
XVII.—*Notes on the Antiquities, Natural History, &c. &c., of Cambodia, compiled from Manuscripts of the late E. F. J. FORREST, Esq., and from information derived from the Rev. Dr. HOUSE, &c. &c. By JAMES CAMPBELL, Esq., Surgeon R.N., F.R.G.S.*

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IN modern Cambodia, or Kamen, as it is called by the natives, the remnant of a once powerful kingdom extending from the Bay of Bengal on the west, to the confines of China on the north and east, there are several objects of interest to the geographer, naturalist, and antiquary; and though the present essay at unfolding these to the Western world is one confessedly meagre, yet it is forwarded as an earnest of the wish and intention of the late inditer of the principal items herein contained to do what he could for the elucidation of many topics relating to this effete kingdom, and which, it is to be regretted, he was not spared to communicate in his own name.

Cambodia was formerly unequally divided into six divisions, viz., Dongnai, Quiduk, Sadek, Metho, Kamao, and Teksea: these, though politically extinct, are still more in the mouths of the people than the new ones, which are named Go-sat-tran, Hateen, Nam-wang, An-giang, Vingh-tan, Dinh-tuong, Phan-yen, and Bien-hoa. The greater part of the kingdom presents a continued flat alluvial soil, plentifully irrigated by rivers, one of which, the Mekom, or Mekong, is one of the largest rivers in Southern Asia. This river, which flows through a rich and varied valley, takes its rise in Yu-nam, on the frontiers of Se-fan, in lat. $27^{\circ} 20' N$. It is at first named Lan-tsan, but towards the south, and before it enters the Laos country, it is called Kew-lung-keang, or Nine Dragon River. In Chinese territory it runs a long distance through a magnificent valley. In $16^{\circ} N$. lat. it bends more to the east, and enters Cambodia, having previously been augmented by a

large tributary. It then drains the whole length of that country, and falls by three embouchures into the sea in about $9^{\circ} 34'$ N. lat. In many places the river is very deep, in others there are rocks, cataracts, shifting banks, and shallows, all of which impede navigation. The river is navigable in Yu-nam, and there are many flourishing cities upon it. In Laos many thriving villages adorn its banks, and in Cambodia the principal population is near it. We may conceive what a mighty stream it must be when it traverses eighteen degrees of latitude, and forms at its mouths an alluvial deposit second only to the Yang-tze-kiang, or Whang-ho. There are numerous other rivers in Cambodia. On the frontier of Siam is the Kho River, an insignificant stream, but the boundary between the two countries. On the banks of the Pong-som, likewise styled Cam-pong-som and Vung-tom, there is a considerable trading-place—Vin-tam-phu, principally inhabited by Chinese. The Hatien, or Kang-kau, in lat. $10^{\circ} 14'$ N., and $104^{\circ} 55'$ E. long., has a great depth of water; and on its banks there is a flourishing town of the same name, inhabited by many Chinese. This was once a great emporium for the whole Cambodian trade, and known to Europeans under the names of Pon-tea-mas and Potai-mat, a name now obliterated from the maps. While civil strife in the interior occupied the attention of the king, a man of Chinese origin availed himself of the opportunity to declare it a free port, and thousands of merchants established themselves there in a few years. The place speedily increased in wealth, but the envy of the Siamese could not allow them to rest, and the emporium was destroyed in 1717. Kangkao, which took its place, is still a considerable trading station for the exportation of rice and salt, principally for Singapore. The junks which belong to it are very small, as the harbour is shallow. In order to facilitate the intercourse, the Cochin Chinese have again opened the canal which joins the river to the Mekom. The Karmunsa, called Rachgea by the Cochin Chinese, and by the Chinese Teksea, is joined not far from its embouchure by a considerable tributary. It falls into the Gulf of Siam, and has recently been joined by a canal to the Mekom. The Tek-maou, or Black-water River, is in connexion with the Mekom, and disembogues by three embouchures into the sea in lat. $8^{\circ} 4'$ N., opposite to Pulo Obi. It is a navigable river, and the water is largely used for irrigation.

That part of the kingdom termed Upper Cambodia extends beyond 11° N. lat., and comprises nearly 5° in breadth, namely, from 103° to 108° of E. long. It is situated on both sides of the Mekom, extending eastward to the Cochin Chinese range of mountains, and westward to Battabong. This province, ceded to Siam of late, formerly constituted a part of the kingdom; and then the second range of mountains, which issues from Yunam and

traverses the whole peninsula, was the natural western boundary. To the north its confines are marked by the bend of the Mekom, the left bank of which belongs to the Laos tribes.

Of all the cities of Cambodia, Saigon stands foremost. The depth of the river on which it is placed, its vicinity to the sea, and its extensive inland communication, constitute it an important emporium. The entrance is at Kangeo, a miserable fishing village amidst jungle. The country, however, soon afterwards improves. The river continues very deep, and the ascent leads to two of its disemboguing branches, both of which fall at a short distance east and west into the sea. The population is here considerable, and several manufactures of coarse silk stuffs are said to exist not far from this. Saigon is about 30 English miles from the sea; but before reaching the town the traveller arrives at Pingeh, the residence of the provincial governor, a city with many new fortifications built after European principles, with arsenals and docks for the supply and building of war-vessels. It has a large population and a considerable trade. Saigon is about 3 miles farther, upon an insignificant branch of the river. Though the principal trading-town, it does not admit but of small vessels. Both towns are intersected by many canals full of boats, like Chinese towns, for many people live constantly on water. The streets are broad and lined with bamboo shops; the Chinese alone have respectable houses. The timber of this district attains a great length, planks being occasionally seen upwards of 100 feet long.

Besides the river and canal communications above referred to, there is another drainage system in Cambodia worthy of special reference, viz., a great inland lake termed *Talæ Sap* by the inhabitants, but *Bien-ho* by the Cochin Chinese. It discharges its water into the Mekom, and seems to be the most important and anomalous of the Cambodian affluents which flow into that mighty stream. This lake does not appear in any of the atlases at my command, and though its position is tolerably well defined in the works of Crawford, Pallegoix, and Bowering, none of whom I believe saw the lake—Mr. Forrest visited it at the middle of the dry season—yet, as they do not give any description of it, I append the following.

The lake *Talæ Sap* is the result of a depressed basin, situated in a very flat country; and hence, from its location in a region of periodical rains, is subject to great alternations in its depth. Occasionally in the dry season it is so shallow that boats require to be poled along instead of pulled; but in the wet season it attains a depth of at least 45 feet, and measures about 100 miles long by 40 at its greatest breadth. It seems remarkably odd that when at its height there is comparatively little surface current, whilst when the waters have somewhat fallen there is a consider-

able flow. There does not appear to be any increase of water at the embouchures of the Mekom, or of the adjacent sea and gulf, as a result of the south-west monsoon, similar to what I have noticed in the Gulf of Guinea during the line westerly monsoon; and as the disemboguing outlets of the Cambodian river system are numerous and unobstructed, the anomaly of such a periodical collection of pent-up water seems truly remarkable. The lake being plentifully supplied with fish, is the seat of an extensive fishery. The taking commences in November and continues till July, when the rising waters compel the fishermen to proceed to Battabong and other places in the vicinity of the lake. The inundation destroys the houses of the fishermen, which, from being of a temporary nature, are constructed of bamboos bound by rattans, and supported by poles at a height of 10 feet or more from the water-level. These huts are thatched with straw, and furnished alone with the most immediate requisites of life and implements of the fishery. When the fish arrive at these dépôts they have their heads severed, are split down the belly and flattened out, the entrails and backbone abstracted, and the inside scraped with a clean shell to carry off all blood; two slits are then cut on each side, and after being rubbed with salt and allowed gradually to dry in the sun, they become what the inhabitants style "pla heng," dried fish. They average about 100 to the pical of 133½ lbs., and that weight is generally sold for two ticals, or about 5s. 4d. sterling.

The Chinese go from Battabong, Oodoong, and other places to purchase the fish, and then export them to Cochin China, where they are sold for from three to four ticals per pical. Their supply of salt is obtained principally from Cochin China, but occasionally they fail in procuring it thence, either on account of Government prohibition or otherwise, in which case they resort to Chantiboon for supplies. Fish are principally taken by the seine, but there are an infinity of methods employed for their capture, such as the spear, cast-net, lines, &c. The fishermen are all Cambodians, and their nets nearly surround the lake.

ANTIQUITIES.

Situated about 15 miles north of Talæ Sap, hidden in a forest of old growth and great density, stand some of the most interesting relics of antiquity—the ruins of Nakon Wat and Nakon Hluang. Enveloped as are these ruins in the most unfathomable mysteries, unpossessed of any tradition beyond mere conjecture and popular rumour which can throw light on their origin or foundation, and surpassing in splendour of design and beauty of architecture the most renowned remnants of bygone ages to be found in Hindostan, they offer to the student of Asiatic archæology matter for the

most profound research, which it is to be hoped some philo-Asiatic may yet undertake. In truth, Nakon Wat stands like a mighty sphinx frowning contemptuously on the infantine and barbaric state of the arts and science of the people who are now the denizens of the forests and plains in its vicinity, and presents, with its towers and halls so pregnant with mystery and evidences of the past, a wondrous enigma which challenges the wisdom of the world to fathom. A superstition exists in Siam and Cambodia, that should any prince or noble be audacious enough to penetrate into the domains of these ruins they will most assuredly die; and so strong is the belief, that no man of rank has visited them within the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood. There is even a pestilential air pervading the surrounding country, asserted by the natives to cause an amount of sickness quite unusual to any other part of Cambodia, which seems to be a guardian against intrusion on the solitary dignity in which these extensive ruins rear themselves. Standing alone in a country now depopulated and overgrown with forest, wherein not even a house of the smallest description can be found, and constructed of stone, these ruins cannot fail to strike the beholder with the utmost wonder and awe, indicative as they are of an age and people to whose vigour, power, and talent, the present debased and enervated condition of the Cambodian forms a most powerfully painful contrast. Approaching the building from the west, the traveller suddenly sees before him a raised platform of stone, with three flights of five steps leading to its surface. This, although at first sight it appears to stand isolated from any further building, is the end of the elevated road or causeway which conducts to the grand entrance of the temple of Nakon Wat—the Temple of Angels. This terrace is built in the shape of a cross, having on the north, south, and western abutments a flight of five steps, to the east being the road to the gate. At both sides of each flight a colossal lion 8 feet in height, erected on a pedestal, stands sentinel; and at the commencement of the road are two more. The causeway passes over a moat of a breadth of 400 yards, which was doubtless formerly filled with water, though now but a morass. It is raised from the surface of the morass nearly 20 feet, its foundation and body to a height of some 10 feet, by means of large blocks of a coarse conglomerate; the rest, together with the pavement, being of freestone. The masses of stone were invariably of the same dimensions, and were fitted together in this manner



without cement. The entire length of this causeway was 450 yards. At the end of the causeway stands the grand gate, which gives ingress into the grounds of the temple. Over the chief entrance a tower of the most delicately sculptured work rears itself to a height of 60 yards. On each side of this,

at a distance of 60 yards, is a lesser tower of the same style, under which is an inferior entrance. These towers are connected together by a succession of halls or chambers, the interior of which is plain, but the exterior beautifully carved and embellished. From the lesser towers, for a distance of 150 yards, runs a corridor, the arched roof of which is supported invariably by a wall, and externally by a row of square columns. A small gateway, built in the form of a cross, then joins the entrance buildings to the main wall, which is 15 feet high, and about 6 feet thick. This wall is built of the coarse conglomerate before spoken of, and environs the grounds in which stands the temple, its monotonous appearance being relieved by lesser gates, with chambers on each side of them built of freestone, which are to be found midway in the wall on the east, north, and south. After passing through the grand entrance a terraced road, raised a few feet above the level of the gardens, conducts to the main edifice. This road, which is 30 feet broad, had formerly a balustrade paved with lead, the traces of the fastenings of which to the stone are plainly visible; but at the time of the invasion of Cambodia by the Siamese in 1835, the ruthless soldiery added the robbery of this to the list of the damage they did to the temple. At intervals abutments with steps, the sides of which were adorned with *phya naks* and lions, allowed egress from the road to the ground. Halfway between the gateway and temple, on each side of the road, are two small buildings of freestone, which might have been either sacred places or residences for priests; they are now too much blocked up by débris and ruin to admit of inspection. The grounds seem evidently to have been laid out with great care, but now the entire enclosure not occupied by building is covered with dense and impenetrable undergrowth, interspersed with a few large trees. Along the sides of the temple are a large number of palms, mango, and betel trees, the latter of recent growth. In the part of the garden immediately contiguous to the chief doorway of the edifice are two artificial lakes or tanks, one on each side of the road, which were most probably constructed to afford water to the inmates. The chief doorway of the grand edifice is approached from the road by a flight of high steps, fifteen in number, and a short terrace. Taken from the outer gateway, nothing can exceed the magnificence of the *coup d'œil* presented by the noble ruins, and the admiration produced by that unison of all parts; and the beauty of the architecture is doubled when, on arriving in close proximity to the walls, the extreme faultlessness of the design, the delicacy of the workmanship, and the great attention paid to the minutest portions of the construction, are displayed. The Cambodians say that this structure could not have been the work of men, but must have been that of angels. Every

circumstance attendant upon its erection gives countenance to this idea, and in truth a people so little advanced in civilization as they are, have ample reason to be confirmed in this belief. They see here a structure of enormous extent and height, built of a description of stone of which no traces are to be found in the neighbourhood, and which must have been brought from mountains, the nearest of which are at a distance of some days' journey. Again, the huge blocks of stone employed in the building, many of them measuring 18 feet in length, and from 3 to 4 feet in breadth, which, notwithstanding that they are put together without cement, leave scarce a trace of their joinings—the excessive delicacy of the chisellings, the artistic contour of the statues, the peculiarity of the design, and the *tout-ensemble*, so widely different and so incomparably superb to what they have ever seen or heard of elsewhere, cannot fail to inspire them, left, as they are, without legend or tradition to guide them in any way, with the faith that celestial artificers must have been the erectors.

Nakon Wat consists of three divisions rising one above the other, the inner and chief one being a pyramidal-shaped tower rising to a height of 300 feet from the ground; this is surrounded by the second division, a corridor; and this in turn is enclosed by the third division, another corridor. It may be a matter of controversy whether the word corridor is a correct term to be applied to these portions of the building, comprising as they do the whole of the sheltered spaces. The absence of any large halls or chambers is very peculiar, but this can be easily accounted for by the evident ignorance of the builders of the art of arching. The corridors or galleries, having but a breadth of a few feet, are roofed with blocks of stone, the one lapped over the other, the irregularities in the surface being afterwards cut away so as to make it arched. A roof of this description could not, of course, be erected over a space of a much greater breadth; and the impossibility of employing timber without destroying the beauty of the edifice gives an ample reason for the nonformation of chambers of large dimensions. The principal flight of steps leading up to the chief entrance conducts along a succession of chambers and passages, and up various sets of stairs through both the outer divisions or corridors to the tower or sanctum sanctorum, where, after ascending a fine broad flight of steps some sixty feet high, is the seat of the grand idol. The outer corridor contains the most interesting features of the entire building in the shape of the alto-relievos with which its walls are embellished. These extend nearly the whole length of the four sides, and display a vast amount of artistic taste and skill. The figures are carved out of the same stone as the rest of the building, and now present a highly polished surface, though they were formerly richly overlaid

with gold of considerable thickness, traces of which now remain. Notwithstanding the scarcely conceivable age of the work, the walls on which are these admirable representations do not show a crack or a mark of decay; and, with the exception of here and there, where some stone from the roof has fallen in, are totally uninjured. On the western or front side is delineated the scene of a grand engagement between two rival armies, recording evidently events of some period in the history of Cambodia. Among the figures are chiefs riding in chariots drawn by dragons and tigers; generals seated on splendidly caparisoned five-trunked elephants with huge tusks; archers and footmen armed with lances and swords. The two armies, it seemed, had also lions and tigers, dragons and elephants, in their ranks, to whose lot, to judge from the number of slain and wounded near them, the largest part of the fighting fell. The wall of the northern face of the corridor portrayed the order of march of the army. Soldiers and beasts are figured as marching along in well disciplined regularity under the command of chiefs and heroes. Here and there among the ranks a band of musicians is to be seen beating gongs and blowing horns in shape like the tom-toms of the Hindostances, evidently made from those of the buffalo. The soldiers are well armed with bows and arrows, swords, clubs, and shields, and have among them several men of gigantic stature, some of whom have twenty-four arms. In every scene elephants hold a most prominent place, showing that their employment as agents of warfare must at that period have been very general. On the eastern front of the outer corridor is to be seen a curious representation of two large bodies of men, apparently rival factions, striving to gain possession of a huge serpent which had one coil in the centre of its length round the trunk of a tree. There are two hundred men engaged in the struggle, one-half of whom are pulling on each side of the tree. This has probably some reference to an event in Buddhistical mythology, though the natives interrogated on the subject assure the inquirer that it is only placed there for ornament. The southern side showed a large number of captives in the hands of executioners, who were inflicting on them every variety of the most excruciating torture. In some parts men are figured driving nails into the bodies of unfortunates impaled on a kind of gallows; some are dashing young children against rocks and stones; some are cutting to pieces men and women confined in fetters, or pounding them in mortars; and others are hanging up prisoners to trees by their legs to allow the vultures to attack them. The outer is connected with the inner corridor, which is raised many feet above it, by passages and stairs, the space between the two on the western side being formed into four quadrangles by the passages connecting them together. At the side of one of these

passages, and leading out of it, is a small cell or chamber, designated the gong or bell chamber by the natives from its being constructed in such a way as to cause a heavy sound, like that emitted by a gong, to reverberate around when a person standing therein strikes his breast with his hand or stamps on the floor. Apparently in this room there was formerly placed either a gong or bell, and considerable ingenuity must have been exercised to construct the walls and roof so as to cause the above effect, which would necessarily give extra power to the instrument. A small perforation in the wall, and a channel scooped out in the pavement of the adjoining passage, evidently intended for a wire, show that the instrument contained in the gong chamber could have been struck through the agency of a person in some other part of the building. In a passage or corridor running parallel to that last mentioned, on a pedestal of bricks, stand a large number of images of all sizes and varieties, the remnants of those that once occupied the many altars of the temple. At some recent period they were collected and placed together in their present position by the then resident priests, in order probably that they might be the more easily guarded from the pilfering hands of pilgrim visitors. A large number are cast in bronze and brass, and were formerly thickly overlaid with gold. Others are to be seen carved out of ivory, wood, and stone. All the gold, silver, and agate images, once profusely adorning the building, were carried off by the Siamese soldiery in the war of 1835. In alluding to the depredations committed by the Siamese—so essentially votaries of Buddha—on a temple of their god renowned for its extraordinary sanctity, it cannot fail to be observed, with respect to the religious idolatry of a barbarous people, how unstable are their faith and tenets. In the case of Nakon Wat all the earliest religious associations of the Siamese were derived thence, whilst the books and faith which they at the present day pretend so much to revere, all emanated from this temple, which, on the occasion of the Siamese army marching against Cambodia, a licentious soldiery, not only unrestrained, but by direction of their leaders, despoiled of its gold and wealth, and broke, in their search for hidden treasures, the finest statues and figures, testimony of which is but too plentifully afforded by the *débris* and broken limbs scattered throughout the edifice.

The second corridor lacks the embellishments of the outer one, the walls being left plain. It must, however, formerly have been thickly occupied by idols. The north and south sides are open, the inner windows looking into the paved open space, in the centre of which stands the grand tower—the third division of the temple. This tower rears itself above the level of the second corridor some two hundred feet, and is ascended by means of four superbly wide and four minor flights of steps. The area is divided by gallerica

or corridors into four quadrangular open spaces. In the centre, and immediately under the tallest and largest spire, is the seat of the chief idol, whose face looks towards the west. The inner division or grand tower, from it is to be presumed, its being the sanctum sanctorum and throne of the chief divinity, displays more architectural embellishments and intricate carving than any other part of the building. What is most remarkable, however, not only in the characteristics of the tower, but also in the rest of the building, is the utter absence of any of those absurd images and representations of monsters and fabulous animals with which the numerous temples in Hindostan and Java are so plentifully adorned. The chief god at this temple bears a most sacred character, and is renowned as the most powerful deity in Cambodia. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the country flock annually to prostrate themselves before him; but mean must be their worship to the grandeur and solemnity of the ceremonials with which he was wont to be adored in olden times, when kings and princes knelt before him, and thousands of gorgeously robed priests chanted his praises, whilst at the sound of the gong the multitude fell prostrate beyond his presence. Occupying this ancient throne, the god still sits, but has been disrobed of his splendour; where once shone jewels and precious stones, is now the unsightly tarnish of the metal of which his body is composed. Attached to the temple are some three hundred men and women, who are the descendants of the slaves apportioned to the temple at its endowment. Their number was formerly much greater, amounting, it is said, to several thousands, but they now decrease almost annually, in consequence of the dependants deserting their posts, most probably to seek a more hospitable and flourishing place in which to earn a livelihood. Not one of these dependants can give a word in elucidation of their origin or that of the temple; they say they are descended from their fathers, and that their fathers' fathers were slaves and descendants of the original dependants of the temple. None of them can tell who ordered them there, nor are there any documents relating to the subject.

A two hours' ride in a northerly direction from Nakon Wat brings the traveller to the ruins of the capital of ancient Cambodia: they are named Nakon Hluang. The wall, built to protect the city, encloses a space of 194 sen, equal to 4 miles 1366½ yards English: they are of great height and solidity, and are built of the conglomerate previously mentioned as used in the construction of the road to the grand temple. The city is entered through a gateway built of freestone, the height of which cannot be less than one hundred feet. This structure has been as yet little injured by age, and presents a picturesque monument to the view of the beholder. No traces exist of any woodwork about it,

although it must have had gates of that material. On each side of the road it contains rooms, probably built for the accommodation of the janitors. According to the natives, there are four of these gates, one on each cardinal point of the compass. The ravages of time, so merciful to the temple, have not extended equal consideration to the city; for, with the exception of a few edifices, little else can be seen of the buildings—some of which must have been of great extent—but a shapeless pile of enormous blocks of stone, which generally effectually destroy the form of the structures of which they were a part. The chief edifice is the palace of the first king: this, from having been built entirely of stone, has withstood the onslaught of age better than any of the other buildings, although it is also in a very ruinous condition. Approaching from the east—the direction towards which the principal entrance faces—access is gained to the royal residence by a line of passages and doorways formerly roofed in with the masses of stone which now block up the way, and through a wall two feet thick, built of the freestone that encircles the edifice. These approaches, judging from the fragments thickly scattered about, seem to have been well ornamented with statues and figures. After entering the precincts of the palace there is a labyrinth of corridors and passages of small breadth and height, roofed with stone, which run at right angles to one another, forming small open quadrangles, by means of which light seems to have been admitted to them. These corridors, although of such narrow dimensions, but seemingly interminable in length, must have formed the main portion of the structure. They pass at intervals into a number of small chambers leading from one to the other, which could have afforded but scanty accommodation to the royal occupants and their dependants. Surrounded by these corridors, stands the central structure, to which ingress is afforded, as it is raised many feet above the ground, by a flight of steps. This, containing the exclusive apartments of the monarch, possesses no space, being divided into chambers of similar size to those on the basement. It consists of a succession of towers, of an octangular shape and of little height, richly sculptured, and having on each face a representation of a head, either celestial or human, of colossal magnitude. Covered galleries connect these towers with one another. Although internally for the most part plain, the towers and corridors have their exterior plentifully and superbly decorated with elaborate chisellings, principally of females splendidly robed and adorned with jewels, the expressions of the faces and the contour of the limbs of whom are depicted with considerable beauty and artistic merit. The number of towers is great, but all attempts to form a correct plan of the building are frustrated by the ruinous state in which it is, and which renders access to many parts impossible. The vicinity of the palace exhibits the remains

of a large number of edifices of various characters—temples and palaces succeeding each other in every direction. In many places there are cleared spaces round the image of some colossal Buddha or other deity, works carried out by the natives at the bidding of some wealthy devotee at Bangkok, Oodoong, or some other large town, who thought by so doing to acquire no small share of merit for himself from the next world of his religion. Some of the images, which are encountered very frequently in wandering through the jungle on the site of the city, must have cost fabulous sums in their construction, many being composed of brass or bronze coated with gold to the thickness of one-thirtieth of an inch. Perhaps the most interesting relic of antiquity to be seen at Nakon Hluang is the statue now standing, neglected and solitary, in the jungle of Phra Pathim Suriwong, once the monarch of the city, and the vast regions that were subject to it. He was afflicted with leprosy, and his statue represents him holding a cup of medicine prescribed as a cure for the disease, which he is about to drink. This figure, which was life-size, has been damaged, having had a part of one arm and the cup broken off. Nearly every ruin at Nakon Hluang is rich in inscriptions engraved in two different characters, the one being very generally used, whilst the employment of the other is exceedingly rare. The character of that ordinarily used by the Cambodians is the Bali; but no person in Siam or Cambodia has yet succeeded in deciphering the inscriptions, notwithstanding they can read them fluently. The natives say that there must be some key to their meaning which has not yet been detected. One stone covered with inscriptions is pointed out by the natives as having a communication between itself and the sea on the other side of the earth: they assert that when the waves are high the stone moves to and fro; however, their knowledge of geography is not sufficient to enable them to state what ocean has the honour of so near a connexion with the stone. Extending to a distance of three days' journey from Nakon Hluang, there are, according to the authorities of Angkor, the ruins of three cities besides another large sanctuary, and on all sides exist vestiges of edifices showing that the country, now a complete wilderness, must have been at the time of the construction and completion of these edifices most thickly populated and exceedingly flourishing. Few countries present a more striking picture of a lapse from the highest pinnacle of greatness to the last degree of insignificance and barbarism than Cambodia; nor is there a nation at the present day which can show so few records or traditions of the past, or produce so few clues to her ancient history. Beyond the fabulous narratives of the Chinese historians and a few legends which, it is to be feared, are more the composition of a barbaric priesthood to strengthen their dominion over the minds of

a superstitious people than any narrative handed down from generation to generation, the world has no accounts relative to this once powerful but now degraded country.

The present King of Cambodia, who resides at Oodoong, states that he has found sufficient evidence to warrant him in ascribing the erection of Nakon Wat and Nakon Hluang to a period antecedent to the Christian era; and a few years ago, on abolishing the bullet-shaped coinage for a flat kind, he took the opportunity of perpetuating the remembrance of Nakon Wat and the former greatness of his country by depicting a view of the building on his money. The present Major King of Siam, who was for many years the chief of a Wat, and who has taken a great interest in the subject, both from the religious associations of his former profession and because the founder of his dynasty emanated from Cambodia, states that all history of India beyond the Ganges antecedent to 400 years ago or so is altogether unworthy of credit, being full of fable often laughable. In one of the volumes of the Buddhistic scriptures, Cambodia is enumerated as the sixteenth of the sixteen principal nations then dominant on the earth, and is referred to as a country where liberal views were allowed full scope—so much so that it was said of it, as of Yona, there is there no Brahmin aristocracy or hereditary nobility, for in Cambodia a nai (master) may descend to the dependency of a bǎo (servant), and the servant become possessed of the dignity of a master. In the 3rd century, A.D. 200, the Cambodian monarch lived who founded Nakon Wat. He was named Bua Sivilithiwong, and gets credit for being the king who first invited Buddhist priests from Ceylon to his country—an importation of whom has frequently taken place since those days. These voluntarily ostracised priests brought their religious works with them, and, in order to preserve these sacred documents, the king had a building constructed of stone erected for their reception, and in it these ancient works are said still to be safely treasured. The books were made of the material used in those days, mere palm-leaves; “And do you think they would endure?” was the rather incredulous query of his Majesty, when narrating the reputed circumstance.

Bua Sivilithiwong was, we might say, fortunately a leper, as it was to propitiate the goddess of health in order that his loathsome malady might be healed, that the magnificent building of Nakon Wat was erected. After its completion the king, finding the leprosy unabated, abandoned his reliance on a cure from works, and resolved to seek advice from terrestrial mortals. Accordingly a proclamation went forth offering a great reward to any one that would effect a cure: what such was at that period is left to individual conjecture, but if not more than bestowed nowadays in Cambodia and Siam, we need not be astonished at the all but

total failure of applicants for the royal bounty. Only one person, a celebrated Brahmin rasi or fakir, volunteered to undertake the cure of his Majesty. The fakir was a firm believer in the virtues of hydropathy, but preferred the liquid in a state of ebullition, and actually proposed to boil his royal patient in a vessel of aquafortis—literally corrosive liquid. The King naturally demurred to such an extreme procedure, and expressed his desire to witness the safety of the process in the person of some volunteer: none such could be found, and the fakir therefore suggested that the experiment be tried upon some criminal. The King, however, who, in truth, had become jealous of the Brahmin's supernatural powers and feared him, thought it a politic opportunity of getting rid of the fakir, and therefore invited him to get into the kettle himself. "I am willing to do so," replied the Brahmin, "if your Majesty will solemnly promise to throw in after me a certain powder I will leave with you." The required promise was instantly made, and the luckless fakir, who put faith in princes, leaped into the boiling cauldron. The leper King then ordered the vessel to be taken up and its contents poured into the river. For this breach of faith a curse clung to the King and his city: is it not a city of ruins to this day?

His Majesty the Major King of Siam says that tradition makes Talæ Sap, the great lake of Cambodia, once a fertile plain where stood a great city. A King, for his amusement, kept some pet flies, whilst the instructor of his young princes, his children, amused himself by feeding some pet spiders. Now it so happened one day that these pet spiders ate up the King's flies, whereupon the King was greatly enraged, and was about putting the preceptor to death, when, lo! he ascended through the air cursing the King and his royal city. Immediately the entire plain sank, and was immersed beneath the lake we now see. Tradition also says that the jasper image of Buddha, which is the glory of the temple in the royal palace at Bangkok, was then found floating on the surface of this lake in a lotus-flower in charge of a Yák. It at last was taken up to Chieng Rai, a Laos city at the north, where a pagoda was built for it, and from that city the Siamese derived it. There are other accounts, however, of the origin of this famous image.

NATURAL HISTORY.

The natural history of Cambodia and South-Eastern Siam, from its having been as yet almost entirely unexplored, presents a most novel and interesting field to the naturalist. The zoology naturally partakes of the general characters of that of the ultra-Gangetic nations of the same latitude. Of pachydermata, the elephant, called chang by the Siamese, but tun-ræ by the Cambodians,

stands of course pre-eminent. Inhabiting vast plains of the most fertile pasturage which form the principal geographical features of Cambodia, this giant mammal is to be found in its prime. Countless herds of them haunt the banks of the lake in the dry season, whence, when the plains are flooded by the rains of the wet season, they pass to higher grounds, and it is then that the most daring of the Cambodian hunters venture to slay them. This they do in a truly singular manner: armed with an old flint musket charged with powder, and a barbed arrow empoisoned with the product of some forest-tree, they proceed in boats over the flooded jungle to where the elephants, seemingly reluctant to leave their accustomed pastures, are browsing on the leaves of such trees as the high floods have as yet not covered. Having marked out one whose tusks show promise of a handsome reward for their toil, they fire at his belly, as what they consider the most vulnerable part; the enormous beast sometimes yields in a few minutes to the deadliness of the poison, but at other times will go for many hours ere he drops, during which time the hunters most carefully watch him. When the venom has at last done its work, they cut off his tusks and tail, then skin and take the fat, bones, and the greater part of his flesh, all of which find a ready sale among the Chinese of the towns. It is to be regretted that we are not yet acquainted with the tree from which this poison is extracted, but I strongly suspect it is procured from a species of strychnia. Certainly it is a very remarkable circumstance that, when eaten, the flesh of animals poisoned as above described should be destitute of deleterious properties; but in the case of the virulent poison, termed "Urari," used by the Indians of Guiana, we have an exactly similar case. In the 'Pharmaceutical Journal' for April, 1857, I find it stated as follows:—"It is well known that with such poisons, more or less weakened, the Indians mostly kill their game. This refers to the thick skinned tapir, to the fleet deer, the agile monkey, as well as to the largest or the smallest bird. Even the wild cattle which roam over the savannahs of Pirará and Fort San Joaquim are secured in that way—without that, the meat of the animals thus killed proves injurious to those who partake of it. On the contrary, the employment of urari in killing the animal renders the meat more tender; and, following the example of Father Zea, the missionary who accompanied Humboldt up the Orinoco, we killed, during the Guiana expedition, the fowls which we purchased from the Indians, and which usually were uncommonly tough, by means of a poisoned arrow, rendering thereby the flesh more tender." As a domestic animal the elephant is everywhere extensively used; every man of but small consideration having one or two for his personal use. They are, however, not to be compared with the elephant of Hindostan in point of training. Elephants fit to be

used as an instrument of attack in war, so much spoken of in all descriptions of Oriental regions, are extremely rare; and it is affirmed that in the late wars between Siam and Cochin China there was but one in the Siamese army who could be urged to assail the enemy, and he is reported to have killed more Cochin Chinese in one battle than the entire Siamese army. In their wild state many of the males, like those of Ceylon, have no tusks.

The rhinoceros exists in considerable numbers in the immediate vicinity of the lake and at the bases of the mountains. This animal, like the preceding, is hunted for its horn and skin, and the Cambodians are very adroit in its pursuit. A number of men armed with long, sharp-pointed bamboos, proceed into the woods frequented by the animals. Having discovered the retreat of one, they surround him noiselessly; then, approaching within a short distance of him, they shout to attract his attention. On seeing his pursuers, the infuriated beast rushes open-mouthed to attack them; they then seize a favourable opportunity, and with a surprising dexterity plunge the bamboo down his throat. The animal soon falls suffocated by the consequent hemorrhage. This manner of killing them is not, however, always followed, as they are often shot with ball.

A superior breed of hardy, well-formed ponies is universal. The pasturage afforded by the plains is very well adapted for them. It is from this country, the Siamese acquired parts of Cambodia and Laos, that the nobles at Bangkok procure their best beasts. Among the ruminantia, Cambodia has six species of deer, three of wild cattle, and the buffalo. Perhaps the most interesting novelty in East Indian zoology to be found in Cambodia is the three species of bovidæ. They are named by the people *ngua kating*, *ngua deng*, and *ngua dam*. The first species is a rare animal of colossal size, with enormous horns. Its colour is black, and its motion is described as a continuous jump. From its great strength it is much feared by the two other species, and even, it is said, by the rhinoceros, which cannot withstand its force and agility. The second named species, "*ngua deng*," or red ox, is also of great size. The bulls have large horns, stretching forward; the cows are similar to the common domestic animal of the same species, but have not the hump. Both male and female are of a uniform brownish-red colour, with the belly and throat white. The third species, "*ngua dam*," or black ox, is like the preceding in size; their colour is a black or blackish grey. The cows, unlike the red cattle, have short horns curved forward, and have not the pendent pouch of skin which the cows of the preceding species have under the throat. They frequently occur on the plains in herds of from 50 to 300 at a time, and afford good employment to the huntsman. In the domestic state two species of

oxen are to be met with ; they are universally employed as beasts of burden. The one is the common humped species, and the other a small race of a red colour, without humps : both kinds have very short horns. The first occurs black, white, and red. The buffalo, although extremely common in the domestic state, is more generally wild, the abundant pastures affording such great facilities for their increase. Those wild are of a much greater size than those domesticated, and have horns of enormous size. They are also endowed with an extraordinary amount of strength, and it is said can knock over a good-sized elephant. The horns and hides of this, as well as the oxen, form articles of commerce.

Among the reptiles, one, the crocodile, is very common, and forms an article of trade with the Cochin Chinese. Boats go annually from that country for the purpose of catching them : this they do by adroitly inserting a piece of wood sharpened at both ends into their mouths ; they then fasten a strong line to them and bring them on shore. As they endure want of food well, they arrive in good condition at the end of the journey to Cochin China, where they are highly prized as food.
