TRAVELS IN INDO-CHINA,
ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ongcor Thom (Ongcor the Great)—Surrounding Wall—
Triumphal Arch.

Half-a-mile beyond Bakhêng are the ruins of Ongcor-Thôm. A partly-destroyed road, hidden by thick layers of sand and dust, and crossing a large ditch, half filled with blocks of stone, portions of columns, and fragments of sculptured lions and elephants, leads to the gateway of the town, which is built in the style of a triumphal arch.

These remains are in a tolerable state of preservation, and are composed of a central tower, 18 metres high, surrounded by four turrets, and flanked by two other towers connected together by galleries. At the top are four immense heads in the Egyptian style; and every available space is filled with sculpture. At the foot of the great tower is a passage for carriages; and on each side of it are doors and staircases communicating with the walls, the whole building being constructed of sandstone.
The outer wall is composed of blocks of ferruginous stone, and extends right and left from the entrance. It is about 24 miles square, 3 met. 80 centimet. thick, and 7 met. high, and serves as a support to a glacis which rises almost from the top. At the four cardinal points are doors, there being two on the east side. Within this vast enclosure, now covered with an almost impenetrable forest, are a vast number of buildings, more or less in ruin, which testify to the ancient splendour of the town. In some places, where the heavy rains have washed away the soil, or where the natives have dug in search for treasure, may be seen immense quantities of porcelain and pottery.

Prea sat Ling poun.

Within the enclosure of Ongcor Thom, and two miles from the west gate, are to be seen through the trees the tops of the high towers of a building called by the Cambodians “Prea sat Ling poun,” that is to say, “The Pagoda where they play hide and seek.” It is a collection of 37 towers of unequal size, connected by galleries which cross each other perpetually, and form a labyrinth through which it is not easy to find one’s way. A long shallow ditch, crossed by four roads leading to the principal entrances, surrounds it on all sides. Beyond the ditch rises the wall of a gallery, of which the exterior colonnades and the roof are only a mass of ruins, over which you must climb to reach the interior. This wall is still
intact: it is about 120 metres long, and forms a square round the pagoda. About 1 metre from the ground are visible, in places where the blocks fallen from the roof have not hidden everything, various bas-reliefs carved in the thickness of the wall: they are not surmounted by cornices as at Ongkor-Wat, by which it would seem as if they had never been finished.

Besides the four principal entrances there were other doors at unequal distances in this gallery, but singularly enough many of them have been walled up. The gallery was connected with the main body of the building by four smaller ones opposite each of the great doors, and forming a covered way to the interior; but all these galleries are destroyed.

The second enclosure is 65 metres square, and each front is composed of five towers, connected by galleries. The central and corner towers are the largest: they are about 13 metres high. High galleries connect the centre tower with the intermediate ones, which again are connected with those at the corners by galleries of a less elevation.

On each side are seven staircases, of six steps each, and leading either to towers or galleries: these galleries are covered by a triple roof: a central one 7 metres high, resting on an outer wall, and on columns 2 metres in height; an exterior roof on a double row of columns; and a third resting on a very low wall, pierced with numerous large windows looking on to a narrow interior court.

On the exterior of the wall, which on one side sustains
the high roof, are a series of bas-reliefs, surrounding the whole gallery. They are sculptured in the thickness of the wall, and are curious from the scenes and costumes they represent. These scenes are drawn more from the sacred books of the people than from their history; for men with ten heads and twenty arms, fantastic animals, griffins and dragons, are favourite subjects. The men all wear the langouti, and often nothing beside, and have the ears pierced and hanging on their shoulders: many have long beards.

In the vestibules of the towers, and in the high galleries near them, are kings and queens seated on a rich dais, with a numerous court, and surrounded by persons carrying parasols, fans, standards, and caskets: there are likewise many musicians with drums, flutes, and harps.

In the galleries are represented several boats' crews fighting; while underneath are fishes disputing for the bodies of the slain. There are also in the same galleries persons in attitudes of adoration, with clasped hands, before a figure of Samonakodom.

In another part is a long procession: the king is in a large open carriage, divided into three compartments, he being in the centre one, and his wives in the two others. This carriage has six wheels and two shafts, which rest on the shoulders of eight men. The chiefs are mounted on elephants or horses, or seated in carriages drawn by four led horses, and by their side march a numerous company bearing standards, parasols, and caskets.

The bas-reliefs at the east and north sides represent
similar scenes, as well as many of the fabulous men and animals which are to be seen in those at Ongkor-Wat. In numerous places the water, trickling through holes in the roof, has so obliterated the carving that the subjects can no longer be recognised. This gallery, with its sixteen towers, is connected with another only 3 metres distant; and this last has five towers on each side, of which the three in the middle face the exterior towers. The interior of the gallery with its three roofs receives no light but by the doors, and is so dark that torches are necessary when it is visited. The gallery, sustained by two rows of columns and by an exterior wall, has no bas-reliefs. The towers, which are built at equal distances, are thus disposed: the largest at the angles, two smaller ones next to them, and one of medium size in the centre.

The middle of the terrace is occupied by a large tower connected with the gallery by two others, only about a metre distant. The central tower is circular at the base, is 20 metres in diameter, and nearly 40 metres high, and has on each side a turret. A colonnade supporting a roof, now in ruins, surrounds it: the columns, each of which is hewn out of a single block of stone more than 40 metres high, are still standing. Four doors lead to the interior. Outside this tower, between each two doors, are three chapels, constructed out of the thickness of the wall, and having no communication with each other, nor with the exterior. In nearly every one of them is a full-length statue of Samanokodom seated on a pedestal.

On visiting this place you behold on every side the tops
of these numerous towers, and the roofs of the galleries, intermingled with large trees, creepers, and thistles, which invade the courts, the terraces, and other parts; and you have at first some difficulty in comprehending the arrangements of the different buildings. It is only after a long examination that you perceive the symmetry of them as a whole, and that these thirty-seven towers and numerous galleries are all in regular order. Some parts are in good preservation; others have been dealt hardly with by time, in spite of the immense size of the blocks of stone, and the skill with which they are united; and the condition of this stone, ready to crumble to powder, seems to prove that this structure was anterior to Ongcor-Wat.

Like it, it is built of sandstone, and the roofs are very similar, only that, in place of the pointed stones ranged in courses at Ongcor, these are embossed, at about two-thirds of their height, with four gigantic sculptured heads.

The roof is terminated by a very elegant embrasure, a feature not belonging to the other temple. Every door in the building is sunk, and many of them are admirably carved, displaying scenes full of expression, skilfully arranged, and exquisitely delicate in detail. They represent various subjects: worshippers prostrated before their idols, musicians and comedians performing pantomimes, chariots filled with warriors standing up, and drawn by horses galloping: in some instances they appear to be running races.

Not far from this labyrinth are three platforms close
together, each occupied by a colossal idol of stone, and gilt. These idols appear to be of modern date; but at their feet are assembled a number of others, some uninjured, some broken, collected from among the ruins. On one of the platforms are several stones fixed in the ground; on one of which is a long undecipherable inscription.

Phiménan Aca. The Palace of the ancient Kings.

Three walls at some distance from each other, and each bounded by a moat, surround what remains of the palace of the ancient kings. Within the first enclosure are two towers connected by galleries, which form four sides, like a triumphal arch. The walls are of ferruginous stone, and the length of each block forms the thickness of the wall. The towers and galleries are of sandstone.

A hundred metres from the angle of the square formed on the north side by the wall, is a singular building, consisting of two high terraces, and communicating with the outer wall by another terrace half in ruins.

In a cavity recently made by excavations, are visible large sculptured blocks, which seem to have fallen from the top. The walls, still intact, are covered with bas-reliefs, disposed in four rows, one above another, each representing a king seated in the Oriental fashion, with his hands resting on a broken poignard, and by his side a number of women. All these figures are covered with ornaments, such as very long earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. Their costume is the langouti, and all wear
high head-dresses terminating in a point, and apparently composed of precious stones, pearls, and gold and silver ornaments.

On another side the bas-reliefs represent combats; and here are children with long hair tied up like the savages of the East. Everything here, however, yields in beauty to the statue of the leprous king, which is at the end of the terrace. The head, admirable in its nobility, regularity of feature, and gentle yet proud expression, must have been the work of the most skilful sculptor of the country, in an age when many, doubtless, evinced great talent. A small moustache covers his upper lip, and his hair falls in long curls over his shoulders; but the whole body is naked, and without ornament. One foot and one hand are broken.

**Prea sat sour Prôt.**

About 1200 metres in front of the building just described is one called “Prea sat sour prôt,” and said to have been the royal treasury. It is square, and consists of sixteen towers connected by galleries, but nearly all in ruins: the doorways and walls are ornamented with sculpture, as in the other remains. It served, they say, as a depository for the crown jewels. The Cambodians also believe that ropes were stretched from one tower to another, on which dancers exercised their skill in the presence of the king, who, seated on one of the neighbouring terraces, enjoyed their performances. All traditions being lost, the natives
Chap. XIII.  Ruined Pagodas.

invent new ones, according to the measure of their capacity.

The centre of the interior of the third enclosure is occupied by an immense esplanade, supported by walls formed of magnificent blocks of stone, sculptured and surrounded by staircases. The ground is level; but in the excavations that had been made I remarked large masses of carved stone.

Not far from this esplanade is a square building in tolerable preservation, the basement composed of great blocks of ferruginous stone, as are the staircases, of which there are four, one on each side; but they are so steep, narrow, and worn away that it is difficult to climb them. The base supports small galleries, very narrow, and having windows with carved bars. The stones and every doorway are covered with inscriptions.

In the centre of the gallery rises a ruined tower, approached by four staircases, as awkward to ascend as the others just mentioned. Near the doors are some figures of women, standing with flowers in their hands. This building appears very old: the stone is crumbling away like rotten wood.

Prea sat Fiao Saie.

On the banks of the river which skirts the eastern side of Ongoor Thom are several remains. The first you come to is Fiao Saie, two or three hundred metres from the water's edge. Large and deep ditches surround it on all
sides; and when these have been crossed you arrive in front of a terrace 45 metres long, and 2 metres 50 centimetres in width. Four rows of columns 1 metre high are all that is left standing. Those in the middle rows are square, the others are fluted, with capitals. This terrace leads to a square formed by four galleries, each 20 metres long: the one facing the terrace has three porticoes with doors and staircases, while in the centre, and at each corner of the gallery, are towers.

Another gallery, 40 metres long, leads from the central tower to another larger one, where, on a high pedestal, is placed the principal idol. On each side of this tower are three staircases, with porticoes projecting four or five metres, and supported by six high columns. All the windows have been ornamented with twisted bars, many of which still remain. By the side of each door are carved columns, every block being cut and polished with infinite patience and art. There are some bas-reliefs portraying a lion devouring a stag, dances, pantomimes, worshippers before idols, &c. As at Ongkor-Wat, the building is entirely composed of great blocks of sandstone.

Prea sat Iheur Manone Tireada, or the Temple of the Angels.

This little pagoda is only about 150 metres from the preceding, and, according to tradition, was formerly a celebrated school for Buddhist theology. At the east is the principal entrance, which consists of a gallery 18