

## REVIEW OF BOOKS.

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**Henri Parmentier.**—*L'Art Khmer Primitif*. Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, XXI—XXII, (Paris G. Vanoest 1927).

Last year saw the publication of a learned and very fascinating work under the above title. The author is, of course, the well known Chief of the archaeological service in French Indo-China and has for many years been a prominent member of the famous Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient in Hanoi, that distinguished seat of learning from which so much has been done to dispel the darkness and ignorance that, only a good generation ago, still surrounded the major part of the history of the Indo-Chinese peninsula.

The work consists of two volumes, the first giving the richly illustrated text (402 pages) and the second containing no less than ninety-six excellent plans and designs, drawn by the author himself, besides four instructive maps of ancient Cambodia. These maps show the distribution of those sanctuaries and buildings which, in M. Parmentier's opinion, belong to the so-called primitive Khmer art.

It may be said here at once that the result of M. Parmentier's painstaking and ingenious studies, undertaken in the field, do not disappoint expectations. Much, which formerly seemed unintelligible or dark to the student of these matters, has been cleared up and new light is shed on many perplexing questions especially regarding the relations between the different styles of the art and architecture of Cambodia, Java, Champa and ancient India—the last named their common mother country. This is, of course, not M. Parmentier's first serious work as an author. His "*Monuments chams de l'Annam*," "*L'Art d'Indravarman*" and "*Etudes asiatiques, Origine commune des architectures dans l'Inde et en Extrême-Orient*" besides numerous papers on matters of archaeological and artistic interest—not to forget those of his consort, known under the "*nom de plume*" as Jeanne Leuba—have long been known and treasured among students of the past of this corner of the world. Indeed it is difficult to overrate the importance of the work done by Mr. Parmentier in connection with the exploration, the study and—last but not least—the preservation of the many wonderful relics from ancient Cambodia's and Champa's golden age; and it is sincerely to be hoped that he will still be able, for a good many years to come, to continue his eminently fertile

activities, for the furtherance of human knowledge. Though it is true that Professor Finot and M. Groslier—and to a certain degree Major Lunet de Lajonquière—have contributed remarkable studies on primitive Cambodian art, M. Parmentier is the first to take up the whole problem for a thorough examination.

By primitive art M. Parmentier understands that form of art which flourished between the VIth and the IXth century A. D. and which was succeeded by what has been termed the classic art, the latter including the forms characteristic of Indravarman (the king who reigned A. D. 877-889) and Bayon (almost contemporaneous with Indravarman's art style). That classic art saw its final and crowning triumph in magnificent Angkor Wat.

The chief characteristics of the primitive art, which separate it from the classic, are roughly the following:— The sanctuaries of the former type are generally isolated and do not present the complex plans of those of the classic period, with their surrounding walls or galleries, annexes, etc. Next they are nearly always built of bricks, only in a single case of laterite, while those of the classic age, particularly those of the Bayon style, are constructed of sandstone. Furthermore their superstructures are, in most cases, covered with a ridged roof with gables, while those of the classic age take the form of a conical "prang", its terminal being a lotus flower shaped stone. Finally there are the different modes and styles of decorations of the walls and especially of the lintel. The different styles of carving of the lintel, always a monolith, are a precious help to decide to which art period the building in question belongs. By a happy inspiration Major Lunet de Lajonquière, when engaged on his grand survey of the Cambodian monuments during the years from 1901 to 1907 (the results of which are given in his imposing work "*Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge*" in three volumes)\* got the idea of dividing the different styles of carving of the lintels into five groups or types. These types are shortly described in the afterfollowing:—

Type I is the so-called Makara lintel. At the two extreme ends of the lintel are seen two monsters facing each other (inwards). These monsters have scaly bodies like sea monsters, their mouths are wide open, the

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\* Referred to further on as I. K.

upper lip being continued in an elephant's trunk, the tongue is long and slender like a harpon, their tails end in cock's tails while their feet are those of a vulture. From their mouths issue either lions or human beings and a personage is sitting on their back or stands, half hidden, behind their bodies. These monsters hide the supports of an arch which spans the space between them. Under the arch hang three lockets or medaillons, the central one of which contains an image of the god Indra sitting on an elephant's head, while the two others contain horsemen.

Type II is more rarely met with. It is a modification of type I; but instead of the Makaras one sees sheaves of flowers or oval lockets. The lockets sometimes contain no figures at all.

Type III is very common. In the center is a monster's head, seen en face, with protruding eyes, its mouth is wide open and its paws are thin and crooked. On the head sits a Brahmanic divinity. From the monster's mouth issue two flower garlands in horizontal direction for finally to bend down at the lower corners of the lintel. Horsemen, dancing girls, bounding lions or fantastic animals often enter into this kind of ornamentations. Two modifications of type III are met with. In one the monster's head is replaced by that of an elephant having often three heads. This latter group may again be replaced by S'iva on the bull Nandin, or Vishnu riding on the Garuda (as so often seen on the gables of modern Siamese temples) \* or the Vishnu-Narasimha.

Type IV shows either Vishnu resting on the serpent Ananta, the churning of the sea or episodes from the Rāmāyana.

Type V is solely decorated with patterns of leaves, often of a very artistic effect.

The lintel carvings connected with the primitive art are all of types I, II, or V, (though type IV may be met with) the two remaining types belonging essentially to the classic age. With regards to the walls of the sanctuaries of the primitive art, these are decorated with representations of a certain kind of edifice in reduced scale, a thing never met with in sanctuaries of the classic age, where the surface of the walls is decorated with rows of divine or human figures. It may be added that the small

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\* The text put in between brackets represents the reviewer's opinion or information added by same.

columns supporting the lintel also help by their shape to indicate the particular style to which the buildings belong. Thus for instance during the primitive art period these columns were round, rarely octogonal, while from the IXth century they are always octogonal. M<sup>r</sup> Parmentier has studied in all 63 buildings and the outcome of these studies appears in the work under review. This work often necessitated clearing of the jungle, which had overgrown the ruins, and sometimes even considerable excavations had to be undertaken, an arduous and painstaking work which, however, brought its reward in enabling the author to assign to the primitive art of the Khmer its proper place in relation to the Indian art in India itself, as well as in Further India.

The sanctuaries belonging to the primitive art are found scattered over the whole territory of Cambodia, from north to south and east to west; but they cluster mostly in the south and south-east.

The following will serve as a brief description of the monuments treated by the author:—

**Materials:—**Bricks were generally used and caves or natural rocks seldom utilized.

**Situation:—**No rules were followed. Most of the sanctuaries are built in the plains, very few on hill tops.

**Orientation:—**Generally East 5° North, rarely East. But in many of the sanctuaries the doors face North, South-east or even West.

**Composition:—**Mostly a single sanctuary; sometimes two or three, which then are ranged on a line. Now and then supplementary buildings (cells) are found, as well as srâ's (temple ponds); but taken as a whole, nothing points to any plan having been followed. This is in the greatest contrast to the later classic age, where nearly all the temples are built and grouped according to a strictly and harmoniously followed plan.

**Details of construction and ornamentation:—**The sanctuaries may be divided into two categories according to whether they contain one or two rooms; the sanctuaries of the latter type are, however, rare. Those consisting of a single chamber are either square or rectangular in shape; of the sanctuaries treated by M. Parmentier 60% are rectangular, while the square formed dominate in the classic age.

The exterior walls are provided with so-called false, or rather blind,

doors on the three sides. There is thus only a single entrance; the surface of the walls project slightly. The superstructure may be of two kinds; if the building is rectangular in shape it rises in slightly accentuated tiers ending in a semi circular vault covered by an elongated ridged roof which ends in two perpendicular gables. In case of the square formed sanctuary, the superstructure seems to be a tiered pyramid, but here the question of the terminal is more difficult to resolve, as but few vestiges have been left of the upper parts of such structures and only a conjectural answer can be given.

The interior of the sanctuary was provided with a low wooden ceiling, the edges of which rested on cramps of stone fixed in the walls. In the center of the chamber stood the stone image of the particular divinity worshipped there; but these images have nearly everywhere disappeared. The idol stood on a pedestal or altar superposed by a so-called *snānadroṇi* which supported the idol and received the offerings of lustral water poured over same on ritual occasions. This *snānadroṇi* was square formed and hollowed out to a depth of 7-8 centimetres and provided with a grooved outlet shaped like a beak, called a *somasūtra*, which, piercing the northern wall of the sanctuary, conducted the lustral water outside. The spout of such *somasūtras* is often carved into the likeness of a monster. Like the images the *snānadroṇis* with their *somasūtras* have mostly disappeared, thanks to the iconoclastic zeal of fervent Buddhists or the impious ravager of treasure hunters.

It will be understood from the above description that the ceremony of the *pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation) in the already narrow chamber was made impossible by the presence of this *somasūtra*.

Besides the square formed *snānadroṇis* there were also circular shaped ones, the latter being preferably employed in the octagonal towers, while the former are found in the rectangular or square formed sanctuaries.

Next we come to the *maṇḍapa*—Mondob in Siamese—which in reality is a kind of stone dais erected in the interior of the sanctuaries dating back to the primitive age. Remains of six *maṇḍapas* have been found, four of them sheltering *snānadroṇis*. One, a perfect masterpiece of sculpture, covers a stoneslab engraved with an inscription from the reign of king *Īśānavarman* (beginning of the VIIth century A. D.). On the edge of the

roof of the dais are seen small niches containing human figures, being exact counter parts of the so-called Kuḍus, so characteristic of the Pallava art of ancient India. The basement of the sanctuaries were often elaborately shaped in terraces with richly ornamented projecting angles, the flight of steps leading up to the entrance commencing with a broad demi-circular stone slab.

The exterior of the walls was provided with pilasters which, however, projected but feebly from the surface; they divided the surface in equal or unequal spaces. The pilasters were ornamented with patterns of garlands or pearls. In the center of the wall one sees the already mentioned representation of an edifice in reduced scale or of human or divine figures standing or sitting in niches.

The reductions of edifices ornamenting the walls of the sanctuaries are of great importance as they may give a faithful idea of what the architectural style, preceding that of the primitive art, was like. Sometimes these reduced edifices represent "Ākāśa Vimāna"—heavenly palaces—showing divinities and adoring figures seated in them. (In this connection it may be re-called that the state funeral cars used for Royal cremations in Bangkok do also represent Vimānas, but their shape is quite different from those depicted on the walls of the sanctuaries treated in this work).

The profile of the lower part of the sanctuaries, studied by M. Parmentier, shows no less than sixteen different patterns but is generally of a very mediocre artistic effect. The uppermost part of the basement is sometimes provided with small niches, containing human heads or faces seen in three-quarter profile, like the Kuḍus of the Pallava art, referred to in connection with the Maṇḍapa.

The entrance to the sanctuary is flanked by columns and superposed by a lintel of type I, II or V, covered by an arch inside which is seen a reduced edifice or, as in the case of the famous temple, called Maha Rosei (The great ascetic—S'iva), the figure of a divinity.

The blind doors are also flanked by columns and superposed by arches. The piedroits supporting the lintel and framing the entrance lent themselves admirably to inscriptions and thus we find them very often covered with detailed inscriptions the contents of which have been of the utmost importance to historical research. The entrance of the sanctuary

could be closed by heavy wooden folding doors, of exactly what shape and decoration it is difficult to say now, but the blind doors may here give us some clue, also the stone circlelets on either side give us an idea of how they were manipulated into position. (Most likely these doors resembled the present day temple doors of Siam.)

The columns were nearly always round in shape; octogonal ones, however, are also found, as already stated in the beginning of this review. It may be added that not all the sanctuaries were provided with blind doors, so for instance in buildings with superstructures, consisting of 5-6 or more tiers, there are no blind doors, also that in the other type of sanctuary, where the tiers are few but well accentuated, one sees small edifices in reduced scale placed on the corners of the base of each successive tier.

Decoration is not much in evidence, besides that already mentioned, and in many cases the walls of the sanctuaries are absolutely naked. However, it is quite probable that the wall surfaces in those far away days looked entirely different from what they do to-day, being coated with a kind of sculpted plaster (akin to that we find in débris at Phra Patom and Pong Tuk, which roughly belonged to the same age as the primitive art of Cambodia). It is also possible that the wall surfaces were decorated with paintings.

Representations of animals are somewhat rare with the exception of the Makara; the lion, so dear to classic art, is seldom depicted.

The building materials consisted of well made bricks held together by a peculiar binding material the nature of which, as in the case of the Châm temples, is still a secret to us.

The stone used was a kind of schist, and it is a very evident that the artists of the primitive art style were not yet so skilled in treating it as those of the later classic art period. Stone was only used for lintels, door frames, columns and the interior crooks supporting the wooden ceiling. In rare cases a sort of white laterite was used as building material instead of bricks.

After this very detailed description of the style and the construction of the sanctuaries, belonging to the so-called primitive art and architecture of ancient Cambodia, M. Parmentier, on the following 192 page of his book treats the most important temples or groups of temples classified under the above nomenclature.

and square built with a flat monolith serving as roof. The walls of the celas are decorated with representations of Rishi's (Hermits), sitting à la Javanaise, while the rim of the monolithic roof is provided with four small niches containing persons of which only the face and the arms are seen, as were they leaning out of the window.

These persons do not resemble Asiatics at all !

But enough of details from this fascinating temple city. Let us only add that in the case of the majority of the sanctuaries their superstructures terminate in ridged roofs with perpendicular gables, while some others had a pyramidal top ; also a very interesting lintel of type II (the three locketts) in whose centre is seen represented S'iva's Mukhalinga adored by the fourfaced Brahmā and Vishṇu, below which is seen a long frieze of bearded Brahmans doing homage to a king sitting on a throne.

It would demand too much space to follow the author in his description of the rest of the monuments treated in this book and we shall therefore confine ourselves to a brief mention of the most important ones.

In the vast delta land of the Mekong, otherwise somewhat poor in Khmer vestiges, there has been found a number of images of a truly fine workmanship, such as an Avalokites'vara (A Bodhisattva of the Mahāyānistic cult) which dates back to the period treated by the author, also an image of Umā, S'iva's ferocious consort, and two statuettes of the Buddha, sitting à l'Européenne ; a Bodhisattva with four arms and a Vishṇu wielding the bow, which all show a superior conception compared with the often stiff and clumsy statuary of the later classic art.

**Prasat Bayang**, a sanctuary situated on the top of a hill and containing a maṇḍapa, is well worth citing as a fine example of primitive art. It is covered with a ridged roof with gables, and has blind doors, its entrepilasters being decorated with representations of edifices in reduced scale. It lies to the north of the canal leading from Ha-tien to Chau-doc, i. e. between the sea and the Mekong. As a detail, worth noting here, are the human nāgas depicted on its lintel, which are recognizable by the aureola of the five serpents heads rising behind them. (Such human nāgas are also seen represented on the oil paintings on the walls inside the Eastern Vihāra of the grand stūpa of Phrapatom—see the reviewer's "Guide to Nakon Patom" p. 32).

The edifices belonging to the primitive art were all—more or less—situated adjacent to the rivers and watercourses of ancient Cambodia. This is in contrast to the edifices of the classic age where we find a considerable number erected in the midst of the jungle or on the tops of almost inaccessible mountains; viz: Koh Ker, Banteai Chmar, Prah Vihar, Wat Phu (Bassac) a.o. The most important group is that of *Sambor Prei Kuk*—not to be confused with Sambor on Mekong—which lies on an affluent of Stung Sen, a river, which coming from the northern part of Cambodia and running south, empties itself in the lower portion of the Tonle Sap, the great inland lake. This important group or groups, of temples, now partly overgrown with thorny jungle, probably lay inside the earthen ramparts of an antique city of no mean size. Some of the temples found here, and there is a vast number of them, date back to the time of Īs'ānavarman (VIIth century A. D.) and show a S'ivaite cult as, according to an inscription, a linga of gold was adored in one of them. Three of the largest groups were enclosed within double enceintes of laterite walls, broken by gopuras (gate buildings), the walls being decorated with sculptures of men fighting lions. Also srā's provided with steps of laterite were found within the enceintes.

In one of the towers (because all the sanctuaries treated here are in reality towers), belonging to the Sambor Prei Kūk group, was found the remains of a beautiful mandapa (which very much resembles a rock cut Jain temple at Khandagur in Orissa—see St. Nihal Singh's "The changing scene in India" p. 45.). The sanctuaries are both square and rectangular as well as octagonal in plan. A single one seems to have had a roof of wood or some other light material, a thing quite abnormal in Khmer art.

The towers have generally only one entrance, but in the northern group we find a central sanctuary built on a terrace, which had four doors.

Over the lintel of the chief entrance is seen a relief representing flying Āpsaras (Celestial female musicians). A statue of a man with a horse's head—a Kinnara—was also found in one of the towers of this group. Besides sanctuaries in reduced scale there are also seen "vimāna's" represented on the surfaces of the walls. Furthermore sculptures of human beings are found such as that of a king, wearing a cylindrical mithra. Many traits are purely Indo-Javanese and some floral designs find their replicas in the grand temple of Borobudur.

In addition to the edifices already mentioned one finds cellas, small

**Prasat Ta Nang O**, with its two storeys, resembles very much certain Indo-Javanese edifices at Dieng (Java); it lies near the former monument.

**Phnom Khyang** is a remarkable sanctuary built inside a natural grotto on the flank of a hill lying roughly to the east of Kampot. Constructions of the latter kind are rare. (Also in Siam, where the only cave temple found, dating back to the primitive art period of the Khmer, is *Than Prasat*, near the conjunction of the Mūn and Mekong rivers—see the reviewers "*Complément à l'Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge*" p. 3.). Other temples situated in the coastal region have yielded many beautiful images of Brahmanic divinities, but unluckily the sanctuaries formerly lying here have often been completely destroyed by the Annamite immigrants, these ruthless annihilators of the ancient Chām and Khmer civilisations, who even go so far as to obliterate the very place names. (A sinister foreboding of what the Chinese influx in this part of Asia may eventually signify to the Indian civilization of the remainder of Further India!).

**Angkor Borei**, lying on the most western branch of the Mekong, between Phnom Penh and Chaudoc, was an ancient capital, its original name being *Vyādhapura*, and must be considered to have flourished just during the primitive art period. Many beautiful images of the Buddha, an image of the sun god, *Sūrya*, and a number of grotesque plaster heads have been found here. (The latter probably resembling those found at *Phrapatom* and *Pong Tūk*?) To the south of Angkor Borei are several caves with sanctuaries built inside, in one of them was found a statuette of a female divinity with four arms, her hands hold attributes which may show that she represents a *Tārā*. (See Miss Alice Getty's "*The gods of the Northern Buddhism*")

**Asram Maha Rosei**, which lies near Angkor Borei, is a sanctuary wholly of stone, and thus an exception from the rest. Also it is still complete, which is almost unique. Its silhouette reminds one very much of certain reduced edifices at Borobudur.

We now come to the region of the great inland lake. It is a curious fact that while the west coast of the lake shows a rich collection of monuments, dating back to the primitive art period, the region of Angkor is singularly poor in this regard.

Following the western shore of Tonle Sap we find, near Pursat, **Prasat Prah Theat**, which is remarkable by its three naves separated by rows of columns, thus presenting another exception from the disposition in the primitive art.

**Kdei Ta Kam**, a sanctuary lying N.N.W. of the great lake (and N.W. of Angkor) is to be noted by reason of its being wholly constructed of laterite. At *Vat Khnat*, to the S. W. of Angkor, are found remains of six sanctuaries and here was found a replica of the famous so-called leprous king; so far, it has, however, not been possible to fix any certain date for either of the statues so named, though they may belong to the primitive art period.

**Phnom Kulen**, is the name of that famous range, lying to the N.E. of Angkor, which provided the quarries of the mighty temple builders during the golden period of the Khmer empire. Here are also found a number of relics from the primitive art period. At a small rapid, *Anlong Pong Tai*, are seen in the rocky river bed the sculptures of no less than five Vishnus resting on the serpent Ananta, besides numerous lingas placed in rows; there are as many as ten such rows distributed over a stretch of 130 metres in length. One may say that the whole river bed is bedecked with lingas over which the gurgling crystal clear waters are forever performing the holy rite of ablution!

On the south western slope of Phnom Kulen, at *Sra Damrei* (Elephant's pond) is to be seen a formidable group of giant stone animals, resembling those carved out, at the same period and belonging to a related civilization, of enormous blocks at Mavalipuram in South India. The group at *Sra Damrei* consists of an elephant, a tiger and two lions.

The sanctuary of *Prasat Damrei Krap*, near by, shows much similarity with Chām style. It is, however, difficult to prove that the early Khmer art was influenced by the Chām art.

**Prasat Andet**, standing in a dominating position on the top of the hill to the S. W. of Sambor Prei Kuk, shows, besides fine architectural lines, a very beautiful and human like image of Harihara (the combination of S'iva and Vishnu). This statue is now in the Musée Albert Sarraut in Phnom Penh. In other temples, situated in the most northern part of Cambodia, on the upper reaches of Stung Sen, but south of the admirable Prah Vihar perched on the crest of the Dangrek range (this temple is accessible from

Siamese territory by motor car during the dry season from Sisaket or Ubon), are found many fine examples of carved lintels which show a further development in composition and artistic conception in the representation of flower garlands and mystic animals, such as elephants with cock's heads, illustrating the fertile imagination of the artists of those far away times.

**Prasat Prah Srei**, a sanctuary lying at the lower course of Stung Chimnit, a water course which falls into the lower part of the Tonle Sap about opposite Kompong Ohnang, is remarkable by the fact that *all* the beautiful details of its decoration have really been finished, a very rare thing to be met with. This sanctuary consists of three magnificent towers.

**Prasat Phum Prasat**, a sanctuary lying on the upper reaches of the above mentioned water course, is a small brick tower very well preserved. It shows sculptured leaves in the brick work, another curious feature is that this tower was crowned by a pedestal which may either have held an idol or a linga (Traces of sculptured brick work are also met with in Siamese territory, so for instance in Amphoe Sangka, Changvad Surin, in *Prasat Don Ngao* (I. K. 391), which the reviewer accordingly considers to belong to the primitive art style.)

We have now reached the banks of the Upper Mekong along which we find many traces and relics of the primitive art right up to Savannakhet.

**Phnom Pros**, a sanctuary lying to the N. W. of Kompong Cham, on the right bank of the river, is built of laterite and dates from the classic art period but its lintels show the primitive style such as the birth of Brahmā in the lotus flower and a human Garuḍa wrestling with serpents.

**Han Chei**, lying to the north of Kompong Cham, shows fine chiselled brick work, also remains of the spikes, formerly adorning the ridged roof of the sanctuary, which were at first erroneously taken for lingas. (Such roof spikes have also been found in the region to the north of Ubon in Amphoe Muang Samsib which should indicate that sanctuaries belonging to the primitive art were formerly erected there.)

**Kuk Prah That**, a small sanctuary situated near to Han Chei, is built of basalt and is in such a complete condition that it could easily be dismantled and put up again. (At present its interior is filled with an enormous termit hill.) It resembles Maha Rosei very much (also certain sanc-

tuaries at Romlok and Bhuwaneswar in Orissa) as well as the small edifices represented on the bas-reliefs of Borobudur. (In view of the great number of temples in Cambodia which, though at present in ruins, are still complete or nearly so, one is tempted to exclaim "What a chance for one of the art-loving multi-millionaires of the United States to do some reconstruction work for which he would certainly be blessed, not alone by the archæologists, but by all lovers of beauty". The lesser part of the wealth of some oil-wheat or meat "king" would probably suffice to restore most of the temples inside the walls of mighty Angkor Thom!)

On the eastern bank of the Mekong, lying S.E. of Kompong Cham, we find a group of primitive sanctuaries enclosed within the rampart of the ancient citadel called *Banteai Prei Nokor*; in some of these are found inscriptions from the VIIth century A. D. Several of the towers have six storeys and are built in the style of those of Sambor Prei Kuk. Part of these fine buildings have — alas! — been destroyed, as so often is the case, by Buddhist monks and used for the construction of their modern temples.

Going farther north and following the course of the Mekong we find at *Kratié* a group of 3 temples belonging to the primitive art and again at **Sambor** we find a group of 7-8 temples of the same style of art. Sambor is the ancient S'ambhupûra, once a capital of the Khmer, before they, in the VIth century A. D., conquered the racially allied Fu-nan, (which sometimes comprised the whole of present Cambodia plus Cochin-China and perhaps the Menam Valley and the Malay Peninsula too). Of special interest here is a beautifully carved lintel with a representation of the Trimûrti and inscriptions from the VIII-IXth century A.D. At Sambor have also been found several relic caskets of stone. (I gather that these resemble very much a similar stone casket found by me in 1917 at Huei Singh, south of Sangka, see my "Complément" p. 18.)

At **Stung Treng**, on both sides of the great river, are important groups of temple ruins dating back to the primitive art period. For instance at *That Bâ Doem*, on the East bank, traces of no less than 20 sanctuaries of bricks are met with. Most unluckily the ruins are disappearing as the Lâo people, who have superseded the original Khmer inhabitants, use them as quarries for building materials. A curious rock, called *Uen Khong*, which is submerged during flood time, shows several interesting sculptures such as two crocodiles, a tortoise and a sun disc and a half moon. Some

very fine lintels have been found at Stung Treng with representations of frightful looking Makaras (which remind one of the now extinct monsters peopling former geological periods of our earth), also statuettes of the gods Vishnu and S'iva and a red copper image of the Buddha.

The famous **Wat Phu** at Champassak the seat of a former Lāo vassal kingdom, i.e. the town of Champassak, not the temple, also dates from the primitive art period according to inscriptions from the VIIth century A.D., though the present fine temple buildings were erected during the classic age,

In mentioning the vestiges of primitive art found in the Chi-Mūn valleys the author thinks that, apart from some few places named in the after following, this part of the sphere of influence of ancient Cambodia was poor in monuments belonging to the primitive art, an opinion which the reviewer does not quite concur in. M. Parmentier mentions only *Ban Saphū*, near Phimun, where there is a lintel belonging to type I; *Prasat Phum Pong*, at the sources of Huei Tap Tan, south of Surin, and the Buddhist inscriptions at *Hin Khon*, south of Amphoe Paktongchai in the Circle of Nakon Rajasima, finally the stone images in *Wat Poh* and *Wat Phra Narai* in the town of Korat and *Bo-Ikā*, lying to N. W. of Amphoe Sungnoen, also in the Nakon Rajasima Circle. The author is of the opinion that the statues found at Nakon Sritammarat, Vieng Sra, Takuapi and Jaiyā can hardly be reckoned as belonging to the primitive age though Fu-nan once extended its sway over these places too. (With regard to this the author is, of course, quite right. The images and temples, as far as the latter have been preserved unaltered, partly show the direct influence of the Gupta art, which flourished in India from A. D. 320-550, partly the influence of the Indo-Javanese art brought to the Malay Peninsula through the dominion of S'rī Vijaya, see Prof. G. Coëdès' remarkable researches with regard to the latter's influence in his "Le royaume de Çrivijaya." The stone images wearing fez-like head dresses from Vieng Sra and Jaiyā are now in the National Museum in Bangkok: it may be added that two such statues have been found in Petchaburi in Wat Tho). The author further mentions the images and cult objects found at Phrapatom and Suphan which are of Khmer handiwork, he expresses the opinion that these do not belong to the primitive period, (an opinion confirmed by the historical fact that the Khmer did not gain the

supremacy in these regions before about 1000 A. D.). The images and cult objects in question must accordingly be classed under the classic art period.

At *Müang Phra Rot*, in the Changvad Jolburi, have been found bas-reliefs with animals, a beautiful female image and a gigantic and very realistic linga with its stone receptacle for the water of ablution, as well as a four armed Vishnu. At *Dong Lakon*, an ancient fortress, not far from Nakon Nayok, a very fine head of the Buddha was found (and we may add the finds at *Dong Sri Mahaphôt*.) These things can hardly be ascribed to the influence of primitive Khmer art but rather to direct Indian influence.

Nor are the statues with cylindrical headdresses, found at *Müang Si Dek*, and the brick building at *Sap Chum Phra* in the Me Sak Valley or the vestiges at *Müang Pukhio Kao* (N. W. of Korat) to be ascribed to the influence of primitive Khmer art. (From Prof. Cœdès' researches we must now consider all these vestiges, as well as the cult objects and decorative débris found at Phrapatom, Suphan, Uthong and Pong Tük as belonging to the so-called Dyāvati school, which again was an offspring of the Gupta art and thus independent of the primitive Khmer art. See Prof. Cœdès' "The excavations at Pong Tük and their importance for the ancient history of Siam" in "Journal of the Siam Society" vol. XXI, part 3.)

The inscribed stelae at *Khan Thevada*, Pakmün and *Tham Prasat*, not far from the first named (both of which were found by me in 1917) and *Tham Pet Thong* in southern Nakon Rajasima belong, however, by their inscriptions undoubtedly to the primitive art period.

The author further mentions the inscriptions found in Chandaburi at *Khao Rang*, *Khao Noi*, in *Wat Sabab* and *Wat Thong Thua* at Muang Khlung and the ruins at *Phamniep* as belonging to the primitive art period (date of inscriptions, VIIth century A. D.). (But were the inhabitants of Chandaburi of that time at all Khmer? Prof. Cœdès in his interesting paper, published in *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* vol. XVIII, doubts it. They may have been a mixture of the negrito like Chong and South Indian settlers for all we know.)

In the Trocadéro and Guimet Museums in Paris, the museums in Lyon, Brest, Saigon, Hanoi and Musée Albert Sarraut in Phnom Penh are found a rich collection of fragments of sculptures and statues hailing from the primitive Khmer art period.

After this indeed fascinating tale of the geographical distribution of the monuments belonging to the primitive art period, M. Parmentier next takes up the study of the different phases of this school of art.

**Decoration and sculpture:**—Sober in comparison with the exuberance of the classic period. The large naked surfaces, which in our eyes give serenity and rest and which are so characteristic of the Indo-Javanese art, are also found in the sanctuaries of Sambor Prei Kuk. The profiles of buildings, on the other hand, are meagre and nearly straight. The flower and leaf motif is much used as decoration on the pilasters and the basement of the sanctuaries. The representation of the bird with outstretched wings is also met with here, as in ancient India. The artist of the primitive period has given to us remarkable studies both of flowers, human beings and animals, but they all but serve him for decorative purposes. Stylization of animals and men abound as decorative means. Men with elephant's head who ride on their own trunks, garlands which terminate in nāgas, or horses or men, is a favoured theme. The Makara is treated in a multitude of forms, with or without paws, transformed into a fish with feet or ending in a garland.

There are lions with parrot's and goose's heads which again terminate in an elephant's trunk! And again winged lions, prancing horses or full breasted Kinnarīs which support the floating heavenly palaces; everything is permissible to the fertile imagination of our Khmer artist.

It is, however, to be noted that the Nāga does not yet play that important rôle which it has in the later classic age. The bas-relief of the primitive art finds its highest expression in the many finely carved lintels. One may say that the lintel is the glory of the Khmer art.

The statues, or often the rather mutilated remains of same, so far found, give one the impression that in this regard the primitive art was superior to that of the classic age. Take for instance that wonderful upper body of a man with broken arms, which comes from Phnom Da (now in Bruxelles), where one admires the beautifully carved head with its fine regular features and whig like head dress. The fine images of Vishnu and Harihara, as well as the grotesque plaster heads, have already been mentioned. The Harihara from Prasat Andet is so far the chef d'œuvre found; every detail is here worked out correctly and harmoniously, even to the

musculature of its back. None of the statues belonging to the classic age can be compared to this remarkable human like image. The few female statues found are often of an exquisite charm, the boldly prominent breasts, the slender waists and the beautiful pose of the hips proclaim a fine artistic conception on the part of their makers.

What information do the monuments of the primitive art give us with regard to the customs, beliefs and civilization of the Khmer population living at that time? The answer is :—Very little, due to the absence of those grand sculptures, which, in the classic art, show us the details of contemporary life. This is so much the more regrettable as our knowledge of the first civilized inhabitants of Cambodia was already very meagre. The physical types depicted in the statuary and sculptures, show straight noses, large eyebrows and well developed mustachios on the part of the men; slender waists and voluminous breasts are characteristic of the women, recalling the types known from the sculptures found at Barhut and Gandhāra. The Harihara from Prasat Andet represents a very European type, quite unlike the broad and heavy features so common in the images belonging to the classic age. The cause of this superiority on the part of the artists of the primitive art period, may be that they only had to execute that ideal which had been handed down to them from the original source (the Gupta art in India) which in matter of time just preceded or was, partly, contemporary to the period covered by the primitive art in Cambodia.

With regard to dress the woman most likely went naked to the waist, like the Balinese women still do to day. (And as the Lāo girls of Lap Lae and Luang Prabang did up till quite recent times). The lower part of their body was covered by a flowing sarong, tied in a knot in front; sometimes a scarf was thrown loosely over the breasts. The use of the scarf was, however, of more recent origin and it is never depicted on the statues. Their hair was made up in a tall chignon (not unlike that of the Lāo and Mon women of to day); a single female statue wears an aigrette in front of her chignon.

The male dress of those times consisted of the Indian languti rather than the later Cambodian sampot (phanung). The male headdress was a full chignon, encased in a kind of helmet or mukuta (crown), sometimes rising in tiers, or a cylindrical fez or mithra. The images of Vishnu and Harihara

generally wear the latter kind of headdress, while S'iva has the tall chignon of an ascetic.

Some of the strange head-dresses worn by the personages occupying the representations of edifices in reduced scale, which deck the walls of the sanctuaries in Sambor Prei Kuk, resemble very much those one sees in Tjandi Djago and Panataram in Java or the Āpsaras of Po Klaung Garai (a famous temple) in Champā. Some of the male figures wear head dresses akin to the antique Phrygian bonnet, while among the female ones are seen both the mithra and the mukuṭa. The mithras often remind one of the beautiful ones found among the Royal Chām treasure at Tinh-mi or, to take a more modern similitude, the embroidered caps of the Indian chettys. (The mithra or tall bonnet is also seen on the images from Vieng Sra and Petchaburi.)

The author concludes that the origin of these kinds of head-dresses is to be sought in the art of the Pallavas, which no doubt is quite admissible. The cylindrical head-dress, common during this period, Vth-VIIIth century A. D., in Cambodia, appears two centuries later in Champā, Siam and the Malay Peninsula, but it is not met with on the bas-reliefs of Angkor. The primitive art does not reveal anything about the common habitations, means of transport and very little about arms or musical instruments. (The plaster covers of the sanctuaries of this period could perhaps have given us valuable information in this regard but they have nearly everywhere disappeared.)

With regard to religion it seems that Brahmanism predominated. Harihara, this curious dual divinity, representing Vishṇu and S'iva in one, was especially honoured. (Does this cult not represent an endeavour towards monotheism?) Representations of S'iva and the Linga are few and only six statues of Vishṇu have been found. Buddhism is only represented by some rare images and very few inscriptions.

Of the lingas one represents, no doubt, one of the oldest pieces found in Cambodia, it is very realistic and its accompanying divinity, an elegant goddess is wearing a mithra. This piece, together with two other lingas, also very antique, come from the now Annamitized part of S. E. Cambodia.

The few octogonal towers at Sambor Prei Kuk were probably devoted to the cult of the linga. A cave at Phnom Da contained several lingas, one

of which was of an enormous size. S'iva was often represented as a Dvārapāla (Door guardian), armed with the tris'ūla and the elephant hook; some representations of S'iva show the god in a resting position. Umā, S'iva's S'akti (female counter part), the only goddess about whose identity we are certain, is characterized by the demon buffalo's head and horns on which she tramples. She is four-armed and wears a mithra, two of her hands hold shield and sword. Only four or five of her images have been found.

Ganes'a, S'iva's son and god of wisdom, is represented by a few statues, he is sitting and has elephant's feet, like the statues found in Java. (See the Ganes'a in the Bangkok Museum which hails from the same island). A large group of smiling goddesses may be attributed to Lakshmī, goddess of love, but the loss of their arms prevent any exact identification.

Harihara, of which seven images have been found, always wears a fez or mithra as head-dress. Sometimes the right half part of the image represents S'iva, the left Vishṇu. The part representing S'iva is then clothed in a tiger skin while Vishṇu's portion wears the sampot. Even S'iva's third eye is sometimes depicted. In S'iva's hands is the trident, while Vishṇu's hold the chakra and the club. (A propos of this third eye of S'iva it will be recalled that some extinct species of saurians *had* a third-frontal-eye!) Rare statues or heads of fourfaced Brahmās, hailing from the primitive art period, have also been found, but none of Indra, who is only seen on the sculptures. On the other hand there has been found an image representing either Sūrya, the sun god, or perhaps it is Skanda, S'iva's second son and god of war. A human figure with a horse's head represents probably Hayagrīva. We also know a number of unidentified statues, especially of women, many of which are of quite a fine workmanship. The sculpture, representing the nine divinities, is also known from this art period. Of the images of the Buddha, a single one may be anterior to the VIIth century. One is struck by their uniform style and sober costumes; some of the images are of stone, others of bronze, and they all were a smiling and benevolent expression. (To the student in Siam, who only knows these images from the illustrations in the present work, they present much likeness with those found in Phrapatom and Lopburi, which in style must be classed under the Gupta art. Note here especially the arrangement of the bhikshu's robe with the oval hem almost reaching the feet,

an identical arrangement found in the images of Siam and Cambodia of that period, so for instance the headless Buddha in the Lopburi Museum and the, also headless, Buddha from Vat Romlok, now in the Albert Sarraut Museum.) The images of the Buddha sitting à l'Européenne recall very much those found in Java (as well as at Phrapatom); such images are rarely met with in the classic age.

Bronze images representing Boddhisattvas, such as an Avalokites'vara and a Maitreya Buddha, have also been found. Another Avalokites'vara has four and still another even eight arms. In front of the latter's chignon is placed a small image of Amitābha Buddha. A very interesting find is also a matrix for ex-votos, where the figures are all female!

The cult took place inside the sanctuaries in whose center the somasūtra with its basin for receiving the lustral water, which, after the rite had been completed, ran out behind the image through a beak shaped conduit. In the center of the somasūtra was a circular hole into which was put into position the, generally standing, image of the god.

Peshanīs, (Siamese :—Hin bot) stone slabs with rollers for preparing a kind of powder with which the holy image was smeared have also been found at the sanctuaries. (It will be recalled that the show cases in the rotunda of Phrapatomchedi contain a great number of these peshanīs.)

We now come to the question of what relations had the primitive art of the Khmer with the architecture of same kind found elsewhere?

To be able to answer this question we must examine the historical data so far collected. The first Khmer king, who has left inscriptions, is Bhavavarman I, the liberator of the Khmer from the yoke of the Funan in the second half of the VIth century A. D. During the interval of the reigns of Jayavarman I (667 A. D.) and Jayavarman II (802 A.D.) there is a long silence, which can only be explained by the occurrence of civil wars and fighting against Malay invaders (the latter were probably expeditions sent by the emperor of S'rīvijaya to whom Cambodia most likely and for quite a time had to pay tribute as a vassal state). With king Jayavarman II, however, begins the great golden age of Cambodia. So far no date permits us to fix the construction of any of the buildings, mentioned in this work, prior to Bhavavarman I or, say about 550 A. D. The art dominating the period between Bhavavarman I and Jayavarman II belongs to the so-called

primitive art and with Indravarman (877-899 A.D.) we find a completely new and entirely different style of architecture, as well as in sculpture and statues. The problem is what kind of style did Jayavarman II adopt after having liberated and unified the empire.

We have seen that the primitive art excelled in isolated buildings and that only few monuments admit a complicated plan (like those of the classic age). Another feature was the curious manner of construction, the interior of the cella or tower rising up in a dihedral or pyramidal shaped tract which did not at all correspond to the exterior form of the sanctuary. The superstructure was, as mentioned elsewhere in this review, covered by the arched roof of bricks with perpendicular gables, the back of the roof being provided with a spiked ridge. The only entrance to the sanctuary was on the narrow side of it and generally faced east. There were two types of decoration, one having its wall surfaces ornamented with representations of edifices in reduced scale, but otherwise sparsely decorated, another kind of sanctuary provided with blind doors had a more prodigious decoration. The latter type alone seems to have influenced the so-called art of Indravarman.

Primitive Khmer and primitive Châm art seem to be very little related to each other but, on the other hand, the cubistic Châm art (a successor of primitive Châm art) does resemble primitive Khmer art, as well as the Indo-Javanese style ; still there are important differences which separate them. In its details primitive Khmer art shows strange resemblances to the art of the Pallavas ; first of all in the decoration of the sub-basements, in the lintels (type 1) and in the head-dresses of the principal divinities, though the Indian art possesses elements quite unknown to primitive Khmer art. The later Hindu art, however, shows in the style of its gopuras a striking resemblance to the primitive Khmer temples, and here we find again the arched roof with the gable and spiked ridge. In conclusion M. Parmentier is of the opinion that none of the different styles cited above are in close family with each other, but the undeniable strong resemblance in many of their details go to show that they were all derived from a common form which has now been lost. A finger point in the right direction may be the edifices in reduced scale, the *vimāna*'s or floating palaces, already mentioned several times in this review. The study of these peculiar edifices, especially of those which deck the panels of the walls of the Sam-

bor Prei Kuk sanctuaries has resulted in the fixing of two distinct types:—One, of rectangular shape, is a single storey building with two axial projections and a cradle shaped arched roof with two gables. It is richly decorated, the center of it being occupied by figures, often whole scenes are depicted, including sitting or standing persons wearing tall head-dresses. It is to be noted that the lintel is never met with in these representations of reduced edifices. In the second type the tympan is either occupied by human figures or, in some cases, is quite empty.

What is the interpretation of these representations of edifices? Often they look like were they floating in the air with birds and winged monsters flying round them. Their style too is not identical with that of the sanctuaries of the primitive art, being single storeyed, while the latter always have several storeys. M. Parmentier explains that they give us the primitive aspect of those buildings whose final evolution has been revealed to us in the brick sanctuaries of the VI-VIIIth century. The next question is:—What country and what civilization was the home of the constructions represented in the edifices in reduced scale? The reply is difficult. No doubt other still more primitive buildings, constructed of light materials and built in the manner of the primitive sanctuaries in India, preceded our "reduced edifices". They may have been made of wood and earth mixed with chopped straw as the Arabian terraces revealed in the bas-reliefs of Borobudur. A curious feature of the edifices in reduced scale is the presence of windows which in the later styles are unknown (with exception of the galleries where they often are blind). The type of figures appearing on the tympan of the edifices are not met with in the primitive art, nor in Indravarman's art, but they reappear in the classic art style of Bayon. Possibly the Bayon school of artists borrowed them from, what M. Parmentier hereafter calls, the *Pre-Khmer art*.

A comparison between pre-Chām, pre-Indo-Javanese and even with pre-Pallava art gives negative results. However, elements common with the Indian substratum are found in the representations of the three animals:—the lion's head in the center flanked by two makaras which, further developed, has given the Pallava art its Tiruachi, the Khmer their lintel and the Chām their apsis. The idea of employing plaster or stucco, wherewith to cover the brick walls in the primitive art period, is a direct

heritage from the most primitive stage when the walls were made of a skeleton of beams filled out with a conglomerate which did not present a sufficiently even surface for the artists to work on. Remains of such buildings are still found in the dry climate of Russian Turkestan.

The result of these studies on primitive Khmer art shows that during the VIIth century A. D. a uniform civilization extended over a region at least equal in size to that of classic Cambodia, even extending farther to the east and west, but less well established in the territory directly situated to the north and south of the Dangrek chain and in the Mün-Chi valleys. This civilization was brought to old Cambodia (or Fu-nan) by the sea way, ascending the rivers and penetrating far into the interior of the country. The present Cochin-China was at that time an integral part of this domain of civilization. Certain sculptures found in Malaya and Siam testify to the near relations between the colonizers of the different parts of Indo-China.

The Cambodian empire, at its height of glory and power, showed rather a lack of interest in the southern part of the country and from the IXth century we see those building activities, which resulted in such splendid stone monuments as those of Angkor, turning more and more to the N. W. part of the empire, between Tonle Sap and the Dangrek chain. The lack of interest in the Southern parts may have given rise to that famous division of the country in the "Tchen-la of water" and "Tchen-la of land" met with in the Chinese chronicles dealing with ancient Cambodia.

This transfer of the center of the Khmer civilization coincides with a marked change in the religious beliefs and ceremonies. The cult of Hariharā disappears before the more gross S'ivaism, the costumes of the divinities and the customs of the people changing at the same time. M. Parmentier finishes by saying:—"This examination of the primitive Khmer art may have helped to lift a corner of that veil which hides the secret of the transmission of the Hindu thought to the Extreme Orient and shows how incredibly it has been transformed by the coming into contact with the different peoples, which were enlightened by its rays." With which words the reader no doubt will agree.

And herewith let this interesting and illuminating work be recommended most heartily to all ardent students of the past of Cambodia, a past which, to a great extent, is also the past of Siam.

It is needless to say that a thorough examination and classification of all the Cambodian monuments still existing in this country would give

us valuable data both for the study of the art and architecture of ancient Siam and for the general history of Further India. May the means for this much needed work soon be available!

In the case that such work were taken up, the classification of the Khmer monuments would naturally follow the lines drawn up by M. Parmentier and it might be useful here, in a few words, to indicate the area where monuments belonging to the so-called primitive art are most likely to be found. As it is a well known fact now that the Khmer did not become dominant in the Menam Valley before ca. 1000 A. D. it follows that there will be next to no chances of finding any such monuments in that area. Moreover as the buildings and vestiges dating back to the time of the primitive art, so far found in the circles of Chantaburi, Prachin and the Sak Valley, do not belong to that school of art our search will be exclusively confined to North Eastern Siam.

As will be seen from the survey made by M. Parmentier this view is also shared by him. From my own researches, undertaken during a sojourn extending over more than 10 years, I am, however, inclined to believe that the number of sanctuaries belonging to the primitive art, is larger than that given by the learned author. Besides those already mentioned by M. Parmentier I should thus add the following :—

**Changvad Ubon.**

**Dong Pu Ta** (Complément p. 7), where the standing image, as far as memory serves, belongs to the primitive art.

**Ku Muang** (Complément p. 11), a brick sanctuary with door frames of sandstone.

**Changvad Khukhan.**

**Prasat Thong Lang** (Complément p. 12-13), three brick towers standing on a terrace of sandstone. Though the lintels represent a modification of type III these towers may perhaps date back to the primitive art period.

**Prasat Nong Pen** (Complément p. 13), a monument analogous to the above mentioned.

**Ban Prasat Jo'r** (Complément p. 17), a brick sanctuary with door frames of sandstone, may also belong to the primitive art period.

**Changvad Surin.**

**Prasat Ban Sanom** (Complément p. 17), a brick tower with door frames of sandstone.

**Prasat Sre O** (Complément p. 18), a brick tower.

**Huei Singh** (Complément p. 18), already referred to in my commentaries on p. 14 of this review under Sambor.

**Changvad Kalasin**

**Ban Muang Sung Yang** (Complément p. 24), a brick sanctuary with stone sculptures.

**Changvad Mahasarakam.**

**Ku Kho Kat** (Complément p. 24). The brick tower found here seems to belong to the primitive art too.

This additional note is only given here with the reservation of a later correction as, at the time, when I wrote my "Complément à l'Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge pour les quatre provinces du Siam Oriental" (1919) I was, of course, not yet conversant with the theories now put forward in such a convincing manner by M. Parmentier.

Bangkok, the 1st June 1928.

ERIK SEIDENFADEN.

