

introduction

There are over a hundred major temple sites to be visited in and around Siem Reap - the religious remains of a series of cities, built by a succession of kings from around the 7th to the 13th centuries.

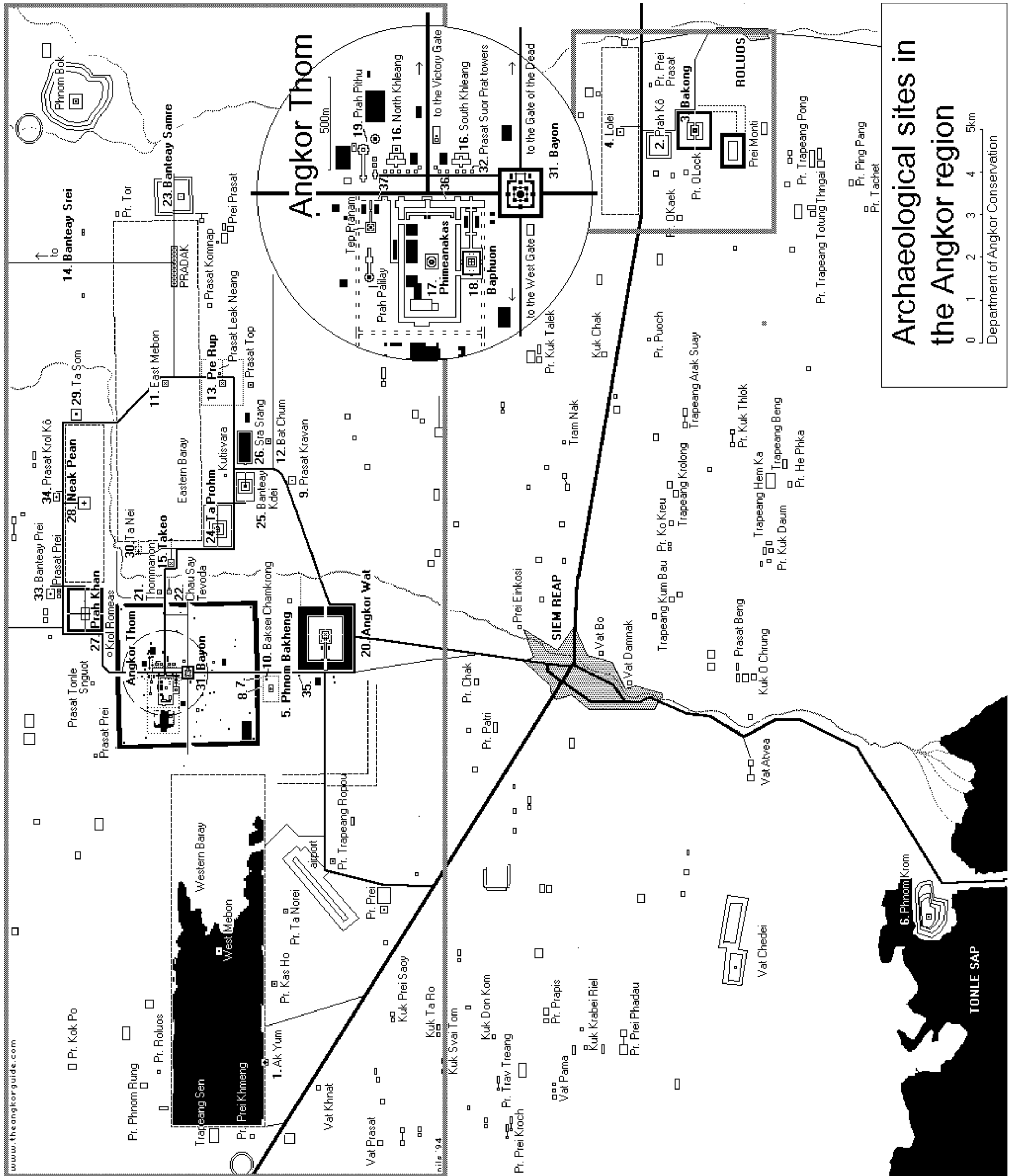
All civic and domestic buildings were built in timber and have long since disappeared, so not much is known about the lives of the civilians - although some 1,200 inscriptions found throughout the region and the remains of a vast irrigation system indicate the scale and complexity of the civilisation.

Brick was mainly used for the earlier temples, with increasing use then being made of laterite, a rust coloured mudstone, and finally of sandstone, which was quarried mostly from the Kulen hills, 40 kilometres to the north-east of Siem Reap. Many were built as 'temple mountains' or pyramids, symbolic of the cosmic Mount Meru of Hindu mythology. The five tiered mountain at the centre of the universe (the temple), was said to be encircled by seven chains of mountains (the enclosure walls) which were surrounded in turn by the sea (the moat).

The map indicates the major accessible sites, which are listed in chronological order. Dates given are of the consecration of the principal divinities and an asterisk rates importance.

All information is from research by the École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

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the monuments

1 Ak Yum * **ប្រាសាទ អកយ៉ុំ**
beginning of 7th century, Hindu
The first temple mountain and one of the earliest known sites in the area, preceding the first Angkor and thought to be central to the first ancient capital city. A small three tiered pyramid in brick with primary elements in sandstone, still mostly buried under the 11th century dike of the western baray. Inscriptions give the dates 609 AD, 704 AD and 1001 AD and reveal that the temple was dedicated to the god Gambhiresvara.

9th century

2 Prah Ko ** (Roluos Group) **ប្រាសាទ ព្រះគោ**
879 AD, Indravarman I Hindu (Shiva)
The funerary temple of Jayavarman II and his predecessors, enclosed within a moat of 400 by 500 metres. The foundation stele (an inscribed monolith) tells of the genealogy of Indravarman I, with a reference to the cult of the god king, and the foundation date of three statues of Shiva and Devi in 879 AD. The other face of the inscription dates from 893 AD under the reign of Yasovarman and describes certain dedications. The temple still has a large area of moulded stucco (a lime-based plaster mixture) remaining intact, though only just.

3 Bakong ** (Roluos Group) **ប្រាសាទ បាកុង**
881 AD, Indravarman I Hindu (Shiva)
A temple mountain enclosed by a laterite wall and two moats, the outer of which measures about 900 by 700 metres. The third such temple after Ak Yum and Rong Cheng (at Phnom Kulen to the north east) and the first to make extensive use of sandstone. The stele tells of the foundation of the linga (a stone phallus, representative of Shiva) in 881 AD. The brick towers have finely detailed sandstone elements and some remnants of stucco moulding. The central sanctuary in the Angkor Wat style, which was probably built two centuries after the main temple, was resurrected from a pile of rubble between 1936 and 1943.

4 Lolei * (Roluos Group) **ប្រាសាទ លលៃ**
893 AD, Yasovarman I Hindu (Shiva)
Four brick towers (though perhaps originally six) set on a two tiered base in the middle of the Lolei Baray, (Indratataka), a large ancient reservoir of 3.8 by 0.8 kilometres. Excavation of the baray began, so the inscription tells us, five days after the consecration of Indravarman I at Bakong, in order to irrigate the capital city centred there. The temple, built subsequently, is dedicated to his memory.

5 Phnom Bakheng ** **ប្រាសាទ ភ្នំបាខែង**
end of 9th century, Yasovarman I Hindu (Shiva)
Located at the centre of the first capital of Angkor which formed a square of about 4km surrounded by a moat of which the south west quarter is still visible. The remains of an inner enclosure of 650 by 436 metres surrounds the base of the hill. A 'natural mound' five tiered pyramid temple, the bulk of which is hewn from the bed-rock and faced with sandstone. The location gives good views over the surrounding landscape, particularly at sunset.

6 Phnom Krom ** **ប្រាសាទ ភ្នំក្រោម**
end of 9th century, Yasovarman I Hindu
Perhaps the second of three temples built by Yasovarman I on the hills dominating the Angkor plain - the others on Phnom Bakheng and Phnom Bok. Badly deteriorated. Enclosed in a square laterite wall, three sandstone sanctuaries aligned north-south are dedicated to the Brahmanic trinity - Shiva between Vishnu (north) and Brahma (south). Good views over the Tonle Sap lake.

10th century

7 Prasat Thma Bay Kaek * **ប្រាសាទបាយកែក**
10th century
A ruined single square brick tower preceded to the east by a laterite terrace, situated between Baksei Chamkrong and the moat of Angkor Thom, 125 metres west of the main road. When cleared in 1945, five gold leaves arranged in a quincunx where found under the base step.

8 Prasat Bei * **ប្រាសាទ បី**
10th century Hindu (Shiva)
Three small brick towers aligned north south on a common laterite base, 175 metres west from the above.

9 Prasat Kravan * **ប្រាសាទ ក្រវ៉ាន់**
921 AD, Hashavarman I Hindu
Five brick towers, aligned north - south on a common brick base, within a single enclosure and moat. The extensive brickwork restoration uses cement mortar where originally there would only have been a thin vegetal adhesive or clay slurry. The inscribed door frames mention the setting of a statue of Vishnu in 921. There are bas-reliefs representing Vishnu, and other representations of Lakshmi in the internal brickwork of the central tower, and of the northern most tower. Best in the morning sun.

10 Baksei Chamkrong * **ប្រាសាទ បក្សីចាំក្រុង**
947 AD, Hashavarman I, Rajendravarman II Hindu (Shiva)
A temple mountain set back in the trees at the base of Phnom Bakheng, in materials typical of the 10th century. A brick tower opening to the east and originally decorated with stucco moulding surmounts four diminishing tiers in laterite, the upper most of which is moulded, enclosed within a brick wall which has virtually disappeared. Four axial stairs each ascend in a single flight.

11 Mebon Oriental ** **ប្រាសាទ មេបូណ៌ទ្រាងកើត**
952 AD, Rajendravarman II Hindu (Shiva)
At the centre of the Eastern Baray and so originally only accessible by boat. All the characteristics of a temple mountain in brick and laterite but with a three metre high platform carrying five towers arranged in a quincunx rather than a central tiered pyramid. A large foundation stele describes the dedication to the king's parents. The east west axis of the temple aligns with the principal entry to the royal palace in Angkor Thom. Sandstone lintels are superbly detailed. Monolithic elephants stand at the four corners of each enclosure, those to the south west being particularly well preserved. Good in the late afternoon.

12 Bat Chum * **ប្រាសាទ បាត់ជូំ**
953 AD, Rajendravarman II Buddhist
The first known Buddhist temple. Three brick sanctuaries with the main architectural elements in sandstone on a common moulded laterite base. Inscriptions give details of dedications to three Buddhist divinities and reveal the architect of the Eastern Mebon as its patron and builder.

13 Pre Rup *** **ប្រាសាទ ប្រែរូប**
961 AD, Rajendravarman II Hindu(Shiva)
On the same north south axis as the Eastern Mebon which it follows by only 9 years. Similar in style and composition, though much grander. Again built almost entirely in laterite and brick but with the main architectural elements in sandstone. The lintels are finely detailed - some remain unfinished. The upper brick towers would have been adorned with stucco moulding. Probably central to the second capital which developed following its return from Koh Ker to where it moved between 921 and 944. It is thought that the royal palace was situated close by.

14 Banteay Srei *** **ប្រាសាទ បន្ទាយស្រី**
967 AD, Rajendravarman II, Jayavarman V Hindu (Shiva)
A temple in the forest 25 kilometres to the north east of Angkor Thom. A jewel to which the nature of the material used - a finely textured rose coloured sandstone - is perfectly suited. Monumental size and architectural theme give way to a miniature scale and a dense and exquisite detail in near perfect preservation. Dismantled and reconstructed between 1931 and 1936.

11th century

15 Ta Keo ** **ប្រាសាទ តាកែវ**
11th century, Jayavarman V, Suryavarman I Hindu (Shiva)
An imposing five tier temple mountain built predominantly in sandstone and surrounded by a moat. Perhaps central to the next capital. Best approached from the original eastern entrance where the massive form of the temple is presented framed in trees at the end of the entrance causeway. The clear constructional intention is all the more visible since the decoration was never completed. Inscriptions on door frames of the eastern gopuras relate to dedications made in 1007.

16 The Khleang * **ឃ្លាំង**
beginning of 11th century, Jayavarman V, Suryavarman I
The two Khleangs are similar buildings of uncertain function. The one to the north was built first - two inscriptions date from 1002 to 1049. Inscriptions within the south Khleang are similar to the oaths of functionaries engraved on one of the door jambs of the east gopura of the royal palace enclosure.

17 Phimeanakas ** **ប្រាសាទ ភិមាណកាស**
11th century, Suryavarman I, Udayadityavarman II Hindu
The Royal Palace of the next capital was enclosed within a five metre high laterite wall that is doubled by a second of later construction. At the centre of this enclosure is Phimeanakas, a three tiered rectangular pyramid built in laterite, which was perhaps a private royal chapel. The composition diminishes with height and so gives a false perspective - a characteristic device of the temple mountains.

18 Baphuon ** **ប្រាសាទ បាបួន**
middle of 11th century, Udayadityavarman II Hindu (Shiva)
A three tiered temple mountain to the south of the Royal Palace enclosure. It is the "impressive copper tower even higher than the tower of gold" (the Bayon) described by Tcheou Ta-Kouan, a Chinese diplomat visiting at the end of the 13th century. Probably the central temple of the fourth kingdom of Angkor.

12th century

19 Prah Pithu * **ប្រាសាទ ព្រះពិដូរ**
beginning of 12th century, Hindu / Buddhist
A collection of five small temples (one of which is Buddhist) and a terrace (a stone plinth originally supporting some form of lightweight structure) situated at the far north-east of the royal square. Unfortunately badly ruined, but the high platforms on which they are built and that which remains of their lower levels - the upper levels having disappeared - reveals a high quality of decoration and classifies them with the best period of classic art - that of Angkor Wat (first half of the 12th century).

20 Angkor Wat *** **ប្រាសាទ អង្គរវត្ត**
beginning of 12th century, Suryavarman II Hindu (Vishnu)
A pyramid temple in three tiers built on an artificial mound with four enclosures and opening unusually to the west, suggesting this was the funerary temple of Suryavarman II. The external wall forms a rectangle of 1025 by 800 metres which is enclosed by a moat 190 metres wide. Overall a square kilometre of bas-relief sculpture to view. Best in the late afternoon.

21 Thommanon * **ប្រាសាទ ថុមមន្ត**
beginning of 12th century, Suryavarman II Hindu
Extensively restored in contrast to Chau Say Thevoda just to its south. A single ruined laterite wall, 45 by 60 metres, surrounded by a moat and divided by two gopuras encloses both a finely detailed central sanctuary set on a 2.5 metre high moulded base and a single library.

22 Chau Say Tevoda * **ប្រាសាទ ចៅសាយទេវតា**
beginning of 12th century, Suryavarman II Hindu
Similar in style to Thommanon, but in an advanced state of ruin. A raised causeway on three rows of piers links the temple via a cruciform terrace to the river. The foundation date is uncertain but the quality of decoration places it, with Thomanon, between the extreme limits of the Baphuon and Angkor Wat style, from the end of the 11th to the middle of the 12th centuries.

23 Banteay Samre *** **ប្រាសាទ បន្ទាយសំរឹ**
beginning of 12th century, Suryavarman II Hindu (Vishnu)
Located 14 kilometres to the north east of Siem Reap. A finely proportioned temple from the classic period. Undated but perhaps a little later than Angkor Wat, the interior is similar in layout to Chau Say Tevoda with which it is perhaps contemporaneous. Dismantled and reconstructed between 1936 and 1944. The Samres were a people of mixed origin who were said to have lived at the base of the Kulen hills.

24 Ta Prohm *** **ប្រាសាទ តាព្រហ្ម**
1186 AD, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A large Buddhist monastery of five enclosures. Unrestored and deliberately left to the elements with dramatic results - though many of the large trees which give the temple its character are dying. Dedicated to the mother of Jayavarman VII, the inscription tells us that within the walls were 12,640 inhabitants of which 13 were high priests, 2,740 officials, 2,232 assistants, and 615 dancers. Best in the morning.

25 Banteay Kdei ** **ប្រាសាទ បន្ទាយក្តី**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A temple of four enclosures, the outer measuring 700 by 500 metres, showing signs of at least two stages of construction in differing styles. Typical of Jayavarman VII, but in an advanced state of decay.

26 Srah Srang ** **ស្រះស្រង់**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII
A large basin (the royal bath), 700 metres by 300, set on the axis of Banteay Kdei and bordered by stone steps. Originally excavated during the mid 10th century, to its west is an elegant terrace, and nearby at its centre a small island on which there are some sandstone remains.

27 Prah Khan *** **ប្រាសាទ ព្រះខ័ន្ទ**
1191 AD, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A royal city forming a rectangle of 700 by 800 metres surrounded by a moat and similar to Ta Prohm, but with only four enclosures. Opens to the east to a baray (at the centre of which is Neak Pean) via a terrace originally used as a boat landing. The large stele, discovered in 1939, tells us that the temple was dedicated to the king's father. It also refers to the small stone building within the fourth enclosure to the east (like the one at Ta Prohm) as 'a house of fire' - perhaps for visiting pilgrims. The many small holes in the stone of the central sanctuary could perhaps have been used to fix a bronze panelling. Larger holes seen elsewhere were generally used for lifting. Good at any time.

28 Neak Pean *** **ប្រាសាទ ណែកព័ន្ទ**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
'The entwined naga'. Built as an island, 350 metres square, in the middle of the Preah Khan Baray. A square central basin has at its centre a circular base for the sanctuary ringed with two entwined nagas (serpents). Four gargoyles in small sanctuaries discharge into smaller square basins to each side in a form which replicates the sacred lake of Anavatapta in the Himalaya, venerated for its powers of healing.

29 Ta Som * **ប្រាសាទ តាសោម**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
To the east of the Prah Khan baray and almost on its central axis. Typical of the later period of the Bayon style with three enclosures similar to those at Ta Prohm and Banteay Kdei. The various buildings which still stand are in an advanced state of ruin.

30 Ta Nei * **ប្រាសាទ តានៃ**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
In an isolated position to the north of Ta Keo. Relatively well preserved though deteriorating, the main temple has four cruciform entrance gopuras in sandstone connected by galleries with walls in laterite and vaulted sandstone ceilings. Corner pavilions, a central sanctuary and a library in the south eastern corner are also in laterite and sandstone. Inscriptions on door jambs give details of divinities to whom the temple was dedicated.

31 Bayon *** **ប្រាសាទ បាយ័ន**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
At the centre of the last city of Angkor and perhaps a microcosm of the kingdom with representations of all the major divinities - Buddhist to the south and east, and Hindu to the north and west. 200 large faces adorn the 54 towers signifying the omnipresence of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the kingdom's principal divinity. There are indications that the temple was built in stages with much architectural indecision. Best early in the morning or, if you get the chance, by the full moon. Don't miss the bas-reliefs.

32 Prasat Suor Prat * **ប្រាសាទ សួរព្រ័ត**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Hindu (Vishnu)
The towers of the rope dancers. Twelve sanctuaries in laterite and sandstone to the west of the royal terrace which perhaps had some ceremonial function.

33 Banteay Prei * **ប្រាសាទ បន្ទាយប្រី**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A small temple in the Bayon style to the north of Prah Khan. Two enclosures, the outer of which is surrounded by a moat.

34 Krol Kô * **ប្រាសាទ ក្រោលគោ**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A small temple of two enclosures. The central tower in the Bayon style is preceded by a library, built of laterite and sandstone, to the south of the axis.

35 Ta Prohm Kel **ប្រាសាទ តាព្រហ្មកេល**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII Buddhist
A lone sandstone tower within a single ruined laterite enclosure. The stele discovered at Ta Prohm in 1928 gives details of 102 hospitals established by Jayavarman VII. This building is probably the chapel of one of these. One stands outside each of the cardinal gates to Angkor Thom.

36 The Elephant Terrace *** **លានជល់ដំរី**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII
The foundation platform of the royal audience hall, described by Chou Ta-Kuan in 1296 - "In the counsel hall, the window frames are of gold: to the left and right are square pillars bearing forty or fifty mirrors, below them are elephants...". "Here, on the central perron amidst the ringing of conches, when the golden curtain was drawn aside by two servants, the king of Angkor, seated on a lion skin, appeared before his prostrated subjects." - G.P. Groslier.

37 Terrace of the Leper King ** **លានស្តេចគំលង់**
end of 12th century, Jayavarman VII
Named after the statue found there which is in fact of Yama, the god and judge of the dead. From epigraphic evidence, Georges Coedes suggests therefore that it may have been the location of Hemagri - the mount meru - where the "inspector of faults and qualities" perhaps once held court beneath a wooden edifice.