

# Factors that Led to the Change of the Khmer Capitals from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The change of location for a capital is never an easy decision. It most often involves massive mobilization efforts, expense, and time. The deciding factors for capital re-location are what most often interest historians. Cambodia, which has undergone several capital location changes, is by no means an exception to this consideration, and provides fertile ground for examination and contribution to historiography.

A powerful political unity whose territory included present-day Cambodia and the southern Mekong Delta is the Chinese-named “Funan,” which had existed before and emerged later within Cambodia.<sup>2</sup> Its principal city, Oc-Eo (also known as a famous port in Southeast Asia), was established on the coast, because Funan drew its strength from regional and international maritime trade. Funan was a central location of the trade route between India, China, the Mediterranean, and Southeast Asia. The state of Funan and its trade activities have been dated back to around the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century. The belief in the link to trade activities resulted from the evidence of material cultures, which were discovered at the site during an excavation in the 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

This trade was primarily based among other factors on agricultural and forest resources provided by the hinterland. The “Funanese” irrigation system was built to take advantage of the tributaries within the delta for agricultural production, and they were subsequently transformed into a network of channels to increase transportation, communication, and inland trade depots. Oc-Eo was therefore connected to another city further north, quite to the interior, but with river navigation access, namely the city of Angkor Borei located in a region that was one of the birthplaces of Khmer art and creative culture.<sup>4</sup>

According to Bernard-Philippe Groslier, the end of that state or rather its partial merger in the

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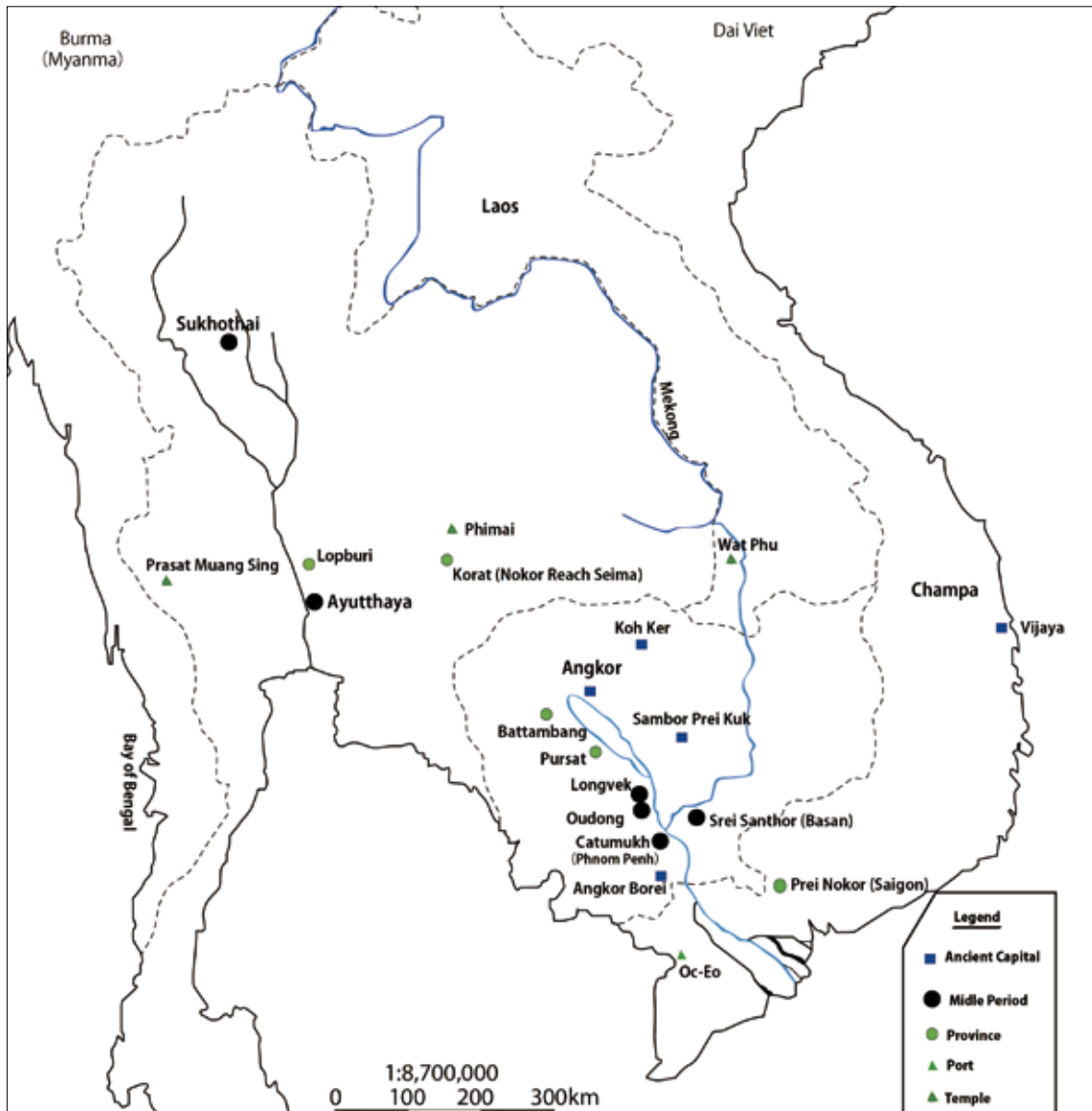
\* For the enhancement of my knowledge in Japan, I owe an immense debt of thanks to my Professor Yoshiaki Ishizawa, for his immeasurable advice and support. Heartfelt thanks are due to Professor Cyril Veliath, Professor Masako Marui, and Professor Ang Choulean for their value advice, comments and editing my thesis, and help over the years. I would also like to thank to my seniors and friends for their help with regard to my thesis in commenting and accompanying me on-site field research. They are: Yukitsuku Tabata, Kong Vireak, Siyon Sophearith, Kim Samnang and others.

1 This article is a revising of a part of the author’s Ph. D dissertation, which submitted to the Sophia University in 2013.

2 We estimate that it emerged as a state worthy of the name around the beginning of the Christian era. The name “Funan” first appears in the Chinese annals of the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. For a critique of the date from the Chinese original sources, see Ishizawa 2007b: 195-209, and for details regarding the question of Funan, see Cœdès 1968 and Vickery 1998.

3 For the first comprehensive archaeological research on the city Oc-Eo, see Malleret 1960.

4 The recent researches on the city of Angkor Borei, see Stark 2001.



Map 1 General Map of the Indochinese Peninsula and Khmer Capitals in the Middle Period

history of Cambodia, occurred around 550 AD. As a determining factor, he noted the correlation to an interruption of the great maritime trade flow across the Bay of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, according to Chinese texts, the new powerful state of Chenla<sup>6</sup> conquered Funan around the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and hereafter the name of Funan was not mentioned anymore in the Chinese texts.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, one of the great Khmer centers of power was in Sambor Prei Kuk. It was only however one of the capitals, and certainly the most brilliant of the time. Other power centers were scattered throughout the Khmer territory, in the present day provinces of Takeo, Prei Veng,

5 Groslier 1985-86: 37.

6 The name Chenla (or “Zhenla, or Tchenla” as it is sometimes written by researchers) appears only in Chinese texts, but we do not find any word in the Khmer or Sanskrit inscriptions corresponding to the Chinese pronunciation “t’sien-làp,” Cœdès 1968: 65. The Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan who visited Angkor in 1296-97 again used the name Chenla. See, Zhou Daguan 1967.

and the area north of the Dangrek mountain range, in northeast (Isan) of present-day Thailand.<sup>7</sup> This indicates that the Khmer power was not yet a consolidated, centralized power.

It was not until the early 9<sup>th</sup> century that a “Khmer Empire,” or a powerful centralized Khmer kingdom appeared in what is now known as the Angkor region. The capital was finally established and centered in the Angkor region from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The extent of time that the capital remained in the same location is extraordinary, considering the fact of the earlier centuries of instability and re-location. Those involved with the historiography of the region mark the “Angkorian Period” as coming to an end at around the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, and followed by the “Middle Period.” However, the capital did not officially transfer to the south until almost a century later. It conventionally served as the capital of the Angkor region for almost five and a half centuries, and this means the end of the Angkorian period does not match with the end or re-location of the Angkor capital city.

The following is a chronological summary of the history of Cambodia:

- Ancient period: lasted from the 6<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century
  - Pre-Angkorian period: 6<sup>th</sup> century – 9<sup>th</sup> century
  - Angkorian period: 9<sup>th</sup> century – 14<sup>th</sup> century
- Middle period: 14<sup>th</sup> century – 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Modern period: 19<sup>th</sup> century – present day

Chronological History and Royal Capitals:

PERIOD	CAPITAL
Period “Funanese” AD 1 <sup>st</sup> century – mid-6 <sup>th</sup> century	Oc-Eo (Mekong delta) in relationship with Angkor Borei (South of Cambodia)
Pre-Angkorian (6 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> century)	Many capitals and cities reflected the fact that a Khmer power had not yet become centralized, but were divided in political unities. The most glamorous was Angkor Borei (especially in the 6 <sup>th</sup> century) and Sambor Prei Kuk (especially in the 7 <sup>th</sup> century)
Angkorian (9 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> century)	In general “Angkor” [Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kulen), Hariharalaya (Roluos), Yashodhara] with a brief period in Chok Gargyar (Koh Ker)
14 <sup>th</sup> – mid-15 <sup>th</sup> century	Angkor
Mid-15 <sup>th</sup> century – mid-16 <sup>th</sup> century	Srei Santhor (Basan), Chaktomukh (Phnom Penh), and Srei Santhor
Mid-16 <sup>th</sup> century – 1594 AD	Longvek, with a royal sojourn at Angkor
17 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Oudong

From the table above, we see that in the Angkorian era, the Khmer capital and power exercised by a centralized government became located physically and functionally in the same area. It is indeed in 802 AD that king Jayavarman II (802-834) completed the unification of the country under his rule. According to the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom, the king proclaimed himself a universal monarch (or Chakravatin) and declared Cambodia’s independence vis-à-vis Java by instituting a new religious cult, namely Devarāja<sup>8</sup> on Phnom Kulen, represented by a sacred Linga. He stayed

<sup>7</sup> For this was the limit of Khmer occupation in the northeast of present-day Thailand at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (during the reign of Bhavavarman and Citrasena), cf., Groslier 1980: 40.

<sup>8</sup> The term was translated as “king of the gods,” and it appears in later inscriptions written in Khmer as “kamraten jagat ta rāja”.

at the city on the top of Phnom Kulen. Then, he founded many villages in the Angkor region, and the Royal Palace where he actual resided was in Hariharalaya, present day Roluos.<sup>9</sup> He himself and his two successors, namely king Jayavarman III (834-877) and king Indravarman I (877-889), lived there. This is the first Angkorian capital of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, king Yashovarman I (889-910ca) moved the capital somewhat to the northwest, namely Yashodhara. It is not a change in capital, strictly speaking. Yashovarman I who made the transfer had in fact founded in Roluos a temple of Lolei, dedicated to his parents and maternal grandparents. This displacement of a very short distance was in response to a double motivation, namely colonizing new lands nearby and appropriating a space more suited to symbolically mark the capital, with Phnom Bakheng as the center. The king had also built a roadway embankment joining the Baray of Roluos to Phnom Bakheng, showing that there is no break between Roluos and Yashodhara.

Worthy of note is the fact that the period of Angkor itself, at least from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, was parallel to the great buildings constructed in the great Angkor region alongside marvelous sites such as Banteay Chhmar in the west and Bakan<sup>10</sup>, Wat Phu in the east, and Preah Vihear, Phimai, Phnom Rung in the north. In the southern areas, Angkorian buildings are much less impressive in size, meaning that different corresponding communities were demographically smaller. Throughout the history of Angkor, from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was only one change of capital, and it was moreover momentary, obviously due to internal political reasons (probably infighting along with the change of reigns). Between 928 and 944 AD king Jayavarman IV relocated the capital of Angkor, Yashodhara, to about 80 km northeast to Koh Ker (the ancient capital named Chok Gargyar). However from 944, Yashodhara, which had never been actually abandoned, became once again the capital city. Overall we see that surprisingly there was stability despite the relocation of the capital.

It should be noted that the “Angkorian Period” began when the capital “Angkor” became the cultural and political center. While the era ended and gave way to a new “Middle Period,” the capital remained the same for almost another century and a half. There are several criteria that need to be considered for researchers to determine the change of a “period”, which amounts roughly to one concept, namely the change of a civilization. All the factors contributed to a significant drop in the Cambodia’s political power, leading to a gradual change in land use and a decline in agricultural production. However, a determining factor seems to have been the rise of the Sukhothai (later Siam), which challenged Cambodia’s political and military domination, and in particular its domination over the religious orthodoxy, where Brahmins hitherto exerted their influences. It was during the “Middle Period”, namely from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, that Cambodia adopted Theravada Buddhism that came from Siam, giving rise to changes in Cambodia’s philosophical and religious orientations. That is to say, it gradually transformed the beliefs, practices, and culture of Cambodia, and with it the civilization and daily life of the people as well.

Added to this is the very important fact of the continued incursions made by the Siamese in Angkor. As to the issue of whether there was a final debacle in the war in Cambodia, leading the

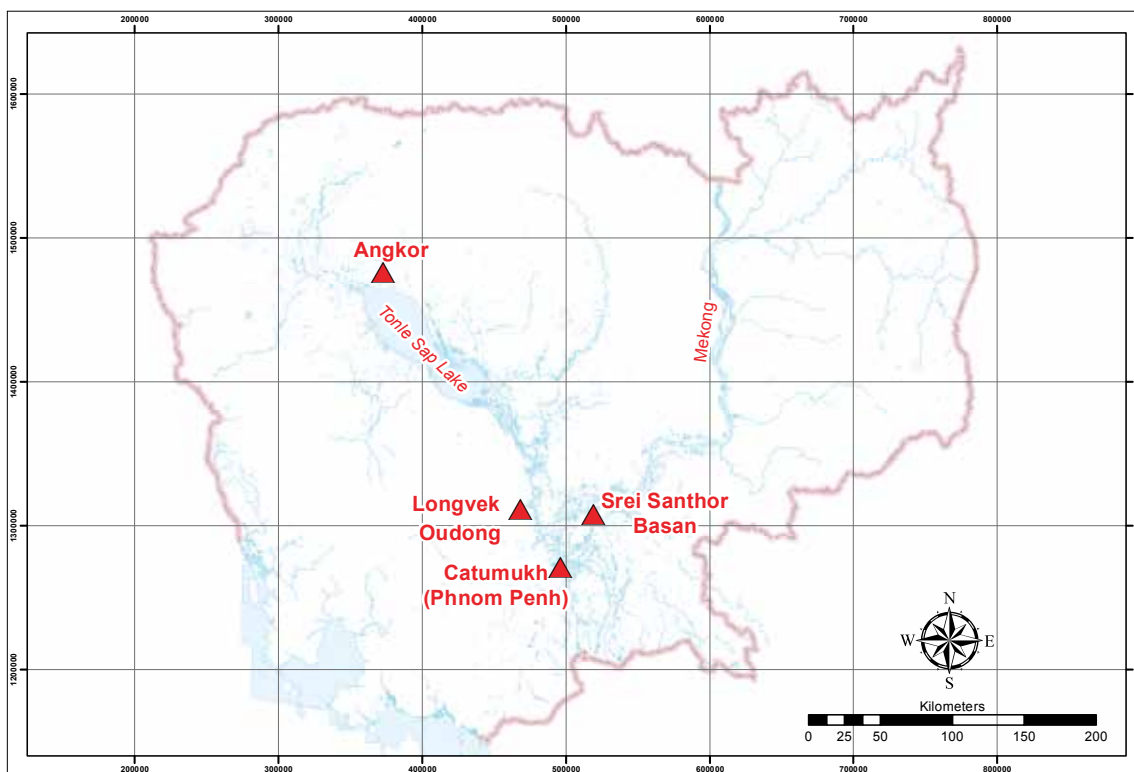
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9 Stele of Sdok Kok Thom, K. 235, face 3, lines 64-80. Cf. Cœdès et Dupont 1943-46.

10 It was called “Preah Khan (de Kampong Svay) by French scholars.”

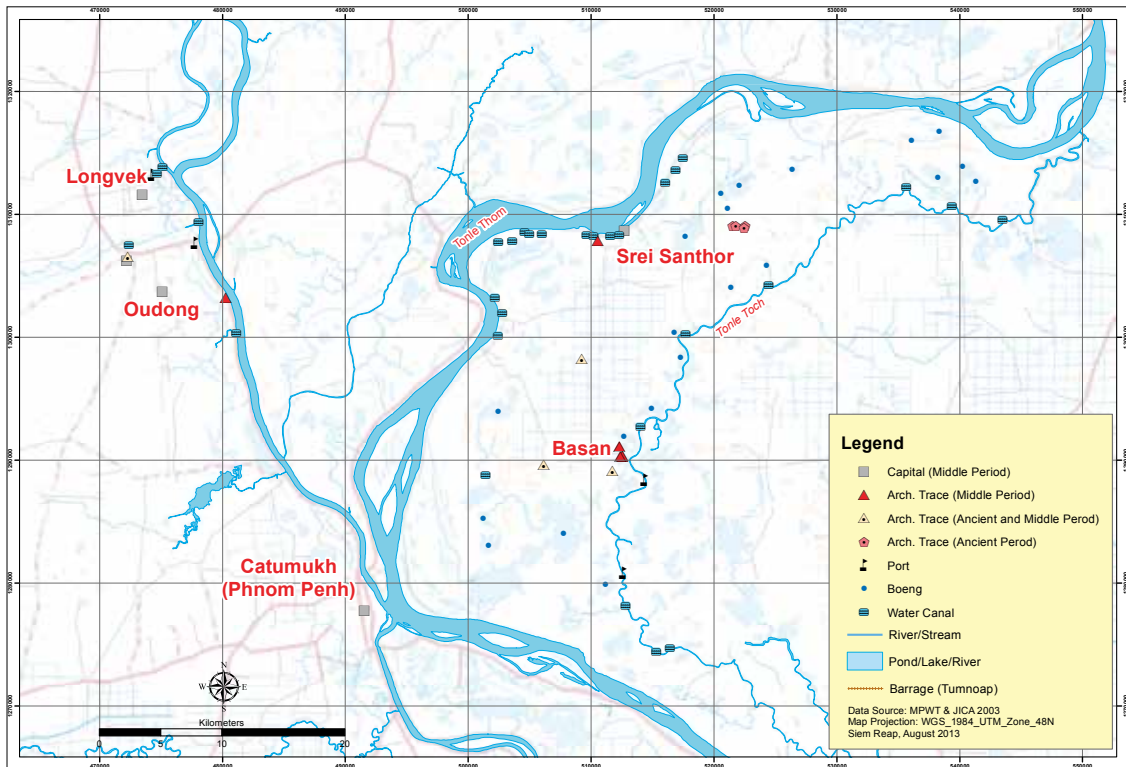
inhabitants to flee from their prestigious capital if the conflict was not yet settled, there are indeed proponents of this study; but there are others who see rather economic reasons. M. Vickery, in his Ph. D dissertation in 1978, hypothesized that the purpose of shifting the capital to a southward region was a more convenient place in order to have access to the sea and to seek an opportunity for trading with China and for involvement in the international maritime trade.<sup>11</sup> In addition to earlier hypotheses, this study attempts to consider other factors that can contribute to the reconstruction, among which agriculture is a main factor. It could be suggested that the movement to the south was primarily motivated by a desire to seek “new” land for agricultural production, and to acquire the places best suited to regional and international trade.

Moreover, the present work tries to explore all possible reasons, not only of this the first and decisive transfer of the capital leading to the final act of abandonment of Angkor, but also the successive changes in the capital after Angkor. This work also is limited to the establishment of the capital at Oudong, early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It will not deal with the transfer of the capital in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Phnom Penh, as the reasons are too well known and have already been studied. In brief, this work focuses on the changes of the capitals in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: Srei Santhor, Longvek, and Oudong (Map 2, 3). The fact of these being cities in themselves, that is to say “urban areas,” one assumes that they possess certain elements worthy of investigation, but they will also not be the objects of our study. Rather, the land management, geography, and regional situation are what attract attention and are the focus of the study. Indeed, there is interest



Map 2 Angkor and Khmer Capitals in the Middle Period

<sup>11</sup> Vickery 1978: 509-522.



Map 3 General Map of Srei Santhor (Basan), Longvek and Oudong

in the potential (or lack of potential) of agriculture and commerce, which is a key to assessing the complexity in factors that led to the abandonment of one capital in favor of another. It then takes on newer nuances, and careful handling of the political motivations that influence the decisions.

This study is principally based on information gained primary source material from the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, in the Khmer Rājabañsāvātār, with reference to a variety of external sources. On the other hand the Rājabañsāvātār, which is the main source for setting Cambodian history in the middle period, needs support from inscriptions that provide more accurate information. For the interpretation we use our background knowledge of Khmer language and society in order to examine these texts, which are rich in metaphor and literary allusions. This is to see to what extent the data can be used to substantiate interpretations of what was happening in this historical period. Also, reflections from the perspective of other disciplines, such as ethno-archaeology, are also applied for conducting a field research to discover examples of oral traditions, archaeological remains, and geographical aspects. The argument on the Khmer mode of culture is based on the fundamental nature of land use and water control in the Khmer way of thinking.

### Note on the Transliteration

Since this study is concerned with the written names of places and names of persons, we basically use the system of transliteration. The system of transliteration has been adopted to reproduce in roman letters, commentaries written in Khmer, Pali, and Sanskrit. The system of transliteration adopted for the Khmer scripts was created by Saveros Pou, who concluded the former works begun by G. Cœdès and F. Martini on this system of writing. The system of transliteration written in this

thesis adopted: Saveros Pou, “Note sure Translittération du Cambodge”, *BEFEO*, LV, 1969, pp. 163-169, and the late revised in the Dictionnaire Vieux Khmer-Français-Anglais, *Cedoreck*, Paris, 1992.

For the often used and well-known names of persons and places, we use the phonetic transcription. For example, the place name “Phnom Penh”, which is written in transliteration as Bḥnaṃ Beñ; and the person name of king Ang Chan, which is written as Aṅg Cand.

## I Sources and Critique

The history of Cambodia from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was a difficult period that remains much debated as an academic research topic, and it hence requires a through re-examination as to its historical consideration. As such, these stages in Cambodian history can together be thought of as a “critical period”. The existing murkiness is due to the relative lack of documentation compared to what is available from the ancient periods (namely pre-Angkor and Angkor). Great monuments like those built in the Angkor period were no longer being constructed, Sanskrit epigraphy had become obsolete, especially beginning from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and even Khmer inscriptions were absent until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. So far, the reconstruction of history from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is locked within a sort of unsolved mystery, since local sources prove inadequate and references from foreign sources are of little use.

It has been the lack of source material coupled with a general shortage in research that has limited access to subjects of interest from this period. For a long time in the study of Cambodian history, scholars had focused primarily on the ancient period, namely from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and mainly through archaeology as the jewel of Khmer civilization, particularly the monuments of Angkor. Such monuments reveal reams of information from which one may study the evolution of arts and architecture, conduct systematic analyses of archaeological finds, and obtain the chronologies that help to place the succession of kings through analyses of stone inscriptions (in Sanskrit and Khmer).

Without doubt, the ancient period epitomizes some of the most significant milestones and highpoints of Khmer civilization. Methodologically, studying these things is made easy by the organization of evidence from these periods in political, religious, linguistic, geographical, and historical contexts. During the French protectorate, the scholars who were involved in refining early academic query on Khmer history, spent most of their time studying the many primary works rooted in the ancient periods. Consequentially, less time was spent on the full breadth of the region’s history, since the main focus was to study everything connected to the fascinating original pre-Angkor and Angkor sources, and all their own firsthand knowledge. As Bernard-Philippe Groslier noted: “The bulk of this documentation – epigraphic and plastic – belongs essentially to the classical age of Khmer culture, the pre-Angkor and Angkor periods, that is to say from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Before – and for that matter after – we know practically nothing.”<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, an in-depth

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12 Groslier 1960: 3, 1997b: 9.

investigation or systematic study of the period from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries has yet to be seriously attempted, except for a handful of very limited researches that have been done and conducted on the topics.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, research and scholarship concerning the middle period is insufficient, and this is not only because of the shortage in documents, but also due to a lack of organized strategy in conducting archaeological field research.<sup>14</sup> An authentic primary document known as the “Royal Chronicle or Rājabaṅsāvātār” provides us with some valuable insight, but it is a bewildering source of information on the middle period. Its dependability is problematic since it was copied and revised many times. In some cases, the chronicle may distort the names and titles of the kings and dates, it seems to be in lack of source evidence, and the amount of research on these topics is very limited. Hence, the topic remains a challenge to reconstruct several missing parts that are essential to gaining a better view of Cambodian history in its entirety.

As mentioned above, the principal sources for the reconstruction of the history of the ancient period such the inscriptions and monuments, were either less in numbers or had ended. Therefore, the reconstruction of Cambodian history in the “middle period” needs to be drawn from other available primary sources, namely the Rājabaṅsāvātār or Rapā Ksatr (Royal Chronicle), the IMA (Inscriptions Modernnes d’Angkor), and other inscriptions of the middle period.<sup>15</sup>

Generally these types of source materials provide not only historical events, but also socio-political and cultural pictures of the periods. Even though the writings are not necessarily very objective in presenting history or society as it really was, yet they offer so much more in terms of records that can be cross-referenced to help fill in the gaps. Though these written materials are linked through those who read and study them in the present period, they nevertheless require interpretation in order to make sense of the past. So it can be said that these writings are reconstructions of important events, and thus are subject to limitations in terms of fairness and constraints of historical methodology.

In this study, Rājabaṅsāvātār is being utilized as the primary source for comparison with the inscriptions from the middle period. The secondary sources being considered are records from the European, Chinese, Japanese, and other neighboring countries. Those sources are also used in order to fill in the points lacking in the Cambodian source materials.

## 1. Rājabaṅsāvātār or Rapā Ksatr (Royal Chronicle)

This set of manuscripts, written in the Khmer language on *slek rit* or *krāmṅ*<sup>16</sup> or modern paper

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13 We see that the works of for example art history and iconography were studied by M. Giteau 1975; philological and linguistic study has been conducted by Pou Saveros (in various articles of the *EFEO* and *JA*); and many articles and books related to the historical event and chronology of the kings were published by Mak Phoeun, Khin Sok, and Michael Vickery.

14 Recently, some institutions have begun in conducting the archaeological excavation at Longvek area. We expect the new discovery will be unlocked this critical period.

15 There are at least about 100 inscriptions that were inscribed not only in the Angkor region, but also in the whole country of Cambodia; See, Pou 1989, 2001.

16 *slek rit* are the manuscripts written on palm leaves bound together in bundles. *Rit* (in Sanskrit *rikta*) is also shown in the old Khmer language on the ancient texts in form *rikta* or *rit*, See., S. Pou 1992. And *krāmṅ* is the



(European paper), described Cambodian history from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> There are many different chronicles written from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but these records are available today only in the form of copies written in Khmer and Latin transcriptions, that are now preserved in the Bibliothèque National de France (BNF) and the library of the École Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO),<sup>18</sup> the Société Asiatique library, the Missions-Étrangère library, and a few texts are preserved in the library of the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh.

There are two Khmer terms used when referring to the Royal Chronicle texts: *rājabaṅsāvatār* or *rapā Ksatr*.

- *rājabaṅsāvatār* can be divided as follows: *rāja* = “king or royal”; *baṅsa*, *vamça* = “ancestry, lines”; and *avatāra* = “descendant, incarnation”, or *sāvatār* is derived from *baṅsāvatār* or *sauvatār* which means “history”. In the Cambodian language, the roots combine into *rājabaṅsāvatār*, meaning “history of the royal ancestries” or “history of the kings.”

- *rapā ksatr* is also called *rapāl ksatr* or *lpār ksatr* (derivative of *rapā ksatr*) or sometimes *ampāl ksatr*, “all the kings”. It can be divided as follows: *rapā* = *jumbuor*, *juor*, “lines” and *ksatr* = “prince, king”; therefore, *rapā ksatr* or *rioen rapā ksatr* would mean “history of the lines or ancestries of the kings.”

However, the meaning of *rājabaṅsāvatār* or *rapā ksatr* can be translated as “annals” or “royal chronicles,” writings that are related to the history of the kings. The royal chronicle texts mention the chronology of the kings, liaisons with the neighboring countries, scandals within the royal families, etc.

In fact, those types of documents had already existed since the Angkor period. As the evidence of this, in the inscription of Preah Vihear (K. 380) that is inscribed on the doorframe of the south gate dated AD 1037-38, mention is made about members of a particular family as being the guardians to serve the annals of the family of Kambu, and other documents of the royal services. The inscription also provides the name of those annals as being “Vraḥ Likhita or sacred (or saint) writings, which are inscribed on the *vraḥ rikta*.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned above, the Royal Chronicle is the manuscript used as the setting for the historical framework of Cambodian history in the middle period. However, to study about Cambodian history in this period, one cannot use the Royal Chronicle alone without any support from other sources. There are difficulties in charting the chronology as of the dates and the names of the kings, because all the chronicles began with different dates in history, especially from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the beginning

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manuscripts written on strips of stiff paper pleated in the form of an accordion.

17 Some historians have tried to divide the royal chronicle texts, of which remain many versions, into two groups: (1) Legendary parts: here the texts contain the complete history of Cambodia from the original legends until the reign of Norodom (1860-1904). These stories are mentioned in history as legends, as for example, the legend of Praḥ Ketumālā; (2) Historical parts: Here the texts began around the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They mention the first reign of a monarchy as a “historic event,” the reign of king Nibbānapad (1346-1351). The legendary portion is not considered as true history, so the historians normally do not use them for reconstructing Cambodian history.

18 Au Chhieng 1953, Mao Reasey 1996.

19 Cœdès 1954: 261.

of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Besides, the texts were recopied and revised many times from generation to generation, and were kept in different places. So the chronologies of the dates shown are sometime conflicting.

The royal chronicle texts generally mention the chronology of kings, relations with the neighboring countries, conflicts within the royal families, etc. Normally, the texts do not mention much about the society. It is said that most of the texts were created and arranged to become historical records, but sometimes left out unsuccessful kings. However, the chronicles do describe actual events. For example: they mentioned Longvek's fall caused by the betrayal of the king, the loss of cooperation among royal family members and mandarins, and about how the king changed his religion to Islam when he fell in love with an Islamic woman, and how he thereupon ordered all his ministers to dress according to Islamic custom, an order that contradicted the religion of country at that time, which was steeped in Buddhism. Another example was when the king married the daughter of a Vietnamese king, an act that led to the great loss of Khmer territory in the 17<sup>th</sup> century of Prei Nokor (present day Saigon, Vietnam), etc.

On the other hand, Cambodian Royal Chronicle texts explain that generally it was the contemporary rulers who determined the chronicles of past rulers, and the deeds of the past rulers formed the basis for judging whether they could be viewed as great kings or condemned as incompetent and evil. However, sometimes in Cambodian history the chronicles selectively omitted facts deemed unworthy of the royal family, and also certain other events concerning the kingdom such as serious military defeats, misjudgments, or scandals. All such things tended to be underplayed or ignored all together.

If one compares these chronicle texts with the stone inscriptions, they are obviously diverse. The inscriptions were in stone and provide the exact place and date, and each event was carved with one inscription. The characteristic of the inscriptions differed from the chronicles, because the inscriptions were not copied from one to another like the chronicles that were made in numerous volumes and kept in different pagodas. Therefore the inscriptions provide more exact dates and have more value than the royal chronicles, because no one can change the contents of the inscriptions.

The oldest fragmented chronicle, dating to 1796, was also translated into the Thai language. This fragment was sent to the king of Thailand by the Khmer king Ang Eng, and was later translated into French by G. Cœdès.<sup>20</sup> There are also many other chronicles that have been frequently used and are considered useful by Cambodian historians focused on this period. Examples of these are the chronicle of Ukañā Vañsā Sārbejñ Nañ<sup>21</sup> (or Nañ in short), the chronicle of Samṭec Cauvā Vāṃṇi Juon<sup>22</sup> (or VJ in short), the chronicle of Vatt Kok Kak (KK)<sup>23</sup>, and the Ampāl Ksatr.<sup>24</sup> The chronicle of Nañ is complete and is the oldest one, written in 1818. This chronicle was ordered by king Ang

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20 Cœdès 1918 : 15-28.

21 Ukañā Vañsā Sārbejñ was the second highest-ranking functionary of the Legal Order after Ukañā Yamarāj (a grand judge of the kingdom). See, Garnier 1871: 336-385 (especially the note, p. 340).

22 The minister of the royal palace, named Juon.

23 This chronicle was written in 1869 by order of King Narattam (Norodom). The dates of this chronicle are very different in Nañ and Juon.

24 The text in the Latin transcription provides the list of the Khmer kings from 1346 to 1860. It was copied by Col de Monteiro, secretary of king Narattam (Norodom), in 1866. Cf., Au Chhieng, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3.

Chan II (1797-1835) in order to rewrite Khmer history. This chronicle later was copied and revised into at least 4 versions: They were registered into inventoried codes such as DL/2 (in the library of EFEO), B39/5 and B39/12/B (in the library of Société Asiatique de Paris).<sup>25</sup> Another version of Nan's chronicle was copied and revised by prince Nopparat (son of the king Ang Duong) in 1878, and it is called the "Chronicle of Nopparat." This version was registered as P/48 (II), and it is also available in the library of the EFEO in Paris.

The two oldest fragments, dated 1796 and 1808 for example, were sent to Thailand by the Khmer king, and were eventually studied by M. Vickery.<sup>26</sup> One of these entitled "The Fragment of Ang Eng", is a short chronicle that only described the period extending from the reign of Param Nibbānapad (or Mahā Nibbānapad) in 1346-1351, to the reign Bañā Yāt (Paramarājā I) in 1434-1438. Professor Mak Phœun and Professor Khin Sok studied some other fragments. These were translated into French with cross-references to different versions and commentaries, and published by the l'École Française d'Extrême Orient. According to their publications, Professor Mak Phœun and Professor Khin Sok had spent a tremendous amount of time and made great efforts in researching the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, for over 25 years. The study of the Cambodian Royal Chronicles is obviously no small task, and requires a great deal of scholarship to properly organize and interpret the valuable information to be found within.

For the purpose of this study, we have chosen chronicles, namely "The Chronicle of Vāṃṇ Juon or in short VJ", which is a complete version. We use this chronicle as a base source by comparing it with other chronicles to fill in the gaps in information, especially the chronicle of Nan from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> We have also relied on the use of sources written by former researchers. The chronicle of VJ is available in the library of Sophia University, in Tokyo, Japan (this version was copied from the Thai library by Professor Yoneo Ishii). This chronicle was republished as a new translation from the original version of Samṭec Cauvā Vāṃṇ Juon, written in 1934.

#### Previous Studies of the Rājabaṅsāvātār or Royal Chronicles:

French researchers had already studied the Cambodian Royal Chronicles since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the study was either elaborated for the translations, or it followed the Khmer version. The chronicle aroused interest and was translated for the first time by Doudart de Lagrée, and F. Garnier (*Chronique Royal du Cambodge*, in *Journal Asiatique*, 1871-72), later published his work.

In 1880, other chronicles were translated and published by E. Aymonier, such as for example the articles: "Chronique des Anciens Rois du Cambodge", *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, Tome 2, 1880; and "Chronique Royal du Cambodge", in *Revue de Cochinchine*, 1880. Then, in 1883, J. Moura published two volumes of *Royaume du Cambodge* from translations of different versions

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25 For the description of each chronicle., See, Mak Phœun 1995. For the inventory registrations, see, Au Chhieng, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-4.

26 Vickery 1978.

27 The events and dates of Nan's chronicle are more accurate than other chronicles at the beginning of this historical period, and are closer to the information found in Chinese sources. See, Wolters 1966: 44-89.

of the royal chronicles. In 1904, E. Aymonier published again his study on the royal chronicles, by comparing them with Chinese chronicles and the European sources from that period.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from French researchers, the history of Cambodia had been a topic of interest also to the Cambodian researchers, from the 1930s until the 1970s. Among those works, Tran Ngia wrote the study of Cambodian history through chronicles.<sup>29</sup> There are two volumes in the Khmer language that were published. The first volume published in 1973 concerned *Khmer History* from “the origin of the Khmer until the abandonment of Angkor,” and the second volume that was published in 1974, began from “the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century until Cambodia came under the French protectorate in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.”

Professor Mak Phoeun and Professor Khin Sok studied many fragments of the Cambodian Royal Chronicles. These were translated into French along with comparisons with different versions and introductions, in the publications of the l'École Française d'Extrême Orient. According to their publications, Professor Mak Phoeun and Professor Khin Sok had spent more than 25 years researching the Cambodian Royal Chronicles. Hence, researching the Cambodian Royal Chronicles is a task, where one cannot do the research in its entirety within a brief space of time, in order to accurately write the history of Cambodia in the middle period.

## 2. Middle Period Inscriptions

As mentioned above, the characteristics of the inscriptions differed from the manuscripts of the royal chronicles, because the inscriptions were not copied from one to another like the royal chronicles that were created into numerous volumes and preserved in different pagodas. Therefore, the inscriptions provide more exact dates than the royal chronicles.

There are around 100 stone inscriptions that belong to the middle period, but the most important ones are the inscriptions at Angkor Wat. All these inscriptions were translated and studied by E. Aymonier, who provided the name “IMA, Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor.” There are 40 inscriptions in Angkor Wat and these are named by means of registered numbers “from IMA 1 to IMA 40.”

Most of the inscriptions here are called *satyapranidhān*, “wishes of the truth.” The inscriptions never mention about selling or buying land or about the disputes, but rather describe the merits (*phalānisans*) of Buddhist belief. For example the inscriptions state, “I would like to respect the truth, I wish to live until Braḥ Seāmetri,<sup>30</sup> I wish to reach Nipean.”<sup>31</sup> Another example is when the king's child was born, and he took him to worship at Braḥ Bisṇulok (Angkor Wat) to become a monk and prayed saying, “I wish to get merit and to reach Nipean.”

For example, one inscription in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1623 śaka, or 1701 A.D) was inscribed by *uk ṅā Jayanand*, who was a minister at that time.<sup>32</sup>

28 Aymonier 1904.

29 Tran Ngia, *History of Cambodia*, original version was published during 1973-74, and republished by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, in 2003 (in Khmer).

30 There are five Buddhas in Theravada Buddhism (Prah Sasna): (1) Kok Santho (2) Neak Mono (3) Kas Buo (4) Samana Kodom (5) Prah Sri Ariya Metri (in Thai Prah Seāmetri), who is not yet born.

31 The word Nipean is the pronunciation in Khmer of the Pali ‘Nirvana’.

32 Pou 1975: 283-353.

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20. sūm dan braḥ śrīāryy mān paribā cren krās kraī

Jā rray bān' hīmn nai l-a prabaiy toy prāthnā

“I ask for rebirth in the time of Preah Srei-Arya, to possess the rest of countless, the hundreds and the thousands of servers, and I also will deserve virtue and beauty.”

These kinds of inscriptions are called “votive inscriptions,” and they never speak of the fights with Champa or give praise to the kings and so on, like the ancient inscriptions. The kings considered themselves the same as ordinary people, and their wishes were the same as well, because the middle period society was somehow different from the Angkor period. Therefore the inscriptions are also different in the “substance of contents,” even though the inscriptions were engraved on the same materials. In summary, the inscriptions of the middle period all had the same purpose of wishing for merit.

However, the inscriptions of the middle period not only mention religion but also provide information concerning the names of kings, dates, and certain events. Particularly from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodian history provides clearer accounts when compared to previous centuries, with the help of inscriptions and other European sources.<sup>33</sup> Although, each chronicle provides information about different dates,<sup>34</sup> they can be compared with the inscriptions. As mentioned above, the writers of the inscriptions of the middle period had no incentive to re-write history, so the dates and the names of kings can support the chronicles. For instance, there are many events related to king Ang Chan's<sup>35</sup> activities with regard to the rehabilitation of the country and his struggles with the neighboring countries.<sup>36</sup> In two inscriptions on the reliefs of Angkor Wat, mention is made about his work of restoration of the northeast gallery of Angkor Wat, that had begun in 1546 and was finished in 1564, and also some other areas in Angkor.<sup>37</sup>

The inscription IMA 2 of the queen mother Mahākalyāṇavattī Śrīsujātā, written in 1499 *śaka* (AD. 1577), describes the honor given to her king son who had a great devotion towards restoring the ancient temple of Braḥ Bisṇulok<sup>38</sup> (Angkor Wat). The inscription also mentions her participation in the restoration works by providing the Buddha images for honoring in the gallery of Bakan.<sup>39</sup> As recorded in the inscription of IMA 3, king Saṭṭhā<sup>40</sup> intended to restore the wall enclosure of Braḥ Bisṇulok by keeping to the traditional way from this period of his reign. The inscription also

33 A European came to Cambodia around 1550, named Diogo de Couto. He mentioned the king of Camboja and the rediscovery of the ancient city of Angkor.

34 For example the chronicle Nañ (P48, II) and the chronicle Vāṃṇ Juon or Veang Thiounn (1933) give different dates, particularly regarding the death of king Ang Chan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The chronicle of Nañ mentioned that king's death in 1502 (p. 56) and Vāṃṇ Juon in 1566 or 1567 (p. 202). Most of researchers noted that Vāṃṇ Juon's chronicle is more accurate than other fragments or versions.

35 Ang Chan was the first king who reoccupied the ancient city of Angkor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since Angkor had been abandoned as a capital city in 1431.

36 Groslier 1958: 76.

37 Cœdès 1962: 235-248.

38 The posthumous name of king Sūryavarman II who built Angkor Wat in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

39 Pou 1970: 99-124.

40 Saṭṭhā (Paramarājā IV) was suggested by S. Pou in IMA 3 as king Jayajetṭhā. The discussion of the name Saṭṭhā and Jayajetṭhā, see., Mak Phœun 1995: p. 34.

mentioned the birth of the king's son in 1501 *śaka* (AD. 1579). The king took his son to present him to the Buddha and other divinities at Braḥ Bisṅulok.

The result of our discussion centers on the fact that other sources as well as cross-referential analysis can allow new informational routes of study from which to open new windows into Cambodian History. The evaluation and careful consideration of the chronicles, inscriptions, other primary sources and secondary scholarship in gaining access to the understudied “Middle Period,” will help to clarify its position as a transitional feature of Cambodian history.

## II

### A General Consideration of the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Abandonment of Angkor as Capital

This chapter attempts to explore the historical contexts before the relocation of the capital from Angkor to a southward region. It starts by paying attention to the political, military, and social situation in Angkor, especially in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This chapter also aims at considering all possible factors that lie behind the course that led to the abandonment of Angkor in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 1. Political and Military Setting

##### 1.1. Relation with Cham

Prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Khmer had been characterized in part by the longstanding historical struggle with the Cham over many centuries. During the entire 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Khmer and Cham frequently had wars with each other. In the first quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, king Sūryavarman II, a founder of Angkor Wat, who ascended the throne in the year 1113,<sup>41</sup> engaged in a military campaign both to the east and west. He was a very great and powerful king who led the armies himself and never lost a war. It is said that he was a great conqueror who extended his territory and made it larger than the previous kings.<sup>42</sup> He marched his armies further to the east against the Dai Viêt as well as Champa. In the year 1145, he defeated the Cham king Jaya Indravarman III who disappeared during the war, either because he was captured as a prisoner or died in the fighting.<sup>43</sup> The battle between the Khmer and Cham in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century was narrated in detail by G. Maspéro in his classical book of “Le Royaume de Champa”, particularly in chapter VII, entitled “Luttes avec les Khmèrs.”<sup>44</sup>

After the year 1145, no inscription mentions the activities of king Sūryavarman II.<sup>45</sup> Under his

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41 The date 1113 for the coronation of king Sūryavarman II is a concrete date, evidenced from the inscription of Wat Phu (K. 366) which was recovered by the Thai Prince Damrong at Ubon in 1930, and brought to the National Museum of Bangkok, see Cœdès 1929: 297-330, esp. 303-304.

42 Cœdès 1968: 159.

43 Maspéro 1928: 153-156.

44 Maspéro 1928: 153-169.

45 Cœdès 1929: 304. The historians, especially G. Cœdès suggested extending the reign of king Sūryavarman II till the year 1150, since his mysterious death has not yet been confirmed and the Khmer occupation of northern Champa lasted until 1149. Moreover, for some reason Cœdès asserted that in the year 1150, king Sūryavarman

reign the Khmer territory, which is recorded in the History of the Sung, expanded to the border of Champa in the north, to the sea in the east, to the kingdom of Pagan (Burma) in the west, and to the Malay Peninsula in the south.<sup>46</sup> After the obscure death of king Sūryavarman II until the beginning of the reign of king Jayavarman VII, there are few sources mentioning the successive reigns of king Dharāṇindravarman II and king Yaśovarman II. During these two reigns, especially under the reign of king Yaśovarman II, Cambodia was struggling with Champa.

The attack on Cambodia by Champa was in the reign of the Cham King Jaya Indravarman IV. The Cham king made the expedition to Cambodia in the year 1177, and was successful in conquering and burning down the capital of Angkor. The Chinese guided this successful attempt. They were skillful in using warships to come upstream over the Mekong River to the Tonle Sap River, and they reached the Khmer capital of Angkor. This incident was recorded in the Chinese account “the king of Chan-ch’eng attacked the capital of Chenla without warning with a powerful fleet, pillaged it, and put the king of Chenla to death without listening to a single peace proposal.”<sup>47</sup> The sack of Angkor by Cham in 1177 has been marked as a catastrophic event in Cambodian history.

This culminated in the occupation of Angkor for 4 years from, (1177-1181) AD, followed by a retaliation in the form of conquest and occupation of Champa led by the Khmer king Jayavarman VII. At the time the Chams invaded Cambodia, the future Khmer king Jayavarman VII was at Vijaya (Champa) for his military campaign. He was late in returning to help king Yaśovarman II,<sup>48</sup> who was stripped of power by the usurper Tribhuvanātiya. There is very little information related to the situation of Cambodia after the incident of the Cham attack on Angkor in 1177, until the year 1181. Based on the inscription of Phimeanakas K. 485, most of historians and especially M. Vickery suggested that king Jayavarman VII was for sometimes still in Vijaya (Champa), until he claimed the throne in the year 1181.<sup>49</sup> According to the inscription of Ta Prohm, king Jayavarman VII killed the Cham king, probably Jaya Indravarman IV, “...Prince Sri Jayavarman who found himself in the law, killed in combat the enemy chief with a hundred million arrows to protect the land”.<sup>50</sup>

In 1193, king Jayavarman VII sent an army to Champa, and King of Champa Sūryavarman was defeated. Later, king Sūryavarman sent an envoy to China and paid tribute to Dai Viêt while asking for help and protection for his kingdom. The situation of the kingdom of Champa was not good during this period, and for about 20 years Champa seems to have been under the domination of Cambodia. The Cambodian army remained in Champa and waged war many times with the Annamites. Maspéro stated that until sometime before 1218, Cambodian troops seem to have withdrawn from Champa.<sup>51</sup> Cambodia gave the throne of Vijaya to the Cham prince who had been

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II undertook another campaign against Tonking. That is to say, at least his reign lasted to this date. Cf., Cœdès 1968: 162.

46 Cœdès 1968: 161.

47 Ibit., p. 166.

48 King Yaśovarman II was a second cousin of king Jayavarman VII, and he succeeded to the throne after king Dharāṇindravarman II (father of king Jayavarman VII).

49 Vickery 2005: 60.

50 Cœdès 1992: 19, 39.

51 Maspéro 1928: 166-168.

raised by king Jayavarman VII.<sup>52</sup>

In Cambodia, king Jayavarman VII reigned several years in peace and made his kingdom prosperous. Many inscriptions of the Khmer and Cham often mention him as a great warrior, and many great temples, 102 hospitals, 121 rest houses, roads, and so on were constructed all over the kingdom during his reign. After 1218, there was no clear information about king Jayavarman VII, and so historians have suggested that he probably died in the years 1218 or 1220. Who his successor to the throne was is very unclear, since he had at least four sons, and after his mysterious death the Khmer kingdom seems to have gradually started to decline.

There is, however, no indication that during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the Chams could have posed any considerable threat to the Khmer Kingdom. The Chams themselves were frequently engaged and under threat of attack by the Vietnamese. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there was some information though it was not very clear, related to the relationship between Cambodia and Champa, mentioned in the Cham inscription of Bien Hoa. The inscription is in a ruined condition and so it is difficult to know the exact date, but it mentions the fact of frequent wars between Khmer and Cham.<sup>53</sup> From the same inscription of Bein Hoa, G. Cœdès asserted that in 1421 the Cham king commemorated his victory over Khmer, and he suggested that Bañā Yāt, who was one of the last kings of Angkor, governed Cambodia at that time.<sup>54</sup>

This event of the war between Champa and Cambodia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is also described in the Chinese source *Ming Shi-lu*. The source states, “in 1414 Ming imperial orders were dispatched to Cambodia and Champa requiring them to cease fighting, to look to their own affairs and develop friendly relations.”<sup>55</sup>

## 1.2. Relation with Siam (Thai)

Before the 13<sup>th</sup> century relations with Siam did not feature very much, since this new state was established just in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Khmer Kingdom had faced trouble with the Siamese. The kingdom of Siam, which is present-day Thailand, was first at Sukhothai, and then the political center was moved to Ayutthaya. The first Kingdom of Sukhothai existed from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, though the exact date of its establishment is not known. G. Cœdès suggested that it was probably in 1257 or 1259, and the founder of the kingdom was probably king Sri Indraditya.<sup>56</sup> Later this new powerful kingdom quickly extended its territory by conquering the neighboring countries as far as the Malay Peninsula, until its formation as the Kingdom of Siam. The information related to the foundation of Sukhothai was based on a very famous inscription of king Rāma Gamheñ (or Rama Khamheng), which was written in 1292 AD.<sup>57</sup>

At the time this new kingdom became powerful, the Khmer Kingdom had gradually started its

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52 Cœdès 1968: 181.

53 Aymonier 1891: 84-85.

54 Cœdès 1968: 238.

55 Wade 2005: 24.

56 Cœdès 1921: 1-11.

57 Cœdès 1924. See also, Griswold A. B and Prasert ōa Nagara 1971: 179-228.



decline, though in the eye of the Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan who visited Cambodia in 1296-97, the kingdom was still prosperous.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, it is of value to take in the regional context of the time. At the time Zhou Daguan came and stayed in Angkor, despite the magnificence that was the Angkorian Empire, the kingdom was showing signs of burgeoning decline. If Zhou Daguan spoke of wars with the Siamese, it was because Sukhothai, the first Thai kingdom, was rising rapidly in power at that time.

When the Khmer empire became weak, the new kingdom had an opportunity to extend its territory. That is to say, when the old kingdom declined the new one became strong. As the record of Zhou Daguan mentions, the war between Cambodia and Siam occurred many times. According to the Royal Chronicles, before king Bañā Yāt moved the capital city to the south, Angkor was attacked at least twice by Ayutthaya.<sup>59</sup> However, the Siamese occupations of Angkor were short-lived. The dates of the wars are very different in the chronicles of Nañ and VJ. According to the chronicle of VJ, in the year 1352 (1353 according to Nañ), the Siamese king Rāmādhpati (Ayutthaya) invaded and captured Angkor city. The chronicle of VJ declares that during the period spanning (1353-1354), the Khmer royal family escaped separately from the city to different areas.

Since then, the three of Khmer provinces (Nagar Rāja Semā, Pascim Purī, and Cand Purī)<sup>60</sup> were controlled by Ayutthaya. In 1354 the Khmer king reclaimed power, but wars between the Khmer and Siam were still swinging back and forth. According to the chronicle of Nañ, the Siamese invaded again in 1372, until Angkor was conquered in 1373 (VJ states that the invasion was in 1416, which differs 33 years from what is stated by Nañ). For a short time in 1373, the Khmer king Bañā Yāt pushed the Siamese back from Angkor (VJ states that king Bañā Yāt<sup>61</sup> took the city back in 1417 at 21 years of age). According to these two chronicles, the dates of the invasions from Siam were 1351-2/1353 and 1372/1416. In 1384, he ordered the ministers to conduct his coronation ceremony, and was crowned and took the name of king Paramarājā I. He stayed at Angkor until 1388, and then decided to move the capital to Basan and then Phnom Penh (Catumukh).<sup>62</sup>

The date 1431 that most of scholars marked as the event that punctuated the fall of Angkor after a final battle against Ayutthaya, is only mentioned in the Annals of Ayutthaya “Hluong Prasoat.”<sup>63</sup> However, the Khmer chronicles do not mention this date as the time when the city of Angkor was attacked and taken by Ayutthaya. The Cambodian Chronicles only state that the king Bañā Yāt decided to move the capital city to Basan (Srei Santhor), because the city was invaded very often by

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58 Zhou Daguan 2006.

59 The foundation of Ayutthaya was about the period 1350-1351. See, Frankfurter 1909: 1-21. There were frequent wars between Siam and Khmer, and the Siamese in particular attacked Angkor before 1430, See, Briggs 1948-49: 3-33.

60 In Thai, the name was Korat for Nagar Rāja Semā, Prachin for Pascim Purī and Chantabun for Cand Purī.

61 King Bañā Yāt was born in 1397, the son of Srī Sūriyovañs (VJ). He was born before his father acquired the throne.

62 According to Chinese sources, there was a king named Po-pi-ya who was a king in Angkor. The name of the King Po-pi-ya has been suggested as the name of king Bañā Yāt. The Chinese reports mention that in the year 1404 king Po-pi-ya was still in Angkor. So the date is about 16 years different from the year mentioned in Nañ, but it is quite different from what is in VJ; For the Chinese source, see, Wolters 1966.

63 The year 1431 is also mentioned in the Annals of Ayutthaya “Hluong Prasoat,” as the date when Ayutthaya assaulted and sacked Angkor. Cf., Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Ayutthaya, many of the Khmer people were taken to Ayutthaya, and some important provinces of the west were occupied by Siam. The Khmer people became weakened and oppressed by the effects of war, and the Khmer king thought that if he still stayed at Angkor, he and his people might face continued threats and domination. Therefore, the supposed date of 1431 as being the time when Angkor was sacked by Ayutthaya seems to have been influenced by the Siamese chronicle.

Although, the setting of the date 1431 is confusing when one compares the Khmer chronicles and Siamese chronicles, the date has been conventionally used as the date of the shifting of the capital southwards. As mentioned above, the relentless Siamese invasion is one of the main factors for the decline, and it led to the relocation of the capital to the south. Most of the historians and other researchers in the different fields of study of Cambodia accept this theory. The Siamese sacking Angkor in the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries is marked as a cataclysmic event in Cambodian.

### **1.3. The Last Kings who Reigned at Angkor**

According to the chronicle of Nañ, king Param Nibbānapad reigned from the year 1346 to 1351. The chronicles tell us very little about king Nibbānapad, and there has been little information with regard to the last king Jayavarmādiparameśvara (or Jayavarma-Parameśvara) mentioned in the last ancient inscriptions of Angkor.<sup>64</sup> Consistent with the legend, it is said that the king Nibbānapad was a son of Ta Trasak Pha-em (Sweet cucumber), who was a usurper of the Angkorian throne.<sup>65</sup> This legendary account was mentioned in the chronicle of VJ. However, it is said that the history itself is very antiquated and was most likely subject to historical exaggeration. The creator of this legend most likely fabricated the report during the time when Angkor became powerless, or during a strain in Angkorian supremacy.

The history of Cambodia between the reigns of king Jayavarmādiparameśvara and king Nibbānapad is very unclear. We know very little about this transitional period from descriptions in the chronicle of Laos. The chronicle of Laos states, “in circa 1320-1330 a king of Laos Phoa Phi Fa was driven out of Mounng Swa (future Luang Prabang) by his father because of his loose living. Phao Phi Fa with his young son Fa Ngum sought refuge in Cambodia. And in circa 1338, Fa Ngum at the age of sixteenth was married to the Khmer princess Nang Keo Lot Fa. Then the king of Cambodia placed Phi Fa and Fa Ngum at the head of an army for the purpose of imposing the right to the throne of Muong Swa.”<sup>66</sup> However, we have not found any of these stories from the chronicle of Laos in the Cambodian chronicles or other inscriptions.

According to the chronicle of Nañ, king Nibbānapad reigned over Angkor until his death after five years on the throne. The same chronicle listed some 6 Khmer kings and 4 Siamese kings who had reigned at Angkor, until the capital city was moved to the south by king Bañā Yāt, first to Basan (Srei Santhor), then to Catumukh (Phnom Penh).<sup>67</sup> The chronicle of VJ listed 8 Khmer kings,

64 Cœdès 1942: 187.

65 The legend is not only known in Cambodia, but it is mentioned in the Burmese chronicles. In the Burmese chronicles it is mentioned that a farmer became a king after he killed a king named “Thy” when the king ate his cucumber. His name is Nyaung-u Sawrahan who reigned from 931-964 AD, Clef. Pe Maung and Luce 1923: 58.

66 René de Berval 1959: 34.

67 Names of the kings listed in Nañ’s chronicle: Khmer Kings were Baram Nibbānapad, Siddhāna(rājā), Param

including king Sūriyodai and Baram Sokarāj.

## 2. Emergence of Theravada Buddhism

The pillars of the Angkor civilization were supported by the religious beliefs of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. The monarchs being regarded as god-kings were able to command the dedication and loyalty of subjects to serve the throne as a divine obligation. The introduction of Theravada Buddhism in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the Khmers had turned out to hurt sublimely the basic foundation of the Angkor Empire in the long run. The adoption of Theravada Buddhism had also a great effect on the language, literature, art and architect, and the political systems guiding the society. It is said that it also had a great effect on the society, because it was not only a question of belief, but also something that rules the lives of people. So far, the change of religion in favor of Theravada Buddhism was a very profound change, as it marks the end of Brahmanic culture and Mahayana Sanskrit. In this regard, let us take a look at the inscriptions.

Early in the 14<sup>th</sup> century came an end to the Sanskrit epigraphy and the first Pali inscription appeared, that is the inscription of Kok Svay Chek.<sup>68</sup> Here, the ending of the one and the beginning of the other, are not merely a coincidence. That is, it was the tilting of religious ideology in favor of another. Everything fitted together. It was in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century that the last Brahmin temple was built at Angkor, and it was rather small. This temple, which the researchers called Mangalārtha (Ph. 1), was almost an anomaly in Angkor, because the new faith there was already widespread. It is clear that in 1308 AD, a king ordered the erection of a Buddhist monastery. Now the Brahmanic cult clearly became a minority. Certainly there could have been here or there Brahmins who continued their religious tradition and ritual,<sup>69</sup> but it was soon to be totally eclipsed.

It is probably from the 14<sup>th</sup> century that the construction of modest monasteries at Angkor and elsewhere began, and these remain today as the foundations of Vihear (sanctuaries) commonly referred to as “Buddhist terraces.”<sup>70</sup> As a word of caution however we must say that much has been stated with regard to the adoption of Theravada Buddhism, as being due to the urge for expansion and domination of power from the outside. This however is not certain, but Sukhothai was beginning to impose its weight on Angkor, and through it came the Theravada religion.



Ph. 1 Mangalārtha, a last Brahmanic temple in the 13<sup>th</sup> century

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Lambañrājā, Srī Sūriyovaṅs, Param Rāmā, Dhammasokarāj; the 4 Siam kings were Cau Pā Sāt, Cau Pā Āt, Cau Ktuṃpañ Bīsī (Cau Ṭaṃpañ Bīsī), and Indarājā (Bañā Kraek).

68 Cœdès 1936: 14-21.

69 Inscription K. 470, found at Bayon temple, mentions an offering to one or many Brahmins. If the lecture of G. Cœdès is exact, the rite was done in 1327 AD. Cf. Cœdès 1942: 187-189.

70 Marchal 1918: 1-37. Those “terraces” which were made into the foundation of the Vihear, were seen everywhere in the Angkor Thom complex. All the terraces are not dated to the same period.

### 3. Constructions

Buildings are one of the external signs of power and wealth. The decline has also been explained as being due to the fact that during the reign of king Jayavarman VII, too much wealth was used to construct numerous great temples and carry out other programs. As a Buddhist believer, the king had to consecrate offerings to his god and people by building great temples, hospitals, rest houses, and roads. One inscription speaks of his generosity in the following words, “It is the public pain that makes the pain of the kings.”<sup>71</sup>

On the other hand, for the construction of roads during the reign of king Jayavarman VII, the motives were such as to spread out the religion, to control political stability, and to facilitate the transports of products and trade all over the country. However, these roads constructions brought danger to Angkor. First, the people in the remote areas could easily have access to the city. They learned everything about it, and also the smaller states that were under the supervision of the great Angkor, obtained the knowledge necessary to carry out a revolution in order to gain independence. Second, when Angkor became weak, the invaders could easily march with their troops via these road networks, to attack the city. As the result from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Siamese troops repeatedly made war against Angkor.

When Theravada Buddhism had penetrated Khmer society in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, many Buddhist structures were erected on the old Brahmanic temples. For example, many Buddhist Terraces, in Khmer “Khoeun Vihear” (Ph. 2), have been discovered in the Angkor Thom compound, and they were mostly constructed on the ancient temples of the Angkor period. It is suggested that these terraces were probably built from around the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and most of the terraces were reused, by utilizing blocks of stones from the Angkor period temples.

These “Buddhist terraces” show that Angkor was not completely abandoned but there were communities of people still living in Angkor. They suggest that Angkor certainly had no means of raising imposing buildings. Certainly one could argue that Theravada Buddhism does not require such great effort for temple building as in the case of Brahmanic Angkor, but the case of Spean Prasat Keo (Prasat Keo Bridge) is obvious (Ph. 3).<sup>72</sup> For its construction they reused blocks of fallen temples, and this gave rise to two phenomena. Not only were the people far more willing to look for stones, but also, they no more restored monuments that were in disrepair.

Ang Chan, a well-known king in the 16<sup>th</sup> century founded the capital Longvek, but for a time he returned to the ancient capital of Angkor. The reoccupation at Angkor by king Ang Chan was evidenced in the account of a Portuguese named Diogo Do Couto who visited Angkor in the year 1550,<sup>73</sup> and in the two inscriptions completed in the northeast panels of Angkor Wat.<sup>74</sup> After king

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71 Finot 1903: 18-33 (Eps. p. 25, 33)

72 We ignore of the exact period of the construction of the bridge, which crosses the Siem Reap River, prolonging the road of the victory gate of Angkor Thom and contouring Prasat Keo. However the gate is believed to have been built around the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

73 The account of Diogo Do Couto mentions that the king of Camboja (Ang Chan) was in Angkor to hunt elephants and clean the vegetation and small trees that had grown up on the temple. The account also describes the condition of the Angkor temples, which was at that time called Angkor. Cf., Groslier 2006: 52-55.

74 The two inscriptions dated to 1546 and 1564 mention that King Ang Chan completed the two northeastern panels, which were left incomplete by H. M. Mahāvīṣṇuloka (posthumous name of king Sūryavarman II). Cf.,



Ph. 2 Wat Tep Pranam, Angkor Thom, or so-called “Buddhist Terrace”: these represent of the elements of the Theravada Buddhism, which is a sign of changes from the great monuments in Angkor period to these constructions in the middle period.



Ph. 3 Spean Prasat Keo, an old bridge was probably constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century.

Ang Chan came king Saṭṭhā, who also returned to Angkor and restored some parts of Angkor Wat.<sup>75</sup> Other evidences are there, such as the reclining Buddha at Prasat Baphuon,<sup>76</sup> the trace of the Buddha image in the form of meditation at Phnom Bakheng, the inscriptions that were inscribed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>77</sup> and Preah Ang Thom at Phnom Kulen.<sup>78</sup> All these show that the Khmer religious soul and the idea of Khmer greatness remained attached to Angkor. Therefore the question remains: why change the capital?

#### 4. Possibility of Natural Calamity (?)

In living memory, Cambodia is not a land prone to natural catastrophes such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. It has been suggested that Angkor had been abandoned due to a natural calamity, which is certainly not altogether inadmissible. To reject the idea that disasters, serious and repeated in magnitude, could have ever happened, is possible, yet removing such ideas from the realm of possibility would go against any balanced inquiry.

With regard to the heart of the Angkor temples, as in the case of Spean Prasat Keo mentioned above, we have an indication quite palpable that certain very important irregularities occurred. It is precisely at the location of this bridge that the bed of the Siem Reap River collapsed, down to 6

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Cœdès 1962: 235-248.

75 The inscriptions of IMA2 & 3 describe the fact that the king’s mother declared the meritorious act of the restoration of Angkor Wat (Brah̄ Bisṅulok) by her son (king Saṭṭhā). Cf. Pou 1970: 96-126.

76 Although it is unclear regarding the precise date, it is suggested that the statue of the reclining Buddha was probably built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

77 The inscription K465, which is dated to 1583 AD, describes a high ranking religious man who came a long way, far from Cambodia, visited Phnom Bakheng, erected a column “satam” and restored 26 Buddha images, and then he went to Phnom Preah Reach Troap (Oudong), restored 50 Buddha images and a Vihear. Cf., Pou 1989: 20-27. See also, Khin Sok 1978: 271-280.

78 The inscription K715, which dated to 1586 AD, mentions the writer of the inscription named Cau Moha Kosal, who came to Phnom Kulen to repair the broken Buddha image. Cf., Khin Sok 1980a: 133-134. Also another inscription K1006 of Phnom Kulen states that a person who was entitled Brah̄ Rājamuni, came from Ayutthaya to see the statue of the Buddha, and then he came to see the god at Phnom Bakheng. Cf., Vickery 1982: 77-86.

meters below, so that today even the floods of exceptional magnitude on any given year can bring water to the level of its apron. Besides, subsidence has deviated from this very place the course of the river. This is an isolated example, but should be considered as a potential contributing factor, however improbable, yet not impossible. While there is no evidence of any large-scale disaster that could have uprooted the capital, yet if natural causes can achieve this magnitude in this region, they should not be disregarded.

It is not impossible that droughts, or conversely, repeated and consecutive floods, could have had a small part in the decision to abandon the Angkor region, which corresponds anyway to a web of factors. In the article related to the hydraulic city, Groslier suggested that one of the factors for the abandonment of the Angkor region was the collapse of the complex irrigation systems, which caused the construction of the huge Barays (reservoirs) to be stopped.<sup>79</sup> The water way and Baray filled, and blocked the irrigation during the dry seasons. That is to say, the economy of the Angkor Empire that was so far based on agriculture had failed, and both the political and economic power of the Khmer had become weak.

Recently, many researchers have confirmed and extended the theory of Groslier. For instance, in the recent research of the Great Angkor Project of Sydney University, they have speculated that the collapse of the irrigation system was due to climate change from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. If recent scientific research has proved that from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century Cambodia had faced environmental problems due to climate change, then such a collapse is possible, since climate change was also mentioned in the account of the Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan who visited Cambodia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Zhou Daguan saw many lepers in Angkor, and he was told that the leprosy infection was due to climate change.<sup>80</sup> Such climate change occurred not only in Southeast Asia but also in Europe and the Maya kingdom, during the Little Ice Age from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup>

## 5. Summary

Mentioned above are some factors that caused the decline of Angkor and which later led to the abandonment of Angkor, but there are still more hypotheses to be noted. The chief cause of the agricultural decline was also seen in its relationship to the high taxation on the land, which drove it out of cultivation, while another suggests taking a look at the issue of depopulation, but this is not very strong as a cause for the decline.

There is a feeling that researchers must still confront the decline and the abandonment of Angkor, though a current explanation is the collapse of the complex irrigation system and fact that the land was withdrawn from cultivation. It could also have been a direct result of the frequent attacks in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Siamese soldiers. Even though these two factors may prove satisfactory for the majority of scholars, yet we presume that one or two factors could not have led to the decline and abandonment of Angkor.

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79 Groslier 1979: 161-202.

80 Zhou Daguan 2006: 51.

81 For climate change, see Penny 2010: 137.

### III Towards the South and the Choice of Srei Santhor

According to the Cambodian Royal Chronicles and Chinese sources, the shift of capital from Angkor to Srei Santhor in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was not an accident, since it was already well thought out. Besides, the site of Srei Santhor was not a new place of settlement in the middle period, since it had already been occupied since the pre-Angkor and Angkor period. We have seen many archaeological traces from Angkor period, such as ruins that belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, many Chinese ceramics from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were found at the site.<sup>82</sup> It appears as though Srei Santhor was a sacred point, and a place that was linked to the capital of Angkor and other places such as Phnom Penh, to Prei Nokor (present day Saigon, in Vietnam) via Ba Phnom (of the Prei Veng province), and also up to Laos through Mekong River.

Before shifting the capital to Srei Santhor in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the site of Srei Santhor was already occupied by the Khmer kings in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In a Chinese source, namely the *Ming Shi-lu* or the history of Ming dynasty, the name of a Khmer king *Hu-êrn-na* is recorded at *Pa-shan* (Basan) in the Kingdom of *Chên-la* (Cambodia), and Wolters asserts that during that times the king was not at Angkor.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, the Royal Chronicles mention that during the threats to Angkor by the Siamese, Khmer kings had come many times to Basan (Srei Santhor) in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>84</sup>

Although Srei Santhor was not a capital city of the Khmer for a long time in the Middle Period, it was an important place for political and economic base movements from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This area was a place to move in or escape when kings and high-ranking people had trouble in other places. As the chronicles state, when the Siamese sacked Longvek in 1594, king Saṭṭhā escaped to Srei Santhor before fleeing to Laos.

The name Srei Santhor is also mentioned in various foreign records, especially in the Spaniard San Antonio's account of 1604. In that account it is declared, "the city of Sistor (Srei Santhor) is very important and has more than 50,000 inhabitants."<sup>85</sup> Phnom Penh, which is thought to have been a commercial place, had a population of 20,000 households, of which 3,000 were Chinese.<sup>86</sup> C. de Jaque, wrote the "Voyages aux Indes Orientales et Occidentales" that was published in 1840, and it was quoted by Groslier. It describes thus the palace of Srei Santhor: "the pagodas are made of gold or silver, with eyes made of rubies and teeth of diamonds".<sup>87</sup> Based on evidence from these accounts and the size of the population, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Srei Santhor was probably one of the concentrated areas for producing agricultural goods, especially rice products.

Before entering into the next discussion, we should briefly consider some ideas or hypotheses on the shifting of the capital to Srei Santhor (southwards), since it is a very crucial point for this chapter

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82 Kitagawa 2000: 58.

83 Wolters 1966: 47.

84 See Chronicle of VJ, P. 48 (II).

85 San Antonio 1998: 6-7.

86 Groslier 2006: 116.

87 *Ibit.*, p. 122.

and the next. As I repeatedly mentioned above, most scholars on Cambodian history have strongly hypothesized the fact that the chief factor behind the changing of the capital southwards, was the Siamese invasion. This hypothesis is based on Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, since we have no other sources that can assure us of this event.

Moreover, Southeast Asian countries that used to be powerful kingdoms from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the Khmer kingdom (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>), Pagan (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>), and Sri Vijaya (7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>), were seen to undergo great changes in their political situations in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This was due to the advance of the Mongol armies in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to China, and to some Southeast Asian countries such as Java, Burma, and Champa.<sup>88</sup> However, after the Mongols were defeated, trade activities rapidly flourished in Southeast Asia. In 1368, China changed its dynasty from Mongol to Ming. In the beginning of the Ming dynasty, some systems were changed, as for instance Chinese traders who used to be prohibited from trading in a foreign country, were now allowed to do so. So in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese traders came to Southeast Asia. Also, many embassy missions from Southeast Asian countries were sent to China. In this context, it is suggested that Southeast Asian countries from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century experienced great changes in their political and economic situations, due to the links brought about by maritime trade between China and Southeast Asia. Anthony Reid, a scholar of Southeast Asian History, has designated this period as “the age of commerce.”<sup>89</sup>

During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia in particular noticeably increased its tribute missions to China. Directly or indirectly, the changing policies of the Ming dynasty are thought to have affected Cambodian politics and its economy, in that period. M. Vickery suggested that the purpose of shifting the capital to the south was to get close to the sea.<sup>90</sup> He presented evidence to show that there was a slow movement of the economic center towards the south. Between 1370 and 1420 there were many mission records from Cambodia, probably coming from ports on the Mekong, south of Phnom Penh. Since then, the political center of Cambodia had left Angkor, and it was moved from Angkor to new places in Southern Cambodia.

Although many scholars have emphasized the fact that the Siamese invasion of Angkor and expansion of maritime trade in Southeast Asia had exerted an effect on the relocation of the Khmer capital from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the role played here by agriculture, has more or less been neglected. In addition to earlier hypotheses, which simply take a look at the rise and decline of the Khmer kingdom, this study attempts to consider another factor that can contribute to filling in the gaps, and agriculture is one of the main such factors.

So far, the theory of the prosperity of the Khmer Kingdom’s economy as being based on agriculture has been considered in this study. Since they failed to control the irrigation management system, the huge Barays dried up, and along with the environmental degradation that was caused by climate change the agricultural rice production was reduced, and the Kingdom’s economy fell into trouble. When the country’s economic base became weak, the political authority became unstable, and this resulted in the decline of the Kingdom and abandonment of Angkor.

Hence, seeking a new place, as a facility for agriculture should be considered as another

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88 For the expansion of Mongols to China and Southeast Asia, See, Stuart-Fox 2003: 52-72.

89 Reid 1988, 1993.

90 Vickery 1978: 509-522.



hypothesis among the regular factors, which are discussed below. This should also explain the process of the disturbance of the political authority, and it will explore the factors behind the cause by focusing on the political events and geographical elements.

## 1. The Region of Srei Santhor and its Description

### 1.1. Site Location

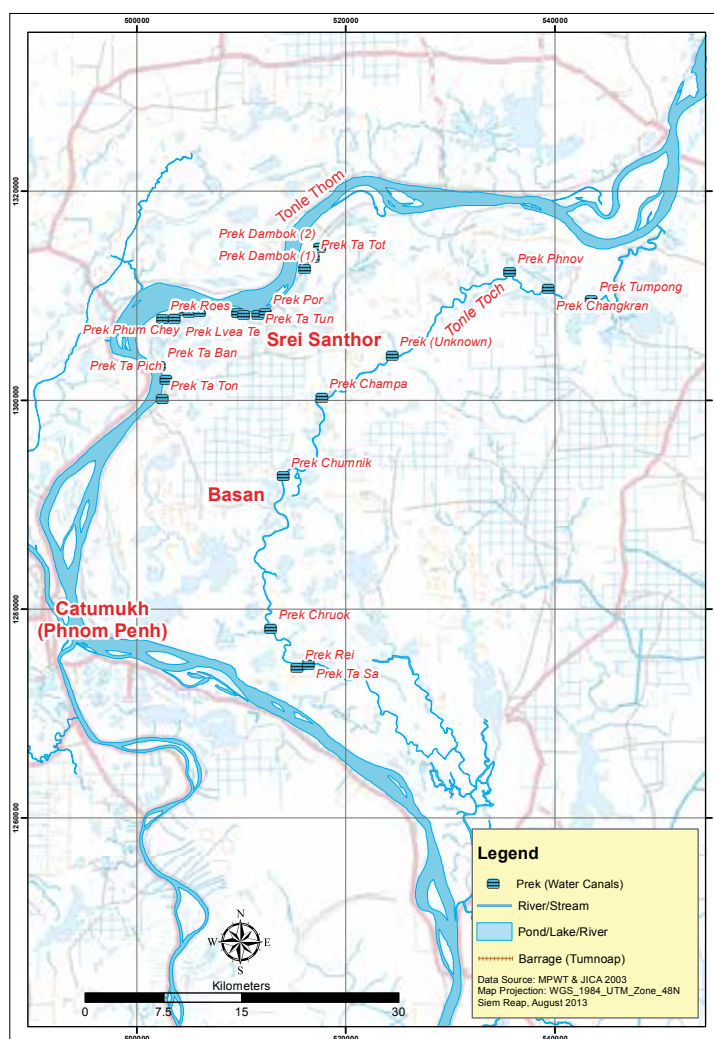
The region of Srei Santhor (Basan) is located on an island around 25 km to the northeast of Phnom Penh. In a record of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the region of Srei Santhor was listed in the province of Kompong Cham, which included the district of Srei Santhor and the area of Basan (Sithor), lying along the border of the Prey Veng province. However the district of Srei Santhor, which is in Kompong Cham, and the area of Basan, and belongs to the Kandal province, now separates it. In this thesis, we propose to use “Srei Santhor” for the general description to the whole region, and “Basan” when we specifically mention to the area of Basan (Sithor) itself.

Geographically, being an island, the site of Srei Santhor is situated in between the Mekong, called by the local people “Tonle Thom, or Grand river” to the west, and the waterway “Tonle Toch, or Small river,” to the east.

Tonle Toch is separated from the Mekong at Chi He, of the Koh Sotin district, in the Kompong Cham province, running through the Prey Veng province (close to Ba Phnom) up to the ancient city of Khmer Prei Nokor (present day Saigon, in Vietnam), while the Tonle Thom or Mekong runs to Catumukh (Phnom Penh). Situated in between the Tonle Thom and Tonle Toch, the region of Srei Santhor contains many natural lakes and water streams, which facilitate the preparation of “Prek, or man-made canals” for the irrigation system (Map 4).

### 1.2. Archaeological Traces

There are five important pagodas located in the area of Basan, namely Wat Prei Bang, Wat Mae Ban or Yiey Ban, Wat Sithor, Vihear Suor, and Wat



Map 4 Region of Srei Santhor, Tonle Thom, Tonle Toch and Preks

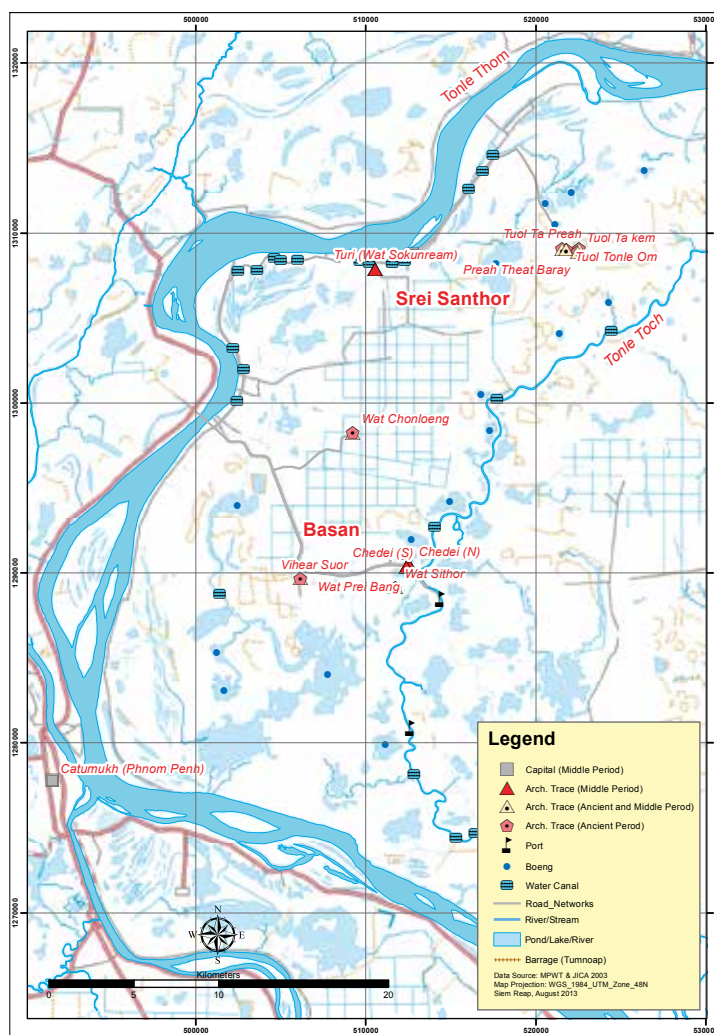
Ang Chonloeng (or Ang Janling) (Map 5). The Khmer kings and rulers built all of these pagodas after the decline of Angkor and when the capital was moved to the area from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Since Theravada Buddhism had begun to strongly penetrate Khmer society from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, structures were erected for worship in the Theravada way, and there was not any influence of the Angkorian temple styles, although old traces of ruins the 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> century have been found on the site. In the compound of the pagodas, the main building facing the east, called Vihāra (and pronounced, Vihear), was traditionally built and placed just in front of the stupas or the ancient temples of the Angkorian period. Also, most of the pagodas in the area of Basan have their own specificity that differs from that of other areas, and this compound of pagodas consists of two Vihears, placed on the same row or on the same platform. This style may be seen at Wat Mae Ban, Wat Sithor, Vihear Suor, and Wat Ang Chonloeng.

In my earlier field research of 2006, I found some fragments of Buddha images in sandstone and wood, and the local people restored some of the fragments. According to M. Giteau, who studied the iconography of post-Angkorian Cambodia, most of the Buddha images made of wood and sandstone were erected in the middle period.<sup>91</sup> Many Chedei or stupas still remain in the pagoda compound, though they are in a severely ruined condition. We do not yet know exactly the date of each stupa, but H. Marchal suggested that most of the stupas were probably constructed between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>92</sup> Besides these elements and Buddha images of the Theravada Buddhism of the middle period, some evidence of pre-Angkor and Angkor period constructions and inscriptions have also been discovered at the site. An inscription of Mahayana Buddhism was found at the site of Srei Santhor (at Wat Sithor), which dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century when Buddhism was practiced there, especially in the reign of king Rājendravarman (944-968 AD).<sup>93</sup>

91 Giteau 1975.

92 Marchal 1951: 581-590.

93 Stèle de Vat Sithor, K. 111, Cœdès 1954: 195-211; See also, Aymonier 1900: 261-270; and



Map 5 Monasteries and Ruin Sites of Srei Santhor (Basan)

### Wat Prei Bang (Ph. 5)

Wat Prei Bang is located to the east of three other pagodas, that is, Wat Mae Ban, Wat Sithor, and Vihear Suor, close to Tonle Toch. We know very little about this pagoda, for there was no information from the earlier researches that were conducted. However, in the Cambodian Royal Chronicles it is mentioned that the king, Srī Sugundhabad (Srei Sukunthabat), who reigned at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, built this pagoda for his wife Neak Mneang Pou, a sister of Sṭec Kan.<sup>94</sup> At present day we find very few traces of the pagoda, such as a basement with some blocks of laterite and Sīma (boundary stone) (Ph. 6). Besides, there are two old stupas made of brick and stucco, placed to the east of the temple compound (Ph. 7, 8). We still do not know the origin of these stupas, but according to the oral tradition narrated by the local people, Sṭec Kan erected them. In recent years, many new Vihears have been constructed in the compound, particularly replacing the old terrace of the Vihear basement.



Ph. 5 Wat Prei Bang, views from the South-East.



Ph. 6 Sīma of Wat Prei Bang



Ph. 7 Chedei, located to north-east of Wat Prei Bang



Ph. 8 Chedei, located to south-east of Wat Prei Bang

These two Chedei, or stupas were suggested to erect around the 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century.

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the inscription was already published by E. Sénart in 1883 (cf., Cœdès, *ibid*).

94 Sṭec Kan was a local hero in the region of Srei Santhor. The royal chronicles mention him as a usurper king, after he killed a legitimate king Srī Sugundhabad. There are many stories related to Sṭec Kan both in the royal chronicles and oral traditions. Until now, his name has been well known by the local people, more than other kings who reigned at Srei Santhor.



Wat Mae Ban (or Wat Yiey Ban) (Ph. 9)

Wat Mae Ban is located to the north of Wat Prei Bang. Like Wat Prei Bang, we also have very little information about Wat Mae Ban. In the *Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments du Cambodge* created by Lunet de Lajonquière at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only the name of this pagoda is mentioned, and it is stated: “a group of three pagodas placed on the same line north-south, about 1 km distance from one another, Wat Sithor to the south, Wat Prei Bang at the center, and Wat Mae Ban to the north,” and he declared that the new Vihear was placed on the ancient construction.<sup>95</sup> The main Vihear of Wat Mae Ban is enclosed by a moat, and on the outside a large pond, which is connected to Wat Prei Bang, surrounds the moat.

To the east of Vihear a greatly ruined Chedei made of brick still remains (Ph. 10). In the Vihear there is seen a large sleeping Buddha measuring 10 meters in length, and the sole of the foot is 1.18 cm × 1.9 cm. Behind the Buddha image is a Chedei made of sandstone with a height of about 5 m (Ph. 11). M. Giteau noted that the comparable designs of the Buddhapada (or the sole of the foot)



Ph. 9 Vihear, Wat Mae Ban



Ph. 10 Chedei, located to the east of Vihear Mae Ban



Ph. 11 Chedei and Sleeping Buddha



Ph. 12 Preah Bat, or sole of the foot

<sup>95</sup> Lajonquière 1902: 167, 170.

with two symmetrical images representing Mount Meru encircled by the seven mountains in this Vihear, was also well attested in the tradition of Thailand and Burma (Ph. 12).<sup>96</sup>

### Wat Sithor

In history, the name “Sithor” was only recorded in European sources. The name Sithor probably derived from Srei Santhor (or Sri Sandhar), which G. Coedès suggested was the name that was originally altered from the name of the ancient capital of Angkor, Sri Yasodhara.<sup>97</sup> In the area of Sithor, another well-known name is Basan or Tuol Basan, which has been mentioned in various sources such as the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, Chinese records, and European sources.

In the compound of Wat Sithor, many important evidences from the Middle Period that are related to the elements of Theravada Buddhism, such as Chedei, Buddha images, and oral traditions, are to be found. At present we can still see some old grand Chedei made of bricks placed behind the Vihear, facing east (Ph. 13). To the east of the Vihear are five stupas made of bricks, concerning



Ph. 13 Chedei of Wat Sithor placed behind of the Vihear, facing to the east



Ph. 14 Inscription found inside of Vihear, Wat Sithor

96 Giteau 1975: 44-45.

97 Giteau 1975: 57.

which we still do not know the exact date, although Lunet de Lajonquière noted that those stupas were probably erected at the same time as the 10<sup>th</sup> century inscription discovered on the site,<sup>98</sup> and some fragments of Buddha images of the middle period have been preserved and may be seen in another Vihear, situated to the south of the main Vihear of Wat Sithor. Inside of Vihear, we found a very ruin stele of inscription (Ph. 14).

We have also found some traces of the basement of a 10<sup>th</sup> century temple, a part of which has now been replaced by a new construction of the Vihear. Based on the 10<sup>th</sup> century inscription found on the site and traces of the ancient construction, we may suggest that the site was already occupied in the Angkor period, and that the Khmer rulers reused it in the middle period. We can see some archeological traces of the Angkor period as well in Vihear Suor.

### Vihear Suor

Vihear Suor is a site that was considered as being located in the region of Srei Santhor of the Kompong Cham province, but it now belongs to the Kandal province. In the middle period, the area was considered as a connecting gate between Srei Santhor and other areas such as Phnom Penh, Thong Khmum (Ba Phnom), and Prei Nokor (Saigon). Since ancient times, Vihear Suor has been regarded as a sacred place for the protection the capital and individual life, both in the belief of Buddhism and in the local spirit belief of “Neak Ta”.

At the present however, because of such strong beliefs, the site itself has been altered and almost all archaeological traces were demolished, due to the construction of many new buildings and Vihears on the ancient temples (Ph. 15). Now, we cannot view the sights that were described in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Lunet de Lajonquière, that is, “Dans le Vihear du N. est déposée une réduction de stupa taillée dans un seul bloc de grès laquée et dorée; cette pièce, qui mesure plus de 2 mètres de hauteurs, repose sur un pédestal...”<sup>99</sup> To the south of the Vihear about 1 km away, the structural basement of the ancient temple made of bricks that I used to see in 2006 and 2010, was replaced by a new construction. We found an ancient sandstone lintel and other fragments (Ph. 16, 17). The local people had kept those objects clean and put them in the shelter, and they have become part of the spiritual belief of the local people.

In the oral tradition, this place is connected to the well-known legends of Baksei Chamkrong (the Bird who shelters under its wing, Ph. 18) and Preah Ko Preah Keo (Sacred Bull and Sacred Gem). Many new statues that are related to the main characters narrated in the legend such as Ta Krahe, a young prince who was always accompanied by Ta Krahe (Ph. 19), and Preah Ko (a sacred bull) and Preah Keo (Preah Ko’s younger brother who formed as a human being) are seen at the site. All these statues are also believed to be powerful spirits protecting their villages and the local people.

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98 Lajonquière 1902: 169.

99 Lajonquière 1902: 170-1, “In the Vihear of N. is filed a reduction of stupa, which carved in a block of lacquered and gilded sandstone; this piece that measures more than 2 meters of heights, lies on a pedestal”, translated by the author.



Ph. 15 Vihear Suor, new construction



Ph. 16 Basement, some fragment of bricks



Ph. 18 New statue, Legend of Baksei Chamkrong



Ph. 17 Old lintel is now believed as Neak Ta, a local spirit.



Ph. 19 Old lintel and statue of Ta Krahe

### Wat Ang Chonloeng (or Ang Janling)

Wat Ang Chonloeng is located along the border of the Kandal and Kompong Cham provinces, and it lies at a distance from Vihear Suor, about 9 km to the north. Lunet de Lajonquière declared that Wat Ang Chonloeng was situated in the center of an island, and he mentioned the fact that the site had a majority of Chinese in its population.<sup>100</sup> Surrounding the site of Wat Ang Chonloeng, there are many mounds that still remain, some having fragments of roof tiles, bricks and other artifacts. Wat Ang Chonloeng has two Vihears on the same platform, and they were constructed just to be in front of the three towers ruin of the Angkorian period (Ph. 20). The three towers are north-south, facing the east. One of the three towers was now collapsed, while the other two towers are still in a good condition. The ruin was made of bricks, with the decorations of lintels, colonnades, and doorframes made of sandstone. The decorations and styles of lintels are quite similar to the lintels of Preah Theat Baray. It was probably built in the same period of Preah Theat Baray. However, we have no any information related to the Vihear (Ph. 21).

<sup>100</sup> Lajonquière 1902: 171.





Ph. 20 Wat Ang Chonloeng



Ph. 21 New Vihear of Wat Ang Chonloeng

## 2. Political Context

According to the Royal Chronicles, King Bañā Yāt had decided to abandon his capital of Angkor which was too close to the place of the Siamese attacks, and he decided to settle at Basan which was a place well suited to protect him from the Siamese threats. On the other hand, the site itself until the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a central point to control the territory to the east of the Mekong, and it adjoined the north and west of the country. Geographically, Srei Santhor can be easily accessed from Prei Nokor, Phnom Penh, Longvek-Oudong, and Angkor. Through the history of the middle period, we see that Srei Santhor was a stronghold capital once after the fall of Longvek in 1594. This event is described both in the chronicles and in the European sources.

### 2.1. Srei Santhor in the Historical Records

#### Royal Chronicles

As mentioned above, the sources for reconstructing the history of Cambodia from the 14<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are almost blank. However, since the inscriptions are inadequate, the Royal Chronicles are our best choice to reconstruct the history of the Cambodia in the Middle Period, though the analysis of the texts should be treated carefully, if possible with the support of inscriptions and foreign sources.

According to the Royal Chronicles, there are at least 10 kings, and Stec Kan, and Rām Joeñ Brai, who ruled at Srei Santhor and for a short time at Catumukh, from the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Below is a brief chronological chart.

No	Names	Times	Genealogies
1	Bañā Yāt (Paramarājā I)	1373 - 1433	His relationship to the earlier king is uncertain
2	Nārāy Rājā (Nārāy Rājā I)	1433 - 1437	His relationship to the earlier king is uncertain
3	Srī Rājā	1437 - 1476	His relationship to the earlier king is uncertain
4	Srī Soriyodai	1438 - 1478	His relationship to the earlier king is uncertain
5	Dhammarājā	1468 - 1504	Son of Bañā Yat
6	Srī Sugandhapad	1504 - 1512	Son of Dhammarājā
7	Stec Kan	1512 - 1525	Son of a low ranking minister
8	Rām Joeñ Brai (Rām I)	1594 - 1596	Son of Abhayadas
9	Bañā Nūr (Rām II)	1596 - 1597	Son of Rām Joeñ Brai
10	Bañā Tan (Paramarājā V)	1597 - 1599	Son of Saṭṭhā (Paramarājā IV)
11	Bañā An (Paramarājā VI)	1599 - 1600	Uncle of Bañā Tan
12	Bañā Nōm (Kae Hvā I)	1600 - 1602	Son of Saṭṭhā (Paramarājā IV)



In VJ's chronicle, the year of the capital's shift is different from that of Nan by 43 years, and this was in 1431,<sup>101</sup> the date that most of scholars marked as the event that punctuated the fall of Angkor after a final battle with Ayutthaya. However, the Khmer chronicles do not mention this date as the time when their cities were attacked and taken by Ayutthaya. For example, VJ only stated that king Bañā Yāt decided to move his capital city to Basan, because the city was invaded very often by Ayutthaya, and many of the Khmer people were taken to Ayutthaya. Some important provinces of the west were occupied by Siam, and the Khmer people had become weakened and were oppressed owing to the effects of the war. The king thought that if he still stayed at Angkor, he and his people might face continued casualties and domination. Hence, the supposed date of 1431 as being the time when Ayutthaya sacked Angkor seems suspicious, since the Siam chronicle influenced it.

After the preparation for the establishment of the new city, in 1433 king Bañā Yāt abdicated the throne to Nārāy Rājā (known also as Nārāy (ṅ) Rāmā).<sup>102</sup> King Nārāy Rājā reigned until his death in 1437, when Srī Rājā succeeded to the throne. During this period, there was internal conflict among the Khmer kings. The war between Srī Rājā, Srī Soriyodai and Dhammarājā (son of the king Bañā Yāt) took years, the outcome of which saw the country divided into three portions. According to Nan's chronicle, until 1468, Dhammarājā had control over the throne at Phnom Penh.<sup>103</sup> In 1476, Dhammarājā asked the Siamese soldiers to attack Srī Rājā, and the throne was captured by Ayutthaya.

VJ recounts that during the reign of Srī Rājā, the country was more stable in social and economic matters than in previous reigns. The king also prepared to fight back in order to reclaim the territory of Nagar Rāja Semā, Pascim Purī, and Cand Purī. Military strategy utilized both land and water as means of approach (water through Kampot to Cand Purī, and land through Bodhisātv (or Pursat), Pātṭampaṅ (or Batdambang) and Srah Kaev to Nagar Rāja Simā). When the war between Siam and Khmer was raging in the western part of the country of Khmer, Srī Soriyodai betrayed Srī Rājā and took control of all the eastern provinces including Kampong Siem, Stung Stong, Choeng Prei, and Baray.

At the city of Catumukh, Dhammarājā knew about the situation, and he took steps to control the city and the western provinces from Samrong Tong up to the sea. Then, he asked a minister to inform Srī Rājā at Pascim Purī about the betrayal of Srī Soriyodai. Srī Rājā ordered the ministers to protect Cand Purī and Pascim Purī, and he decided to return back to the city (Catumukh). After he arrived at Pursat, in 1476, he crossed the river with troops to fight with Srī Soriyodai. So civil war began in the country. The war was not only between Srī Rājā and Srī Soriyodai, but also with Dhammarājā, after Srī Rājā found that Dhammarājā did not follow his orders.

Srī Rājā decided to control the western provinces from Rolea Pha-ie, Pursat, and Batdambang

101 The year 1431 is also mentioned in the Annals of Ayutthaya "Hluong Prosoath", as the date when Ayutthaya assaulted and sacked Angkor. Cf., Frankfurter 1909: 1-21, Briggs 1948-49: 3-33, Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 44. It should be noted that the date 1431 in VJ's chronicle was probably influenced by foreign sources, since this publication was carried out during the period of the French Protectorate as noted in Chapter I.

102 In VJ's chronicle it is mentioned that Bañā Yāt abdicated in 1463 (he died in 1466) and gave the throne to Nārāy Rājā until his death in 1468, and his younger brother Srī Rājā succeeded him.

103 Dhammarājā has two sons, Bañā Ṭāṃkhāt (Srī Sugandhapad, the name he had when he was crowned king) and Ang Chan, or Bañā Cand (Rājā), or Paramarājā II (the crowned name). In this study, we prefer to use the name of Ang Chan rather than Bañā Cand, or Cand Rājā, since the name of king Ang Chan is well known.

up to the Siamese provinces, the north from Kompong Siem, Choeung Prei, Kok Seh, Stung Stong, and Kompong Svay up to Kok Khan, Surin and the Laos border. In 1478, Srī Soriyodai was made the leader at Srī Sandhor. His territory spread from the province of Sambor, Tbong Khmum, Ba Phnom up to Duon Neay and Champa. In 1479, Dhammarājā took the throne at Catumukh and controlled the province of Samrong Tong, Thpong, Kampong Som, and Kampot up to Basak, Prah Trapeang, Kramuon Sar, Koh Slaket, and Peam. The war continued for almost ten years and the country was divided into 3 parts.

In 1485, king Dhammarājā asked the king of Siam for help to finish the conflict between Srī Rājā and Srī Soriyodai. The king of Siam Mahā Cakrabartti<sup>104</sup> led many soldiers to break down the soldiers of king Srī Rājā at Kampong Siem. Because the civil war in the country had been taken so long, many people were killed and the territory was diminished, so Srī Rājā decided to negotiate for peace with Dhammarājā and Srī Soriyodai, ending the war among the Khmer kings. In order to avoid future conflicts among Khmer kings, the Siam king asked king Dhammarājā to take Srī Rājā and Srī Soriyodai to Ayutthaya. A few years later, those two kings died of disease. A son of Srī Rājā name Pañā Uñ (or Siddhien Rājā, a name that was given by the Siamese king) was adopted as a son of the Siamese king, and he got married to the daughter of the Siamese king. In 1486, king Dhammarājā underwent a coronation ceremony to become king at Catumukh. King Dhammarājā continued to rule until his death in 1504, and his son Srī Sugandhapad ascended the throne at Catumukh and then moved to Basan.

#### Sṭec Kan (Sdec Kan)

Among the kings who reigned at Srei Santhor, Sṭec Kan<sup>105</sup> was a well-known ruler and is considered a hero in the area of Srei Santhor. In a legend, when his mother gave birth to him near a river, the baby who was just born was accidentally dropped into the river. Unfortunately, a short while later there was an enormous fish that swallowed the baby, and later the fish was caught by a fisherman. The fisherman then presented that fish to the pagoda, and fortunately the baby survived. The story related to the legend of Sṭec Kan's birth is also described in the chronicle.<sup>106</sup> The story of a fish that swallowed a baby is also described in the Indian scriptures, which is one from the Mahabharata and the other is from the Vishnu Purana. There is a story in the Mahabharata about a fish that gave birth to two little children. The story is as follows: Satyavati, was the great grandmother of the five

104 The name of the Siam king Mahā Cakrabartti given in VJ has no correspondence to the name of the Siam king of that period. It seems to have been given by the Khmers to the Siam king Rāme-suan (Baramtrilokanat), who reigned from 1448. See, Khin Sok 1991: 28. However, in G. Cœdès classical book mention is made about the Siam king Mahā Cakrabartti who ruled in 1549 and who was faced with an attack by Burmese soldiers. The king had to release two kings who were hostages, Mahadhammaraja from Ayutthaya, which was a part of Khmer territory. Because the king had to defend his city from the attack by the Burmese, Cambodia was slightly suppressed by Siam; G. Cœdès 1967: 139-171.

105 Sṭec Kan was a son of a low ranking minister named Braḥ Jai Nāga (Preah Chei Neak) and a lady named Nān Pān (Neang Ban), a slave of The Triple Jewels “in Khmer, Bal Braḥ Srī Rataṇa Trai” (or a person who serves at the pagoda). After the king got married to Nān Bau (or Preah Snam Ek Pau), a sister of Nāy Kan (Neay Kan), Nāy Kan became a bother-in-law to the king, and he had power in the royal palace. For details of the history of Sṭec Kan, see Khin Sok 1988: 102-103.

106 Among Khmer chronicles, only the chronicle of VJ mentions Sṭec Kan's birth story.



Ph. 22 Bayon relief, south gallery of the Bayon temple, depicted an enormous fish story in the Indian scriptures.



Ph. 23 The 10<sup>th</sup> century ruin, Preah Theat Baray, Srei Santhor

heroes of the Mahabharata (namely the five Pandavas). She was the daughter of an Apsara named Adrika, who, because of a curse, was forced to live as a fish in the Ganges River. One day, the semen of a King named Uparicaravasu fell into the Ganges River, and the fish swallowed this semen and became pregnant. A fisherman caught this fish, and when he cut it open, he found two little babies in it, one was male and the other was female. The female child later became Satyavati, who was the great grandmother of the five Pandavas.<sup>107</sup> There is also another story about a fish that appears in the *Vishnu Purana*. Pradyumna was a re-incarnation of Manmatha, the God of Love. He was born as the son of the God Krishna and his Queen Rukmini. When he was born, a demon named Sambarasura kidnapped him and threw him into the sea, where a big fish swallowed him. Some fishermen caught this fish. They brought it into the kitchen of Sambarasura's palace and cut it open, and they found a male child inside the fish. Mayavati, who was the chief maid of Samabarasura's Queen, raised this child as her own. This child was Pradyumna, who later became famous as the son of Krishna. When Pradyumna grew up, he killed Sambarasura and married Mayavati.<sup>108</sup> The enormous fish story is also carved on the wall of the south gallery of the Bayon temple (Ph. 22).

Even now, the legend of S̄tec Kan and his name still exist and are known very well by the people in Srei Santhor and the surrounding area, especially in the Khum Baray (Baray commune) around Turi village located on the bank of the Mekong, and around Wat Sithor and the surrounding area.

107 Vettam Mani 1984: 709.

108 Swami Harshananda 2008: 531.



Ph. 24 Lintel depicted the scene of Vishnu reclining on Naga



Ph. 25 Lintel depicted the scene of Shiva dancing



Ph. 26 Lintel depicted the scene of the Churning of the Sea of the Milk

In the area of the Khum Baray, there is to be found a ruin from the Angkor period made by bricks on the square mount, and according to E. Aymonier this ruin was built in the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>109</sup> The ruin is called Preah Theat Baray (Sacred relics temple or reservoir) (Ph. 23). On the ground surrounding the temple, there are many fallen fragments of pediments and lintels made of sandstone (Ph. 24, 25, 26). There is one interesting lintel depicting the myth of Vishnu lying on a Naga. The villagers believe that the relief of the god Vishnu is representative of S̄tec Kan, who was born in the year of the Naga. Related to the Naga and S̄tec Kan, there are many stories written in chronicles and also narrated in the legend. In the chronicles, it is mentioned that when king Srī Sugandhapad tried to kill S̄tec Kan, the Naga came to protect him.<sup>110</sup>

Beside the ruin, there is a long road just located in front of the Preah Theat Baray ruin, connected to Tumnoap Chas, called Thnal Pranang Seh (race-course road), and there are two ponds called Tonle Om Srei and Tonle Om Pros (boat race lake) (Map 6). All the places are related to S̄tec Kan. In the village of Turi, there is a pagoda named Wat Sokunream and inside its compound is a great stupa, called Chedei S̄tec Kan (Ph. 27), and in the pagoda of Sithor, as mentioned above, there are four stupas located to the east of the main Vihear, and among these stupas, one is said to have belonged to S̄tec Kan. Other pagodas such as Wat Prei Bang and Wat Mae Ban are accredited to the family of S̄tec Kan.

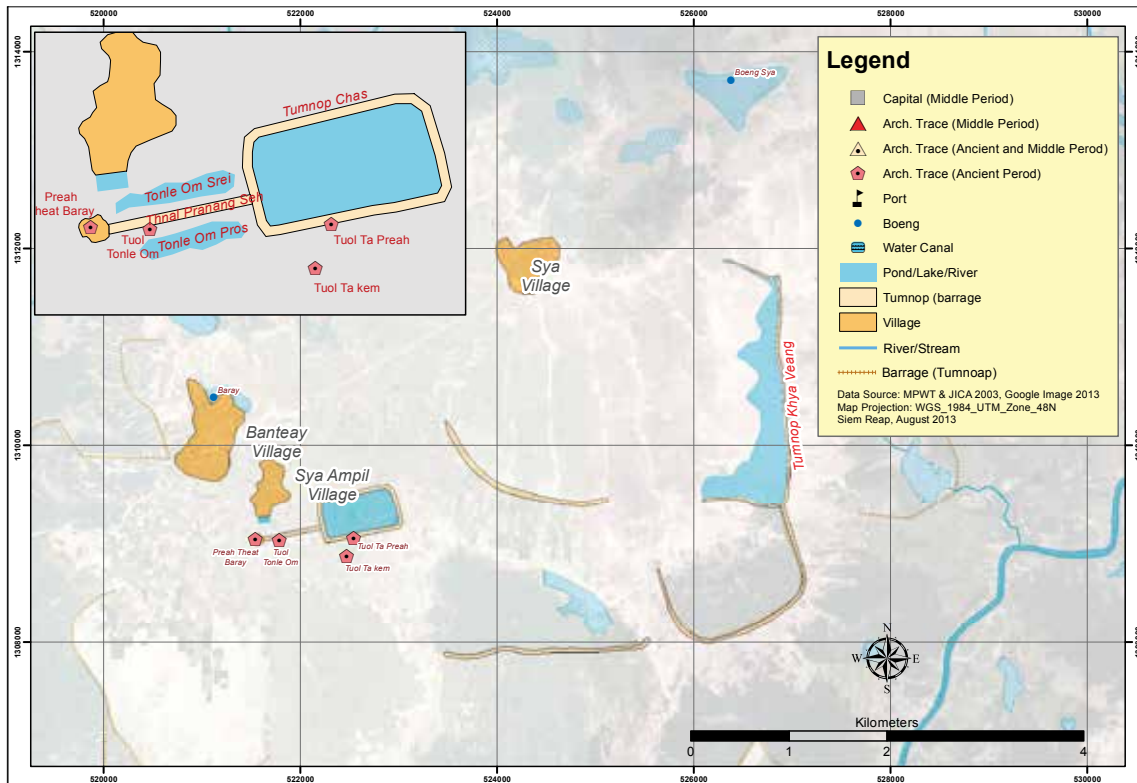
There are various episodes in the oral traditions narrated about S̄tec Kan, but less mentioned is the king Srī Sugandhapad, and as for the name of Ang Chan, it has never appeared in the narrations. However, the chronicles describe the fact that S̄tec Kan was involved a struggle first with Srī Sugandhapad, and then with Ang Chan. Below is a resumé of the event.

When Srī Sugandhapad ruled at Basan, in 1508 S̄tec Kan prepared to fight with him (according

<sup>109</sup> Aymonier 1900: 250-52.

<sup>110</sup> See the chronicle of VJ, Tranet 2001.





Map 6 Ruin of Preah Theat Baray and Surrounding Area



Ph. 27 This new stupa is belived to build on the old stupa of Sdec Kan; the local villagers called “Chedei Sdec Kan”.

to Nan’s chronicle). In 1512 the king was assassinated at Stung Saen in the Kompong Svay province (the present Kompong Thom), while he escaped from the battle at Basan when he was attacked by Sdec Kan. Ang Chan, a brother of king Srī Sugandhapad, fled to Siam. After that, Sdec Kan ascended the throne and was named Srī Jetthā, reigning in peace over Basan for 4 years. His territory spread north to Laos, west towards Siam city, east towards Champa, and south towards the seaboard.

According to the VJ, during the reign of Sṭec Kan, the country was rich and prosperous, drawing many people to immigrate there due to its positive cultural influences and peaceful rule. He minted silver and gold coins for money, that is, “Prāk’ Sliṅ and Mās Sliṅ”<sup>111</sup> that were decorated with a Nāga image, for use in the country.<sup>112</sup> The chronicle did not describe the reaction of the populace towards Sṭec Kan during his reign, nor did it describe that of the mandarins or Brahmans. However, the revolt of Sṭec Kan was not justified when we consider the best interests of the nation, and besides it appears that a son of a slave of the pagoda becoming a king was something prohibited by law.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, king Ang Chan made efforts to find a way to establish justice and for the integration for the land, and finally Sṭec Kan was arrested and killed.

### Foreign Sources

Besides the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, the names and events related to Srei Santhor (Basan) were described first in the Chinese records of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in European sources of the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even though the Chinese records provide little information about Cambodia, the Ming dynasty had treated Cambodia fairly and with respect. For example, in 1404 the Chinese imperial government released three Khmer troops and sent them back to Cambodia, and in 1414 the imperial government sent a message to Cambodia and Champa asking them to cease fighting and rebuild the relationship between the two countries.<sup>114</sup> According to Wolters, the Chinese court sent at least seven missions to Cambodia in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>115</sup>

The area of Srei Santhor was first mentioned as having the name *Pa-shan* (Basan) in the Chinese records, when Cambodia agreed to send tribute to China. Kuo Chêng who was appointed to announce to the people in Cambodia the recent king’s accession to the throne in the year 1371, used the name *Pa-shan* in the record.<sup>116</sup> Around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the area of Srei Santhor was mentioned once again by a Portuguese missionary. A Portuguese by name Gaspa da Cruz, who visited Cambodia in 1555, mentioned the name of three cities of Cambodia, of which the first was Srei Santhor, and then Longvek, and Catumukh (Phnom Penh).<sup>117</sup> However, according to San Antonio’s account in 1604, the main cities are Anchor (Angkor), Churdumuco (Phnom Penh) and Sistor (Srei Santhor).<sup>118</sup>

In the account of San Antonio, he describes the war between Cambodia and Siam. The account states: “...the King of Siam wanted to force Apram Langaram,<sup>119</sup> the king of Cambodia, to hand over

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111 Sliṅ was an old coin worth about 25 cents. Cf., Franklin E. Huffman and Im Proum 1977: 136. As for the archaeological evidence, we have not found any of silver and gold coins in that period.

112 Throughout the history of Cambodia, in relation to monetary matters, we see that coins were not produced in Cambodia until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. If what is mentioned in the chronicle is reliable, the coins would probably have been minted during the rule of Sṭec Kan.

113 Khin Sok, 1991, p. 29.

114 Wade 2005: 21, 24.

115 Wolters 1966: 46.

116 Wolters 1966: 47.

117 Groslier 2006: 116; Briggs 1950: 5.

118 San Antonio 1998: 6.

119 That is the name of king Saṭṭhā who is mentioned in the Royal Chronicles.

the animal to him. For that purpose, he gathered together an army of thirty thousand men along with three thousand war elephants, and, although the king of Cambodia had set another army as powerful against them, Siam was victorious, they took possession of the white elephant and made one the king's brothers and three thousand men prisoners. ...As for king Apram Langara, he returned to the Kingdom of Laos, accompanied by his son" (this event is also mentioned in the Royal Chronicles, and the details of this event will be discussed in the next chapter).<sup>120</sup>

Another description related to the area of Srei Santhor is mentioned in the reports of the Chinese Junks to the Nagasaki port authorities (Tokugawa Japan).<sup>121</sup> Around 56 Chinese Junks passed by Cambodia before arriving at Nagasaki, and each Chinese junk reported to the Nagasaki authorities about the situation in Cambodia. In the Chinese reports, mention was made about the war between Cambodia and Siam, and the internal conflict between the two brother kings, referred to by the Chinese as "Mountain Kings" and "Water Kings". The reports were from the year 1679 to 1723, and during this period according to the chronicles, the "Mountain Kings" ruled at Oudong and the "Water Kings" governed at Srei Santhor. According to the chronicles, during this period the kings who reigned at Oudong were Aṅg Jī (Kaev Hvā II), Aṅg Sūr (Jayajetthā III), Aṅg Nūr (Srī Dhammarājā II). The "Mountain Kings" who ruled at Srei Santhor were Uphayorājā Aṅg Nan' (Padumarājā), supported by Nguyên, and Aṅg Im (Kaev Hvā III).<sup>122</sup> The internal conflict between the "Mountain Kings" and the "Water Kings" was also studied by Japanese researcher Takako Kitagawa, who has often used the Japanese source called *Ka-i hentai*, for her reference to treat the history of Cambodia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>123</sup>

## 2.2. A Short Interlude in Catumukh (Phnom Penh)

According to the chronicle of VJ, after king Bañā Yāt moved the capital to Basan for a year, he decided to reside at Catumukh due to the inundation at Basan. Another king who reigned at Catumukh was king Dhammarājā, son of king Bañā Yāt. In the history of Cambodia, the reign at Phnom Penh was very short, and it had never been referred to as the capital of Khmer until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Cambodian Royal Chronicles provide very little information related to the area of Phnom Penh, though according to European sources Phnom Penh was a very active place for trading. Phnom Penh was a strategic and potential place for trade and it seems to have already been occupied by traders, but why could not the Khmer kings settle there for a long period? If they changed the capital to a southward location, it was possible to seek a commercial port and easily link up with international trade, but then why did the kings return to Srei Santhor? These are questions I still cannot answer.

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120 San Antonio 1998: 10.

121 Ishii 1998. The Chinese Junk Trade is a translation from the Tōsen Fusetsu-gaki, which is an official report that the Tokugawa government in the Edo period tried to collect information from foreign countries. The report is not only from the Chinese Junk, but also from other foreigners who came to Nagasaki, like the Dutch report to the Nagasaki authority called Oranda Fusetsu-gaki, etc. There are many other reports from foreign traders to the Nagasaki authority.

122 For the details of the event mentioned in the chronicles, see Mak Phoeun 1995: 359-442.

123 Kitagawa 2000: 65-66; see also Kitagawa 2006: 116-118.

### **3. Motives for the Choice of Srei Santhor**

#### **3.1. Potential of the Agricultural Products**

Historically, the development of the Khmer civilization was based on cultivation. The first state of Funan was not only experiencing a commercial boom at the famous port of Oc-Eo, but it attained agricultural resources from inland areas. From aerial map views, we see that the area of Funan, which is now located in the southern part of Cambodia and the Mekong delta (present day Vietnam), reveals a complex waterway network for draining and irrigation combined. Even though from the 6<sup>th</sup> century the sea trade route network was weakening, Chenla state became a strong agricultural base at the inland centers. M. Vickery suggested that Chenla and the Angkor periods appear as the prototypical inland agrarian state, until its decline during the 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>124</sup>

On the other hand, the Chenla state developed at the inland center, that had a subsistence-level economy based on the Mekong tributaries. B. P. Groslier asserted that from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards the Khmer abandoned Angkor not only geographically, but also with regard to the type of land use that had created it. However, a subsistence-level economy of Cambodia from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was to take over once again, almost the same places and the same system of the pre-Angkorian period.<sup>125</sup>

The first choice for the Khmer capital in the middle period was Srei Santhor, which was located along the belt of the Mekong. It was an area that could produce crops on the fields lying along the riverbank called “*camkār* or *chamkar*”, which contained fresh ground and soft soil, and by using which people could cultivate crops such as tobacco, corn, indigo, cotton, and various other plants and vegetation. Also, on the inland and surrounding area were “*Boeng*, or large ponds” which connected and shared water with the natural and artificial canals, and the area had paddy fields that were used for growing rice.

Records of early French researchers at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century stated that people in the area situated on the left of the Tonle Toch cultivated plenty of rice, and planted many palm trees to produce sugar palm. The people in this region also grew a lot of cotton, mulberry, and indigo along the riverbanks of the Mekong.<sup>126</sup> In J. Moura’s account of 1883, he states that almost everywhere on the bank of the river, the Khmer people planted a lot of corn, cotton, and indigo. The account mentioned that cotton was most important in Khmer culture and that it could be produced every year.<sup>127</sup> The *Monographie de la circonscription résidentielle de Kampong Cham*, and the article published by Peyrusset in 1880, stated that most of the population resided along the bank of the Mekong.<sup>128</sup>

What the earlier explorers had seen in the area from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remains the same today, both regarding the mode of culture called “*chamkar*” and the paddy rice cultivation. Even these days, Srei Santhor district can produce a lot of rice, not only to support the population in its area but also to satisfy the demand of the whole province

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124 Vickery 1998: 257.

125 Groslier 1985-86a: 63-64.

126 Aymonier 1900: 258-59.

127 Moura 1883: 26-28.

128 Cf., Kitagawa 2000: 52.



of Kompong Cham. During the rainy season, the water level goes up and spreads all over the area, enabling easy access by boat to the interior of the villages, while during dry season, villagers can use oxcarts for their daily mobility. At present, most of the people who live along the belt of the Mekong can grow a lot of tobacco, corn, cane, and other vegetables. In inland areas, that is, areas lying at a distance from the riverbank of the Mekong down to the Tonle Toch, paddy cultivation is used.

Based on the situation we have seen today and the records of the European explorers of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it can be suggested that the geo-environmental situation from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not very different.

### 3.2. Traditional Water Management Systems

Unlike in the case of the ancient periods (the pre-Angkor and Angkor periods), nothing is mentioned in the royal chronicles and other Khmer sources from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, concerning agricultural products and terms related to irrigation or water supply for cultivation. Even though in the ancient Khmer inscriptions not much mention is made about them, yet there are at least a few records about agricultural products. In the inscription K. 505<sup>129</sup> dating back to the year 939, mention is made about “the products of over 228 areca and 140 coconuts served by over 32 workers. There was one and a half *sanre* of rice land and five *yoke* of buffalos, suggesting that it was just enough to supply the personnel tending the plantations, which obviously produced a surplus of fruits, which were perhaps destined elsewhere.”<sup>130</sup>

Also, other inscriptions such as K. 44, K. 79, K. 115, mention the word “Sre”, which means “field, or rice field”, and “travañ” which means “ponds.”<sup>131</sup> These two words mentioned in the inscriptions are related to each other. Professor Ishizawa Yoshiaki, in his work on the examination of historical inscriptions, asserted that the Khmer people in ancient times traditionally built their villages on the edge of waterways, such as Trapeang, Boeng, and Prek.<sup>132</sup> Other inscriptions such as K. 138, K. 933, K. 299, and K. 754 mention the word “añcan”, which means “moat, or pond.”<sup>133</sup>

As regards the systems of Prek (man-made water canals) associated with a river, Boeng (natural ponds) and Tumnoap (water barrage), we see that the system of Prek is not something spectacular like that of the Baray (reservoir) at Angkor, but perhaps at the level of the “country” it was infinitively more effective and durable (Ph. 28, 29, 30). Unlike the Baray at Angkor that needs a lot of human energy to build, Prek management systems use less labor, and people of their own village or community can manage them. The system of Prek and its terminology are mostly employed in the southern part of Cambodia, while Baray is mainly used at the northern part, especially in the Angkor region. For example in the Kandal province, from Sa-ang to the Koh Thom district, a distance of approximately 100 km, there are more than 60 Preks that share the water from Tonle Basak (another name for the Mekong River) to the plains.

Also, according to the 2003 topographical map of the Ministry of Public Work and Transportation

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129 K505 was found in the area near Aranyaprathet province (present day Thai-Cambodia border).

130 Vickery 1998: 280-281.

131 Vickery 1998: 112, 199.

132 Ishizawa 2000b: 10, 11.

133 Pou 2004: 8.



Ph. 28 Prek Lvea Te flows from Tonle Thom (Mekong)



Ph. 29 Boeng Yiey Maov, water flows from Tonle Thom via Prek



Ph. 30 Prek Dambok flows from Tonle Thom to the Baray commune, the area of Preah Theat Baray ruin.

(MPWT) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) of 1/100,000 scale, there are at least 9 Preks along the belt of the Tonle Toch, counted. Also, according to the 2003 topographical map of the Ministry of Public Work and Transportation (MPWT) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) of 1/100,000 scale, there are at least 9 Preks along the belt of the Tonle Toch, counted from the break point of the Tonle Thom of Prek Tumpong at the northeast to Prek Ta Sa at the southwest (Map 7).



Map 7 Map showing the complex of water chanals and natural ponds

There are 15 big Preks from the new bridge of Spean Ta Meak to Prek Dambok in the district of Srei Santhor. Prek directly means “water break or fosse,” and it is a tributary or man-made canal that shares water from the rivers during the flood season, and keeps the water for being used during the dry season. Prek is also used to commute from one community to another. The mouth of the Prek is called Peam, and Prek is also called Chumnik, which is derived from a verb Chik meaning to “dig”. In the area of Longvek, what people call Peam Chumnik refers to a Prek, which was probably dug during the Ang Duong reign in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (r. 1840-1960).

Cambodia divides the year into two seasons, namely the rainy season that starts from

June and continues to November, and the dry season, which is from December to May. During the annual flooding period in August and September, the Mekong River rises and spreads the water into the plains via Preks, gradually retreating at the end of the rainy season in November, and in December and January the water runs off the fields into receding small canals, Preks, and Boengs.

In the dry season, the water is mainly stored in the Boeng, and it is then diverted to rice fields through small waterways. Other terminologies referring to water storage are Me Toek and Me Tumnoap, and villagers in different areas use them. For example villagers at the site of Longvek use the terms Me Toek or Me Tumnoap. The water storage in Boeng and Tumnoap (the barrage) is generally used for the Srov Prang (dry season rice field). The local community created the system of Tumnoap, to distribute the water through small canals to the rice fields. The system of Tumnoap or a bank earthen bund system has also been popularly used by Thai farmers since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The system and the term itself are probably originally from the Khmer.<sup>134</sup>

The small tributary canals that convey water from the Tumnoap to the rice fields are called “chonlak”. In the Baray commune (at the site of the Preah Theat Baray ruin) for example, a great Tumnoap of Khya Vaeng can distribute or divide up to 46 chonlaks (or 46 small canals) from the Me Toek or Me Tumnoap (Ph. 31). The term “chonlak” is specifically employed in the area of Srei Santhor and Longvek (Ph. 32). General Speaking, the water control systems differ extensively, depending on their geographical or natural endowment.



Ph. 31 Tumnoap Khya Vaeng in the dry season



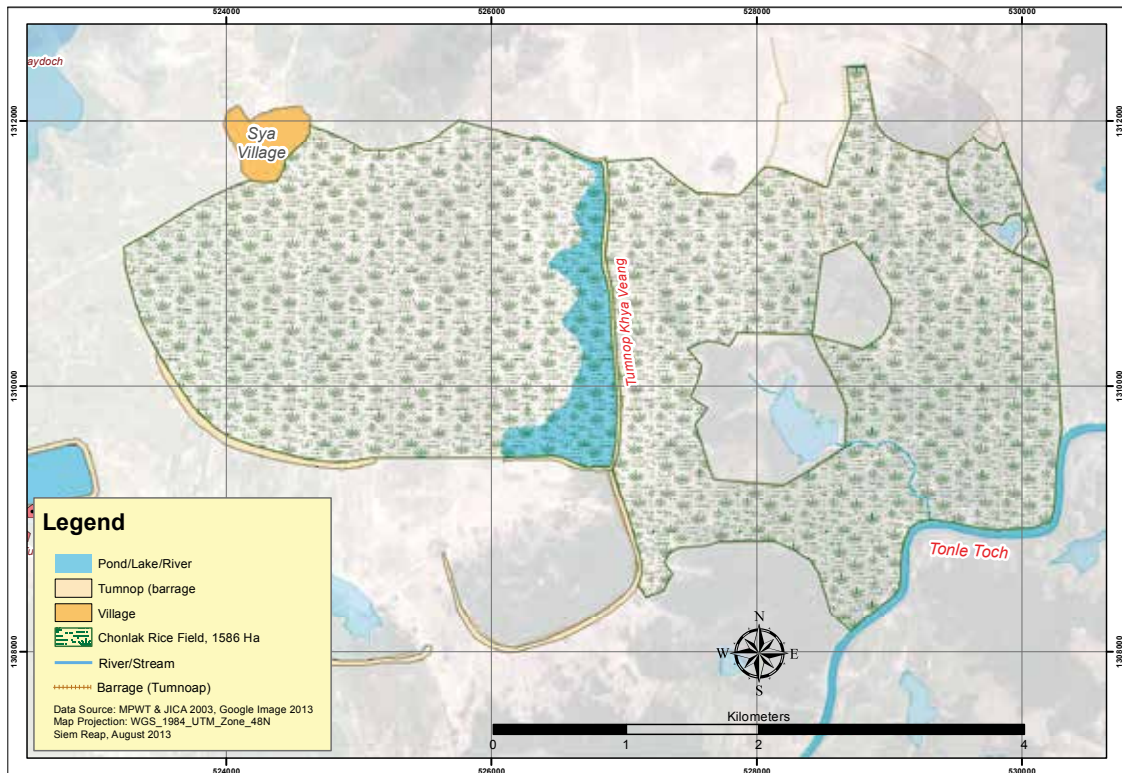
Ph. 32 Chonlak of Tumnoap Khya Vaeng in the dry season

### 3.3. Type of Cultivations

In Cambodia there are three basic patterns of rice production or cultivation: Srov Vossa, Srov Prang, and Srov Chamkar. Srov Vossa refers to the “rainy season rice field,” Srov Prang is the “dry season rice field,” and Srov Chamkar can be translated as “shifting cultivation.”<sup>135</sup> Srov Vossa is annually transplanted when the rainy season starts, but normally people begin to transplant the rice at the end of June and beginning of July, depending on whether the rainwater was enough in the rice fields. Srov Vossa is traditionally transplanted in the dyked fields, and the rice grows according to the rise in the rainwater. Srov Prang is mostly transplanted near the waterways of Prek, rivers, and the natural ponds “Boeng”. It is cultivated in the dry season when the water ebbs from the rice field, especially in the flooded areas. Also the water supply for the rice field was used from the Me Toek

134 Fukui 2000: 35.

135 The words Srov Vossa and Srov Prang are sometimes called Sre Vossa and Sre Prang.



Map 8 A pattern of Tumnoap and Sre Chonlak at Khya Vaeng

or Tumnoap, in case the water was not enough. Srov Chamkar refers to the practice of clearing land by cutting down trees and burning the groundcover. Srov Chamkar is called in English “shifting cultivation, and it is also known as swidden or slash-and-burn cultivation.” Here they traditionally planted the rice on the upper land or near the mountains.

In case of the Baray commune of the Srei Santhor district, at the low fields around the vicinity of the ruins of Preah Theat Baray, there is only one type of cultivation, namely Sre Chonlak (Map 8). The term Sre Chonlak is also referred to as “ended rice cultivation.” Sre Chonlak is annually yielded when the flood recedes from the upland fields in November, for then the farmers are able to start cultivating the rice. Compared to Srov Vossa, Sre Chonlak and Srov Prang<sup>136</sup> are more secure and sustainable types of cultivation. For Srov Vossa, the cultivation is done depending on the rainfall. If the rainwater is less or it rains too much, the productivity of rice becomes substandard and it also becomes less productive.

In November and December farmers could also begin to grow various kind of crops along the mouth of the Mekong. For the Srei Santhor district, the most favorable crops cultivated are corn, potatoes, beans, and vegetables such as cabbage and Chinese lettuce.

Up to around 10 years ago, when farmers had no tractors for managing the land and the harvest, they could develop the land using simple tools, animal power, and human labor. Ploughing was done using draft animals (cows or buffaloes) and simple ploughs, and reaping was done by hand, using

<sup>136</sup> Srov Prang and Sre Chonlak are the same type of rice cultivation, and the way they are referred to depend on the area. Most farmers who live along the belt of Mekong in Srei Santhor area traditionally use the term Sre Chonlak, and not Srov Prang.



sickles. Other simple tools employed for the farm and rice field operations were hoes, spades, harrows, and shovels. There were many types of traditional irrigation pumps, such as the Yong (a waterspout), Snach (a water shovel, or a kind of trough-shaped instrument that is normally used made of Bamboo), Rohat (waterwheel), etc. (Ph. 33). At present, most of these tools are not seen much in the rice fields.

Here, farmers could cultivate rice only once a year, and one hectare could produce 6 tons of rice.<sup>137</sup>

Since the 1980s, one family could receive between half or one hectare of land, depending on the members of the family. The living standard of farmers in this area is much better than those in other areas in the upper lands, and this is because besides rice cultivation, they could produce other crops or catch fish from the Mekong River.



Ph. 33 Snach, or a water shovel, a traditional irrigation water pump.

## IV

### Longvek and Oudong

#### 1. Site Description of Longvek and Oudong

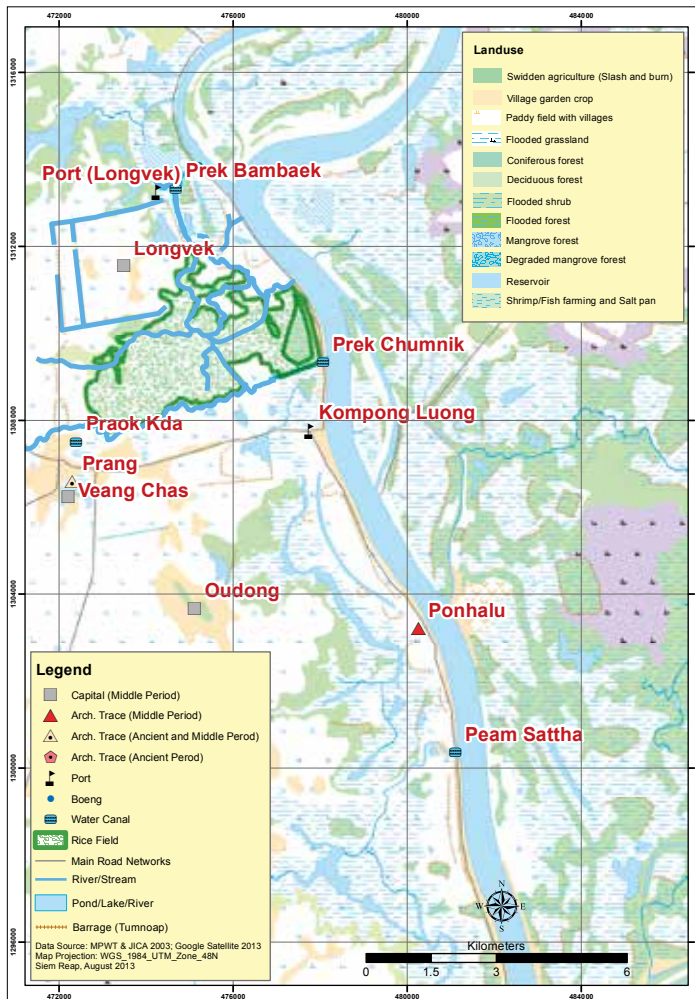
The regions of Longvek and Oudong are located to the northwest of the present-day capital of Phnom Penh, around 40 km distance from the Spean Chroy Changwa (Japanese bridge) along National Road No. 5, in the direction to the Kompong Chnang and Batdambang provinces (Map 1, 2). The sites of Longvek and Oudong are situated on the west side of the Tonle Sap River, with both sites facing the river. Both sites lie at a distance of about 7 km from each other.

There are some historical and archaeological traces remaining in this region from the pre-Angkorian period, up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the Longvek site there are traces such as Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, and two enclosures of the Khmer capital in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, namely Prek Longvek and the port of Longvek. In the case of the Oudong site there are some historical traces such as the names Peam Sattha (the water canal of king Sattha), Ponhalu, Kompong Luong (or Royal port), Prek Chumnik or Peam Chumnik, Veang Chas (or ancient palace), Prang or Wat Prang, and the mountain group called Phnom Preah Reach Troap (see., Map 9).

#### 1.1. Description of the Site of Longvek

According to the Royal Chronicles, king Ang Chan established Longvek as capital in 1526 AD, and it was looted and burned down by the Siamese in 1594 AD during the reign of king Satthā, a grandson of king Ang Chan. During 68 years Cambodia prospered and was politically equal to Siam, and Longvek was a stronghold capital to protect it from threats by the Siamese. The

<sup>137</sup> Unfortunately we could not find any data related to the annual production of rice or the rice export in this area, from the government sector or NGO.



Map 9 General map of Longvek-Oudong

since the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods. According to the VJ chronicle, during the reign of king Ang Chan, many Buddhist temples (Vihear) and statues were erected throughout the country. The Wat Tralaeng Kaeng was built at Longvek, along with the installation of Buddhist statues. A big Buddha statue in stone was erected and installed on the peak of the mountain, namely Phnom Preah Reach Troap.

### Wat Tralaeng Kaeng

In the compound of Wat Tralaeng Kaeng (the four-sided or cruciform temple) there are two Vihears on the same basement and one pond (Ph. 38). The present-day Vihears were renovated at the origin of the old basement, surrounded by sandstone Sīma. Inside the Vihear, we have the four sides of the Buddha statues made of wood, facing all directions, and fragments of Buddha's foot made of sandstone. The original of the Buddha statue was probably shattered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Siamese invaded the capital. Information related to the origin of the Buddha statue is also mentioned

138 Cœdès 1966: 96-97. See also Vickery 1998: 107. M. Vickery suggests that K. 137 may be related to K. 24 and K. 600 from Angkor Borei, which is dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

capital Longvek was established on the west side of the Tone Sap River, midway to the Grand Lake of Tonle Sap at the north, and at a confluence of the Mekong at the south where it joins it at Catumukh (Phnom Penh). Even though we have difficulty pointing out the exact place of the royal palace due to the site being in a very ruined condition and due to the lack of scientific excavation, we found some traces of the double enclosures or protected embankment of the capital, moat, old terraces, and some other laterite blocks, and Sīma (boundary stones) (Ph. 34, 35, 36, 37). Some ancient inscriptions were found at the site of Longvek.

According to the inscriptions of Longvek K. 136 & 137 that are dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>138</sup> it can be suggested that the site of Longvek was already occupied



Ph. 34 1<sup>st</sup> embankment of Longvek city



Ph. 35 Moat of Longvek city



Ph. 36 Basement of Vihear, laterite blocks



Ph. 37 Sīma, or the boundary stone, Wat Tralaeng Kaeng

in the VJ chronicle and chronicle 48 (II).

The VJ chronicle mentions the following: “one day when the king (king Ang Chan) strolled in the forest, he found a block of stone on a tree of Koki (*Hopea odorata*). The king ordered the ministers to bring the tree and the block of stone to the royal palace. The king ordered the artisan to sculpt the branch of the tree into four Buddha statues, arranged in cross, the backs attached each other, and facing the four directions. The stone was decorated as a pedestal to support the Buddha statues. Then the king ordered them to install the Buddha statues in a Vihear, and he gave them the official name of Wat Tralaeng Kaeng.”

According to M. Giteau, the name Tralaeng Kaeng was given to express the four faces of the Buddha statues, and the architectural plan of the temple was cruciform, which is also found to be of the same style as a temple in the northeast of Thailand, namely Wat Phumin.<sup>139</sup> The name of Tralaeng Kaeng was also mentioned in the middle period inscription of Angkor Wat, IMA 4. In the inscription, the name was written as “*prāsāt tralaenkaen*” made of stone by a minister. The temple was constructed to keep the four faces of the Buddha statues.<sup>140</sup>

E. Aymonier, who came to the site at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also mentioned Wat Tralaeng

<sup>139</sup> For details of the description of Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, see Giteau 1975: 78-79.

<sup>140</sup> Pou 1971: 109.



Kaeng. He remarked as follows: “...Un massif de terre levée, haut de 15 à 20 mètres, en form de croix, dont la branche orientale était plus allongée, supportait, à l’entre-croisement de ses bras, un soubassement rectangulaire en limonite que surmontait vers son extrémité occidentale la quadruple statue de Buddha faisant face aux quatre points cardinaux...”<sup>141</sup> The description of E. Aymonier at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century about the cruciform terrace and the Buddha statues does not differ from their present condition, but the structure of the Vihear itself seems to be ruined or destroyed compared to what it was in the past.

#### Prek Longvek (Ph. 38)

Prek Longvek or the man-made canal of Longvek is a water break, which was dug to make a canal connecting the Tonle Sap to the capital of Longvek. It lies at a distance of about 1 km from the break point of the Tonle Sap to the port (Longvek?) (Ph. 39, 40),<sup>142</sup> and from the port it is about 1.3 kms to the Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, and about 30 m wide at the mouth of the break point. The canal of Prek Longvek come to the connected point with other waterways, which is one connected to the Krang Ponlei River and another to Spean Po.<sup>143</sup> The joint place is called Prek Bambaek (Map 10). There is no doubt that this water canal was used for communication by the people in this area, a connecting route for merchants from other areas, and for the irrigation.

Even though we don’t know the exact date of this canal, it was perhaps dug during the establishment of the capital of Longvek, if we look at its geographical features. At present during the rainy season this canal is still used as a means of transportation, connecting between the Longvek area and other villages along the Tonle Sap River, and it is still functional regarding the irrigation system. According to the villagers, in the area to the east of Longvek site only Srov Prang can be cultivated, since this area is flooded during the rainy season. In one hectare of land, they could produce around 4 tons of rice. Besides cultivating the rice, this area can produce crops such as, corn, potatoes, and beans.



Ph. 38 Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, viewing from the east.



Ph. 39 Prek Longvek



Ph. 40 Port of Longvek; at the present day the villagers still use this port in the rainy season.

<sup>141</sup> Aymonier 1900: 224.

<sup>142</sup> The name of the port (Longvek) has been created by the author, since it has no name. At present during the rainy season this place is used as a port for communication between the people living in the Longvek area and those living along the Tonle Sap River, especially people living around Prek Longvek. This port was probably used since ancient times, based on the geographical area.

<sup>143</sup> Krang Ponlei River and Spean Po waterway are the water sources from the Oral mountains.





Map 10 Prek and waterway systems at the site of Longvek

## 1.2. Description of the Site of Oudong

According to the chronicles, Oudong became a capital of the Khmer in the Middle Period in the reign of king Jayajetthā II (1619-1627) after the sacking of the capital of Longvek by the Siamese, until the reign of Ang Duong (1840-1860). Compared to other Khmer capitals in the Middle Period, Oudong was for a long time a capital, for more than 3 centuries and a half. During the Oudong period, Cambodia was under the intervention of Siam and Vietnam, and internal conflicts among the Khmer kings. Also, it was a struggle period in terms of politics and economics among the Cham, Malays, and Europeans (especially the Dutch) in Cambodian territory. The capital Oudong is located about 7 km from the capital of Longvek, and opens to the Tonle Sap. At present, it is situated on the west side of National Road No. 5.

As mentioned above, the hill of Oudong was already used by king Ang Chan to erect a grand Buddha statue. Based on the chronicles, after the death of king Srī Suriyobarm (Paramarājā III, 1602-1619), king Jayajetthā decided to establish the capital and build a Chedei or stupa on the top of Phnom Preah Reach Troap,<sup>144</sup> namely Trai Troeng.<sup>145</sup> Besides a grand Buddha statue and Chedei Trai Troeng, which were erected in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are many stupas, ruins, and pagodas

<sup>144</sup> We can not provide the exact meaning of the proper name of Phnom Preah Reach Troap, but it can be translated as a “holy royal heritage hill,” which comes from a combination of the word Phnom meaning “hill or mountain,” Preah meaning “holy, sacred, divine”, Reach meaning “royal”, and Troap meaning “heritage, property”.

<sup>145</sup> Trai Troeng means “a residence of the god Indra”.

on the hill. There are at least 16 stupas on the hill,<sup>146</sup> and all belonged to the royal family, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20 century. However, the stupas that can be identified are Chedei Trai Troeng, Chedei Preah Saṅṅhā, Chedei Preah Aṅg Eñ, Chedei Preah Ang Duong, Chedei Preah Sisowath, and the most famous is a grand stupa of Shakyamuni Chedei that was built under the orders of king Norodom Sihanouk.

There are also many historical and archaeological traces surrounding the area of Oudong. Those traces are for instance Peam Saṅṅhā (a canal of king Sattha), Ponhalu or Ponhea Lu (a place where there used to be a Japanese village or quarter in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and which was recorded in the Dutch account),<sup>147</sup> Kompong Luong (a royal port),<sup>148</sup> Prek or Peam Chumnik (a water canal which is believed to have been dug during the reign of Ang Duong), Prang (a stupa that was built on the ancient temple),<sup>149</sup> and Veang Chas (the old palace) (Map 9).

## **2. Political Context of the Establishment of the Capital of Longvek**

### **2.1. Foundation of the Capital of Longvek**

In 1516, king Ang Chan returned to Cambodia after his exile in Siam for years, after Sṅec Kan had killed his brother king Srī Sugandhapad.<sup>150</sup> As mentioned in Chapter III, Sṅec Kan was very powerful and was considered a local hero in the area of Srei Santhor. During his rule, the territories under his control had no movement to oppose him. He led the country peacefully to prosperity. This fact is based on the chronicles. However, Sṅec Kan had no blood links to the royal family and he became a ruler without the law on his side, on account of which the chronicles describe him as a usurper. Since Sṅec Kan was not a legitimate king or ruler, king Ang Chan had a right to get the throne back, according to the law of the country. Hence, king Ang Chan prepared to attack Sṅec Kan in order to recover the throne.

When king Ang Chan escaped to Siam from the threat of Sṅec Kan, he asked the king of Siam to help him to fight Sṅec Kan, but it took too long for him to wait for the help. According to the VJ chronicle, at that time Siam was also busy fighting with the Mon (Burma). King Ang Chan decided to come back to Cambodia but it was not easy to ask permission from the king of Siam. At that time in Siam, to hunt a white elephant was very popular, since it was believed that a white elephant was strong and powerful for use in the war.<sup>151</sup>

Then, king Ang Chan played a trick. He promised the Siamese king to hunt a big white elephant,

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146 Men 2007: 21.

147 Iwao 1995.

148 The name Kompong Luong appears in the chronicles (especially the VJ chronicle) when King Jayajetṅhā came to build the palace at Oudong in 1620.

149 We cannot identify the exact date but we found some fragments of sandstone around the area and its basement, which probably belonged to the Angkorian period.

150 The date of the return of king Ang Chan to Cambodia is quite close, in the VJ and Garnier versions, but it is 14 years different from the chronicle of P/48 (II). The date mentioned in P/48 (II) was 1530 AD. However, the event of the return of king Ang Chan and the war with Sṅec Kan was the same.

151 There is a well-known legend related to a white elephant, called “Sṅec ṅamrī sa” in Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. This legend is always narrated with reference to the ancient temple in Cambodia, as well as in Thailand and Laos, and at present too the white elephant became a local spirit in the community living around the temples.

and when the Siamese king allowed him to hunt the elephant in the forest, he escaped to Cambodia. At first he came to Batdambang, and then established his residence at Pursat. With the help from Tā Mīoeñ,<sup>152</sup> many mandarins and people returned to join with him in attacking Sṭec Kan. According to the VJ chronicle, the war between king Ang Chan and Sṭec Kan continued until 1525, when Sṭec Kan was arrested and killed. After the death of Sṭec Kan, king Ang Chan ordered his ministers to build a new city at Longvek. In 1529, he left Pursat and came to be crowned at Longvek, under the name Paramarājā II.

Here, with regard to the choice of Longvek as the capital of king Ang Chan and his not continuing to reign in Srei Santhor, there is no mention in the chronicle and other documents. However, when we look at the political circumstances between king Ang Chan and Sṭec Kan, it seems as though the decision to establish the capital at Longvek was politically motivated in order to avoid problems with the local people at Srei Santhor, because the area of Srei Santhor was a stronghold of Sṭec Kan, and since he himself had not yet ruled in the area. As mentioned repeatedly above, Sṭec Kan was a popular ruler in that region.

On the other hand, even though the capital was established in Longvek, in the history of Cambodia from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Srei Santhor had never been abandoned. Srei Santhor was still a strategic place for both politics and economics. For example, for the event of the fall of Longvek, when the king Saṭṭhā had trouble with the Siamese who attacked in Longvek, he escaped to Srei Santhor. As mentioned in the Chapter III, according to the European sources Srei Santhor was a very populated area, when compared to Longvek and Catumukh.

## **2.2. Situation during the Reign of King Ang Chan**

Since king Ang Chan occupied the throne after taking it back from Sṭac Kan, he did not pay homage to Ayutthaya. The Siamese king was very displeased at this, since king Ang Chan had enjoyed his hospitality during his stay in Ayutthaya. Thus, in 1536, the Siam king ordered Siddhien Rājā (Pañā Uñ) to lead his soldiers and attack king Ang Chan in order to bring Srok Khmer (Cambodia) under Siam's suzerainty. However, the plan of the invasion failed and Siddhien Rājā died at Pursat. In the Siamese chronicles mention is made of a Cambodian raid on the Pascim in 1531, and that was the reason for the Siamese taking their revenge, with their attack by land and water. Also, it is mentioned that the Siamese soldiers won a great victory over the Khmer soldiers.<sup>153</sup> It seems as though the chronicles on each side have divergent accounts concerning the event.

However, Garnier's version and one Siamese chronicle (Hluong Prasoat Aksornit)<sup>154</sup> seem to have patched up the event, though the date is different. Each chronicle appears to confirm the fact that the date of the Siamese soldiers' attack was around 1555-56, and that Siddhien Rājā died at Pursat.<sup>155</sup> At that time Siam was also having trouble in their war with the Burmese, which led

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152 Tā Mīoeñ was a servant close to king Ang Chan, and he became chief of soldiers after king Ang Chan got the throne.

153 According to B. P. Groslier, the date of the revenge was in 1532-33. Groslier 1958: 14.

154 Hluong Prasoat Aksornit (in short, Hluong Prasoat) was compiled in 1680 in the reign of king Narayana. Cf., Frankfurter 1909: 1-21.

155 Frankfurter 1909: 12. See also, Garnier 1871: 350.

Cambodia to have priority over Siam.<sup>156</sup> Since then, during the reign of king Ang Chan, Cambodia had been experiencing peace until his death in 1566.<sup>157</sup> It is said that king Ang Chan was a great king who ruled his country with peace, prosperity, and justice for at least 50 years. He was also the first king who occupied Angkor again, since the capital Angkor had been moved to the south. According to Garnier's version, it was in 1540 that he had defeated the Siamese at Angkor.<sup>158</sup> During his occupation, it would appear as though he had made a wall carving at the northeast gallery of Angkor in 1546 and 1564.<sup>159</sup> Another evidence comes from the European sources of Diogo do Couto (a Portuguese), who came to Cambodia during the period 1543-1616. Diogo do Couto described the fact that the Khmer king came to find elephants and discovered Angkor Thom.<sup>160</sup>

After the death of king Ang Chan, his son, king Paramarājā III<sup>161</sup> succeeded to the throne at Longvek. According to the VJ chronicle, in 1569 (1570 in the Hluong Prasoat chronicle),<sup>162</sup> the king had prepared his soldiers to proceed to Ayutthaya by way of both water and land. In the chronicle of Siam, the year 1569 had been marked by the fall of Ayutthaya owing to the conquest by the Burmese, who thoroughly looted the city and led thousands of prisoners, both commoners and nobles, away to captivity in Burma.<sup>163</sup> King Mahādharmarājā (1569-1590) was installed on the throne by right of conquest in Ayutthaya. Since then, it seems as though Ayutthaya was under the control of Sukhothai.

Khmer soldiers again controlled the western provinces of Cand Purī, Rayaan, Sāsien, and Pachim. At that time, because Ayutthaya was flooded by rain and the soldiers were unable to stand the fighting, they returned to Cambodia. In 1572, king Paramarājā III placed his son Saṭṭhā at Longvek, and he went to establish a place at Kompong Krasang (Sruk Nagar Vatt, present-day Siem Reap). King Paramarājā III raised soldiers to proceed to Nagar Rāja Semā, and brought back many prisoners.

In the same year, the king of Lāv (Laos) sent two ministers and 1,000 soldiers to Cambodia. The reason was to bring Cambodia under Lāv's suzerainty. With that the Lāv king forced the Khmer king to have a combat with elephants, because if one could attain victory by using an elephant, one would have to be recognized as a suzerain.<sup>164</sup> The combat took place at the south of Phnom Sanduk, which is now in the Kampong Thom province. In the combat, the Khmer elephant defeated the Lāv elephant, and the king did not allow the soldiers and elephant to return to Lāv. Hence, the king of

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156 For details of the war between Siam and Burma, see Frankfurter 1909: 8-12.

157 See the discussion in detail below concerning the date of the king Ang Chan's death.

158 Garnier 1871: 349.

159 Cœdès 1962: 235-248.

160 Groslier 1958: 21, 69

161 Paramarājā was born when his father king Ang Chan was at the war with Sṭec Kan.

162 According to the Hluong Prasoat chronicle, in 1569, Ayutthaya fell into the hands of the king of Pegu (Burmese king). But then the king of Pegu returned to Pegu, and just a year later the king of Longvek raised an army to proceed against Ayutthaya. Frankfurter 1909: 14.

163 Wyatt 1984: 100.

164 Juon's chronicle mentions the fact that the Laos king's name was Sīsatt Nakhun Hut, but there was no king by this name in the history of Laos in this period. During this period, Laos was under the control of General Bañā Saen who recaptured Vientiane after Lao's king Setṭāḍhirāt disappeared mysteriously during his campaign in the southern state. Bañā Saen proclaimed himself Regent (he reigned from 1571 to 1575). The Lao king who invaded Cambodia was probably Setṭāḍhirāt. Cf., Mathieu 1959: 31-49 (especially p. 37).

Lāv was furious that he could not bring Cambodia under his control, and in 1573 the king of Lāv prepared to invade Cambodia. The war between Cambodia and Lāv took two years, and finally his army was heavily defeated and the Lāv king mysteriously disappeared during the war.

### 3. Fall of Longvek

#### 3.1. Political Context

According to the VJ chronicle, Paramarājā III died in 1579 (1576 in Garnier's version) and his son Saṭṭhā succeeded to the throne at Longvek under the royal title of Mahindarājā<sup>165</sup> (Paramarājā IV in other chronicles). Before king Paramarājā III's death, there had been negotiations to have peace between Cambodia and Siam. When king Saṭṭhā attained the throne, he decided to conclude a treaty between the two countries. At that time Siam was under the reign of Mahādhamarājā (1568-1590). During the reign of Mahādhamarājā, Siam was attacked several times by the Burmese with the joint forces of the Prince of Chiengmai.<sup>166</sup> After concluding a treaty, king Saṭṭhā sent an army under the command of Mahā Uparāja<sup>167</sup> Srī Suriyobarm, to assist in the attack on the Burmese. The Siamese army was led by Uparāja Naresūr,<sup>168</sup> the oldest son of king Mahādhamarājā.

With the cooperation of the Khmer army the Siamese defeated the Burmese, but the result was adverse. The VJ chronicle states that there arose a dispute between Naresūr and Srī Suriyobarm on the way back to Ayutthaya. Srī Suriyobarm was very upset at the impertinence of Naresūr in cutting the heads of Lāv prisoners in front of him. Srī Suriyobarm returned to Longvek and informed king Saṭṭhā about the bad manners of Naresūr. A consequent quarrel between the Siamese prince and the Cambodian prince worsened, and king Saṭṭhā decided to forsake his alliance with Siam. Naresūr was greatly insulted by the treatment and he started to prepare an army to fight Srok Khmer. However his father king Mahādhamarājā refused to make war on Khmer in this situation, because the Burmese armies had advanced upon Ayutthaya. Later, the Burmese again surrounded Ayutthaya. King Saṭṭhā had the advantage of raiding Ayutthaya, and he seized Nagar Rāja Semā and Pascim.

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165 The name Mahindarājā is mentioned only in Juon's chronicle, and another chronicle mentions the name Paramahidarājā (the chronicle found in the library of Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh, which is an unknown source, "Rājabaṅsāvatar Khmer". But A. Leclère had already used some parts of this chronicle in his book, *Histoire du Cambodge*, 1914, and other chronicles named Paramrājā. The middle period inscription called "IMA 3," speaks of *satyaprandhān*, "Wish of the truth," of the king name "samtec braḥ jayajetṭhādhirājaonkār paramarājā dhirāj rāmādhipatī cṛitrībhavanādityabarmm dhammīkarāj..." Cf. Pou 1970: 107. In the expression of the royal honorific the crown name follows the term Onkār. It means that the name of the king was Paramarājā and jayajetṭhā [dhirāj] was the name before coronation. Cf., Khin Sok 1991: 30. In the European source his name is "Apram Langara" which meant "lame." Since the king was lame they called him by that name. See San Antonio 1998: 10.

166 Cœdès 1967: 154.

167 Mahā Uparāja is the original Sanskrit word. Mahā means "grand", and in this case the term signifies the role of the high rank of a dignitary; Upa means "second", and Rāja means "king", so the compound means "the grand vice-king" or the term can be translated into English as viceroy. The king always gives this title. Prince Srī Suriyobarm was chosen as Mahā Uparāja by king Saṭṭhā after he got the throne. Prince Srī Suriyobarm was the younger brother of king Saṭṭhā, but of a different mother.

168 Naresūr is also known as Naret or the Black Prince in foreign records. The name Naresūr derives from the Sanskrit term "nara + īśvara", means "Master of Humans". The Siamese call him "Naresuon", in Khmer "Nores (translit. Nares)", or "Noreso (translit. Naresūr).

Wyatt emphasized the fact that the Khmer army attacked Siam at least six times (in 1570, 1575, 1578, 1582 (twice), and 1587).<sup>169</sup>

In 1586 king Saṭṭhā made a decision to relinquish the throne to his two sons, Jayajetṭhā 11 years old and Cau Bañā Tan' (his name when crowned was Paramarājā V) 6 years old. He also decided to change the title of Srī Suriyobarm from Mahā Uparāja to Mahā Ubhayorāja.<sup>170</sup> However, this decision was not supported or encouraged by Srī Suriyobarm and other royal members and mandarins. The union of the royal family and mandarins had detracted from protecting the country, and Cambodia at that time was in turmoil and uncontrolled. This caused the Khmer to begin losing power and the mentality to protect the kingdom and country, and even resisting the Siamese received less consideration.

In contrast, Ayutthaya was well organized in protecting their territory by their king Naresūr. After the death of king Mahādhamarājā in 1590, Naresūr became king of Ayutthaya. It had been remarked that Naresūr was a great king for bringing Ayutthaya into a wider world, and for giving the kingdom advantages over its neighbors. He was capable of leading the army against Cambodia, and he also threatened to shake the powerful Burmese country apart. Since then, Ayutthaya has remained an important international trading center.<sup>171</sup>

According to the Cambodian chronicles, Naresūr never forgot his personal quarrel with Srī Suriyobarm, due to which he always attempted to attack Cambodia. In 1588, Naresūr led his army to seize Nagar Rāja Semā and Pascim, and again in 1592 he made the army proceed on a raid to Longvek.<sup>172</sup> Within three months, Ayutthaya defeated the Khmer at the front line, and the Siamese controlled Batdambang, Pursat, and Baribo. Then, the Siamese armies proceeded to surround the city of Longvek. Some economic historians have suggested that the event of the Siamese attacked on Longvek as well as the invasion of the capital Angkor in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was to control the port city.

However, if we look at the situation when the Siamese occupied Angkor, we see that it was not all that long. It seems that after their victory they left Angkor in the forest, since Angkor was perhaps not a beneficial place anymore. The evidence is that when king Ang Chan returned to Angkor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a fact that was recorded in the Portuguese document, Angkor Thom was in a ruined condition and covered by vegetation and the forest, and when the Siamese gained a victory over the Khmer at the capital of Longvek, king Naresūr did not march his army to Catumukh, which was a commercial city at that time. After he had sacked Longvek he returned to Ayutthaya and ordered only some soldiers to remain there (see the description below). If Naresūr's ambition was to take control of the port city of Catumukh, then he had to advance his troops towards it, and not stay for a short time in Longvek. Rather, it should be simply suggested that the Siamese invasion of Angkor and Longvek was to extend their power and territory, and it can also be related to the political

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169 Wyatt 1984: 100.

170 Mahā Ubhayorāja was the title for the abdicated king.

171 Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 101-104.

172 According to Wyatt, in the same year of 1592 in October, Naresūr sent a mission to China, offering to send the Siamese navy against Japan. At that time, Japan under Toyotomi Hideyoshi had begun to expand its trade in Asia.

atmosphere at that time, but not the economic one.

The siege of Longvek lasted for three months. The Siamese were lacking in food, and with the well resistant armies led by Srī Suriyobarm, Naresūr ordered his soldiers to retreat. The Khmer king had prepared his soldiers again to protect the area at the fronts. The royal families and ministers led in each battle. According to the chronicle P/48 (II), at the end of 1593,<sup>173</sup> the Siamese armies invaded again on two fronts, by land and water. Naresūr organized his armies at Longvek through Batbambang, and a number of his soldiers came by Kompong Som, Preah Trapeang, and Kampot (in the VJ chronicle). According to the chronicle P/48 (II), it seems as though Batdambang and Pursat fell to the Siamese without any strong resistance. This opportunity offered the Siamese soldiers a means of entering very fast into the city of Longvek, with all their power. In the VJ chronicle it is stated that Mahā Ubhayorāja allowed the Siamese king Naresūr to enter Longvek, offering him a warm welcome.

Finally, Longvek was burned down and controlled by the Siamese in January 1594.<sup>174</sup> The fall of Longvek in 1594 has been marked as a catastrophic event in Cambodian history, and as the destruction of the last grand capital city after Angkor city. This disastrous event has some causes from the historical and socio-political viewpoints. One reason was the invasion of the neighboring country, which occurred while the royal family members within the country were embroiled in turmoil over the sharing of power. Factions began to form among the royal family members and the mandarins, and so they could not carry out their duties for the country. All of these cases have been noted as the principle causes that brought an end to the capital of Longvek.

This event also ushered in a dark age to the later Khmer period, because the capital was burned down, the sacred documents of the country were destroyed, and most of the Khmer scholars were taken to Siam. Moreover, the union of the king and the mandarins to protect the country had started to detract from the patriotic spirit. The country had continuously faced many troubles, not only among the Khmers but also with foreigners. The independent and prosperous time from the reign of king Ang Chan at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century for almost 50 years had ended. The later periods after the sacking of Longvek by the Siamese king Naresūr, mark for Cambodia its decline. The Khmer mind has never forgotten this event, and it remains alive for them until the present day. Many stories and oral traditions were created, that were related to this painful event.

### **3.2. The Situation after the Fall of Longvek**

Chronicle P/48 (II) narrates the fact that king Saṭṭhā fled to Srei Santhor,<sup>175</sup> and then to Laos with his two sons. The Siamese soldiers arrested the rest of the royal families members. In the same

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173 Other chronicles such as chronicle of VJ, Vatt Kok Kak, and others do not mention or reveal clearly the date of this event.

174 The date of the fall of Longvek in January 1594 was strongly concluded by B. P. Groslier, through his study of the European sources; Cf. Groslier 1958: 19. The chronicle P/48 (II) gives the date of the Siamese attack in the month of Bus, the year of Msāñ (serpent) 1515 *śaka*, which means that it was in December 1593 or January 1594.

175 The name Srei Santhor (or Srī Sandhar) seems to be an echo of an ancient name of Angkor city at the end of the ninth century and beginning of the tenth century, namely Srī Yaśodharapura, established by the king Yaśovarman I.

year as the Siamese victory at Longvek, Siam was attacked again by Burma. The Siamese king Naresūr had to return to Siam in order to resist the Burmese. In 1595, king Naresūr left his minister in place at Oudong and returned to Siam. When returning, Naresūr took Mahā Ubhayorāja Srī Suriyobarm and their families, and thousands of other Khmer families to Ayutthaya.<sup>176</sup> He made a promise to let Srī Suriyobarm go back to Cambodia.

During the occupation by Siamese soldiers at Oudong, a royal line Braḥ Vaṅs,<sup>177</sup> under the title-name Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai,<sup>178</sup> reunited the soldiers to attack the Siamese soldiers at Oudong. There was no information in detail related to Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai before this event. This information is mentioned in a few sources, such as in P57 that mentions that he used to be a son of a king at Treang under the title-name Abhayadas, and in the chronicle of Dik Vil (DV) he had the name Uṅ or Rāmādhīpatī Uṅ, a chief of the Braḥ Vaṅs.<sup>179</sup> He had been living in the Joeṅ Brai province, but the royal chronicles do not describe clearly where he originally came from. According to the VJ chronicle, his personal name was Jay and he got married to a daughter of a rich family in Joeṅ Brai province, name Sṭoeṅ. According to fragment 1170, Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai had two sons, named Nāk Noṅ (Anak Nan) and Nāk Nū (Anak Nū).<sup>180</sup>

Before Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai took power and the throne, according to the VJ chronicle he came to visit king Saṭṭhā very often in order to get more power. When king Saṭṭhā escaped from the capital of Longvek with his family to Srei Santhor, Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai came to meet king Saṭṭhā and promised to help him in fighting with the Siamese. Then, king Saṭṭhā provided him more power and he became more popular in other areas. With his ambition, he had preferred not only to become a king, but also fancied all the king's consorts and concubines. He was rejected and blamed by king Saṭṭhā for acting dishonorably. Some chronicles (P/48 (I), and KK) describe his disgrace and disfavor. Particularly, P/48 (I) mentions the fact that Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai desired a grand consort (*aggamaheṣṭī*) of the king, which caused the situation to become worse with regard to the relationship between the king and Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai.

According to the VJ chronicle, after king Saṭṭhā rejected his desire and treated him as a betrayer, Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai was very displeased with the king. Then, he propagated among the people and his soldiers the fact that the king does not follow and respect the *dharma*, by destroying sacred

176 The Siamese capture of the Khmer and their being taken back to Siam is also described in the account of the Portuguese and Spaniards, who came to Cambodia during the Siamese invasion in Cambodia. Cl., Blair & Robertson 1973.

177 Braḥ Vaṅs are descendants who had exceeded five generations. They are not considered a royal family. Cf., Moura 1883: 325.

178 Europeans call him Huncar Prabantul, and in the correction of the transliteration “Okñā Brah Pantūl,” it is a title name. He is also called by the Spaniards Anacapan Prabantul “Anak Param Brah Pantūl”. San Antonio 1998: 11, and see also note No. 53. We propose to use the name Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai, since all Cambodian chronicles use it, and it is a well-known name that has lasted until the present. According to the VJ chronicle, people called him “Braḥ Rām Joeṅ Brai”, because he liked to walk cross the forest from one place to another.

179 There are different sources providing different information on his relationship to previous kings or his background before getting the throne. According to European sources such as that of Antonio de Morga, he was a mandarin, and for Père Diego Aduarte he was one of the chiefs of the kingdom, for Blas Ruiz he was a son of a brother of a wife of Paramarājā III. Mak Phoeun 1995: 48. He is also mentioned as a first cousin of king Saṭṭhā who took hold of the kingdom when king Saṭṭhā fled to Laos. See, San Antonio, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

180 Vickery 1978: 207.



Buddha statues, and that this led to the destruction of the country by the Siamese. He proclaimed that he would seek a good royal family member to be crowned. After such propagation, his followers believed him and joined his army to attack king Saṭṭhā at night. King Saṭṭhā and his family escaped to Stung Treng. In the VJ chronicle and P/48 (I) it is mentioned that king Saṭṭhā died at Stung Treng because of a disease. However, the description in other chronicles speak of the escape of the king Saṭṭhā from Longvek to other areas, and describe his death as having occurred in a different place.

Fragment 1170 (cited in Vickery, 1978), KK, P/48 (II), and Garnier's version, mention that king Saṭṭhā fled to Srei Santhor, and then to Laos, where he died. According to European sources it is said that the king died in Laos, and that two people, namely Captain Diego Beloso and Blas Ruiz, assisted the king's son to recover the throne. This information is presented in letters from the king's son to Governor Don Francisco Tello and Doctor Antonio de Morga, as follows.

"I, Prauncar,<sup>181</sup> king of the rich land of Camboja, I, sole lord of it, the great, cherish an ardent love for Doctor Antonio de Morga, whom I am unable to keep from my thoughts, because I have learned through Captain Chofa Don Blas, the Castilian, that he, from the kindness of his heart, took an active part and has assisted the governor of Luzon to send to this country Captain Chofa Don Diego, the Portuguese, with soldiers to find king Prauncar my father. Having searched for him in vain, the two chofas and the soldiers killed Anacapan<sup>182</sup>, who was reigning as sole great lord. Then they went with their ships to Cochinchina, whence the two chofas went to Laos to find the king of this land. They brought me back to my kingdom, and I am here through their aid..."<sup>183</sup>

Therefore, among the Cambodian chronicles, fragment 1170, KK, P/48 (II) and Garnier's version provide accounts similar to the European sources, while other chronicles like VJ and P/48 (I) are inaccurate, though VJ describes the event in more detail than other chronicles. Whatever, the escape of king Saṭṭhā to Srei Santhor and then to Laos was not the only thing caused by the Siamese attack, since it was also caused by the depression of Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai.

After the escape of king Saṭṭhā to Laos, Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai took all the king's property and gathered the people to become soldiers. In 1595, he drove all the Siamese soldiers out of the area of Oudong. After his victory and since the royal families were not in the country, and especially since Srī Suriyobarm's family was captured and taken to Ayutthaya, Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai proclaimed himself king.<sup>184</sup> He restored the area of Srei Santhor and reigned there, and not in Longvek. The reestablishment of the capital at Srei Santhor by Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai was geographically more secure to protect the capital from the threat of the Siamese, and perhaps the people were more familiar with him and he could exercise his power more easily, than the people in Longvek who still had a sense of loyalty to king Saṭṭhā. Moreover, the area itself was perhaps more strategic and facilities were better both politically and economically compared to Longvek, as we had described in Chapter III.

At the time when Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai ruled at Srei Santhor, a Portuguese named Diego Beloso

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181 In the Cambodian chronicle named Paramarāja V (Cau Bañā Tan'), the future king after Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai.

182 The name used by Europeans for Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai.

183 Blair and Robertson 1973: 136-37.

184 The event of Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai anointing himself a king was mentioned in the account of San Antonio in 1604; See San Antonio 1998: 10-11, 17-18.

and a Spaniard, Captain Blas Ruis de Herman Gonzalez, arrived in Cambodia. The situation did not go well in the relationship between Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai and the two foreigners, because when they learned about the new king's wish they tried to murder Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai. Captain Blas Ruis tried to find a way to Srei Santhor to meet Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai. Finally he got permission from the new king to present him with a gift at Sistor (Srei Santhor). Using this opportunity, Blas Ruis and another Diego Aduart decided to attack the king. In accordance with their plans the king's wife was hit by a bullet and died, when the king tried to flee from the palace.<sup>185</sup> After Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai died, Diego Belloso and Blas Ruis went to Laos and met king Apram Langara (in the chronicle his name is Cau Bañā Tan'), and helped him to return to Cambodia and reign at Srei Santhor.<sup>186</sup>

The information that Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai was killed by the two foreigners was also described in the letter of king Cau Bañā Tan' to Antonio de Morga (who wrote about the "Event of the Philippines Islands"). In the letter of Cau Bañā Tan' it is mentioned that Blas Ruis and Diego Belloso went to Laos to find him and took him to Cambodia, after they had killed Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai.<sup>187</sup> This event is also mentioned in the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, though the story in the chronicles describes no details and is slightly different from the European sources.

The chronicle of P/48 (II) mentions very briefly that there were two Barangs<sup>188</sup> who came to meet the king Saṭṭhā and his son in Laos, then after king Saṭṭhā died, the two Barangs invited the son to come back to Cambodia. In the VJ chronicle it is mentioned that the two Barangs met Cau Bañā Tan' in Thbong Khmum (presently in the Kompong Cham province), and not in Laos, after they came from Laos. The chronicle describes both of them as the adopted younger siblings of king Saṭṭhā. When they knew about the situation, they came to Srei Sa Chor<sup>189</sup> (Srei Santhor), and finally met Braḥ Rām (Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai). Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai learned that the two of them had a relationship with king Saṭṭhā, and so he wanted to kill them. But the two Barangs knew the situation and so they tricked Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai by asking him to go hunting animals together with them in the forest. At night they killed Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai, when he was sleeping.

After Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai died, Cau Bañā Tan' who took the name Paramarājā succeeded to the throne in 1598 and reigned at Srei Santhor. King Cau Bañā Tan' reigned only 1 year and died. At that time there were two Cāms, named Po Rat and Lakṣmaṇa, who came to make war on king Cau Bañā Tan'. In the chronicles it is mentioned that the Cāms killed the two Barangs, and then assassinated the king. After the king died they controlled the area of Thbong Khmum. In the Cambodian Chronicles less mention is made about the event of the war between Cambodia and Champa, during the reign of Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai. Referring to the European sources, Professor Mak Phoeun asserted that Cambodia was also attacked from the east, and that was by the kingdom of Champa.<sup>190</sup>

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185 San Antonio 1998: 21.

186 *Ibit.*, 30-31.

187 Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, 136-37.

188 All chronicles mention the word Barang, which is French, to refer to Europeans. Even today in remote areas in Cambodia when they see Foreigners, they call "Barang".

189 Srei Sa Chor is often used in the VJ chronicle to refer to the name of Srei Santhor. Srei Sa Chor means "a white lady stand."

190 For the details regarding the war with Champa see Mak Phoeun 1995: 64-66.

According to the VJ chronicle, after king Cau Bañā Tan' died, some religious dignitaries, Brahmins in the royal palace, and religious members invited prince Cau Bañā An (an uncle of Cau Bañā Tan'), princess Devāksatrā (the daughter of King Ang Chan), and prince Cau Bañā Ñom (another youngest son of king Saṭṭhā) who resided at Phnom Peam Cheang, to Srei Santhor. In 1599, Cau Bañā An succeeded to the throne at Srei Santhor, under the name Paramarājā (VI). King Cau Bañā An reigned at Srei Santhor for about one year and died. The death of king Cau Bañā An, according to the chronicles, was caused by an assassination. King Cau Bañā An ruled the country unjustly, and so during his reign there were a lot of revolts in the country. In the year 1600, Kaev Braḥ Phloēn who came from the area near Phnom Penh assassinated him. The chronicles describe differently his rank and his origin, but most of the chronicles describe him as a rebel or sometimes a rebel governor.

After king Cau Bañā An was assassinated, his nephew prince Cau Bañā Ñom ascended the throne at Basan (Srei Santhor) and his title was Samṭec Braḥ Kaev Hvā. During his reign, the country was in turmoil, because he ruled the same way his uncle did. In the second year of his reign, princess Devīksatrī tried to help the country to get back into stability, but it seems as though power was in the hand of Braḥ Kaev Hvā, and so that the situation was unchanged. Then, princess Devīksatrī decided to seek the former *ubhayorāj* Srī Suriyobarm who stayed as a hostage in Siam.

### 3.3. Total Debacle or Soft Transfer?

According to Gregory Mikaelian<sup>191</sup> it is difficult to interpret the royal chronicles on this very important historical fact. Beyond what is said officially, this author seems to opt for the thesis of a soft assignment of power in Siam from Naresūr. The king Saṭṭhā had left Longvek quietly for Laos (where the king died), leaving his brother the viceroy Srī Suriyobarm, in control to ensure the physical preservation of the capital, not by fighting but by offering himself as hostage to the Siamese. Anyway, Srī Suriyobarm was indeed taken as a hostage to the court of Ayutthaya.

It must be said here that in the collective “memory”, or more exactly it is being said through the generations not only in Khmer but also among minorities such as the Pear, that the fall of Longvek was an absolute tragedy. So there is a phrase that every Cambodian (at least, minorities like the Pear) knows: *sṭem kier*,<sup>192</sup> “deported by the Siamese.” Many associated the phenomenon with the fall of Longvek. The anthropologist Jean Ellul who conducted research among others in the Cardamom Mountain region, recorded in 1968 in the village of Peam Prus the words of invocation to the Neak Ta (protective spirit) of the place, at an annual ceremony. It contains a passage saying, “if we come to live in this region of forests and mountains, it is following a raid in which the Siamese have deported our brothers ...”<sup>193</sup> Even today, a few illiterate Suoy<sup>194</sup> who are ignorant regarding “history” associate their poverty and isolation specifically to the “fall of Longvek,” without their knowing of course when this phenomenon took place.

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191 Mikhaelian 2009: 113-14.

192 The word *kier* means, “to deport.” It connotes “in mass,” that is, “to deport a mass of people” with all that it entails, both inhuman and atrocious.

193 Information communicated with Prof. Ang Choulean.

194 In the group of ethnic Pear? Living in the region of Oral Mountain.

Was the fall of Longvek a human disaster, an absolute tragedy or a prepared debacle? In other words was the capital Longvek taken or sacked by the Siamese? I dare not decide. Nevertheless I think that wrongly or rightly Cambodians and others talk either directly of the (“fall of Longvek”) or indirectly of being (“deported by the Siamese”). The fall was not without drama, in life and in psychology. Had everything been prepared, accompanied... to soften, it is not impossible either, because basically there is no contradiction.

#### **4. Choice of Oudong and the Cambodian Recovery**

##### **4.1. State of the Region of Oudong**

The inscription of Phnom Bakheng K. 465 / K. 285 dates from 1583 AD,<sup>195</sup> and its author is a devout Buddhist from afar, probably northern Cambodia, who came to restore a pillar and statues of Buddha that lay ruined on the top of Phnom Bakheng. It is stated in the listing that before, that is to say prior to 1583 AD, the same person had restored fifty piles of ruined statues on the hill of the Phnom Preah Reach Traop at Oudong. Since statues of Buddha, probably wooden ones, were in disrepair at this time, there is reason to believe they had already been built a long time ago. According to the VJ chronicle, as mentioned above the statue of Buddha was erected in the reign of Ang Chan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In short, centered on the sacred hill of Phnom Preah Reach Troap, the region of Oudong was famous enough to attract pious Buddhists coming from afar,<sup>196</sup> and it was populated for a long time. Yet king Ang Chan chose to build his palace and his monastery not in the heart of Oudong, but about 7 km away, with an opening on the Tonle Sap. Probably in terms of “country,” Longvek and Oudong are one. But in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, socio-politically this country was distinct from Srei Santhor, and this enclave was formed by the Tonle Thom (Mekong) River, and its tributary the Tonle Toch.

As in the narrative history above, after the fall of Longvek, Cambodia was disorganized and lawless due to unjust and weak rulers, especially after Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai had reigned as king for a short time. There are three weak kings who led the kingdoms into the state of disorder, and until the return of Srī Suriyobarm, after which Cambodia gradually recovered and obtained independence from Siamese control. From the reign of king Srī Suriyobarm in 1602 until his son king Jayajettḥā who had established the capital of Oudong, Cambodia could match Siam in military strength.

##### **4.2. The Return of Srī Suriyobarm from Siam**

Srī Suriyobarm and some members of the royal family were captured and taken as hostages to Siam, when the Siamese conquered Longvek in 1594. Srī Suriyobarm stayed for 8 years in Siam until he received a letter from princess Devīksatrī. As mentioned above, during the reign of Braḥ Kaev Hvā (Cau Bañā Ñom), the country was unstable due to the injustice of the ruler. Princess Devīksatrī decided to send a letter secretly to Srī Suriyobarm, who still stayed in Siam. In the VJ chronicle it is mentioned that at that time he stayed at Khak Khyay. After receiving a letter from princess Devīksatrī, Srī Suriyobarm sent the letter to the Siamese King Naresūr.

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<sup>195</sup> Pou 1989: 20-27.

<sup>196</sup> The expression used in the inscription is “toer des,” which means “travel a long path.” Cf. Pou 1989: 25.

King Naresūr understood the situation and agreed to let Srī Suriyobarm come to Cambodia. However, king Naresūr asked Srī Suriyobarm to keep the two children at Ayutthaya, and promised to take care of them as though they were his own children. The VJ chronicle does not mention the names of his two children. The chronicle only mentions that the two children were born at Ayutthaya to princess Sūjātikṣatrī. From another version of the chronicle, Prof. Mak Phoeun stated that Srī Suriyobarm had four children, two daughters, namely Ekakṣatrī and Visuddhākṣatrī, and two sons, namely Jayajetṭhā and Uday.<sup>197</sup>

After accepting the request of the Siamese king to keep his two children, he returned to Cambodia. The VJ chronicle mentions that he came back with 3,000 Siamese soldiers via the sea. He arrived at Basac and met the governor of Basac named Ukañā Adhikavañsā, and then he reunited the soldiers and people. Many people and soldiers were from other areas such as the province of Preah Trapeang, Kramuon Sar, Moat Chrouk, Banteay Meas, Bati, and Prei Krabas. The army led by Ukañā Kralāhom “Kaev” came to attack Kaev Braḥ Phloēñ, and during the fighting, Kaev Braḥ Phloēñ was killed by a bullet.

After Kaev Braḥ Phloēñ died, Srī Suriyobarm marched the army through the river. When he arrived at Koh Slakaet<sup>198</sup> and saw the beautiful scenery there, he ordered the ministers to build a palace at Koh Slakaet. Based on the VJ chronicle, in the year 1602, he ascended the throne at the age of 55, after Kaev Braḥ Phloēñ (Cau Bañā Ñom) at Koh Slakaet. After ascending the throne, king Srī Suriyobarm sent a letter with a lot of tribute to king Naresūr, and in 1605 he decided to transfer the capital from Koh Slakaet to Lvea Em, which was located at a place facing Phnom Penh. Based on the chronicles F1170 and P57, the moving of the capital to Lvea Em was in 1608.<sup>199</sup> King Srī Suriyobarm reigned until 1618/9, and then he abdicated the throne in favor of his son Jayajetṭhā. After his abdication, about 3 months later in the year 1619, at the age of 72,<sup>200</sup> king Srī Suriyobarm passed away due to illness. The funeral ceremony was conducted at Lvea Em, but his urn was brought to be preserved in Chedei Traitroeng, Phnom Preah Reach Troap, and Oudong by king Jayajetṭhā in 1623. King Jayajetṭhā brought not only the urn of his father the king, but also the urns of his mother Braḥ Devīkṣatrī, grandfather king Saṭṭhā, and Braḥ Kaev Hvā to Phnom Preah Reach Troap.

During the reign of king Srī Suriyobarm the country still had rebels, as during the reign of Cau Bañā Tan’ and Cau Bañā Ñom. The rebels were in the first year of his reign, but he drove them away. The return of king Srī Suriyobarm was marked as bringing recovery and peace to Cambodia for years. Until the end of his reign there arose the Siamese threat again, and since the Siamese army was stronger than that of the Khmer, king Srī Suriyobarm sought the help of Vietnam.

At the end of his reign there developed his first relationship with the Vietnamese Nguyễn, by conducting the marriage of Prince Jayajetṭhā to a Vietnamese princess, namely Nguyễn’s daughter. The marriage was held on 1616/17 (based on the VJ). The VJ chronicle states that this relationship was to ask the Vietnamese for help in protecting the country from Siamese attacks. This relationship was distinctive, because in the later centuries Cambodia had begun to lose its territory piece by

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197 Mak Phoeun 1995: 104.

198 Koh Slakaet is close to Kien Svay, near present-day Phnom Penh.

199 Mak Phoeun, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

200 In the chronicle P/48 (II), the death of king Srī Suriyobarm was at the age of 64.

piece, especially the city of Prei Nokor (present day Saigon, in Vietnam). This event still remains in the memory of the Khmers, and it has even developed into an oral tradition, similar to the event of the fall of Longvek in the legend of Preah Ko and Preah Keo.

### 4.3. Jayajetthā and the Establishment of the Capital Oudong

According the chronicles, after king Jayajetthā ascended the throne, in 1620 he decided to move the capital from Lvea Em to Oudong. The chronicle P/48 (II) mentions that king Jayajetthā took his Vietnamese wife along and gave her the title Samṭec Braḥ Bhagavatī Varaksatṛī.<sup>201</sup> He had 3 children, named Bañā Tūr, Bañā Nūr, and Bañā Cand. His name also appears in the inscription of IMA 3 as being of an age of around 40 years.<sup>202</sup> Professor Mak Phoeun and Professor Khin Sok designated him as king Jayajetthā II, and king Jayajetthā I was the son of the king Saṭṭhā, who died in Laos.

Before king Jayajetthā II came to build the palace and capital at Oudong, he still resided at Lvea Em for 6 months, based on the VJ chronicle. Around mid-1620, the king traveled to many places. When he arrived at the province of Samrong Tong, he stayed there for several days. The area of Samrong Tong has many waterways flowing from the Oral Mountain, of which the biggest waterway is Stoeng Krang Ponlei.<sup>203</sup> The VJ chronicle mentions the fact that during the time king Jayajetthā II stayed at Samrong Tong, he reformed many legal codes of the kingdom, because the king saw that the kingdom was chaotic for many years, caused by the injustice and lawlessness of its rulers. Even though within 3 years of the beginning of his reign there were some disturbances caused by Siamese invasions in Khmer territory, until 1624 he reformed at least 24 codes completely, and promulgated them throughout his kingdom. The codes were to govern the administration and rule of the kingdom, and also to vanquish revolts and pro-Siamese threats in the northwest area of the kingdom.<sup>204</sup>

After staying at Samrong Tong, king Jayajetthā II came to the area of Oudong, which is located not far from Samrong Tong. He found a small hill and the nearby Sraḥ Kaev (or precious pond), and a beautiful village.<sup>205</sup> Then, he consulted a royal astrologer about the place. The astrologer told the king that “based on the code of formulas this place was the land of victory “Jayabhūmi,” superb, powerful, and one which could triumph over the enemy from all the eight directions.” Then the king decided to build the palace and capital at Oudong. The palace and capital are located to the western side of the Tonle Sap River, and they both face the river and are situated about 7 km to the south of the capital Longvek.

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201 Her original Vietnamese name was Ngoc Van/ Añg Cūv. Cf., Mak Phoeun, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

202 See the details of the discussion about the problem of the name of king Jayajetthā. Mak Phoeun, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

203 The Stoeng Krang Ponlei or Krang Ponlei River flows down to the area of Praok Kda, which is located between Longvek and Oudong. Praok Kda was an important place for agriculture. According to the villagers, the area of Praok Kda can produce rice twice a year. Villagers could cultivate Srov Vosa and Sre Chonlak.

204 For the detailed study of the legal codes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see Michaelian 1999: 65-167.

205 Concerning the trip of king Jayajetthā at Oudong, Mak Phoeun insisted that when the king found the site of Oudong, “in Sanskrit ‘Uttuṅga’ means ‘high or great,’ he was excited, because the area was in the center of a huge rice field, and also because of the 117 meters height of Phnom Preah Reach Troap, which is very significant place. Cf., Mak Phoeun, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

After his decision to establish the capital at Oudong, he ordered his minister Ukañā Kralāhom Kaev to construct the palace at Sraḥ Kaev. Ukaña Kralāhom Kaev ordered all the chiefs of the districts to cut wood to construct the palace, and then pile up dirt surrounding the palace to make the enclosure. He also ordered them to build many small residences and annexes. The construction works were completed after about 10 months. In 1620, king Jayajetṭhā II, his royal family, ministers, and mandarins came to reside at Oudong. He named the new capital “Oudong Lu Chei”, which means “Oudong that hears victory,” and in other chronicles it is called “Oudong Mean Chei,” which means “Oudong the victorious.” King Jayajetṭhā II reigned for 8 years and passed away in 1627 due to illness.

During the reign of king Jayajetṭhā II there were frequent wars with Siam, especially in 1622. After the Siamese king Naresūr died in 1605, the Khmer king Srī Suriyobarm declared Cambodia’s independence vis-à-vis the pressure from Siam. King Naresūr’s successor was king Ekathotsarot, who was considered as king Naresūr’s loyal brother. Following the death of the king Naresūr, Khmer and Siamese relations seemed to be quiet, and they were not seriously concerned in starting a war. This was until the reign of Song Tham<sup>206</sup> (ca. 1611-1628), who sent an army to attack Cambodia. This event according to Khmer chronicles was in 1622/23, just after king Jayajetṭhā II established the capital at Oudong.

The event of the Siamese king Song Tham invading Cambodia again was in the interest of commercial relations with the Japanese. In the 1620s, many Japanese came to Southeast Asia countries, such as Luson, Siam, Cambodia, and Cochinchina. The Japanese merchants purchased mostly deerskins, fish skins, and Sappan Wood to supply the *Shuin-sen* ships from Japan.<sup>207</sup> During that time, both Siam and Cambodia sent letters to the Tokugawa Shogunate asking for friendship and trade relations. Song Tham not only sent letters to the Japanese, but to European traders as well.<sup>208</sup> Cambodia had sent letters to the Shogun since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>209</sup> During the 1620s, Japanese were very active in Cambodia, especially in the Khmer court.<sup>210</sup> During this period, Dutch traders were also interested in conducting trade with Cambodia, and with Siam as well. The Dutch were people who recorded many detailed events related to the Cambodia affairs.

The attempted invasion of Song Tham into Cambodia was not a success, king Jayajetṭhā II asked the Vietnamese to intervene in the Siamese attacks. Cambodia also had not profited by the war, and it was likely to fall into the Vietnamese trap. When the Vietnamese sent troops to fight Siam, they wanted to share the land of Prei Nokor for carrying out their trade. D. Chandler asserts that in the 1620s, the Vietnamese marched to the south and colonized the Mekong Delta. They controlled the Cambodian southern territory by first taking over the Cambodian city of Prei Nokor (present-day Saigon). Since then, during the later years under the Nguyễn administrators Cambodia was cut off from maritime access to the outside world, and under Vietnamese control that lasted

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206 Song Tham was also called king Intharacha when he became king. He executed king Si Saowaphak who succeeded king Ekathotsarot. Song Tham was another son of Ekathotsarot by a concubine. See Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 106

207 Iwao 1995: iii-iv (English abstract).

208 For letters of Song Tham sent to Japanese and European traders, see Mak Phoeun, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-172.

209 Péril 1923: 127-130 (Appendices).

210 Ishizawa 1998.



more than 200 years, they eventually lost a large part of Khmer territory, and tens of thousands of Khmer people were removed from Cambodian jurisdiction.<sup>211</sup>

## **5. Motives behind the Choice of Longvek-Oudong**

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially from the period of king Ang Chan who reigned in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia was conspicuous as it had been in the period of commerce. Many foreign merchants came to Cambodia, such as the Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Malays, and from neighboring countries such as the Cham, Vietnamese, and Siamese. The information related to trade activities in Cambodia is basically based on foreign sources. Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, Chinese, and Japanese recorded the documents. By contrast, there has been no record in Khmer sources related to activities such as commerce and local products. Since there was no record related to commerce in the Khmer sources, so far we have worked on this issue by basing ourselves on records that were described in European sources and Chinese junk trades.

In the record of San Antonio in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he describes various agricultural and rare products in the kingdom of Cambodia: “There is a lot of cotton in that kingdom, a lot of silk, plenty of incense, benzoin, an abundance of rice and all the lacquer which is sold across the world. There are also famous silver, gold, lead, copper and tin mines.”<sup>212</sup> Also, in the account of a Captain Diego Beloso who came to Cambodia at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is stated that the Khmer king sent a great deal of rice and wine to Malacca and Macan.<sup>213</sup>

Moreover, in the report of the captains of the Chinese junks that sailed from China and stopped over in Cambodia, and which were given to the Nagasaki authorities from 1679-1723, it is stated that in Cambodia rice was much cheaper than other products such as sugar, lacquer, ivory, areca nut, and other natural drugs (Ship No. 69). In the reports it is also stated that agriculture is easier to carry out in Cambodia than in other countries, and so rice was extremely cheap (Ship No. 63 and 67).<sup>214</sup> In the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, around the year 1600, Cambodia could export about 7,000 tons a year, which usually supplied Patani, Pahang, and Brunei.<sup>215</sup> So far these historical records can be used to indicate that Cambodia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century was still a country whose economy was based on agricultural products.

It appears as though Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century was very active in trading with Asian and European countries. After the maritime growth took place due to the predominance of the Chinese network in Southeast Asia, European traders such as Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English who began their missions, were the first. For example, the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511, and later they implanted their missions in the nations of Siam, Cambodia, and Burma.<sup>216</sup> At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Japan under the Tokugawa government had started to introduce the vermilion ship trade with Southeast Asia. At

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211 Chandler 2000: 94-95.

212 San Antonio 1998: 6.

213 Blair and Robertson 1973: 161.

214 Ishii 1998: 170, 174, 175.

215 Reid 1988: 21.

216 Mantiene 1998: 55-84.

least 44 trade licenses were delivered to Cambodia, and around 1500 Japanese came to settle in Phnom Penh and Ponhalu (situated near Oudong, along the bank of the Tonle Sap). The Japanese settlements in Southeast Asia, as well as in Cambodia at Ponhalu, have been known as Nihon Machi (or Japanese Quarters).<sup>217</sup>

Later Ponhalu was to become an active place of commerce for not only Japanese merchants and Christian's residents, but it also attracted European traders, and especially the Dutch. In the area of Ponhalu, close to the Japanese quarters, there was a mercantile office for Dutch traders, and it even had the name of a Dutch river.<sup>218</sup> It seems as though international exchange and trade between Khmer and foreign merchants from Catumukh to Longvek-Oudong, had to pass through Ponhalu.

Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ponhalu was still an important place for merchants. According to the description of E. Aymonier at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ponhalu produced a lot of tobacco, cotton, and mulberry, and about 4 km from Ponhalu, to the north along the Tonle Sap river, there was another important and well-known place called Kompong Luong (or royal port), which is located near the mouth of the Tonle Sap and situated in-between the sites of Longvek and Oudong. Kompong Luong was perhaps the Chinese merchant settlement during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. E. Aymonier noted that there was a market in Kompong Luong, and that Chinese people were in a majority. Kompong Luong was a place for foreigners to exchange exported products such as cardamom and gamboge (genus *Garcinia*). Kompong Luong is also located closed to Samrong Tong, which is mentioned in the chronicle as a province of Samrong Tong, where the capital of Oudong was established. Samrong Tong geographically consists of a lot of the water network canals, where it can produce a lot of rice, tobacco, gamboge, and sugar palm.<sup>219</sup>

Based on the above description, it is obvious that the area of Longvek-Oudong could also be utilized for agriculture and commerce. Geographically the area of Longvek-Oudong was a suitable route for communication between the area itself and the commercial place of Catumukh, both via the water and land routes. Compared to the Srei Santhor area, the region of Longvek-Oudong was not so far to access, with regard to the commercial center of Catumukh.

## Conclusion

The change of the capital from Angkor to the south in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was not completely abandoned, because there were still people living, if not urban, at least rural communities, as we have seen many Buddhist terraces in Angkor Thom and other Buddhist worship places in Angkor area. Although the capital cities afterwards were at Srei Santhor and Longvek-Oudong, Angkor had been never forgotten. One thing is certain and must now be stressed: in the consciousness of the Khmer, Angkor will forever remain the focal center of their culture and their identity. In brief, Angkor is their soul.

What is so-called the "Abandonment of Angkor" is simply the abandonment of a capital and not a culture. Also, later rulers came back to settle there at least for a time. Other material facts also point in this direction: the name Srei Santhor (or Srī Sandhara) is the mere reproduction of the name

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217 Ishizawa 1998: 85-94., See also, Iwao 1995.

218 Iwao, *op. cit.*, p. 89-95.

219 Aymonier 1900: 220-221.

of the Angkorian capital Srī Yaśodhara (or Srei Yashodhara). This shows that the abandonment of Angkor was not the death of the Angkorian soul, but the transference of a cultural depth that stands the test of time. So far, the middle period of Cambodia is a bridge in connecting between the ancient and modern period.

The abandonment of Angkor as capital to southwards was to settle in a new place, which had potential for agricultural products. Through my on-site research and investigation at Srei Santhor, which was the first choice of the capital in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was located along the belt of Mekong. It was an area that contained fresh ground and soft soil which people could produce various kinds of crops. The area has particularly consisted a system, namely “Sre Chanlak” that is referred to as “ended rice cultivation”, which is a secure and sustainable type of cultivation if we compare to other types of cultivation.

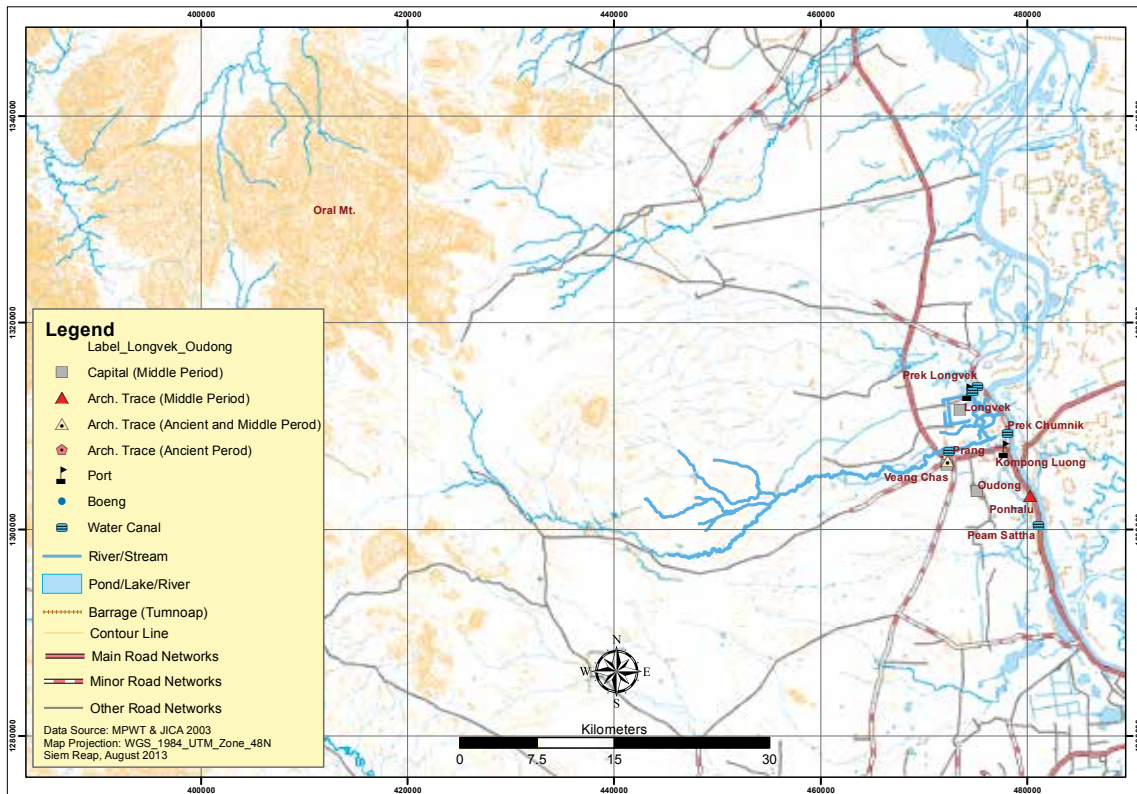
On the other hand, by comparing with previous records of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be shown that the situation in the region of Srei Santhor was not much changed in terms of agriculture, and it was perhaps also not very different if we compared the potential of the economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, back to that of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. The potential of the agricultural products, especially rice production was recorded in European accounts of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. That is why several rulers from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries occupied Srei Santhor. In that period, the region of Srei Santhor was a stronghold both politically and economically.

Moreover, the establishment of the capital at Longvek by king Ang Chan did not mean abandoning or even depopulating Srei Santhor. This region, we have seen, was too favorable with regard to agriculture and well equipped with agricultural infrastructure, for it to be deserted. Following the “capture” of the viceroy Srī Suriyobarm in Ayutthaya, a notable from Joeñ Brai proclaimed himself king under the name Braḥ Rām Joeñ Brai and reigned, not in Longvek but in Srei Santhor, thereby reviving the ancient capital.

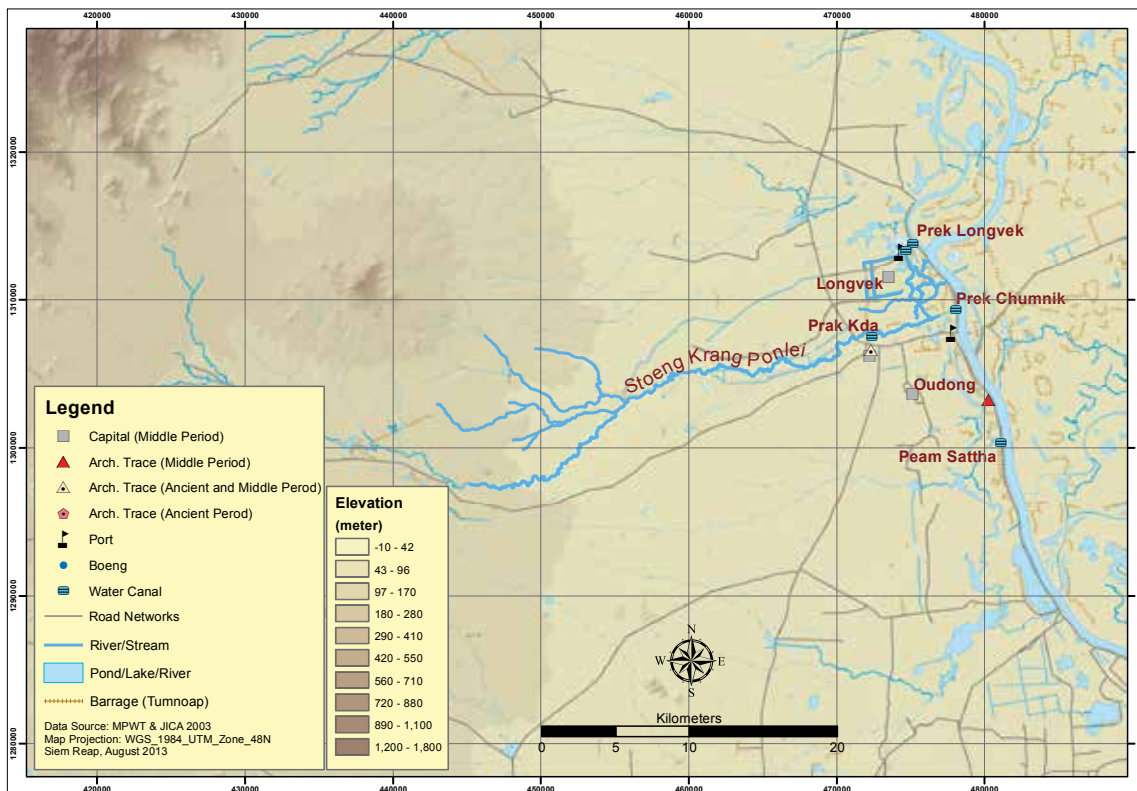
For the next re-locations at Longvek and Oudong, when we look at the map, one realizes that the region of Longvek and Oudong are quite close, since just 7 kilometers separated the centers of the two cities. One of them opens onto the Tonle Sap and is situated at the lowland plain that naturally exists, the volume of the river water flowing down from the Oral Mountains (Map 11, 12). A synchronic point of view suggests activities, agricultural areas, and movement, or that the socio-politico-economic-example of one overlapped that of the other.

Compared to Srei Santhor, the region of Longvek-Oudong was not too far-away, in order to have access to the commercial center of Phnom Penh, and furthermore it was close to the Tonle Sap (Grand Lake), which could lead to the production of not only agricultural products but also fisheries and other forest resource products.

On the other hand, the establishment of the capital at Longvek and not Srei Santhor by king Ang Chan, emphasizes the fact that it was related to the political atmosphere between king Ang Chan and Sṭec Kan. Srei Santhor was once controlled by Sṭec Kan, and he seemed to be respected by the people who lived there, and as we are aware even today he was very well known by the local community. For his kingly dignity, king Ang Chan perhaps decided to find a new place. So far, it can be suggested that it is necessary to address all factors, in order to create a better and well-formed hypothesis.



Map 11 Map showing the complex waterways between Oral Mountain and the area of Longvek-Oudong



Map 12 A potential of waterway system in the area of Longvek-Oudong

In sum, on the basis of these discussions, we see that the reasons for the changes of capital to Srei Santhor and Longvek-Oudong were political, logistic, and agricultural, or a mix of the three, and the reasons lean heavily on the subsistence level economic environment that increased agricultural productions would support. Therefore, the first factor is political, which is related to the invasion by Siam that caused the shift of the capital to the south. The second factor is that the need to change the capital was something logistic, and was based on a need to attain wealth through increasing the frequency and access to trade. The third is that increased agricultural output coupled with the resulting increase in the possibility of production of trade goods and specialty items was a good strategy for a growing population, regarding economy and wealth. In addition, with regard to governing, a decision had to be made about choosing a location where both farming and trade routes were more easily accessed.

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*BEFEO*: Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

*BSEI*: Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises.

CEDORECK: Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Civilisation Khmère.

EFEO: l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

*IC*: Inscriptions du Cambodge.

IMA: Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor.

*JA*: Journal Asiatique.

*JOSA*: Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia.

*JSAS*: Journal of Sophia Asian Studies.

*JSS*: Journal of the Siam Society.

NUS: National University of Singapore (Press)

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