

Memories of Ancient Maritime Tin Route linking Hanoi and Haifa. Evidences of Hindu Rāṣṭram, Angkor Wat world's largest Viṣṇu mandiram, of Khmer Empire, metallurgical splendour and reclining Tin-Bronze Viṣṇu of West Mebon, Cambodia



Hinduism of Khmer Empire



According to Coedès Indian merchants were the founders of the states Srivijaya (7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> cent.), Majapahit (1293 to 1500) and Khmer empire (802 to 1431), some assign the founding of the kingdoms to Southeast Asian rulers as founding them while importing Hindu pundits as advisers on rajadharma (ethics of kingship).

The extent of Srivijaya Empire in 10th to 11th century CE, according to Chinese source and Srivijayan inscriptions. (Source: Gunawan Kartapranata, based on "Atlas Sejarah Indonesia dan Dunia" (Indonesian and World Historical Atlas) page 32, Drs. Achmad Jamil, Yulia Darmawaty, S.Pd, Sri Wachyuni, S.Pd, Mastara, Jakarta 2004).[ima-water-festival-in.html](http://ima-water-festival-in.html)

HISTOIRE ANCIENNE DES ÉTATS HINDOUISES D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT.

By G. COEDÈS. 93 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ , pp. i-viii, 1-366. Hanoi, 1944.

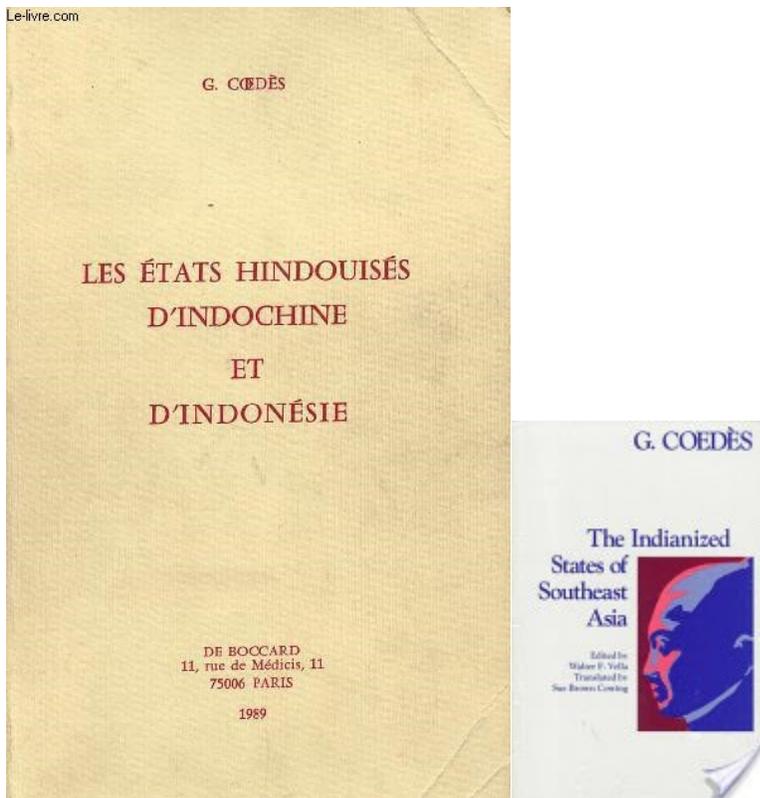
Professor Coedès sprang to fame as the discoverer of the Malayo-Buddhist kingdom of Çrivijaya, whose site and dynasty have been debated ever since. The present important volume covers the Malay Archipelago (excluding the Philippines), Indochina, Malaya, Siam, and Burma. The first chapter disposes briefly of prehistory. The second handles the causes of Hindu expansion, the places from which the Hindus spread, and their methods of penetration. Though history in South-East Asia must be largely epigraphical, Professor Coedès has broken new ground by correlating it with events in India and China. "The contact established between the Mediterranean world and the east after Alexander's campaign, the foundation in India of the empire of Asoka and the later empire of Kanishka, the birth in the west of the Seleucid empire and of the Roman empire gave commerce in luxury articles a scope deplored by the Latin moralists of the first century. Gold, spices, sandalwood, eagle-wood, camphor, benzoin, were reckoned among the products of the lands beyond the Ganges." The supremacy of Pon-nan is linked with the troubled period of Chinese history under the Six Dynasties, the growth of Champa with the feebleness of the Tsin and Tch'en dynasties, the maritime power of Çrivijaya with the weakness of China at the end of the T'ang period and under the Five Dynasties, the rise of Khmer, Cham, and Burmese dynasties with the feebleness of China under the Song dynasty at the end of the eleventh century. Finally, the Mongol conquests under K'oubilai Khan broke up Çrivijaya, liberating the T'ais for incursions down the Malay peninsula and abetting the rising of Majapahit, conqueror of Sumatra and of Malaya south of the T'ai incursions. (The second ruler of Malacca was not Muhammad but *Megat* (= magadha) Iskandar Shah. That is a detail.) This scholarly work enhances, if possible, its author's high reputation.

R. O. WINSTEDT.

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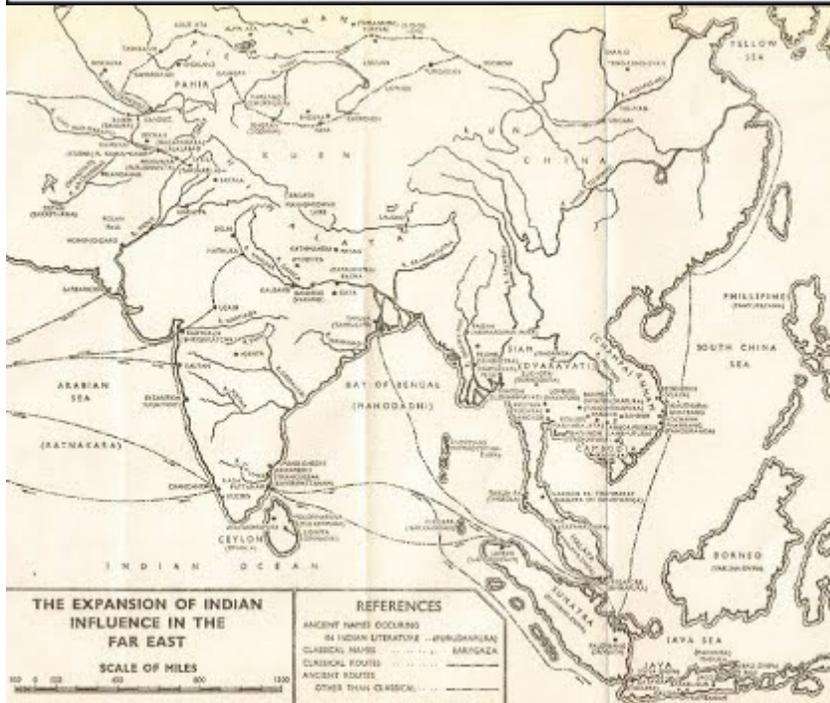
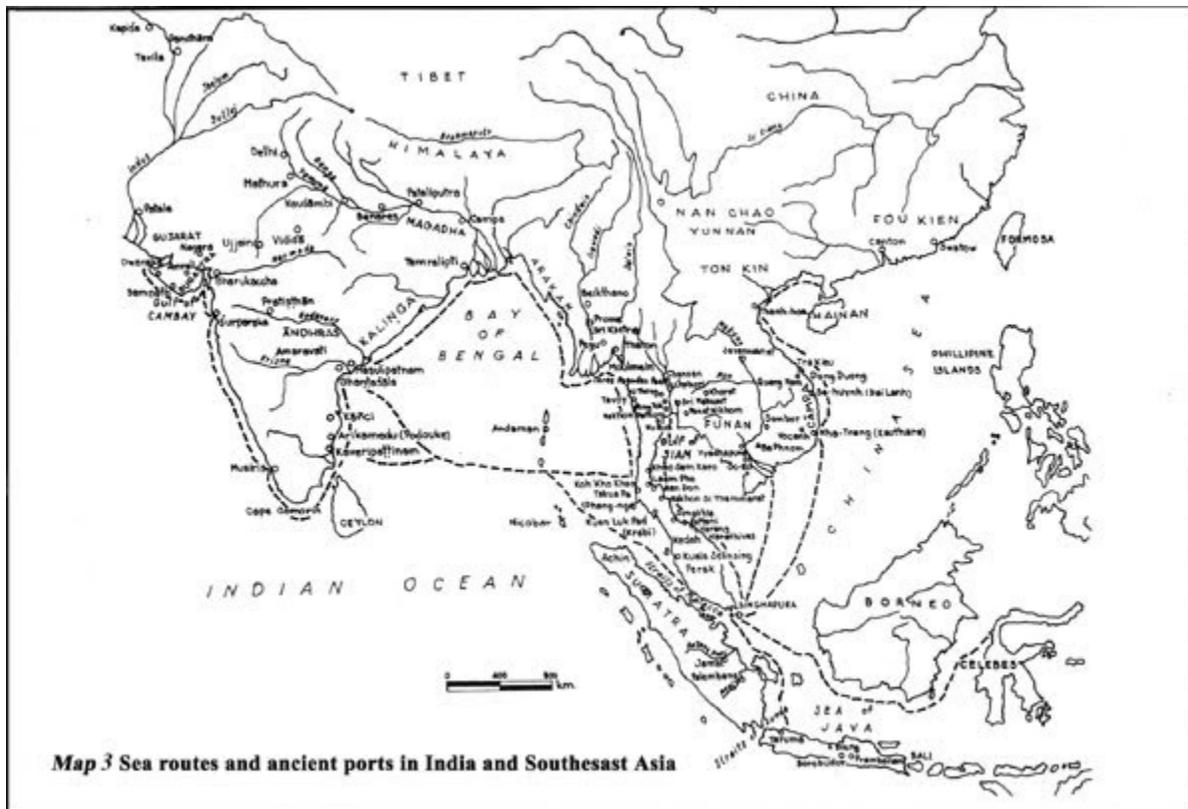
Add caption



See: [http://tantriklaboratories.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rigveda\\_Soma\\_not\\_a\\_herb\\_not\\_a\\_drink\\_but.pdf](http://tantriklaboratories.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rigveda_Soma_not_a_herb_not_a_drink_but.pdf) Rigveda Soma not a herb, not a drink but a metaphor for archaeometallurgical processes: Evidences from Ancient Far East: Bharhut, Bhuteshwar, Candi Suku, Candi Bukit Batu Pahat

See: <http://bharatkalyan97.blogspot.com/2014/11/karthika-purnima-water-festival-in.html> Karthika Purnima water festival in Cambodia. Karthika Purnima Bail Yatra in Bharatam.





The magnum opus of George Coedes, French epigraphist is *Histoire ancienne des États hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient*, Hanoi, Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1944

See: <https://www.sites.google.com/site/indianoceancommunity1/hindu-kingsdoms>

[quote] May, 2014,

#### **Process of Indianisation in Khmer Empire and their Impact**

**It is noteworthy that the Khmers seemed to have willingly accepted Indianization. One likely explanation of the Khmer's acceptance of Indianization was that the rulers found Hinduism a useful tool in governance that helps to increase their dominance over local groups as well as improve their contacts with other cultures. According to the Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, "Early Khmer leaders learned to justify their authority by placing it in a universal context of devotion that could fully absorb the religious aspirations and compel the loyalty of their followers."**

**Through cultural diffusion, borrowing and adaptation, Indianisation resulted in the Khmer Empire adopting Indian religious and political traditions and practices. The Khmers juxtaposed prehistoric animistic cultures with those of newly adopted Hinduism, the coexistence of which continues among villagers to this day. The development of a coherent model of political, social, religious integration resulting from political consolidations in Indian attracted the Southeast Asian rulers.**

#### **What Indianisation brought to the Khmer Empire:**

- **The rich and complex Hindu religion, its mythology, cosmology and rituals – in particular Shiva and Vishnu**
- **The Sanskrit language, the vehicle of Hinduism. The source of many loan words in Khmer.**
- **The Hindu temple complex. A brick and stone architectural tradition, inspired by Gupta prototypes**
- **Sculptures and metal works representing gods, kings and Buddha**
- **Political practices associated with the Khmer court and the state**
- **Lifestyle and culture to the society**

## **In A Nutshell: Indianisation in Southeast Asia and its Process**

Historically, 'Indianization' was the term generally used for Indian cultural influence upon Southeast Asia. It refers to the spread of Indian culture to Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia adopted religious iconography, Sanskrit terminology, coinage, terms identifying leaders and the use of scripts (often mixed with local languages) from India.

Earlier scholars had regarded the process of 'Indianization' as an Indian initiative with large-scale migrants establishing colonies in Southeast Asia. There were a few theories of Indianisation of Southeast Asia. Ultimately, some of these theories were debunked. Examples of such theories are:

### 1. The Theory of the Brahmin (priests)

The Brahmin theory credits the Brahmins with the transmission of Indian culture. The Brahmins are individuals belonging to the Hindu priest, artists, teachers, technicians class. This theory was debunked due to the belief that the Brahmins are very elitist as they are at the top of the Indian caste system, where the society is divided into four major castes (varna): the priestly Brahmins, the Kshatriya warriors, the merchant Vaishyas, and the lowly, labouring Shudras. However, Southeast Asia did not adopt this system.

### 2. The Theory of the Kshatriyas

The Kshatriyas theory presupposes that Indian cultural expansion was due to the seminal influence of the Indian warriors and conquerors, who migrated to Southeast Asia and conquered the land through war. However, insufficient evidence could be provided to support the hypothesis.

### 3. The Theory of the Vaisyas

The vaisya theory postulates that Indian cultural penetration began with traders, who intermarried local women and impressed the indigenous population with their goods and culture. Trade had been the driving force for the traders to move to different places and hence spread the Indian culture around. However, the merchants of low origin and caste would not have the extensive knowledge to pass on extremely complex expertise as well as have the legitimacy to install the rulers of empires in Southeast Asia.

*Rather than being the result of a single factor, most likely the whole process of Indian cultural expansion was the outcome of endeavors of warriors, traders and priests along with the indigenous initiative. Most probably all four groups of people were involved in the process.*

The Indianisation process was not through colonisation, but rather through cultural diffusion (syncretism), cultural borrowing and adaptation. The arrival of a large number of Indians would have made significant social changes, but the people of Southeast Asia did not adopt the caste system, nor even the dietary habits of the Indians like curry powder or milk products. Politically, none of the supposed Southeast Asia 'colonies' showed any allegiance to India. Economically

speaking, the states of Southeast Asia were not colonies as there was no scope of economic exploitation. India also did not enjoy a monopoly in the field of foreign trade.

**Investigations in the past thirty years indicate that 'Indian influences were selectively assimilated into pre-existing, well-developed cultural base'. One of the significant factors in the spread of Indian cultural influence in Southeast Asia is the geographical proximity between the two regions. The Indians were attracted by Southeast Asia's great wealth and strong trade. In the spread of Indian culture, the sea played an important role. There was intensification of sea-borne commerce in the early centuries of Common Era. Along with traders, missionaries, priests, literati, adventurers and fortune seekers went to Southeast Asia.**

The **Khmer**, or Angkor Empire was a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom which dominated the Mekong River Valley and delta for more than 400 years, from 802 to 1432. The empire was founded by King Jayavarman II, and was based in what we now know was Cambodia. Prior to regional establishment, the area was under the influence of Indian culture for a number of centuries.

## **Social**

### The Arts

**Reamker**, Cambodia's national epic, is a poem derived and **adapted** from the Ramayana, the famous Indian epic. Like the Ramayana, it is a philosophical allegory. It is not only confined to the realm of literature, but also extends to all Cambodian art forms, from sculpture to dance drama, painting and art.



The performing of a battle scene between Rama and Ravana in the Reamker.



Mural depicting a scene from the Reamker in Phnom Penh's Silver Pagoda Reamker

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### **Stone Sculptures**

Many sculptures were carved. Most of them being sculptures of religious and mythological creatures. The following are Phnom Dasculptures that are carved from single blocks of fine-grained sandstone. They depict both the Buddhist and Hindu divinities, supporting the presence of divine kingship in the Khmer Empire.



### **Metal Works**

A number of bronze statues have survived, though it is believed that most have been stolen or lost due to war or melted down. Zhou Dagan reported that gold and silver jewellery were common in Khmer society. Bronze objects found by archaeologists include hammocks, fans, parasols and litters. A fragment of the statue was found near the West Baray in Angkor/Yasodharapura, ce.1936 which is believed to be a bronze statue of the Hindu god

Vishnu. Through this statue, we know that the Khmer society had knowledge and respect for Vishnu as well as Hinduism, and were greatly influenced by it.

**SOURCE 6.26** Remnant of the giant bronze statue of Vishnu, found in 1936 CE



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### Wayang Kulit - Shadow Puppetry

- It is a form of art used by traders and priests who came from India to spread Hinduism
- The Khmers **adopted** and preserved the art of shadow puppetry for religious purposes, as well as for education and reaffirmation of cultural beliefs.
- In Cambodia, shadow puppetry is performed during sacred temple ceremonies and private functions, as well as for the public in the villages
- This shows that shadow puppetry is part of the Khmers' customs and tradition



## Food

**Kari** in Cambodia was influenced by the Indian local dish, curry. It was **modified** through the adding of local ingredients, giving it a distinctive Cambodian flavour.



Khmer Curry

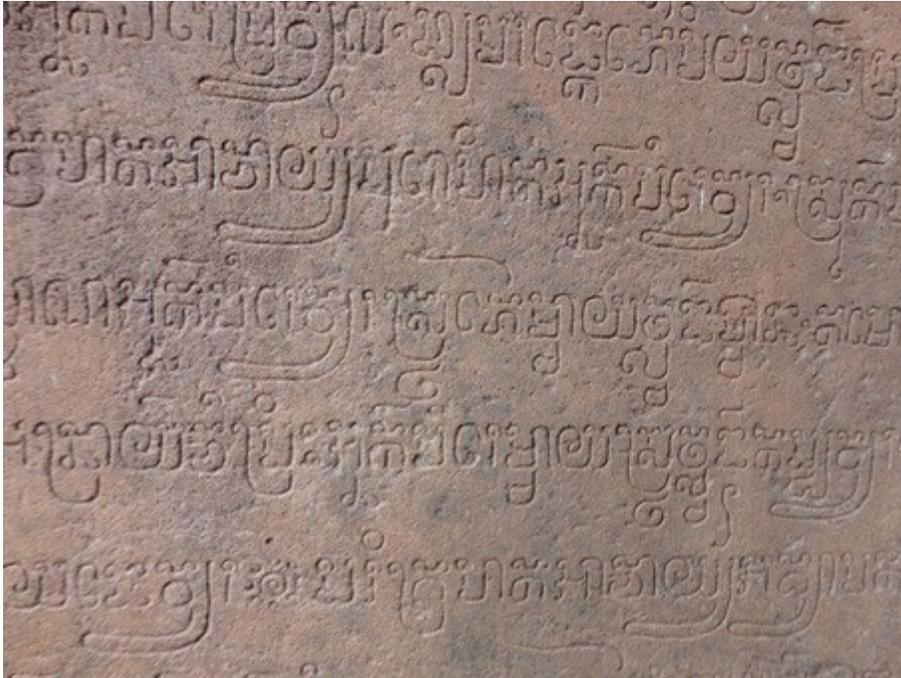
## Language

### **Sanskrit**

- It was an important form of communication and was used by many people in the society. This can be supported by the fact that we get most of our knowledge of the Khmer empire through inscriptions written in Sanskrit.
- Indianisation is also supported through the spread and usage of the language.

### **Khmer - the official Cambodian Language**

- The language was greatly influenced by southern Indian language as it **borrowed** heavily from the Sanskrit
- The Khmers **assimilated** Brahmanism and Hinduism together with Sanskrit and the Pallava script
- The presence of cultural borrowing and assimilation supports the process of Indianisation



Inscriptions in Sanskrit and ancient Khmer on the doorjambs of Angkor Wat

[unquote]

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Yr5ZQ6nvg> (1:06:14)

Churning the Sea of Time - Full Movie | Snagfilms

### SnagFilms

Published on Mar 22, 2017

One of the mythic journeys of our time through the exquisite, complicated, surprising terrain of Vietnam and Cambodia to the great ruins at Angkor - the magnificent Khmer temples being painstakingly restored deep in the Cambodian jungle. It is a high definition odyssey up a river far distanced in time from the corridor into the heart of darkness portrayed in Francis Coppola's "Apocalypse Now." Director Les Guthman travels by boat up the Mekong Delta, along the river whose raw beauty and power were celebrated by Marguerite Duras in the 1920s. But in our time it became known as "the river of evil memory" as it coursed through Southeast Asia in the second half of the 20th Century.



Remaining east wall and towers, West Mebon, Khmer, a temple of Angkor.



West Mebon, from the water.



#### Location of West Mebon within Cambodia

In the dry season today, it is reachable by land. In rainy season, the waters of the 7,800-meter-long baray rise and the temple, located on a site higher than the baray's floor, becomes an island. Khmer architects typically surrounded temples with moats that represent the Hindu sea of creation. The West Mebon, located amid waters so vast that they can seem like a real sea, takes this religious symbolism to the ultimate level.

The temple was built to a square design, with sides measuring about 100 meters. Each side had three tower-passages crowned with stone lotus flowers and arrayed about 28 meters apart. In the center of the square was a stone platform linked to the eastern wall by a laterite and sandstone causeway.

Today the platform, causeway and much of the east wall and towers remain; the other sides are largely gone, though their outlines in stone are visible when the baray's waters are low. There is no central sanctuary to be seen, though the platform may have supported some comparatively small structure in times past.

## **The reclining Vishnu**

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In 1936, the West Mebon yielded up the largest known bronze sculpture in Khmer art, a fragment of the reclining Hindu god Vishnu. The fragment includes the god's head, upper torso and two right arms.

A local villager is said to have dreamt that an image of the Buddha was buried in the West Mebon and wished to be freed from the soil. Subsequent digging unearthed the statue of Vishnu. The Chinese diplomat Zhou Daguan, who visited Angkor at the end of the 13th Century, wrote that the West Mebon had a large image of Buddha with cascading water. Zhou mistook the Vishnu statue for a Buddha image, and the West Mebon for the East Mebon.

The statue, which in complete form would have measured about six meters long, entered the collection of the National Museum in Phnom Penh. It has also been shown abroad, including in Washington D.C.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West\\_Mebon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Mebon)

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**Western Mebon** (GPS: 13.43353, 103.80123) is a small temple within a man-made island, which itself is within the huge man-made reservoir called West Baray. It was built in the 11th Century. Construction was started by King Suryavarman I (reigned 1001-1050) and completed by King Udayadityavarman II (reigned 1050-1066).

Western Mebon was built on the orders of King Udayadityavarman II, in the 11th Century, on the man-made island. It comprises a large square pond of some 100 meter square with a sandstone platform in the middle. Today only the east and south *gopuras* are still standing, along with the walls along the gopuras. A magnificent bronze Vishnu was found on the Western Mebon in 1936 and can now be view at the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

Today nothing much remains of the Western Mebon temple, except for its east and south gopuras.

<https://www.timothytye.com/cambodia/angkor/western-mebon.htm>



## Digging for where the gods were constructed

Brent Crane | Publication date 05 March 2016 | 08:13 ICT



One of the most famous bronze sculptures found at Angkor is the West Mebon Vishnu. Dating to the 11th century, the piece now at Phnom Penh's National Museum is merely a fragment – albeit a car-sized one – of the top half of a reclining Vishnu.

Archaeologists estimate the four-armed Hindu deity's original length at six metres, which makes it comparable to the largest bronzes in the region. Ancient artists would have spent months slaving over it. Yet where Angkorian bronze makers would have spent those months in toil has long puzzled researchers – until now.

The discovery of a sprawling bronze workshop found adjacent to the ancient Royal Palace of Angkor has gone a long way in solving the riddle. The significance of the site was first revealed during a dig in 2012, but the first-ever comprehensive report was published late last month in the 100th edition of the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (BEFEO), a journal that has reported the major archaeological finds of Angkor since 1901.

The workshop was found by chance. Martin Polkinghorne – who co-authored the report – and a team from the APSARA National Authority and École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) were there excavating what they believed was a stone workshop, a site originally found in 1926 by EFEO conservator Henri Marchal.

They collected evidence of stone-making, but they found other things too: half-finished bronze sculptures, hefty furnaces, fragments of unused metal and weighty crucibles that could hold up to two litres of molten bronze.



A large crucible once used to hold molten alloy found at the workshop site. Photo supplied Later, carbon dating would reveal that the workshop was likely in use from the 11th to the 12th century, the pinnacle of Angkorian civilisation under the reign of Jayavarman VII, the famed god-king who oversaw the construction of the Bayon among other edifices.

“We’ve demonstrated that there is a centralised workshop with very large-scale production,” said Polkinghorne this week over the phone from Adelaide, Australia, where he teaches at Flinders University. “It was a great find. We were really excited.”

The reason the workshop’s discovery is so important, Polkinghorne said, is that it turns previously held assumptions about Angkorian bronze work on their head.

The prevailing idea before was that “sculptures were created on the site where they were to be installed or venerated”, he said.

This workshop near Angkor Thom, which the team estimates could be as long as a kilometre, suggests that the fabrication, or at least a large percentage of it, was centralised and industrial. Angkor’s masterpieces were ordered for takeaway.

Bronze statues were highly valued in Angkorian times, Polkinghorne said. Copper and tin, materials used to make bronze, were rare and valuable.

Often the statues were gilded with gold. Despite the expense, such sculptures were found all over the region, including as far as Sri Lanka.



Cambodian archaeologists toil at the workshop site where their forefathers also toiled, with bronze, fire and hammers. Photo supplied

One 12th century inscription known as the Preah Khan references 20,400 statues of bronze, silver and gold across Angkor, which at its peak stretched into Thailand and Laos.

The workshop discovery revealed something else that was previously unknown. Its close proximity to Angkor Thom, the seat of royal power at Angkor, tells archaeologists that the artistry was likely overseen by Angkorian elites.

“The kings were investing huge resources into these statues,” said Polkinghorne.

The statues had a double meaning. They reminded Angkorians of the awesome power of the gods but also of the more immediate authority of the king, he said.

“Primarily, sculptures are important because they have power to restore and also communicate legitimacy,” Polkinghorne explained.

“Artistic skill is a coveted and almost highly secret skillset that the king is tapping,” he continued. “He’s using that knowledge to legitimise himself.”

Alison Carter, an honorary associate at the University of Sydney and a visiting assistant professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, called the bronze workshop “a significant find”.

Carter, whose excavation at Angkor last year focused on the lives of ordinary Angkorians, praised the project for revealing more about the nitty-gritty of the ancient empire, details of which archaeology remains largely in the dark about.



Piece of a leaded bronze 15.5cm statue found at the Angkor Thom Royal Palace dating to the late 12th/early 13th century. Photo supplied

“These [statues] were made by real people and Martin’s work is helping us understand how these objects were crafted,” she said via email.

It was a sentiment echoed by Polkinghorne. “We’ve kind of outlined the bigger picture of Angkor, but now we’re looking at the more minute details, how things were made,” he said. To that end, Polkinghorne described the method of bronze-making likely used at the workshop. The method, known as lost-wax casting, involved using a wax model of the sculpture that the artist would cover in a clay mould. The wax would then be melted out and filled with a molten alloy for molding. The method was used in China, India and Europe as well, but “there’s no question that the Angkorians mastered it”, Polkinghorne said.

Many questions still remain unanswered. The exact boundaries of the workshop are yet to be determined, and there may be more like it. As to the source of the metals that supplied the bronze-making process, archaeologists are not certain about that either.

There are no significant ore or metal deposits known in present-day Cambodia, according to the BEFEO paper, which speculates that the metals were likely obtained through trade. Further excavations at the site are in the works, Polkinghorne said, but still we might never know all the answers.

As a self-doubting Henri Marchal lamented after revisiting the potential workshop site in 1934: “Forever these same old assumptions, for which it is impossible to prove either their truth or falsehood.”

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/post-weekend/digging-where-gods-were-constructed>



**Vishnu Anantashayin. Bronze from the West Mebon, Angkor, Cambodia. Second half of the 11th century**

Spectrum, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2006

ART & SOUL

### Vishnu, of the Thousand Names

In the image of the Great Sustainer in the celebrated Hindu triad is embedded the great mystery, the paradoxical vision of the prime mover of all things, the one who animates all that there is, lying still, writes B. N. Goswamy



**Vishnu Anantashayin. Bronze from the West Mebon, Angkor, Cambodia. Second half of the 11th century**

ONE knows the mythology, but also the image, well. One also knows the *dhyana shlokas*, even one of the many long texts, by heart, evoking his presence, his ineffable persona. *Shaantakaaram*, a verse begins: calm of appearance; *bhujagashayanam*: reclining upon the coils of the great serpent; *padmanaabha*: from whose navel the primal lotus issues forth; *suresham*: lord of all the gods.

Even though one knows that with these words one has barely begun to describe Vishnu, the Great Sustainer in the celebrated Hindu triad, the image stays in mind. For somehow in it is embedded the great mystery, the paradoxical vision of the prime mover of all things, the one who animates all that there is, lying still: strangely inactive, lost in thought, recumbent upon Shesha, the myriad-hooded serpent, floating upon the shoreless waters of eternity.

The meaning of it all may not dawn upon one ever, but perhaps every little thing, every little fragment of a ‘vision’ that comes one’s way, helps. When I think of Vishnu Anantashayin—this is how the iconic representation is often referred to—a succession of images and words comes to my mind. Heinrich Zimmer’s wonderful description, for instance, of how, in this very inactive state, there are the seeds of the beginnings of creation.

For when the urge to create rises, Vishnu will put one hand out to gently move the surface of the still waters, causing a small wave that will lead to an interaction between air and water and thus set the whole chain of creation into motion. Over aeons of time.

I pull out from the bank of my memory great sculpted images of Anantashayin Vishnu: from Deogarh and Aihole and Kathmandu. A vision of Vishnu lying in this state of grace and serenity that Malavika Sarukkai, the greatly gifted Bharatanatyam dancer, raised on the stage at Chandigarh some years ago, surfaces in my thoughts. And each time this happens, a measure of quietness, and of wonder, descends.

This sense of quiet and wonder was further enhanced for me recently when I chanced upon an image of Vishnu Anantashayin from Cambodia: from the celebrated Khmer period. I have never travelled to Cambodia; so it is a photographic reproduction of the image that I am speaking of. But even as a photograph the impact that the image makes is stunning.

It is a bronze image, the largest bronze that was ever cast in the whole of south-east Asia perhaps. Only a fragment of it has survived: fortunately, however, the head, two arms on one of which the slightly raised head rests, and a small, uneven part of the torso. But from the scale of this fragment, it has been estimated that the whole image must have been some 16 feet in length. Now the fragment is part of the collection of the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

There is a little story attached to the discovery of this image which needs to be told perhaps. The image is believed to have been installed by King Udayadityavarman (1050-1066) in the great 11th century Vishnu temple of West Mebon, the exquisite central shrine of the West Baray, one of the vast water reservoirs of Angkor. But the temple is now in a mouldering state, with very little that was inside it once, now intact. As long ago as 1936, pillaging had started. The Archaeological Department of the Government—the country was under French rule at that time—had placed a ban on things being taken out and sold, but small objects found or dug continued to be offered to European visitors by local villagers.

In December of that year a villager from the neighbourhood reported to the authorities the discovery of a statue which, he claimed, he was led to by a dream in which Buddha appeared to him asking to be ‘released’ from the place where he was buried. He guided a team of archaeologists, led by Maurice Glaize, to a site where, at the end of the causeway, they found the image buried, face down, in a shaft a meter below the surface.

The ‘Buddha’ of the villager’s dreams—the country is predominantly of Buddhist persuasion—turned out to be the Vishnu that we speak of here: the ‘West Mebon Vishnu’. The image was in a desperately broken state. The head and the portion of the torso apart, there were other pieces: a portion of the lower back, the right thigh, some parts of two arms.

All of these are now carefully preserved in the National Museum, and archaeologists, having taken careful measurements and weights of these, are working with digital images of all the fragments in the hope of being able to ‘reconstruct’ the statue. However desirable, that end seems, as yet, to be a long way off, though. The fragments are not easily available for viewing, and there is word that a great deal is still missing.

Whether or not a complete reconstruction—or a computer-generated image—of the whole will come about, and whether or not one will eventually have to enter ‘the museum of our

imaginations' to view the whole, one does not know. But many people are at it, with some young scholars from the University of Sydney helping out.

Meanwhile, there is the great head of this masterful work to contemplate and revel in the elegance of. There are the familiar Khmer features that almost define the style: full curved lips, arched eyebrows, curling moustache, fleshy cheeks, broad shoulders. One takes them in but, above all, there is that hint of a smile on the face, now child-like, now cosmic and all-knowing. A calm radiates from the face, even though the mystery of what goes on in that mind remains unfathomable, and therefore un-utterable.

Even in this fragmented state, the 'West Mebon Vishnu', produced by some anonymous artist a thousand years ago, is a deeply affecting work. What is it that Andre Malraux, who had spent some early years of his life in 'French Indo-China', say about works such as these? "*Each masterpiece purifies the world*", he wrote, "*and their common lesson is that they exist, and the victory of each artist over his servitude converges in an enormous display, that of art over human destiny*". [tps://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060924/spectrum/art.htm](https://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060924/spectrum/art.htm)



**Religion :** Hindu

**Style :** Baphuon

**King :** Udayadityavarman II (1050 – 1066 )

**Location :** West of Angkor Thom. North of Siem Reap Airport. In the middle of West Baray. A fragment of the layer Vishnu's statue, bronze.

<https://sovanntips.wordpress.com/category/khmer-temples/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZAksyDRkEo> (5:14)

ប្រាសាទមេឃុណ្យ (WESTERN MEBON TEMPLE in siem reap Province )

Kom san karaoke

Published on Nov 25, 2016

Ruins of the central island temple of the West Baray. West Mebon is in poor shape, consisting primarily of a single wall displaying some carvings in fair condition. The carvings exhibit some of the first examples of carvings of animals in natural, non-mythological scenes, reminiscent of carving on Baphuon. West Mebon may have originally housed a renowned bronze Buddha statue which is now held at the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Also see 'Barays'. The West Baray, though ancient, is filled with water year round and has become a local recreational area. Take route #6 west from town. Turn right about 3 km past the airport turnoff. A short boat ride is

necessary to visit the ruins. 西梅奔寺 (West Mebon) 位于吴哥城西门外，距离暹粒市西北约十公里处。西梅奔寺 (West Mebon) 是11世纪中叶真腊国王优陀耶迭多跋摩二世 (Udayadityavarman II)，所建立献给印度教毗湿奴神的祖先庙。公元 1050 年，苏耶跋摩一世 (Suryavarman I) 逝世，儿子继位成为优陀耶迭多跋摩二世 (Udayadityavarman II)，优陀耶迭多跋摩二世建造巴普昂寺 (Bapuon) 以及西梅奔寺 (West Mebon)。在他的统治期间，发生好几次大规模的国内叛乱，还好都被他的大将 Sangrama 所剿灭平定。公元 1066 年，优陀耶迭多跋摩二世 (Udayadityavarman II) 其弟曷利沙跋摩三世 (Harshavarman III) 继承王位，但是受到内乱及与 Chams 族的战争影响，王权便落入来自 Khorat 高原 (位于现在的泰国境内) 的王族。优陀耶迭多跋摩二世 (Udayadityavarman II) 建造的另外一个有名的建筑物是 The Sdok Kak Thom temple，位于现今的泰国境内的 Aranyaprathet 镇，但是 The Sdok Kak Thom temple 最有名的发现，是一份详细列明优陀耶迭多跋摩二世 (Udayadityavarman II) 之前所有高棉国王排序的碑文，让现代的考古学家得以进一步了解先前高棉吴哥王朝的历史。现在的一部分碑文，收集于曼谷的国家博物馆保存。西梅奔寺 (West Mebon) 位于西大人工湖 (West baray) 的中央小岛上，寺中曾供奉着一尊表现毗湿奴在宇宙之水中休憩的铜像，现铜像移置于金边的国家博物馆中。西大人工湖 (West baray) 长八公里，宽 2.3 公里，为吴哥最重要的水利工程之一，也是世界上现存最大的人工水池。日落前到了西池南堤，那里有个码头，这里来得人不多，来这里游玩的多数是当地人，他们在沙滩上嬉戏，算是当地人的休闲场地吧。到西梅奔是要坐船过去的 (USD \$15)，不论东美蓬或是西梅奔，以前都是一个大水库中间的建筑物，只是东美蓬周围的水已经干涸了，而西梅奔寺仍在水中央的岛上，但西梅奔寺的可看性很小，因为只剩下一段墙。在公元九至十二世纪，吴哥大兴水利，建成了以东池，西池，北池，罗来池，皇家浴池和吴哥寺护城河，建构数千小水池和管道相连通的宏大水利系统。根据当地一年旱雨两季分明的气候条件，合理调度，先将河水汇集，再分流到农田中进行灌溉，同时兼顾城市和神庙的用水，排水，防御，交通等各个方面的需要。有了这样完善的灌溉系统，千年前的吴哥就实现了水稻一年两熟，甚至三熟的先进农业技术。这些水利工程，其实完全可与吴哥的建筑以及浮雕艺术并驾齐驱。然而随着国力衰弱，水利设施失修，最终导致洪水泛滥，给吴哥文明造成了毁灭性的打击。



Photo by Michael Freeman

<http://www.michaelfreemanphoto.com/-/galleries/the-galleries/stock/architecture-design/art-artefacts/hindu/-/medias/096981f6-fd68-11df-a26d-d1bdba235e85-reclining-vishnu>

### Reclining Vishnu

12313.02 Reclining Vishnu The remains of the giant bronze statue of Vishnu reclining, from Angkor, Cambodia. Discovered in 1936, it was originally installed in the temple of West Mebon, on an island in the middle of the large artificial lake known as the West Baray. It dates to the middle of the 11th century, during the reign of Udayadityavarman II, and is now in the National Museum, Phnom Penh.

[National Museum](#), [Phnom Penh](#), [Cambodia](#)

Author: **Michael Freeman**

See: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-540-78566-8\\_7](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-540-78566-8_7)

Reconstructing the West Mebon Vishnu: A Marriage of Traditional Artefactual Analysis with Digital 3D Visualization Authors:

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- 
- 

### Abstract

The West Mebon Vishnu is one of the most magnificent works of sculpture in South East Asian art history, and a key example of the tradition of large bronzes that plays an important role in the history of the region. Unfortunately, this once powerful and serene sculpture survives only in 19 major fragments that together constitute perhaps 40% of the original statue.

Reconstruction of the Vishnu from these fragments is a formidable task that we have approached by combining detailed analysis of the surviving fragments with digitally modeled 3D reconstruction, informed by comparative studies of Vishniavite iconography and the

aesthetic and religious traditions of Khmer culture. Beyond its aesthetic value, the reconstruction process may provide insights into the many unknowns surrounding the creation and destruction of this masterpiece.

West Baray By

[Siemreap.net](http://Siemreap.net)

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August 26, 2017

By

[Siemreap.net](http://Siemreap.net)

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August 26, 2017



West Baray during dry season

The largest artificial reservoir (8 x 2.2km) in the Angkor Park, called the **West Baray** is located near Angkor Thom city. In ancient times, the Baray was supplied by fresh water that came from two main sources: The Siem Reap and Puok Rivers. The reservoir was probably built by the great king, Suryavarman I, during whose reign the whole Angkor Empire was greatly expanded. This construction was finished in the second half of the 11th century by king Udayadityavarman II, who built, in the centre of the West Baray, a small temple called **West Mebon** on an island where the bronze statue of the 'Reclining Vishnu' was found. This sculpture is now exhibited at

the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. According to some researchers, the West Baray was built because the **East Baray** could not be relied upon for water storage. According to an excavation in the 1960s, there must have been a prehistoric site near the **Ak Yum** temple. The west part of Baray was constructed on the north part of an old city surrounded by a moat called 'Banteay Chheu', a name given after a village to the south of this city. The city must have survived through many reigns as many temples were built there.

## Nearby Temples

Following is the description of some temples to the northwest of the West Baray.

**Phnom Rung** is about 1.8km from the northern dike of the West Baray. This temple was a square sanctuary of brick on a high mound, open to the east with false doors on the remaining sides. Although this temple is ruined, some pieces of brick and sandstones remain as proof of its construction and structure in the Pre-Angkorian period.

**Kuk Po**, located approximately 2.5km from Prasat Phnom Rung, was built in the 8th century to dedicate to Brahmanism. In the 9th century, the King Jayavarman III had conducted some restorations and made a bilingual inscription in Sanskrit and Khmer, narrating his donation to the god of the temple. The temple was continuously used for worship as many statues from different periods have been found at the site.

**Spean Thma** 'Stone Bridge' or **Spean Memay** 'Widows' Bridge' is located close to the northwest corner of the West Baray along the ancient road to Sdok Kok Thom temple. It is built of laterite and measures 79m in length and 9m wide, with 21 arches.

During your discovery of Khmer architectural and historic values at the temples, you may also enjoy the admirable village landscape, rice fields and vegetable gardens along the road to the temples.

<https://www.siemreap.net/visit/angkor/temples/west-baray/>

**manasataramgini @blog\_supplement 24 Dec. 2018**

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More

The fragments of a monumental bronze viShNu from the artificial Khmer island of West Baray. The image when intact was around 6 meters in size. It was cast in sections which were then riveted&mercury amalgamation was used to give a gold coat and studded with gems. It was placed on the artificial island to give the impression of viShNu on the kShirasAgara. The initial creation of the island was started by queen jayadevI ~710 CE and its final form was achieved by udayAdityavarman in the 1000s when the viShNu was likely installed.



"Srahs and barays were reservoirs, generally created by excavation and embankment, respectively. It is not clear whether the significance of these reservoirs was religious, agricultural, or a combination of the two. The two largest reservoirs at Angkor were the West Baray and the East Baray located on either side of Angkor Thom. The East Baray is now dry. The West Mebon is an 11th-century temple standing at the center of the West Baray and the East Mebon is a 10th-century temple standing at the center of the East Baray. The baray associated with Preah Khan is the Jayataka, in the middle of which stands the 12th-century temple of Neak Pean. Scholars have speculated that the Jayataka represents the Himalayan lake of Anavatapta, known for its miraculous healing powers."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khmer\\_architecture#Srah\\_and\\_baray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khmer_architecture#Srah_and_baray)