



## Banteay Chhmar: Garrison Temple of the Khmer Empire

By Peter D. Sharrock, Claude Jacques, Olivier Cunin, Thierry Zephir

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The secrets of the great temple and city of Banteay Chmar have been buried in this vast forestclad sandstone ruin for 800 years. Now that it is finally being restored, it is revealed as the twin-hub of the Khmer Empire under its greatest king, Jayavarman VII (1181-1219), the 47 Buddha-faced towers linking it with Angkor s 59 tower Bayon.

As well as taking the visitor on a detailed tour of the monument, the book includes a new translation of the temple's main inscription, aligned with a contemporary inscription in neighboring Champa. This recounts the lost story of how the Cambodians marshalled their army in this temple, sending it from here to conquer Champa. The campaign is also reflected in a 'newsreel' of politico-military reliefs carved into the outer gallery of the temple, lavishly illustrated here for the first time. In addition, the story surrounding the unique series of Avalokiteshvara reliefs, their partial theft and recovery are also discussed.

Banteay Chhmar was also key to the gathering and distribution of precious medicinal herbs for the world's first chain of 102 hospitals under the care of the gentle medicine Buddha Bhaisajyaguru.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### About the Author

Dr Peter D. Sharrock is Senior Teaching Fellow in the History of Art and Archaeology at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He experienced the American war in Indochina for four years as the Reuters correspondent and discovered how, as the French said, Indochina 'attaches to the skin'. The war put the vast Angkor temple complex out of reach and this was prolonged as Cambodia closed on itself and underwent the agony inflicted by Pol Pot and the Khmers Rouges. His doctorate and subsequent publications are on a new interpretation of the esoteric Buddhism and imperial politics of the greatest king of ancient Cambodia, Jayavarman VII, as expressed through the art and architecture of the 'Bayon style' named after the Bayon temple in Angkor. His current research explores Jayavarman's empire beyond Angkor - including his second greatest temple complex of Banteay Chhmar, now at last being restored after slowly crumbling for eight centuries in remote forest near the modern Thai border. Outside ancient Cambodia he studies the spread of tantric or esoteric Buddhism that developed in the great eighth-century monasteries of the Ganges valley and was diffused in many different art and architectural forms through much of Asia.

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##### **Patrick Cartwright:**

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##### **Thomas Schroeder:**

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