

Phnom Bayang



Phnom Bayang - The tower is seen from the eastern entrance and the southeast. This temple resembles a miniature temple of Sambor Prei Kuk with the difference that Phnom Bayang is very arduous to reach (a 2-hour walk on a steep hill under the sun).



The flying *hamsas* are carved on the cornice



On the tower roof are marks of palace walls



The **Phnom Bayang** - Ruins of the presumed library (of engraved stones) and the space between the inner walls of the temple.



Phnom Bayang - Degraded wall panels carved with "flying Palaces". Despite the narrow space available they were built on the western wall only. Flying *hamsas* appear on the roof's cornice



In the forest below **Phnom Bayang** I found **Prasat Sok Pro** - A almost all plundered by men and weather. In the half that is in ruin, local poor people repaired the caves for the veneration of the Buddha and modern precious items.



The display at the core of the tower

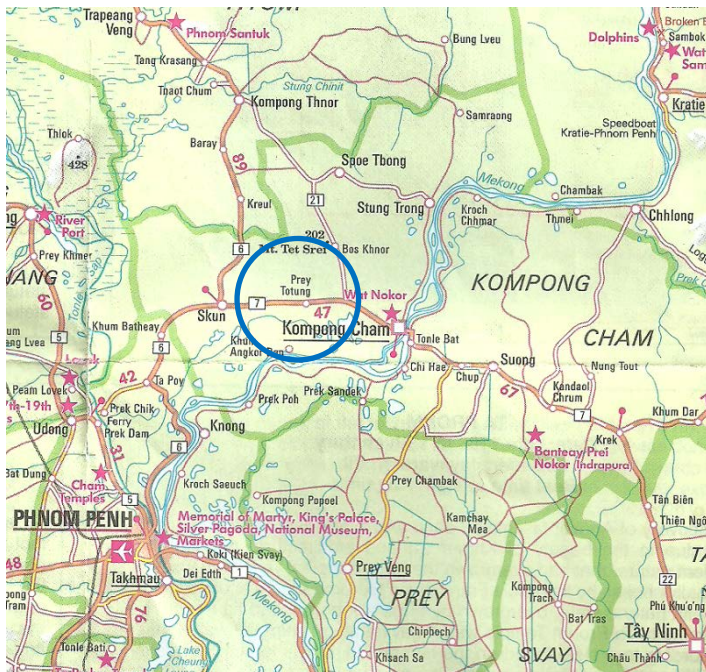
Stung Trong

The Sambor Prei Kuk style remains

In the year 2004 after visiting the delightful Hanchei meditation site, we continued to ride along the Mekong shore in search of Buddhist monasteries. When we the modern village of Stung Trong on the east bank of the Mekong, after the renewed rapids. I have described before the Tala Borivat monuments on the west coast We did not enter the village but turned west up a hill where we saw an interesting Buddhist vihara. After stopping to allow me to look at this monument, I started to descend and I noticed that I was not walking on sturdy soil, but, amongst shrubs, on the same stone fragments, wooden planks and dirt discovering lintels and other remains that I documented with photographs here below. Some fragments of the colonettes seemed to have been saved by wood planks for transportation somewhere. I took pictures of anything I could.

The building at the hill's base was a cement factory producing Buddhist images, apsaras, garudas worshippers and figures of Buddha, all painted.

After the surprising discovery we continued driving to reach Kampong Thma and on-road number 4 to reach Kong Saen and then the national road No.6 to Siem Reap).



Towards the centre-right of the picture, above Kampong Cham, driving along the west bank of the Mekong after the Sanctuary of Hanchei, we reached the large village of **Stung Trong** (see map).

On the hill behind the village is where I found the archaeological pieces described below. I immediately phoned Dr Hab Tab, at that time Director of the National Museum in Phnom Penh. He informed me later that he would take measures to recover the precious items and thanked me vividly for the information. I took pictures of the lost pieces. There was also a flat *sema* with the inscription, hopefully now at the National Museum (2007).

The discovery was casual, but finding the true origin of the Preangkorean artefacts is always a discovery. The fact that they were all in the style of Pre Kuk may indicate they may be coming from a nearby source. I cannot explain Sambor Prey Kuk style lintels in this location on the southeast of the Mekong. To explain it, I entered an unknown complex interpretation (probably inadequate) published by L.P. Brigg in 1951 : 49).

It seems that Stung Treng (near Stung Trong) was the capital of Chenla that had been conquered by Ishanavarman and that at the time was considered close to Wat Phu. Ishanavarman undoubtedly desired to consolidate and extend his kingdom by founding the capital near the eastern border. Sometime early in his reign, he moved along the Stung Sien River (bottom left corner of my map) until the river reached the area of Sambor Pei Kuk, to the southeast of the present Kampong Thom. Finally, the factory workers took me to see the remains of a Khmer tower at the top of the hill, to the pagoda which was my visit's objective.

The material must have been discovered by the factory workers (in 1997). This lintel was also photographed by Parmentier in 1927, Fig.64 which is better than the colour photograph taken by me at the National Museum of Phnom Penh in 2004.

On the lintel are carved riders on the back of convergent Makara, each regurgitating a wavy arc, with 3 medallions of which the central one contains a small image of Indra on his elephant. In the other 2 medallions, there are indistinct human figures. The makara is positioned over the capital of the colonettes. The hole to insert them into is clear under each makara. From the arc hangs a series of pearl pendants and the makara have curly tails.



Stung Trong - A much-eroded lintel of the Sambor Prei Kuk style



Stung Trong - On the lintel are carved two *makaras* regurgitating a flat but wavy arc with 3 medallions of the same size containing human figures. The *makaras* have a rider holding a stick. They stand on the *makara* that are in position over the capital of the colonettes.

The lintel is in Sambor style with undulated arc also with 3 large medallions with figures, the central one being of Indra flanked by undefined worshipers with crowns. Compare with de Coral-Rémusat 1951 Plate 6, fig.2 colonnettes. Below the arc are several pendants of pearls some terminating with a lotus bud.



Stung Trong - Another lintel in the style of Sambor Prei Kuk. In the central medallion is a carved figure of Indra on his elephant Airavata.



Stung Trong - Two wooden ladders were used to compose a sort of wooden box to protect only one *colonette* I was lucky to discover on the ground.



Stung Trong - The decorated friezes are possibly of a younger age (?), meaning that there had been a temple reconstructed nearby or a deposit of archaeological elements for commerce.



Stung Trong - The Buddhist *sema* stone is of characteristic shape with inscription. Possibly could be translated from old Khmer or easily read if a Buddhist text.

The Kulen

The interest in Kulen resides in the memory of the first Khmer king, Jayavarman II, who in 802 celebrated in the Rong Chen temple in Kulen jungle, the ceremony of the *Chakravartin* (king of kings) (which started the Khmer dynastic lineage, root of the Khmer Empire).

To complete the Kulen iconography presented on the following page, it is imperative to read my comments on the stunning works of Chevance and Evans founded on the use of Lidar over Mahendraparvata in my Conclusion (Page 190).

The positioning by de Coral-Rémusat (1851: 123) of the Kulen style between the Kompong Prah style and the Trapeang Pomng style was arbitrary, a problem encountered in making stratigraphy of images, without any historical support and architectural evidence.

Concerning the influence of the great King Jayavarman II on the history of Cambodia and the symbolic boundary Preangkorian to Angkorian Period at 875 on iconography, I decided to follow some of the best scholars such as de Coral-Rémusat 1951, Jacques 1999 and Dagens 2003.

So much has been written about this important king II that I decided to follow Claude Jacques's 1972 suggestions based on epigraphy:

Jayavarman II

750: Birth, place unknown

770: Arrival from abroad to Cambodia of Jayavarman II who takes power over Indrapura and Vydiapura (under Indrapura rule). Ceremony of the *Rdval* to free Cambodia from Java's dominion

770-780: Conquest of Shambhupura

780-800: Conquest of the kingdom of Aninditapura, successive installation to Kuti (to the east of Angkor), at Hariharalaya, at Amarendrapura founded by him and perhaps populated by the colons of conquered lands

Around 800: return to the Angkor area to install on mount Mahendra (Mahendraparvata

802: Ceremony (and consecration ceremony?) electing Jayavarman II *kakravartin* (or *Chcrakravartin*) on mount Mahendra and later invention of the ritual of the *devaraja*, deleting dependency from Java(?).

802-834: new installation at Hariharalaya where he dies in **834** or when he was 84 years old.

Certainly, Jayavarman II was a conqueror and the king that started the Khmer dynastic structure and left a place in Cambodian civilization. However, he did not have any influence on the art of his time.

According to unsupported belief, The **Rong Chen** is the site where we presume Jayavarman II has anointed *Chakravartin* in 802, engaged to keep Cambodia safe from foreign influence (either Javanese or Cham).

The cult of *devaraja*, was installed probably in another ceremony when the king is identified with Shiva symbolized by a *Shivalinga* enshrined in this sacred temple (picture from Snellgrove 2004: 51).

The important monograph by Boulbet and Dagens published in 1973 during the Khmer Rouge period is difficult to follow because the temples are unrecognisable after 50 years of neglect. Their map comprises essentially a scatter of points in the jungle and would remain the definitive image of the area for decades to come.

Fortunately the Researchers from early 2000, supported by the French Institute EFEO and APSARA, have used high detection and ranging (LiDAR) surveying technology to reveal the location of Mahendraparvata.

The probable existence of a city was known but, the result of a years-long international research project—offers the most definitive identification yet of Mahendraparvata.



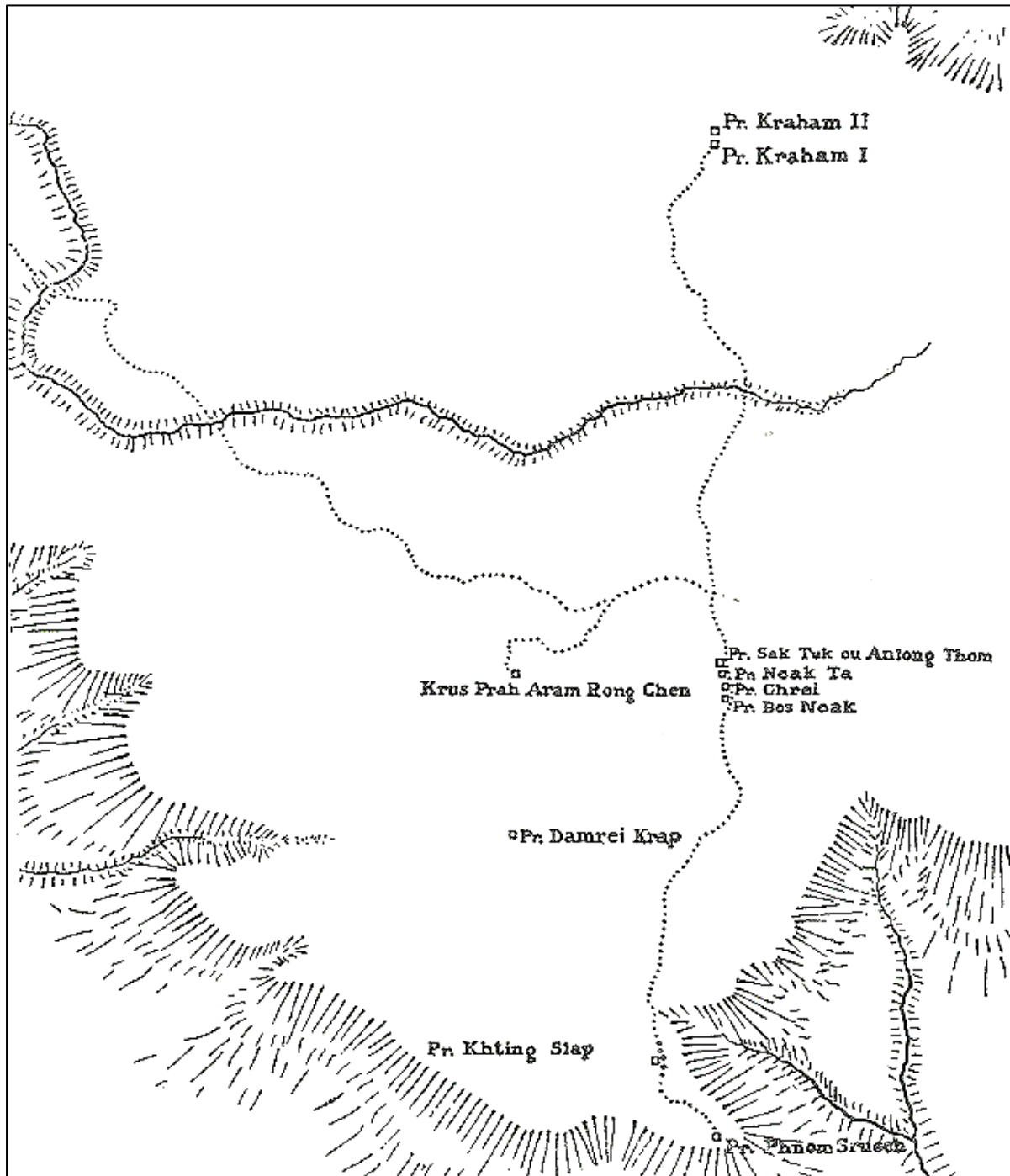
Kulen 2002 – Being disoriented during one of my first visits to Phnom Kulen, I halted to identify some of the most important temples, advised by a local guide with his motorbike.

Iconography and history of Kulen Mahindraparvata.



The picture was probably taken around 1950-60. The above picture is from D.Snellgrove 21995

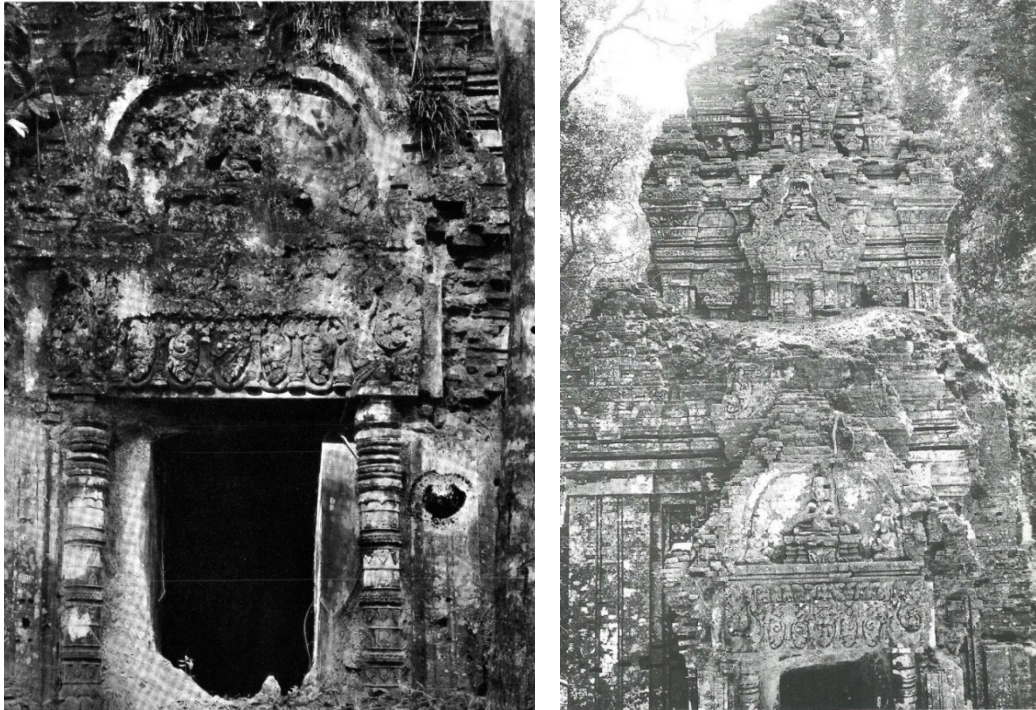
**Most important monuments on and around Mount Mahendra
(Mahendraparvata)**



map of Boulbet et Dagens 1973

The iconography of some monuments of Kulen

I present my cursory view of some of the Kulen temples I explored from 2003 to 2006 rapidly on a motorcycle rented together by a guide driver.



Pictures of **Damrei Krap** from Stern(1938) and from Boisseler 1966 : 182. It has the only p diment that survives containing the high-relief image of a god seated in the lotus position.

In the Kulen's monuments, some mythological scenes survived (Danrey Krap and Rup Arak) but particularly in the beautiful lintel of Prasat Kaki (at the Guimet now). The first attempt to have a small image of Indra on his elephant; also Garuda or of Shiva, or a simple figure sitting in a yoga position (Buddha or a deity) were lightly carved possibly outside the request of the sponsor. Perhaps at that time, the need for images was satisfied by statuary, which includes some of the best masterpieces of Khmer art.

It is possible that a few Khmer artists who worked at Sambor Prei Kuk were dispersed by the closure of workshops. Thus artists felt isolated, lacked direction and probably suffered from lack of royal sponsorship. Jayavarman resided only two years (800-802) at Mahendraaparvata. I am of the personal opinion that at Kulen the king found it difficult to satisfy the need of his Court, concentrating on obtaining manpower.

The people of Kulen descended to the fertile plains of Banteay Srei and south Phnom Bok to cultivate or to buy rice for the family and other needs, such as tools, at Siem Reap. On Kulen, despite the large royal palace, it may have been difficult even for the strong powerful king to receive victors and have entertainment. Soon after nominating himself *chakravartin*, Jayavarman II descended with his Court to the sunny founding of the sacred city of Hariharalaya close to the moat of the massive pyramid of Wat Bakong, at that time under construction built for the capital city of Hariharalaya by Jayavarman I (first) and completed in 801 just before Jayavarman I descended from Kulen to Bakong.

In the iconography of the lintel, starting from Prei Khmeng onwards there seems to be a search for the elegance of designing vegetal elements rejecting all human figures leading to the “vegetation invasion” (de Coral Remusat) in lintels generating abstract simplicity through the beauty of large naturalistic leaves (Prasat Pum Prasat). The dynamism of Sambor is replaced by a static balance of the elements of Kulen. The 3 extraordinary lintels of Sambor Prei Kuk carved with Shivaite narrative stories demonstrate an early episode of visual narrative carving in Khmer art (Banteay Srei, Angkor Wat).

Two connected features characterize Preangkorean iconography: importance exclusively given to lintels, the difficulty of finding complete *colonettes* and the absence of pediments, a situation that will change in Angkorean art. The pediment of Damrey Krapp, one of the rarest (Parmentier 1924: Fig.50 and 51) has the shadow of a seated figure (probably Indra or Vishnu but more likely of Buddha). Initially, in the 6-7th centuries, pediments were tentatively carved on the wall over the door's lintel of the brick walls of the temple, as in the Bakong Towers.

Quite puzzling is the narration of Parmentier (1924:87-88) that edifices with lintels were stored at the pagoda of Wat En Khna. It turned out that the Wat had a terrace supported by a laterite block and two anomalous lintels of Type 2 of Lunet de la Jonquiere. Fortunately, both lintels are now stored at the National Museum each depicting scenes of devotion to Shiva, the *Shivalinga* (Parmentier 1924: and Fig.34 page 88) together with another lintel also with a Shivaite ritual. I described them together with a third lintel from Tower S1 of Sambor, equally with a Shivaite celebration with women under a very thick naga. Wat En Khna existed near the southeastern side of the road bringing to the Sambor complex, now completely destroyed.

Most surprising to me is that all narrative signs disappear from the temples that followed, following the political and economic instability during the rule of an unknown king, until Jayavarman II (770-834), a period of general impoverishment. The narrative will be fully reinstated by the surprisingly rich and beautiful Banteay Srei (967-1000) carvings.

Michael Vickery and Claude Jacques told me that the inscription's letters were taken for the sound “JA’ a”, Java also sounding like “Ch’am”, Champa or Cham, confirming scholars finding more Champa than Javanese influence. In iconography, it was believed that the Javanese influence was in the presence of *kala* and convergent *makars* (de Coral-Rémusat1951). However, I have seen and photographed a *kala* face in the famous monolithic monument N17 of Sambor, the only remains of a large temple complex of an older settlement. Another ferocious *kala* in a Sambor Prei Kuk “Flying palaces”. Therefore the *kala* monster existed in Khmer iconography probably from the end of the 6th century, well before Jayavarman II.

The Khmer *kala* does not have the features of the Indonesian *kalakirtimuka*. Concerning the *makara*, the rule of convergence/divergence seems variable in the Preangkorian lintels. Khmer artists, even in a phase of non-directions, introduced *Kala* and *makara* from Indian art. The belief that the Kulen style introduced a *kala* as a component of the central motif and that in each lintel the *Kala* is usually alternated with a deity or *diakpala* is unsupported. Stern photographs will show that of 16, lintels he *Kala* and *makara* occur 3 or 4 times only (see Table2).

To demonstrate the Indonesian influence on khmer art Madame de Coral-Rémusat published an image of Borobudur (Plate VIII, fig.21) showing a niche with a diorite statue of Buddha. However, in these well-finished conditions, the Borobudur was not before the mid.9th century. In other words, years after Jayavarman came from Java (?); on her picture, the presumed *Kala* is instead an Indonesian *kirtimuka*. The image has the rich fur lion, which has a squashed face with a large closed mouth, far from the typical round face of Trapeang Pong's lintels.

To show the considerable difference with the lintels of the previous styles, especially the lifeless of the Kulen's lintels I will add some lines of the Roluos's temples, In my view, the extraordinary dynamic myth-generating lintels of Prah Kô and Lolei which show the end of the monotonous series of geometric layout lintels of the Kulen style. The new art period begins under the rule of Indravarman I, starting in 877.

The rich Sambor style did evolve and improve into the Trapeang Pong. In Tower S1, besides the evolution into the Prei Khmeng style, a major innovation of the lintels becoming narrative is visible in the lintels (9th century ?) deposited at the National Museum of Phnom Penh.

The Kulen style

Kulen style is characterised by an endless variation of embryonic motifs: a horizontal arc of foliage with the *kala* head sustaining the seated figure of a king or a god at the centre; the side of the arc is either regurgitated by small *makara* with a raised elephantine trunk or terminating in large volute leaf scrolls. Sometimes, the arc becomes the trunk from which hang 5 or 6 u-shaped leaves below. At Kulen, a lintel has the typical mythical groups and figures, exceptionally Vishnu on Garuda. Fully developed *kala* are quite rare, not a piece of mythological evidence and rare divergent *makara* and *kala*, when they appear, are elements to create a new style. The lintels do not have a unity whichever the decorative element, and are examples of "disconnected creativity"

Stern (1938: 141) wrote that the Kulen style is transitional to the style of Preah Kô or, which more simply composes the end of the Kulen style.

Definition of the Kulen style

The distinctive style of Kulen lintels (fig. 9) typically consists of inward-facing *makara*, which disgorge a long, intricately decorated garland (arc) segmented into four arches. These segmentations are often emphasised by three oval medallions. The *makara* is an auspicious mythological creature representing water, which is venerated for the natural abundance and fecundity of the land; the garlands may also be regarded as both a blessing from heaven as well as a permanent form of offering to the divinity enshrined within the temple. Many Buddhists added decorative pillars (*sema*) to indicate the sacred space.

It is important to remember that according to Stern, the style of Kulen is defined by the arc ending in large curls of leaves (*fleuron* in French) and vegetal motifs with four points (Stern 1938: 141). I interpret these photographs in 4 groups. In addition, I separate 4 other independent temples (Table 3).

This table is not made to define styles, but to identify the elements that typify the Kulen style. For example, *kala* appears only 4 or 5 times on 16 lintels, while *makars* 6 or 7 times. Consequently, it is incorrect to mention that *kala* and *makara* define the Kulen style. or that they appear for the first time. My reconsidered classification (re-classification) is presented in Table 3 is a tentative structuration based on information from de Coral-Rémusat 1951, Jacques 1999 and Dagens 2003 with inserted the names of lintels of the assumed age into the Preangkorean, previously based on epigraphy and the sequence of the Khmer king's ruling time, following the traditional view of 20th-century scholars such as Claude Jacques (1972 :30-32).

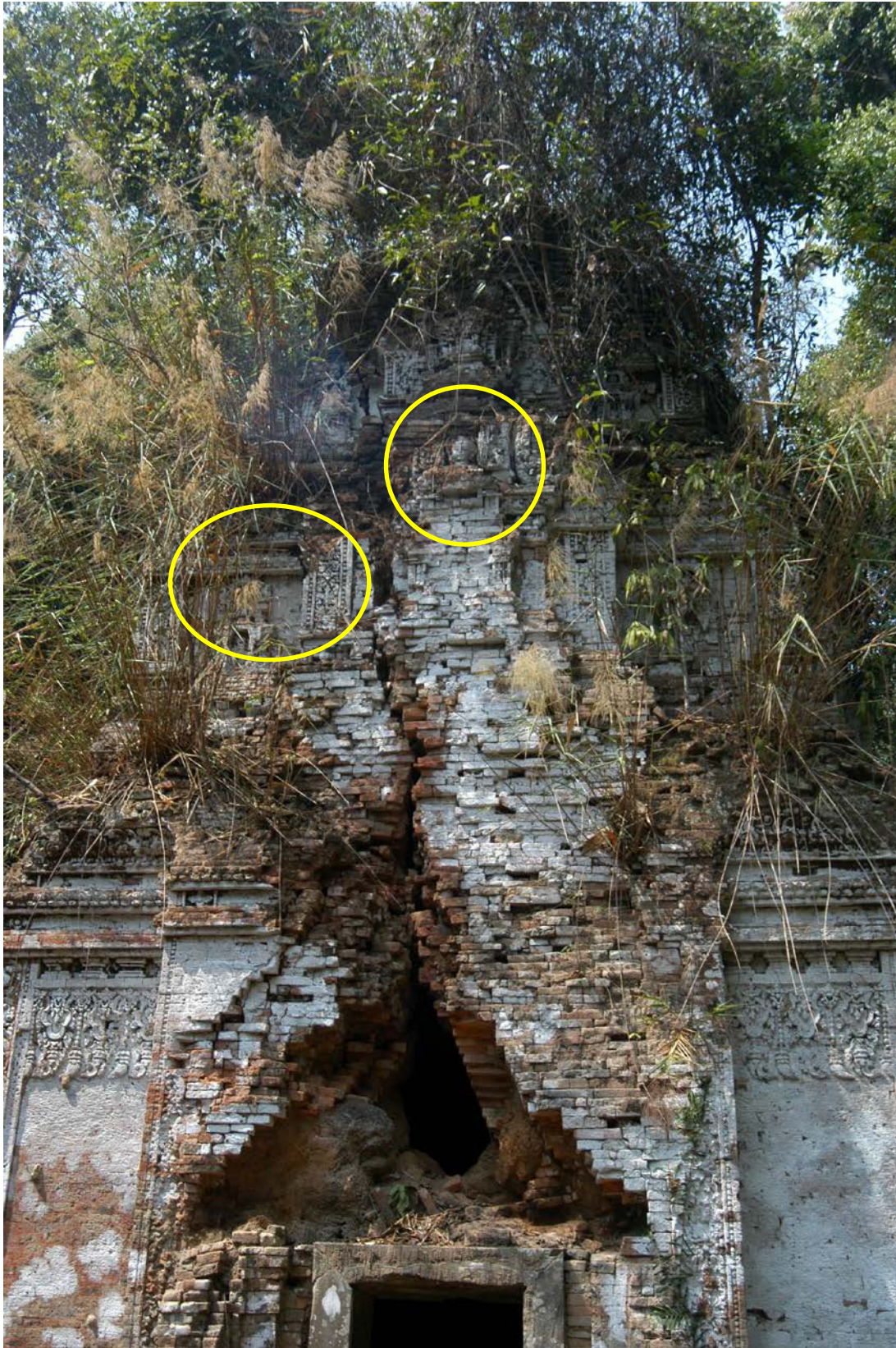
Kulen temples



Damrei Krap. Two pictures of the decoration are carved on pillars of external walls.



O Pha Ong (Neak Ta, Andong). Different kinds of edifices repeat at each level of the temple. Occasionally the figure at the centre has been preserved like a standing man or god, or a crowned figure.



O Pha Ong (Neak Ta, Andong) - picture of the full tower parts with each stage having its reproduction of edifices with a small figure at the centre. Notice the decoration of glass or pearl strings below the linear lines of the first level .



O Pha Ong (Neak Ta, Andong).

The temple in 2004 and after the restoration of 2015-2020, which trimmed the vegetation growing on each of the 5 levels (not discernable before) and supported safely the entrance door of the shrine 's single room, previously with a deep hole carved by the treasures hunters, a very common desecration in most the old towers. Unfortunately, the whitewash covering the original part of the temple was also removed. It is not clear where are the decorative elements below each of the levels, as clearly seen in my next page pictures, unless we are dealing with two different monuments.

(LEFT picture by Vittorio Roveda, RIGHT Picture with thanks to *beyondangkor.org*).



O Pha Ong (Neak Ta, Andong).



O Pha Ong (Neak Ta, Andong). The central figure has been carefully carved out. Nevertheless, it reminds lintels of Stern illustrated in 1938, particularly reminder of the layout of Prasat Anlon Thom or Prasat Kaki without the large central medallion that Wat extracted by teeth It may have been made by a Kala or a medallion with Garuda.



O Pha On (Neak Ta, Andong). Remains of a lintel ground. It has analogies with Stern (1938) Prasat Neak Ta. Detail showing outlines of 2 small shrines *apsara* seated in them (visible to the left of the lintel, below the green shrub, holding a lotus. To the right is carved near the top edge of the lintel) the figure of a man holding a drum (?). The lintel arc is missing on this fragment, but it may end with curls of leaves. The figure of girls in shrines reminds the similar ones in the Kulen temple of Bos Nak.



Detail of the man holding a drum to the right of the apsaras.



O Pha On temple. The lintel over the western face false door has the dragon's head *kala* biting the centre of the robust horizontal arc. It would be interesting to know if the temple is older than Trapeang Pong which some scholars believe to be the first in which they appeared in the Javanese *Kala*.

Each layer of the temple's roof contains a reproduction of edifices with a miniature shrine containing the image of the head of a crowned deity or king modelled in plaster, then painted white as done for the entire temple.



O Pha On. Detail of the previous picture with a small figure inside a miniature shrine built over the lintel, and reappearing at each level of the tower.



Damrei Krap. The lintel over the door has a robust arc with a *kala* at the centre and large scrolls of leaves below (no *makara*). Over the door's lintel, there is a horizontal reproduction of edifices with a god figure in the central shrine (in the photograph below).



Damrei Krap, the brick temple has no visible decorative elements.



The rear and lateral sides of O Pha On





Prasat Khu Slap. this picture demonstrates that the entire temple was whitewashed.



Prasat C'rei ?



an outer pillar with a geometric capitol. (inverted pyramid?)



Broken 'colonnette' of Prasat C'rei ?

Comments on Stern's photographs of 16 lintels

After studying Stern's 16 lintels (1938), my notes are:

The lintel of Prasat Don Mas has a small *kala* face (decorative image not intended to scare spirits away) between the 4 curled leaves, but there aren't *makara*. Two out of the 16 lintels, Damrei Krap and Phnom Sruoc have converging *makara* with raised a elephantine trunk holding a chain of pearls. Some lintels have an arc with large flowers and leaves at its centre the image of a god or a group of gods with their acolytes as in the lintels from Prasat O Paon , Prasat Kraham I.

The lintel from Prasat Khum Slap with 3 large medallions is of Sambor Prei Kuk style. The arc looks as if it is disgorged by *makara*.

The best comments on Kulen iconography can be done only on 2 (of 16) lintels preserved at the Musée Guimet of Paris. They show the ingenuity of Khmer artists by inventing many new elements arranged in brilliant layouts. The two lintels were also masterly carved.

One should never work from photographs but on the original stone lintels visible in the temples or museums when considered original. Stern 16 pictures are mediocre and unique apart from two extraordinary lintels now at the Musée Guimet of Paris, which are illustrated above.

For Stern, the meaning of style was based on the arc ending with large groups of leaves (*fleuron* in French) in addition to 3 or 4 leaf bunches in four points (Stern 1938: 141), with the occasionally *kala* or *makara*. This type of arc is typical of the Prei Khmeng style.

The 16 lintels of the Kulen temples, judging from Stern's photographs, show a repetition (3 or 4 times) of the same models/motifs, one being that of divergent *makara*'s heads plus some occasional *kala* or the accessories of the vegetal arc (from which hung carved jewellery of beads collars pendants, the garlands of leaves, etc.). The other model has an increase of vegetal elements emerging from the central arc. These two models show a detachment from art carving which may reflect the absence of social and political guidance, carving under stress and no more as an offer to the sponsor or the gods. Alternatively, there may have been disagreements in the workshops, or finally that they had run out of ideas. However, they did find a positive attitude to produce the 16 Kulen lintels by taking pre-existing elements or re-inventing older ones. Kulen artists did find the creativity to produce new ideas in layouts remarkably different from Sambor Prei Kuk.

In conclusion, the Mount Kulen lintels can be assembled into three different groups: those with affinity to Sambor Prei Kuk, those revealing elements of Kampong Pra' and Prei Khmeng style and finally a layout disorder in lintels typical of the Kulen, the third group (Table 3).

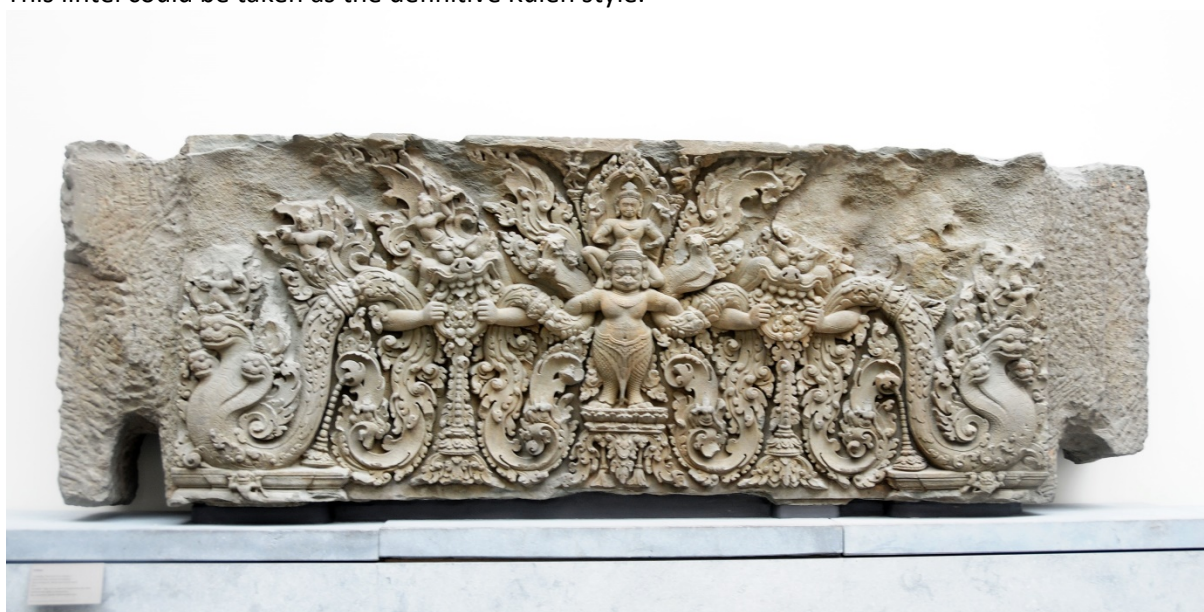
Characteristics of the 16 lintels from Stern's photographs (1938) TABLE 2

TEMPLE	kala	Makara	Dicpala/	Single figure	Vegetal abundance	medallions	Vong hien
Pr. O Pha On			Group			Men holding animal	
Prasat Kaki	squashed	Outlooking divergent with rider's figure		seated			yes
Pr Rup Arak (eroded)	?	Outlooking divergent with riders figures					
Pr.Khtin Slap		Large makara, Divergent outlooking				3 medallions	
Damrei Krap		Convergent Inner looking Makara	Laksmi?		carved vegetation		
Phnom Sruoc		Inner looking Convergent Makara		Shiva on bull?	Abundant row of foliage, curled below the arc		
Prt. Bos Neak	vong		Concubines?	Indra on Airavata			yes
Don Mas	Baby kala		Meditating deity		Vegetal invasion		
Neak Ta		Convergent Makara, vegetal with riders		Garuda open wings	Vegetal background; men on tails of makara		
Thma dap	Skull type				All vegetal rich vegetal scroll		yes
Anlon Thom	Skull type				Row of leaves over the arc		yes
Pr Khtin Slsap	defaced				Large arc with curved vegetal scrolls		



Prasat Kaki. In the sandstone image of the lintel, we can see better the two *makara* at the left edge that are missing in Stern's Plate XXXII, fig.2 having *kala* and *makaras*.

This lintel could be taken as the definitive Kulen style.



This magnificently preserved lintel of Kulen(?) (Musée Guimet) is identical to that of Stern 1938 Plate XXXII, fig.2. On the original from the Guimet, there is not a single *kala* head, but two heads with the arms of *kala* eating the two *naga* held by Garuda and that terminates in a 5 headed *naga*. Garuda has a god, Vishnu on his shoulders. from the mouth of the *kala* emerges a vertical line of flowers terminating in a large lotus bud. On both sides, of these elements, there is a composite curl of leaves.

These 2 perfectly preserved lintels of the Musee Guimet make me change my opinion on Kulen art and appreciate the creativity and innovations produced by the artists working at Kulen. The difference between these two specimens and their relative photographs of Stern is enormous.

Table 2 is purely conjectural on Kulen lintels and relative style, without information on colonettes and architecture and based on photographs of Stern 1938, not the original stone pieces.

Re-classification of Kulen styles

Table 3

TEMPLE	MAIN FEATURES	STYLE
<i>Khun Slap</i>	Arc with medallions	Late Sambor Prei Ku
<i>O Pha On</i> <i>Kraham II</i> <i>Kaki</i> <i>Rup arak</i>	Vegetation arc bending until becoming a bow, central images on a quashed <i>kala</i> Kaki: further thinning of the arc, central <i>kala</i>	Analogies with Prei Khmeng
<i>Damrei KRAP</i> <i>PHNOM SROUC</i> <i>Bos nak</i> <i>Kraham I</i>	Rich decorative elements, central deity, small <i>makara</i> , vegetal arc ending in large involute scrolls.	Kulen 1
<i>DON MAS</i> <i>NAL TA</i> <i>THMA DAP</i> <i>PR.ANLON</i> <i>KHUN SLAP GOPURA</i> <i>PR RUP ARAK</i> <i>PR.CREI</i>	Rich decorative elements, central deity, small <i>makara</i> , vegetal arc ending in large involute scrolls. PR. CREI HAS AN ARC WITH SIMPLE VEGETATION, AND IN BOW FORM: PREI KHMENG STYLE	Kulen 2
TRAPEANG PONG KOMPONG PREI PRASAT ANDET TRAPEAT PONG	Each lintel with its characters See text	The last 2 are possibly Post-Angkorean

(Comments on Stern's 16 lintels) I do not see evidence of any phase corresponding only to Jayavarman II's presence on the Kulen because he was somewhere else in Cambodia. In conclusion, I cannot see in the Kulen lintels anything special to justify the definition of a single clear "Style of Kulen", but a mixture between the Sambor Prei Kuk style and the Prei Khmeng style as shown in Table 2. I would call the middle group "Kulen style"(Kulen 1).

Stern (1938) agreed with the explanation of M.me de Coral-Rémusat (1951:43) hesitating to keep ancient themes or adapting to a taste that was too new, requiring the disruption of local traditions. These attempts we can see on the 16 lintels. According to M.me de Coral-Rémusat's concept that artists prefer to seek their inspiration in past models and new motifs are never entirely adopted, the details are taken from the past. Some details reveal the real-time composition (age dating?).

It is assumed (by Stern and Remusat) that during the Yajavarman II stage at Kulen, the monuments built (?) had an impoverishment in the general layout of composition. In general, the Kulen temples had simple compositions. At Neak Ta appears (first time) in miniature spaces occupied by a Garuda with heavy legs and open wings and four arms as his protector Vishnu, but no other narratives.

It appears that Stern, based on 16 lintels and only fragments of *colonettes* each from a single temple (or their fragments, possibly mixed with colonnettes of other temples) and declared that colonnettes demonstrate the unity of the “Kulen style” and its position in the evolution of Khmer Art. Eventually Stern decided that the Kulen style presents the transformation of known motifs to a new grouping of them and most of all a phantasy and dynamism surprising in an ensemble that conserves a perfect equilibrium.

The Thma Dap lintel with rich decoration and many sculptures announces the end of the 9th century and the beginning of the 10th. Perhaps the Aram Ron Cheng has a very modest pyramidal form wrongly believed to be the site for the ceremony for the instauration of the *Devaraja*. It is a simple tower, far from being a pyramid temple, (the first to appear was the Ak Yum temple in the Easter Baray oriental side). Boisselier remarked the art of this period does not show any Indonesian signs but rather Cham art. Michael Vickery and Claude Jacques said that the inscription’s letters taken for the sound “JA jam” (Java), sound can be interpreted as “Ch’am” for Cham or Champa, confirming Scholars finding more Champa than Javanese influence, especially in architecture. I reproduce here below Jacques attempts to reconstruct the dates of Jayavarman II life (BEFEO, 1972). They are also bringing a different interpretation of iconography. They are reported at the very beginning of the Kulen chapter.

Impossible to explain why Jayavarman II went to Hariharalaya soon after 802 CE. where he may have remained till his death in 854CE. Stern said that considering the number of temples built at Kulen, the “Kulen style” should extend further till 877, which is instead the date of the return to Hariharalaya by Indravarman I (1938 :146). It is accepted that almost nothing is known of Jayavarman II, an unfortunate fact because he was considered the father of Khmer royalty and history. Confusion will always arise from the inadequate use of styles in the art to establish historical dates for political, economic and social art events.

In the Kulen’s monuments, some mythological elements survived (Danrey Krap with a very small scene of the anointment of Shakti or *Shaktibisheka*, and particularly in the beautiful lintel of Prasat Kaki (at the Musée Guimet now). Attempt to have a small image of Indra on his elephant, Garuda or of Shiva, or a simple figure sitting in a yoga position (Buddha, Vishnu or the king) were lightly carved possibly without the request of the sponsor, just following the tradition of a particular motif at the centre of the arc. Perhaps at that time, the need for human images was satisfied by statuary, which includes some of the best masterpieces of Khmer art.

Unquestionably, the iconography of the Kulen is problematic having been confused by the forced use of the input by King Jayavarman II. In fact he does not have anything in common exceptan his *Mahanipata* city. The Kulen artists used all their imagination to decorate lintels with some great innovations but none that can stand out as unique. Perhaps future excavation following the Lidar and Aereo-photography exploration will bring many new temples (including lintels and colonettes), allowing clarification of the Kulen style. The Kulen period before Jayavarman II was a period of neglect from the central power, Kulen being in the jungle of a remote mountain of difficult access from the Angkor plain.

The art of Indravarman I started to differentiate, leading about a century later to the masters lintels of Lolei. There is a great conceptual difference between the art of Kulen (lintels) and that of Hariharalaya. Perhaps at Kulen there were no structured workshops until Jayavarman II occupied the site before 802 and his financial support. Therefore the scarcity of lintels and their different layouts do not permit us to see a clear evolution from Sambor Prei Kuk starting from the first plastered “Flying Palaces” in the techniques of plaster modelling and minute carving. Decoration had to fit all the parts of a temple, thus requiring contact with architects for the creation of space for lintels and the carving pediments.

Jayavarman II imported from Java (?or Cham) active brahmins that were the sources of knowledge and power and their stories were narrated in the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom composed in the 11th century.

Brahmins acquired wealth and power from marriages with the king's sister, sister of the king, or even daughter of the king. They were given the title *purohita* (Royal chief priest) and the royal *hotar* (royal chaplain). Brahmins were asked by kings to join and give recommendations on the affair of the state, including the building of ornate temples.

One of the most important brahmins was *Shivakaivalya* from a priestly family, and Jayavarman II's chaplain and who performed magic rites to appoint the king *Chakravartin* (king of kings) and start the *Devaraja* (God-king) cult, on Mount Kulen in 802 CE.

Soon after his anointment to king in 902 it is written around 802—803?, king Jayavarman II descended to Hariharalaya where only the work had started for the construction of the future Bakong colossal pyramid. Jayavarman II had a particular interest in the site and lived there for about there over 30 years, until his death in 835?, in time to see King Indravarman I build 3 temple complexes: the state temple of Bakong, the temple to the ancestors Prah Kô and the Lolei temple related to water management (*baray*), (terminated by Yashovarman I).

Based on iconography only, it is proposed to trace the end boundary of Kulen with the first lintel of Prah Kô which temple started to be constructed in 877 and completed by 893 (Jacques 1999: 12).

The Kulen artists used all their imagination to decorate lintels adapting previous models but introducing innovations but none that can stand out as unique. Perhaps future excavation following the Lidar and Aereo-photography exploration will bring many new temples (including lintels and colonettes), allowing clarification of the Kulen style. The Kulen period before Jayavarman II was a period of neglect from the central power, Kulen being a mountain remote and of difficult access from the Angkor plain.

Little is known about temple building during the period of Jayavarman I and Jayavarman II, as well as the religious and political power at Kulen before Jayavarman II descended to Hariharalaya.

In the Preangkorian the great, masterly imaginative Indian literature (*Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Puranas*) sources of the innumerable visual narrative, had not arrived denying the carving richness of iconography in the Angkorian Period.

Based on iconography only the end boundary of the Kulen style is drawn with the first lintel of Prah Kô which was a temple that started to be constructed in 877 and completed by 893 (Jacques 1999: 12).

As in all art history of continental Southeast Asia, images and their development depended essentially on royal sponsorship, a sequence that inevitably included kings, one after the other, name after name unravelling the genealogy/chronology and History of Cambodia. The making of art depended on the length of the ruling of an art-prone king. The labour allocation was decided by structured workshops.

The birth of Khmer styles was not due to socio-economic or revolutionary events but to royal sponsorship difficult to follow therefore making tentative any age dating to a period of history. The other conclusion is that the management of styles requires impartiality and time. The first scholar who simply introduced the concept of style was Lunet de la Jonquiere in 1902.

The Preangkorean Art history based on styles presents big problems. The first happened for the so-called "Style of Kulen" discussed by Stern in 1936/38 and believed that it was his style was homogeneous, but not demonstrated by his 16 photographs. As shown above, in **Table 3**, they are tentatively divided into 3 groups: Kulen 1; Kulen 2 and Kulen 3, avoiding introducing new styles. Rejected is also the notion of the Kulen style being a "transitional style". For Stern probably it was transitional from Preangkorean to the Angkor Period that it is not. Otherwise, it is meaningless because each style is transitional to another style. The Kulen style is more of a transition from a period of general impoverishment to the rich sharp art of the period of Hariharalaya (Bakong Towers, Prah kô and Lolei).

Khmer artists at Kulen were without workshops and remuneration as they had been at Sambor Prei Kuk and probably felt isolated, with a lack of direction and suffered from the loss of connection with other members of the workshops. The most important element could, however, have been the lack of royal sponsorship, especially if Jayavarman II resided at Kulen for only two years (800-802) as suggested by some scholars. On the sacred mountain, his capital city became Mahendraparvata. He must have been the sponsor of at least his royal palace and another for his court.

Personal View

For Stern, the style of Kulen is defined by the arch ending with large groups of leaves (*fleuron* in French) and vegetal motifs with four points (Stern 1938: 141). These last features are clearly of the Prei Khmeng style.

The 16 lintels of the Kulen temples, judged only from Stern's photographs, show a repetition of the same models/motifs, one being that of divergent *makara*'s heads (4 times) plus some occasional *Kala* at the centre (4 times) sustaining the figure of a seated man; the accessories of the vegetal arc (with pendants of glass, and a garland of leaves, etc.). By now the central figure of a man seated at ease with one leg bent became popular. Notice that this position might be considered a royal attitude when a thin belt will support the bent leg to the man's waist. The other model is the flourishing of vegetal elements from the central arc.

These two models/motifs appear carved without energy as if the sculptors were going through a phase of non-involvement or disapproval with their rulers, sponsor or workshop. Alternatively, there may have been they had run out of new ideas. However, they did find a positive reason to produce the 16 Kulen lintels.

In conclusion, the enthusiastic view of M.me de Coral-Rémusat is agreed, but amongst the Kulen lintels, only 3 are of this style a characteristic by having the new Javanese *kala* but missing the divergent *makara* both defining the style.

According to Stern's ideas, it is possible to see the extraordinary faculty of renewal and the imagination typical of the art of this epoch, nor the action of renovation of the imagination that characterizes the art of that epoch (Kulen) an art that seeks, by all means, the sources of inspiration and that it mixes and renews the borrowed motifs. The statues underline the position of the Kulen style between what it was before and what followed, some elements hanging clearly to the past, others announcing the future, as Stern suggested we are dealing with *disconnected fantasy* (given by "colonnettes").

I have to conclude that iconography will keep its close association with architecture and on the revolutionary interpretation by **Chevance and Evans** from the aerial prospection with Lidar over the Kulen mountain, please see the Conclusion which follows the section on the temples.



The River of the Thousand Lingas flowing slowly over linga and yoni towards the waterfall. Located on the western side of Kulen this will be discussed separately.

The main Kulen waterfall of the river flowing west-east, seen from a helicopter in 2006.



The end of Kulen