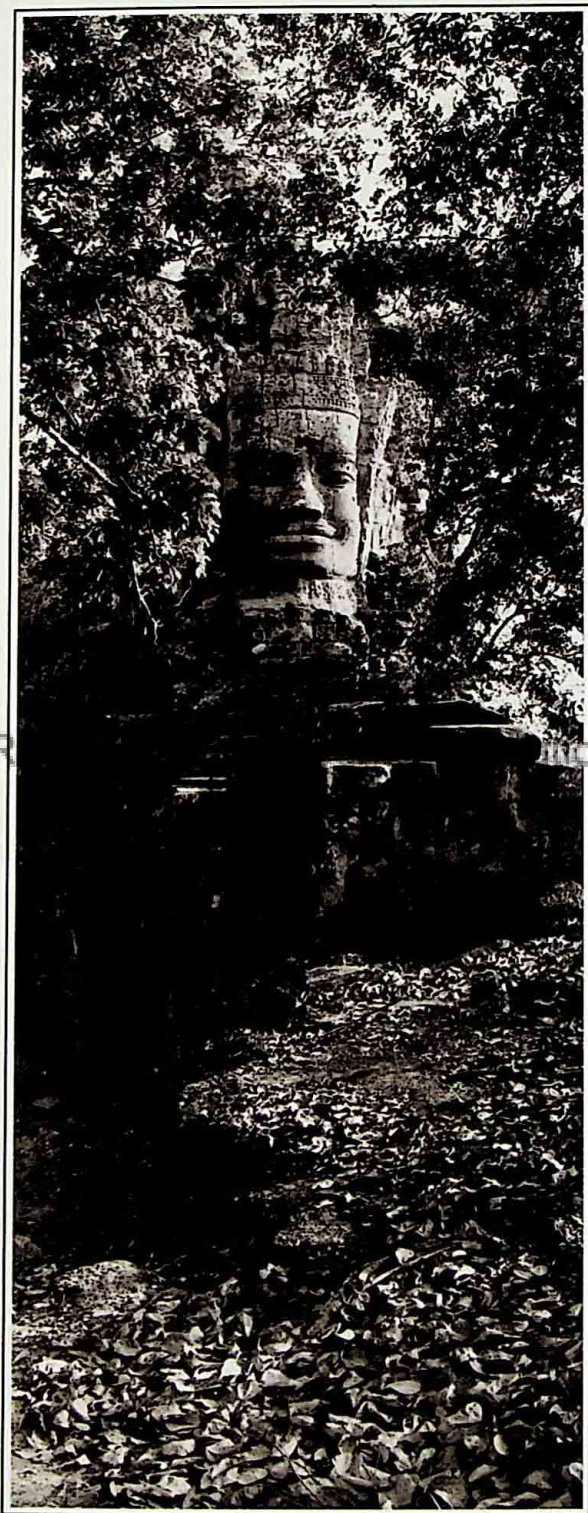


ANGKOR

REVISITED



JARO PONCAR

ANGKOR REVISITED

DURING HIS VISITS TO ANGKOR IN CAMBODIA IN 1994 AND 1995, JAROSLAV PONCAR WAS KEPT VERY BUSY WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF THE BASRELIEF FRIEZES IN THE OUTER GALLERIES OF ANGKOR WAT.

BEING INVOLVED IN THE *GERMAN APSARA CONSERVATION PROJECT* AT ANGKOR WAT, HE WAS ABLE TO TAKE TIME OUT OCCASIONALLY FROM HIS DUTIES AND TO TRANSLATE WHAT HAD FROM THE VERY BEGINNING BEEN A DEEP FASCINATION WITH ANGKOR, ITS ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS AND ITS SCULPTURE INTO A SERIES OF IMPRESSIVE PHOTOGRAPHS, SOME OF WHICH ARE REPRODUCED HERE.

THE KEY OBJECT WAS ANGKOR WAT, OF COURSE, A GIGANTIC COMPLEX OF TEMPLE BUILDINGS, ERECTED DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 12TH CENTURY BY THE MIGHTY KING SŪRYAVARMAN, "WHO IS PROTECTED BY THE SUN", AND STILL REGARDED AS ONE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL WONDERS OF ASIA, IF NOT OF THE WORLD. IN ITS RICHNESS AND REPRESENTATIONAL ASPIRATIONS, IT HAS BEEN COMPARED WITH VERSAILLES. ANGKOR WAT WAS DESIGNED NOT ONLY AS A STAGE FOR MAJESTIC RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, BUT ALSO AS A COSMIC SYMBOL, ITS MEANING CULMINATING IN THE FIVE CENTRAL TOWERS THAT STAND FOR MOUNT MERU AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD. PONCAR NOT ONLY SUCCESSFULLY CAPTURES THE SPLENDOUR AND GRANDEUR OF THE WHOLE ARCHITECTURAL COMPLEX AS IT IS EXPOSED TO DIFFERENT WEATHER CONDITIONS, LIKE HAZE, RAIN OR SUNSHINE; HIS PHOTOGRAPHS ALSO ISOLATE THE SEDUCTIVE BEAUTY OF FIGURES INTEGRATED INTO THE LARGER DECORATIVE AND SYMBOLIST SYSTEM OF THE ARCHITECTURE. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY ENCHANTED IN PARTICULAR BY THE FEMALE FIGURES THAT FILL WALL PANELS AND FLANK ENTRANCES, OF WHICH THERE ARE MORE THAN 1800 DISTRIBUTED ACROSS SEVERAL LAYERS OF THE BUILDINGS. THEY ARE SOMETIMES CALLED DEVATĀS, "GODDESSES", SOMETIMES APSARAS, "WALKING BETWEEN THE HEAVENLY WATERS", AND THEY REPRESENT A KIND OF NYMPH THAT INHABITS THE SKY. THEY ARE OFTEN MARRIED TO GANDHARVAS, GUARDIAN DEITIES OF THE CELESTIAL REGION. IN THEIR RICH DRESSES AND WITH THEIR FANTASTIC JEWELRY, BUT ALSO OWING TO THEIR OSTENTATIOUSLY SEDUCTIVE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, THEY TRANSFORM THE WHOLE OF ANGKOR WAT INTO BOTH A HEAVENLY PARADISE AND THE LAVISHLY DECORATED PALACE OF A CAMBODIAN KING.

IN THE SLIGHTLY LATER COMPLEX OF ANGKOR THOM AND THE BAYON, PONCAR FOCUSES ON THE TOWERS WITH THEIR GIGANTIC FACES LOOKING IN FOUR DIRECTIONS AND ON THE EXPRESSIVE HEADS OF GUARDIAN DEITIES FLANKING THE ACCESSES TO THE CITY-LIKE TEMPLE AREA.

THE TWO BUDDHIST TEMPLES NEARBY, THE PREAH KHAN, THE "TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SWORD", FOUNDED BY THE KING IN MEMORY OF HIS FATHER, AND THE TA PROHM CAPTIVATE ALL VISITORS WITH THEIR JUXTAPOSITION OF NATURE AND MAN-MADE MONUMENTS. THE ARCHITECTS OF THE EARLY 13TH CENTURY INTENDED TO CREATE BUILDINGS FOR ETERNITY, BUT NATURE TOOK OVER AFTER THE FALL OF THE DYNASTY, AND THE ROOTS OF TREES STARTED ENTWINING THE PILLARS AND TEARING GALLERIES APART.

HOWEVER, PONCAR ALSO TAKES US TO MORE REMOTE PARTS OF THE ANGKOR EMPIRE, SHOWING US THE RICH AND ELEGANT DECORATION OF 10TH CENTURY BANTEAY SREI, THE CRUMBLING TEMPLE OF BANTEAY CHHMAR AND EVEN THE RARELY VISITED SITE OF KABAL SPEAN, WHERE VEGETATION AND WATER LITERALLY SWALLOW MARVELLOUS SCULPTURES.

ROGER GOEPPER

COLOGNE, MAY 2000



Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

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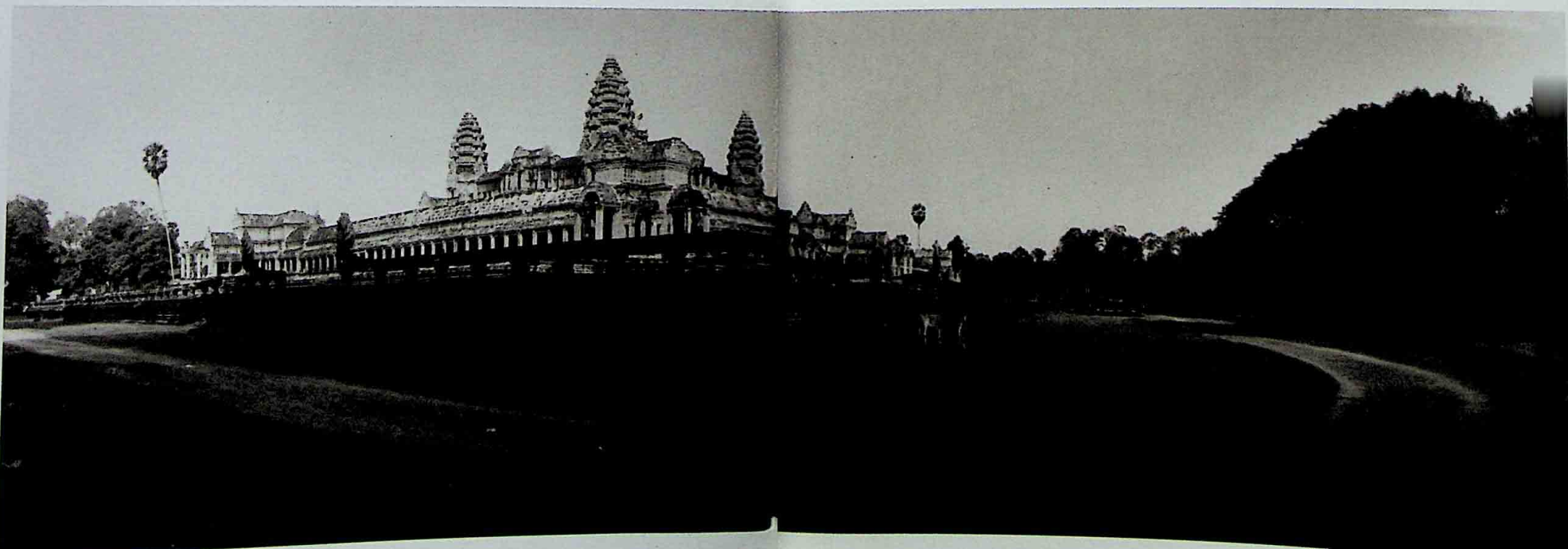
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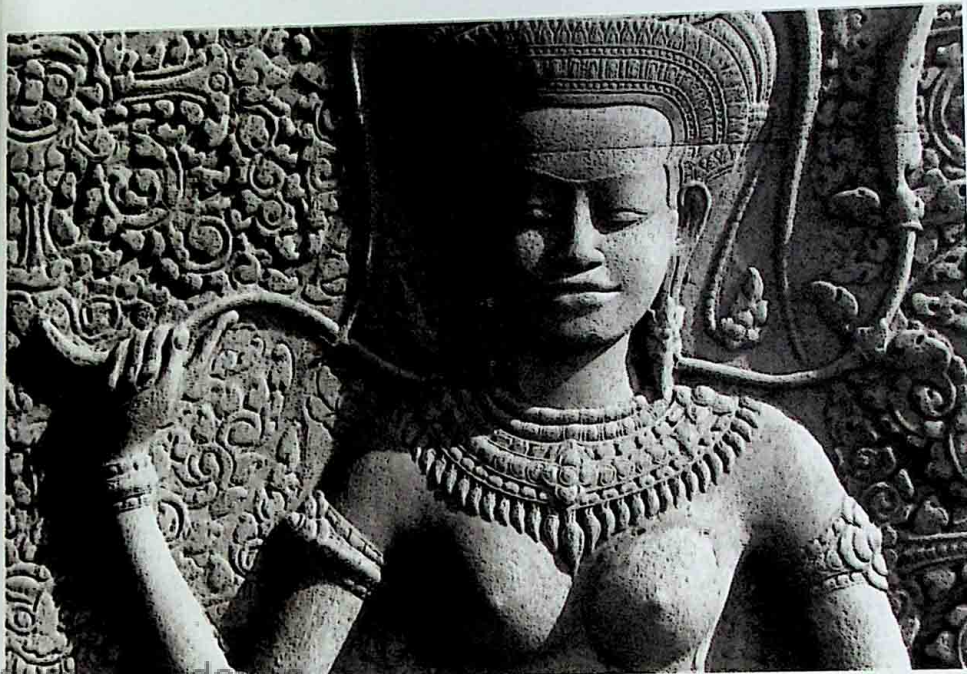
Cologne in May 2000



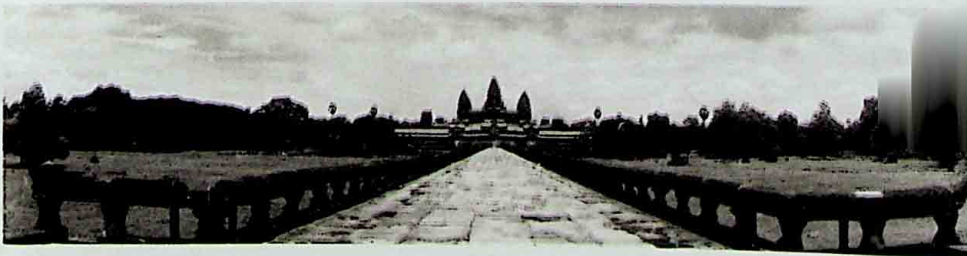
ANGKOR WAT

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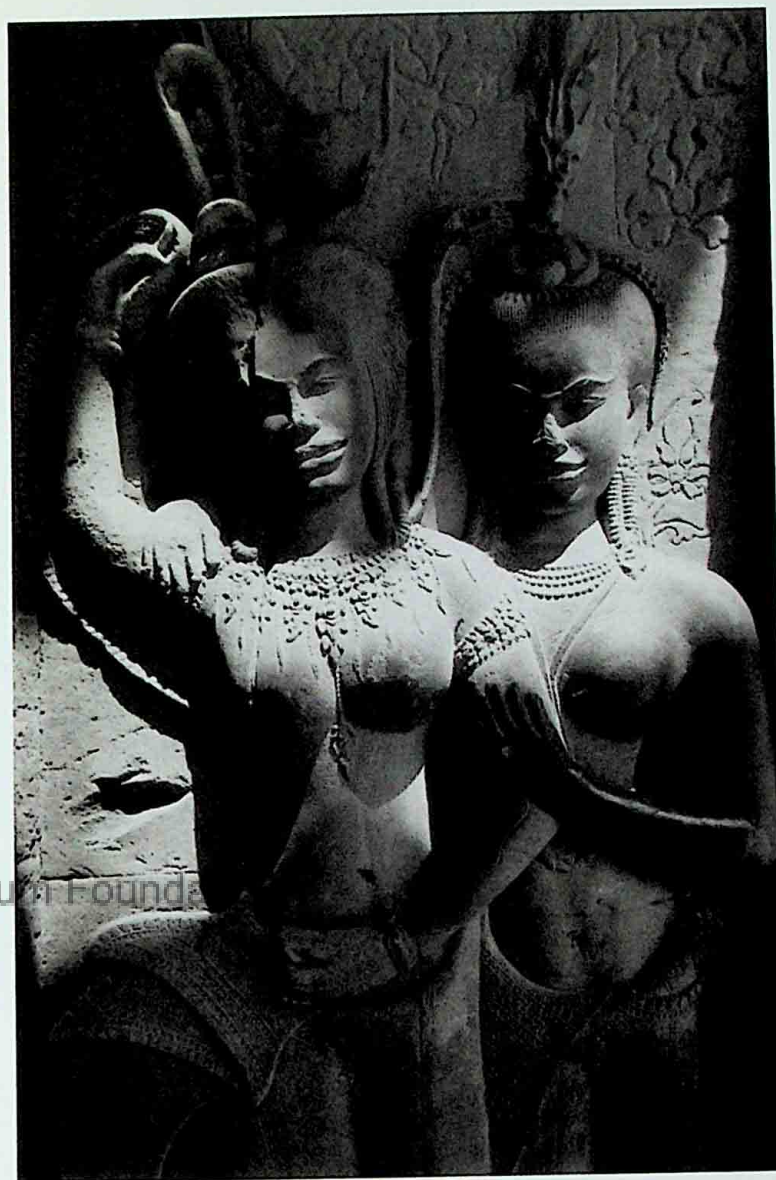
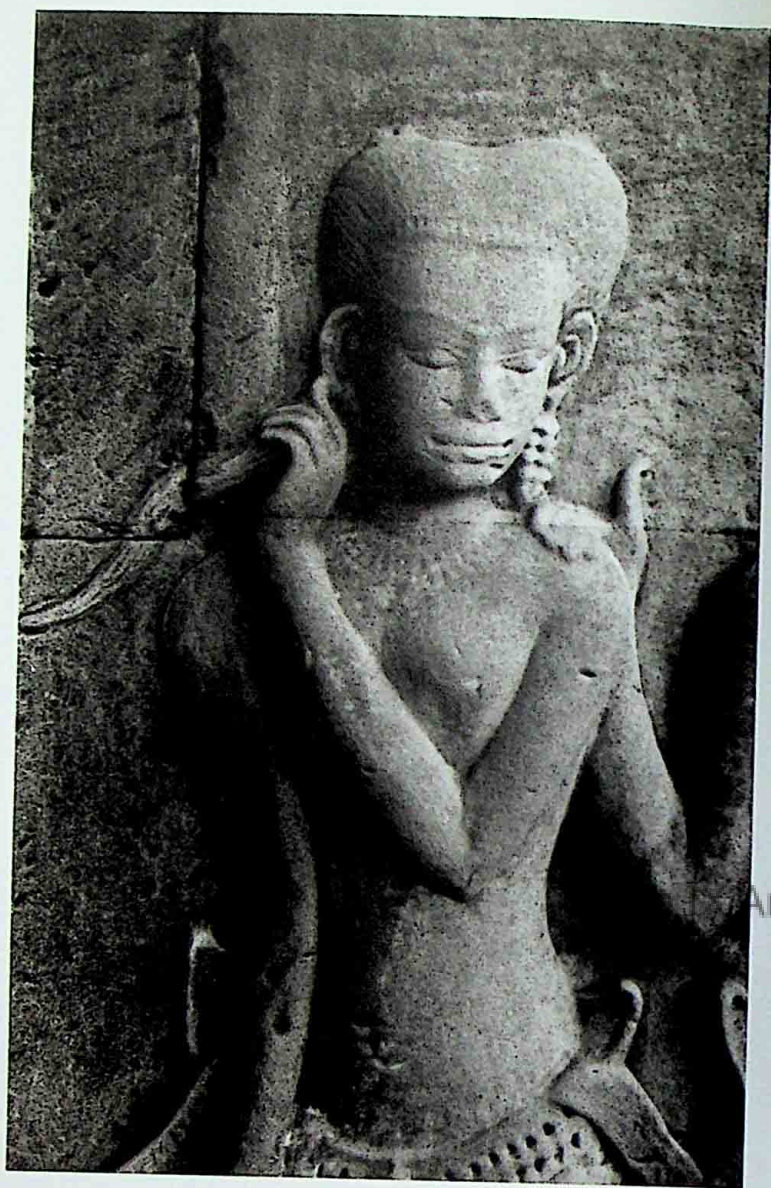




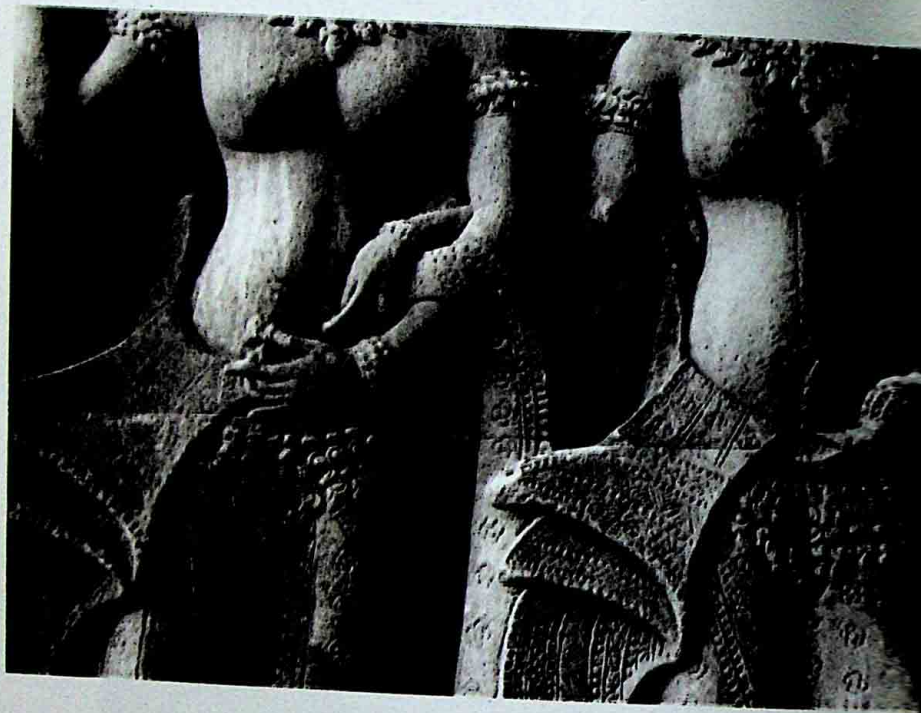
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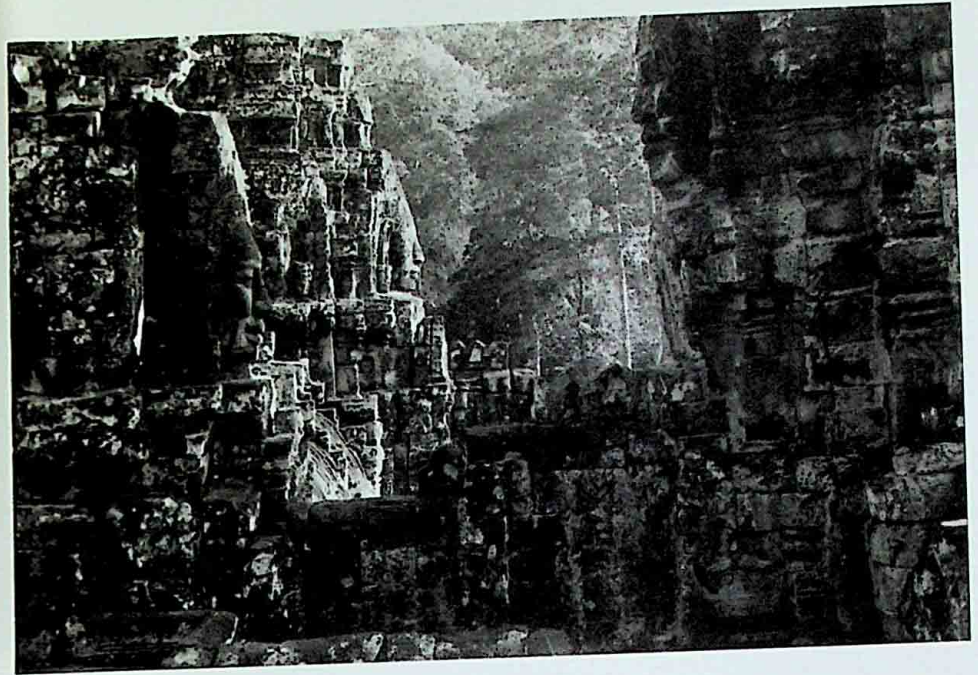


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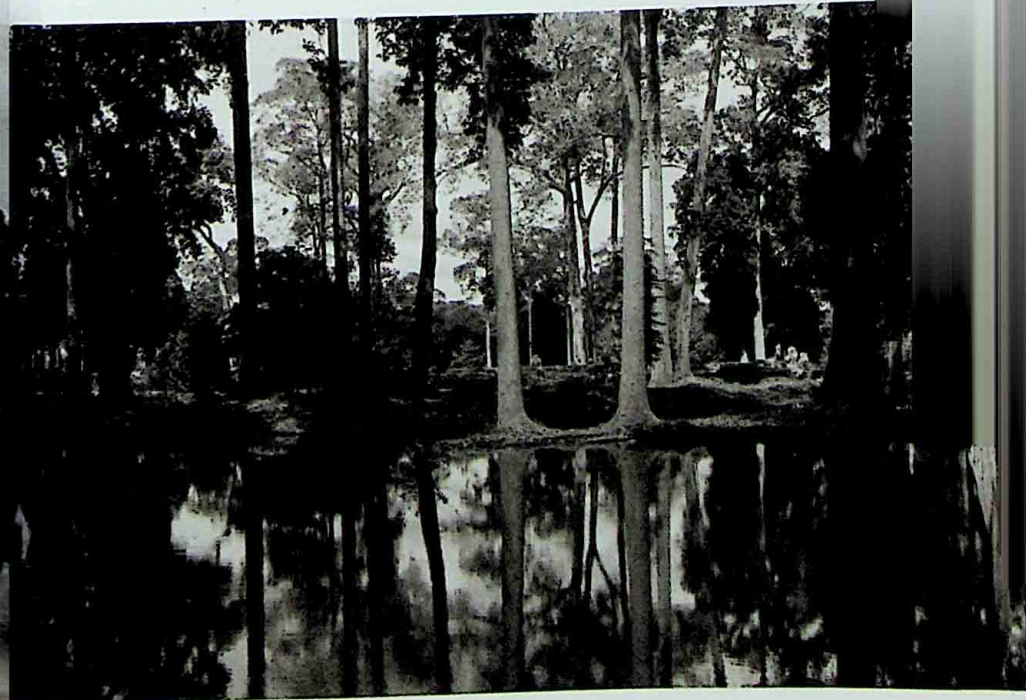
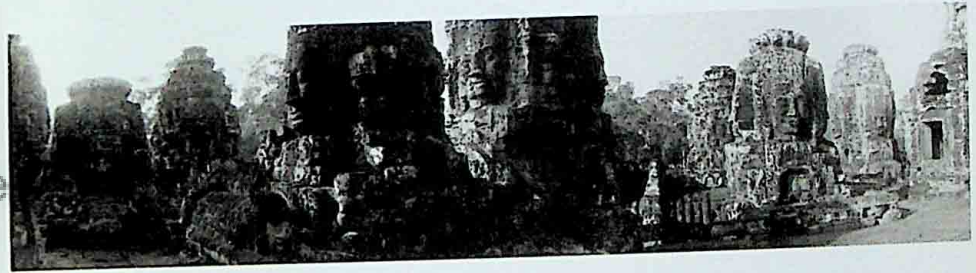


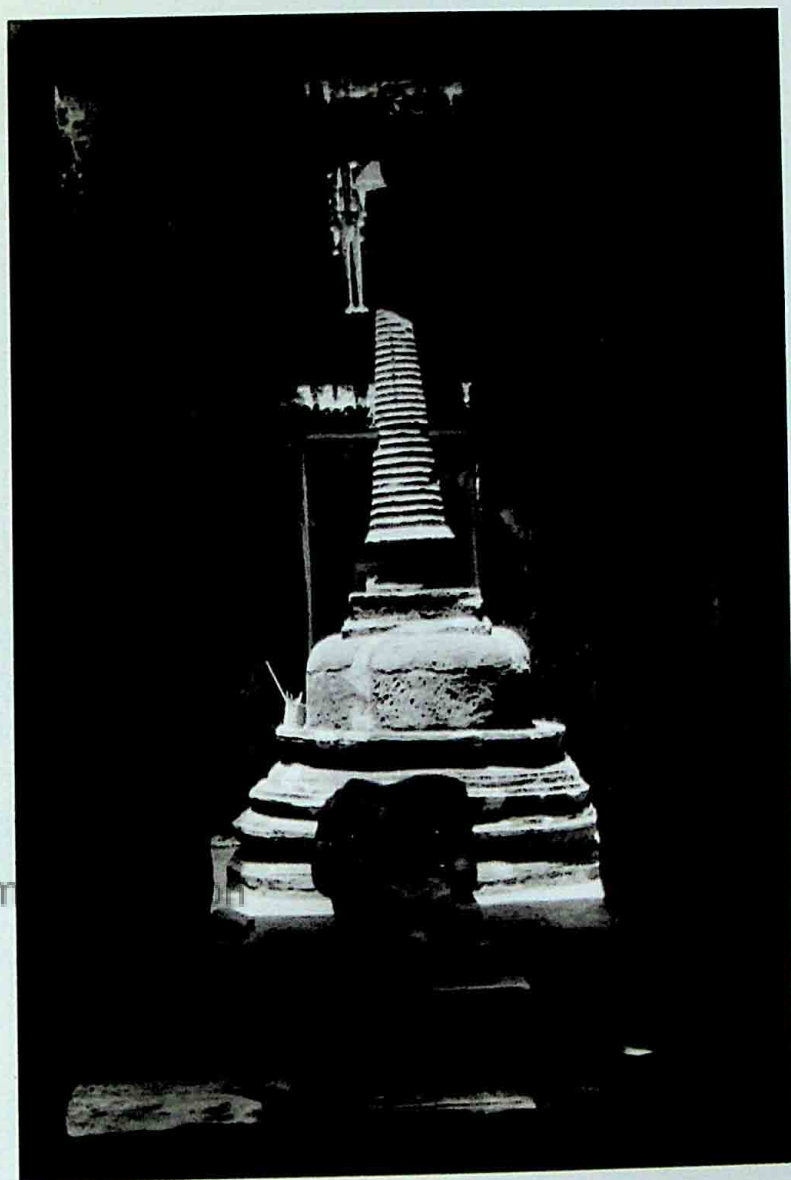


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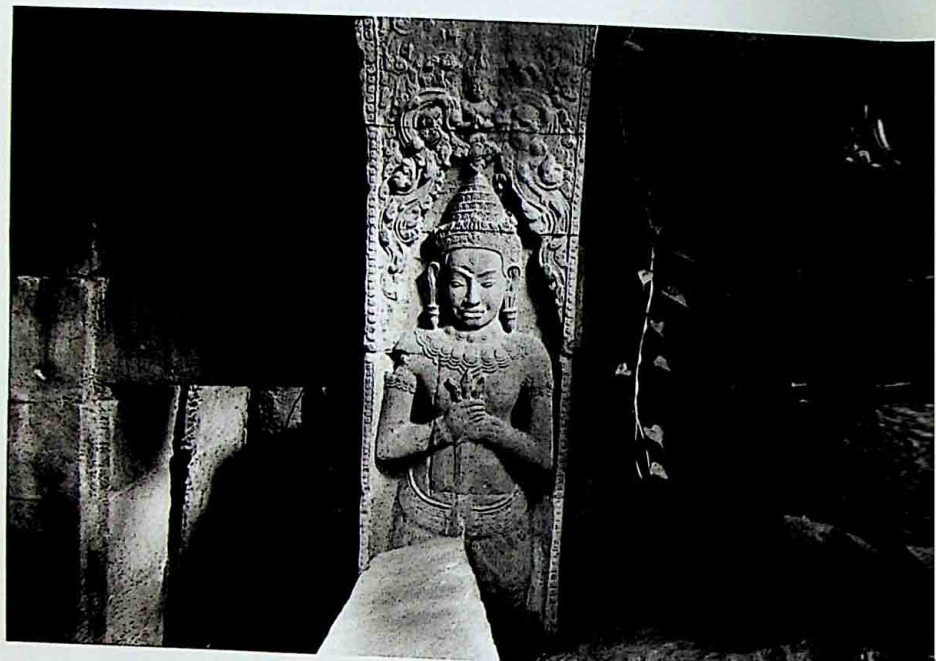
THE BAYON



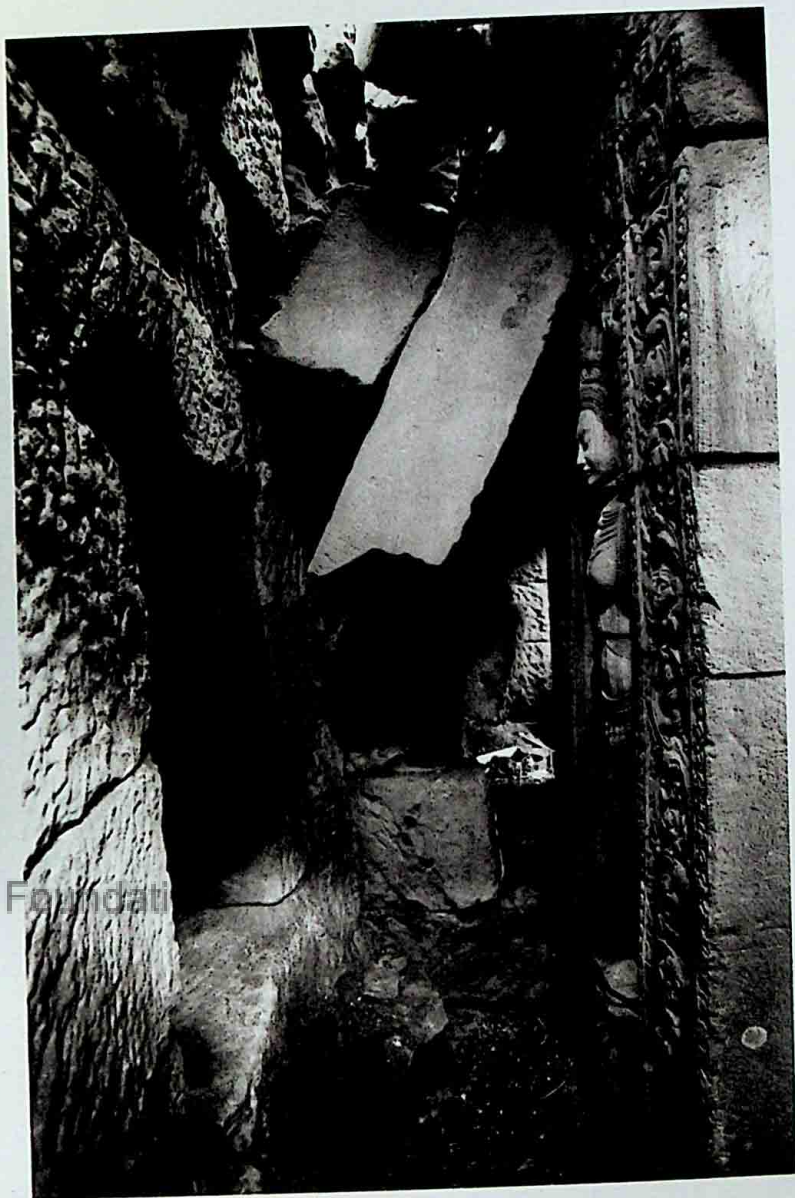


PREAH KHAN





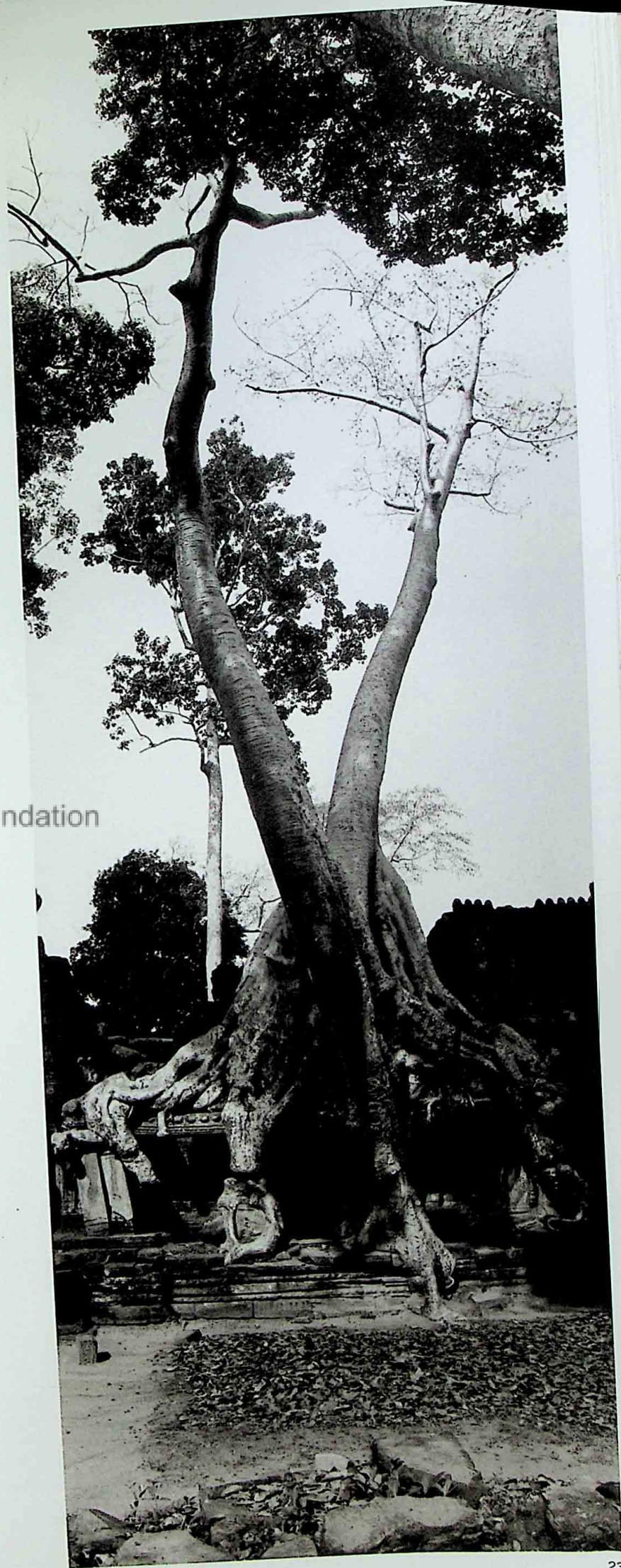
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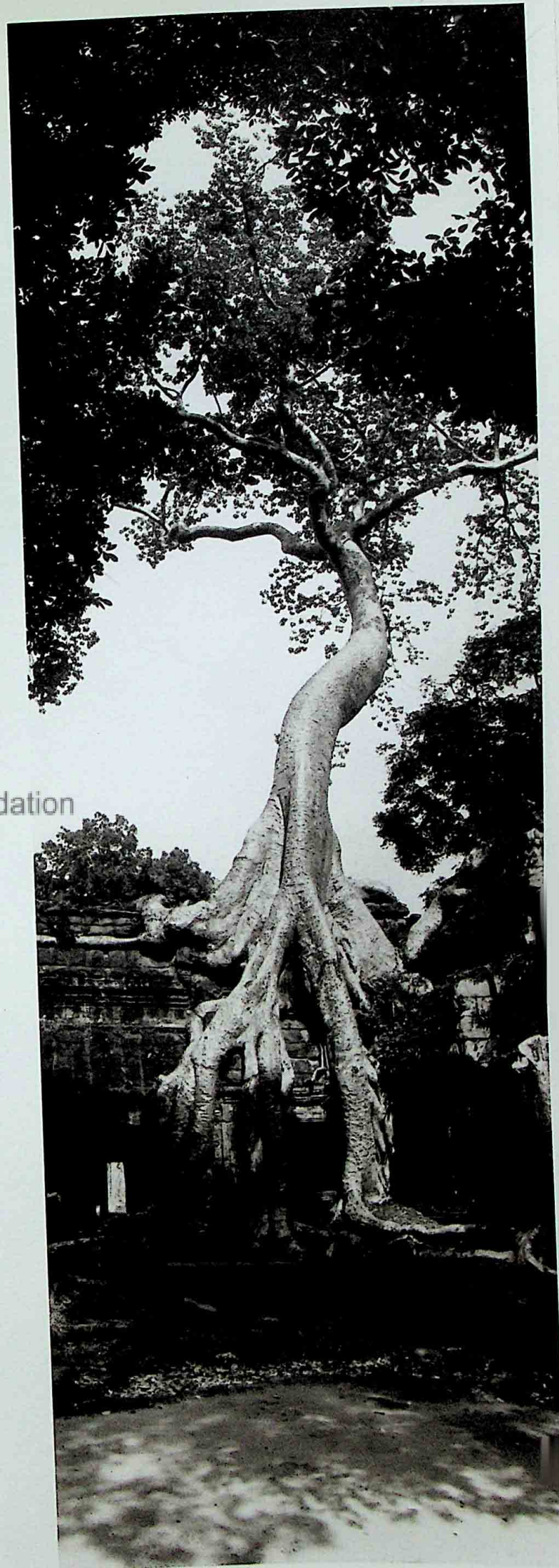
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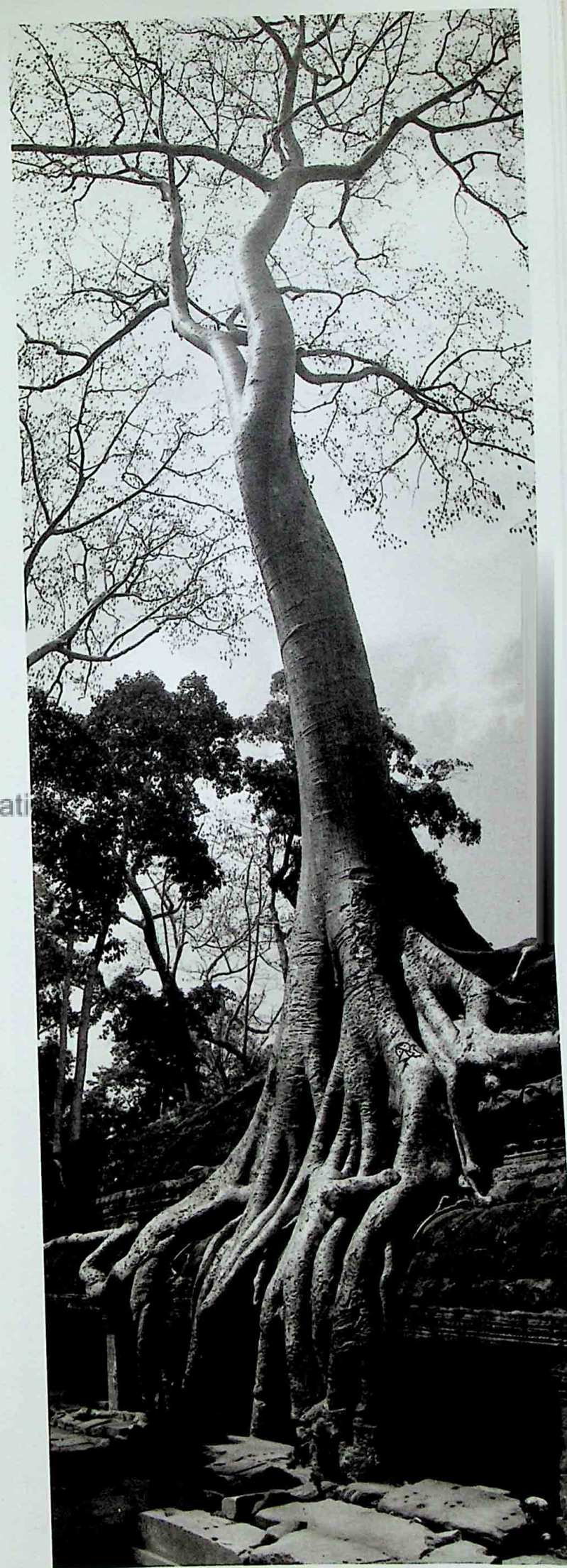
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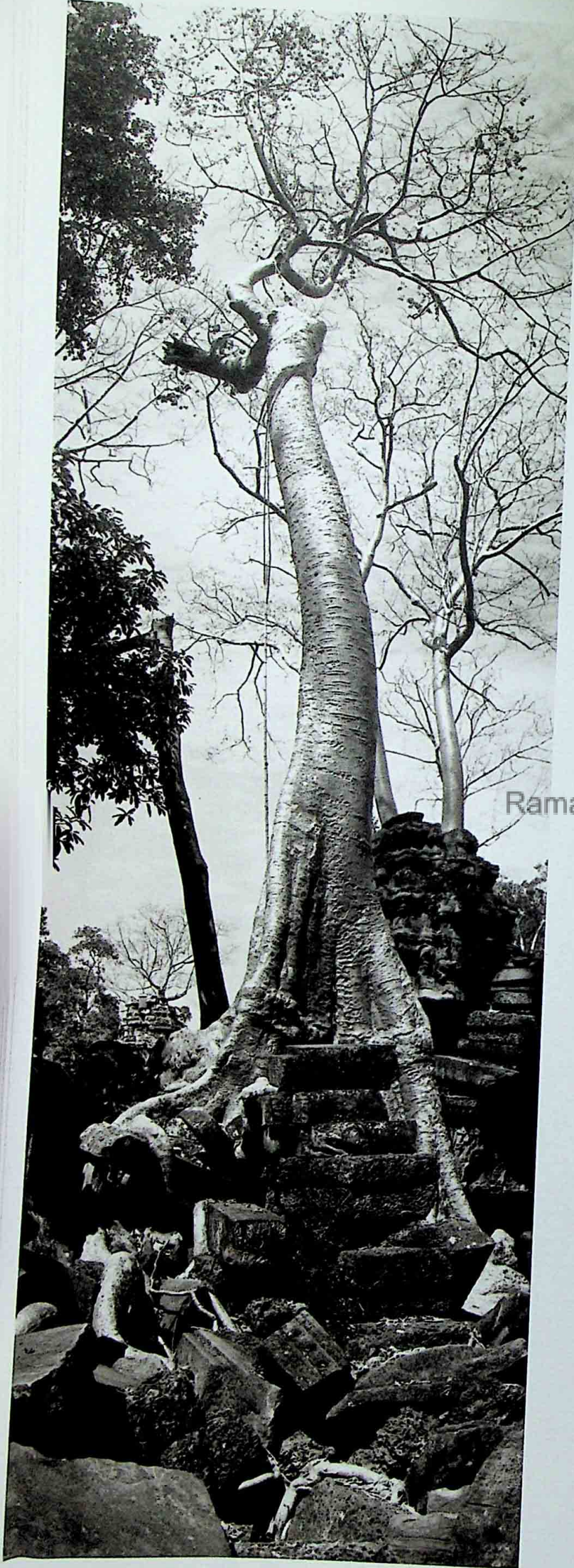
TA PROHM



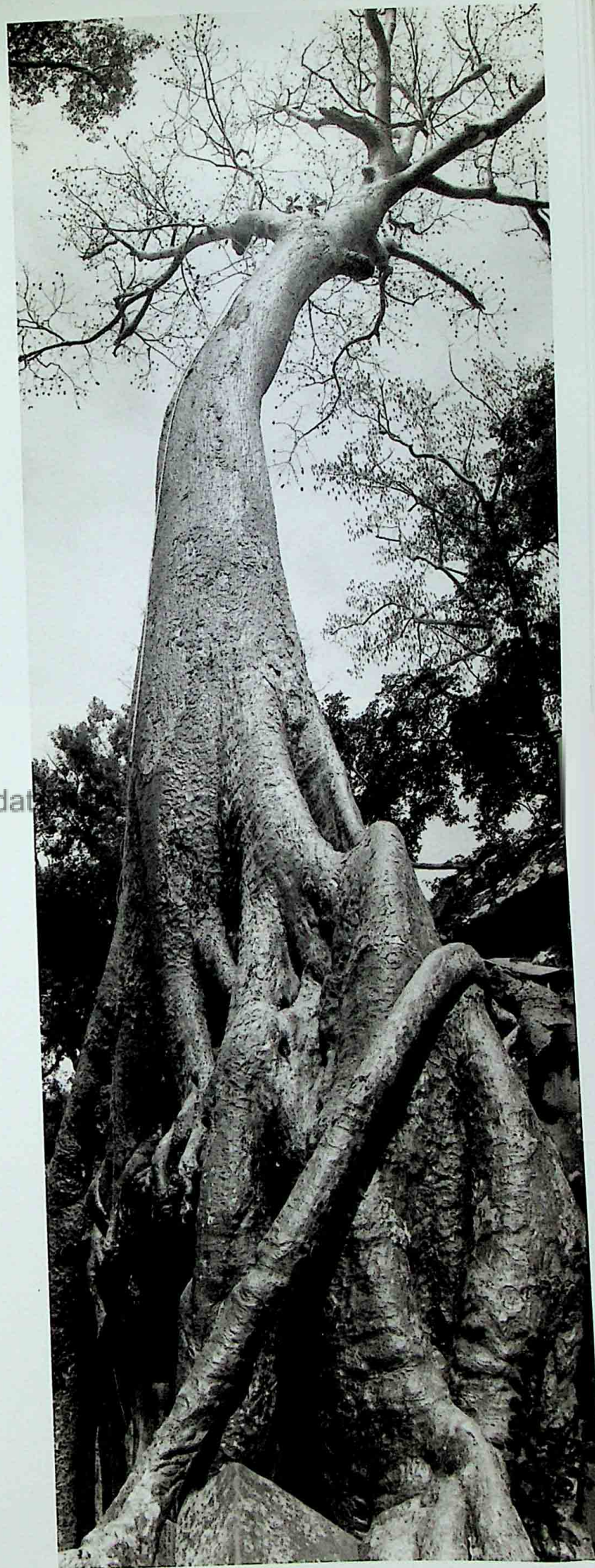


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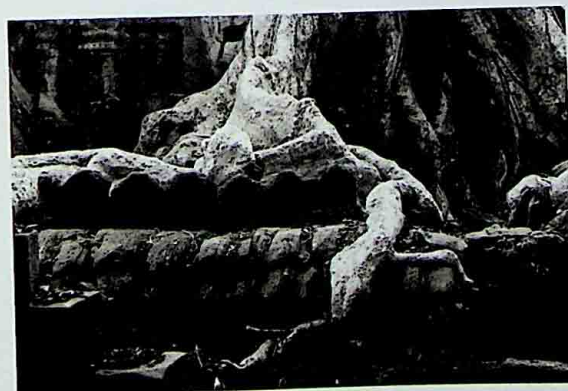
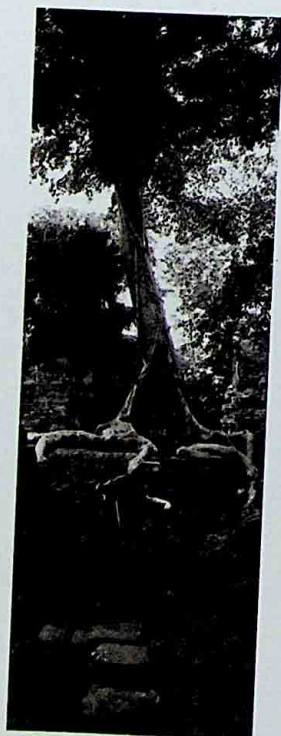


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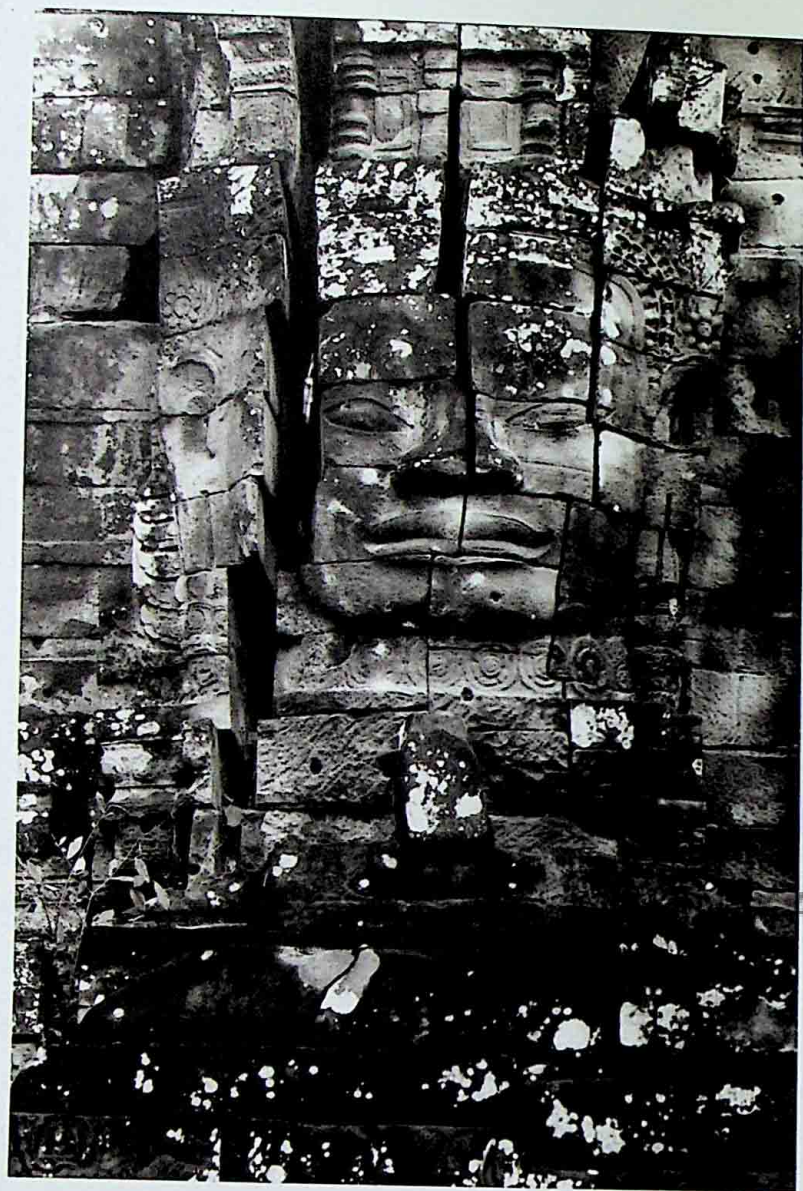


AT THE GATES OF ANGKOR THOM



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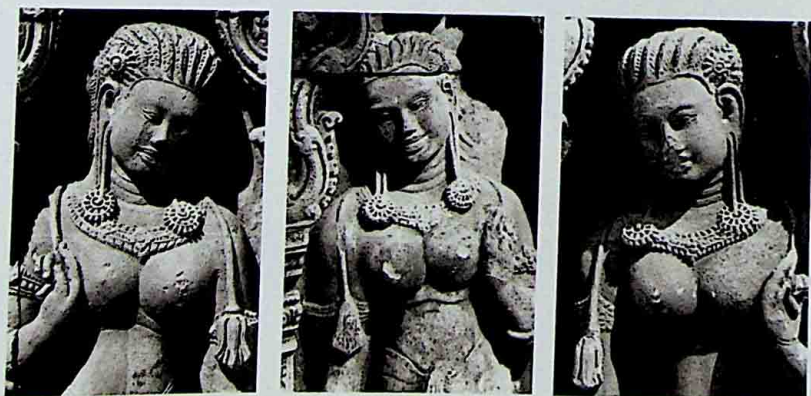
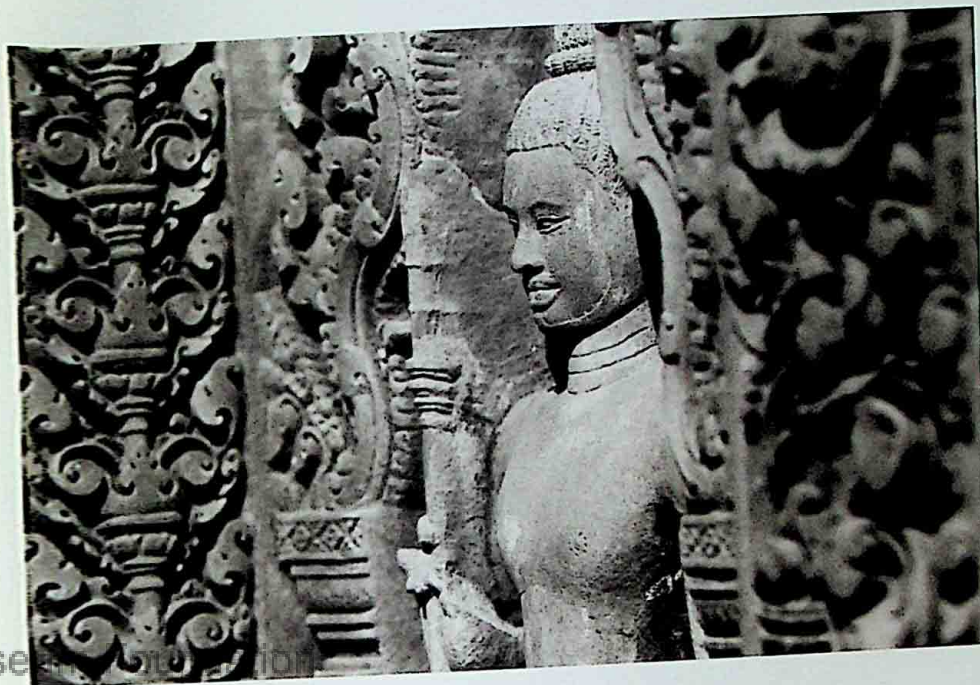
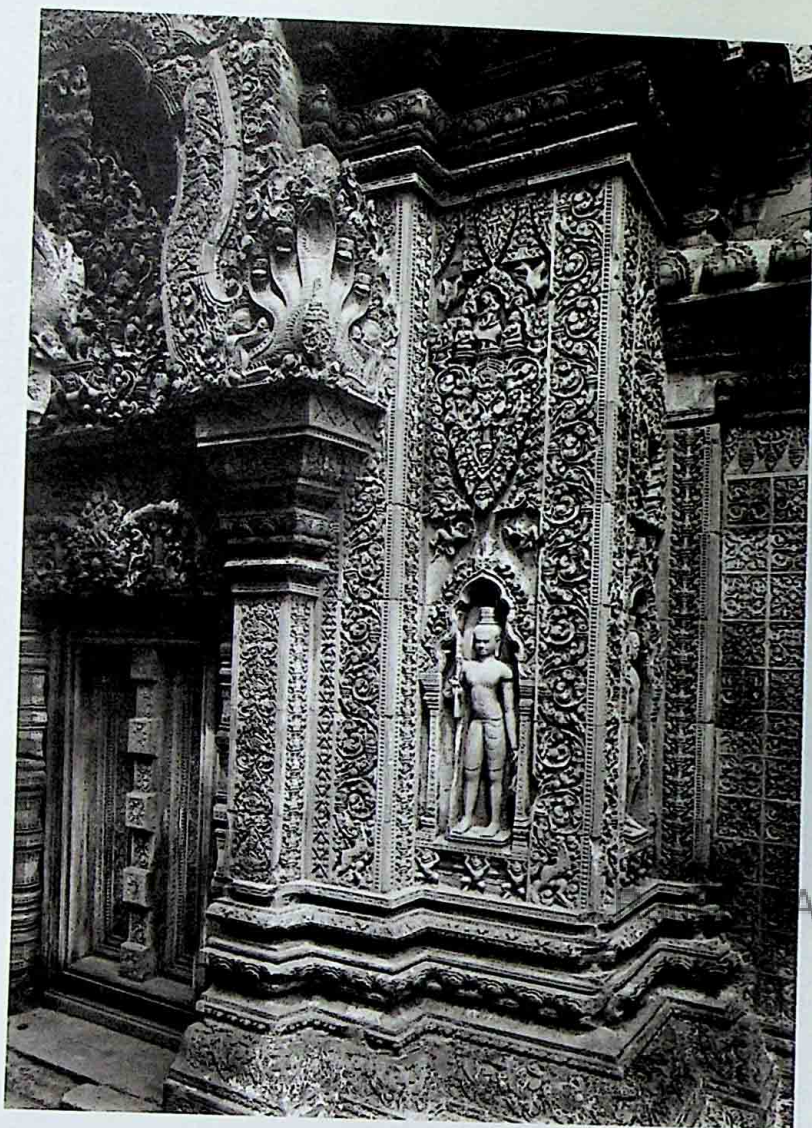


TA SOM



Art Muse

BANTEAY SREI





ROLUOS

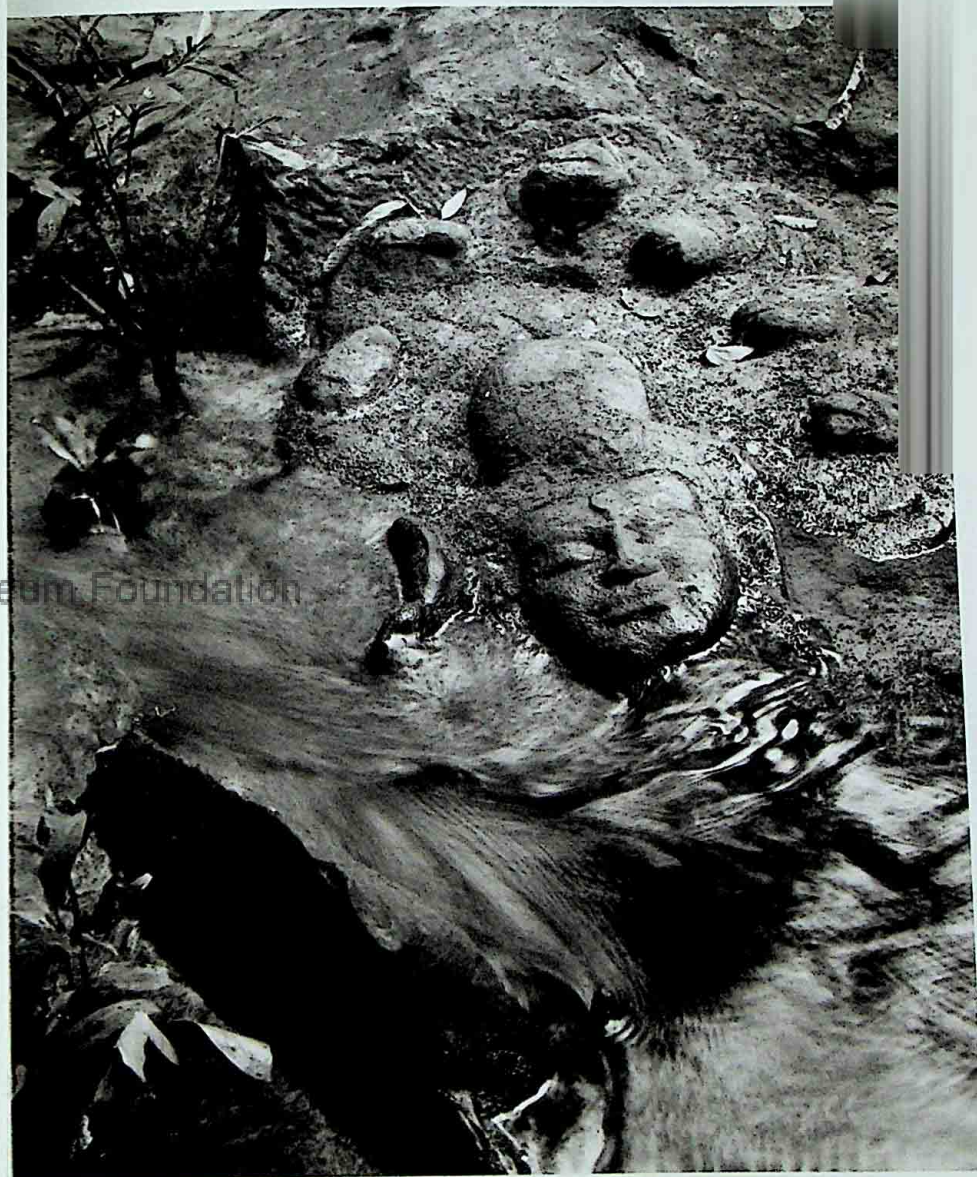


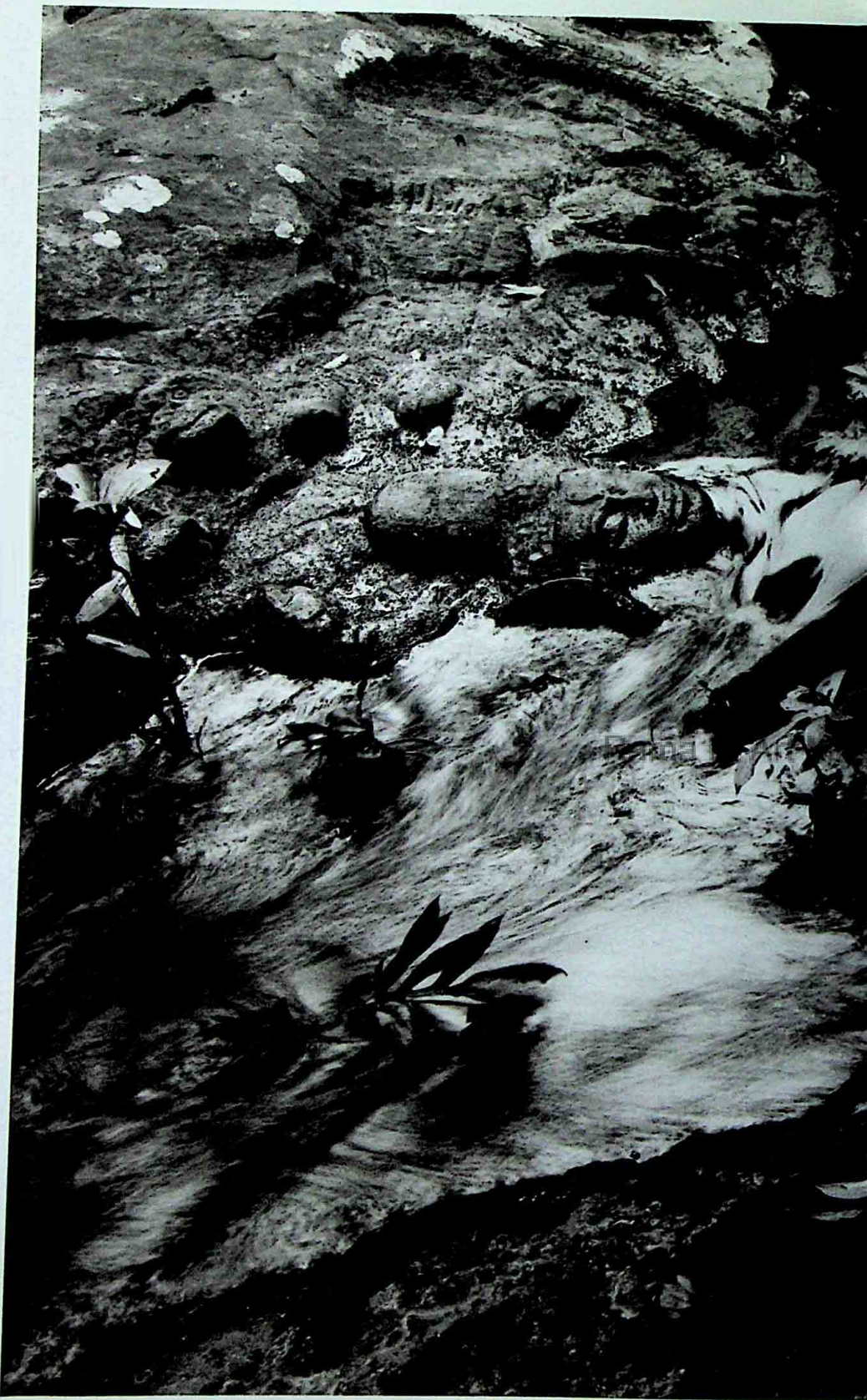
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KABAL SPEAN

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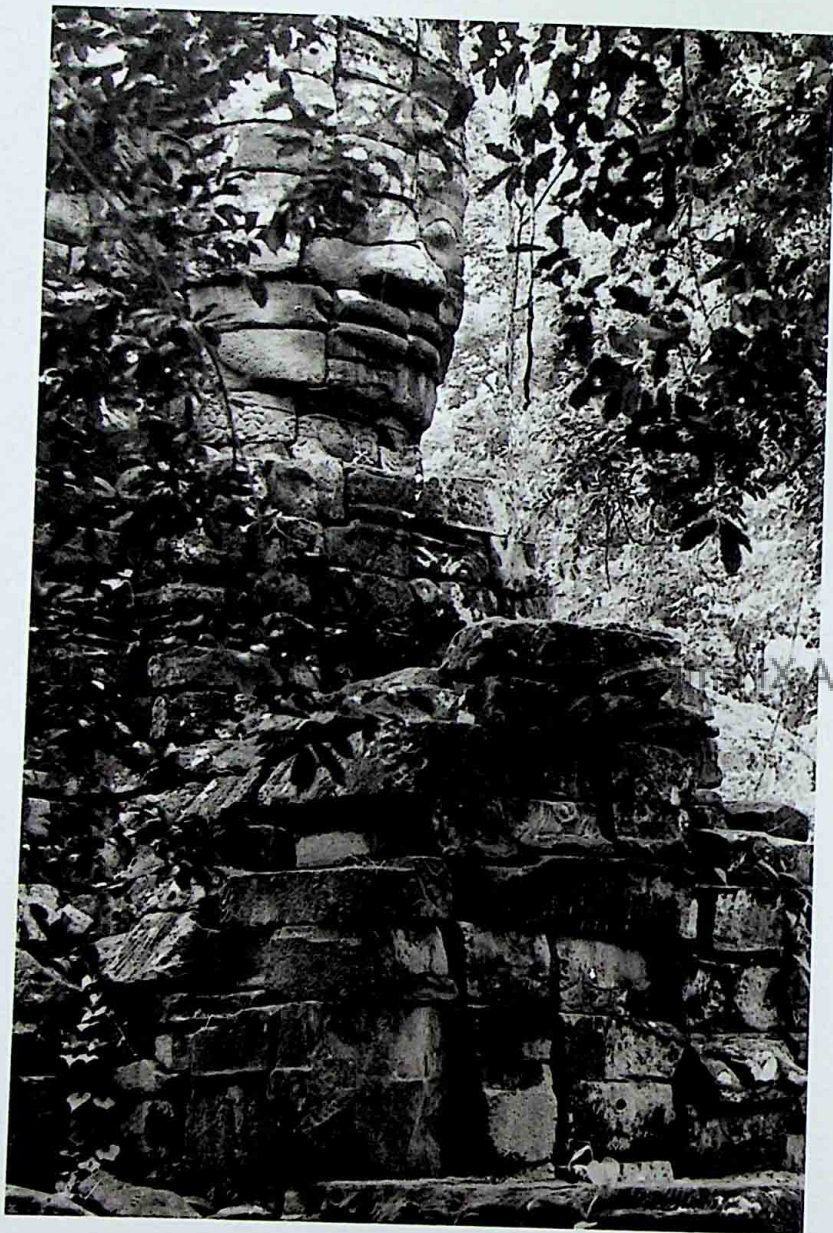
BENG MEALEA



Kama Art Museum



BANTEAY CHHMAR



Art Museum Foundation





"IT SEEMED I NEVER WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT ANGKOR. CAMBODIA GOT INTO THE TURMOIL OF THE TRAGICAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE 60S AND AFTER THE END OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM IT EVEN CAME WORSE FOR THE KHMER PEOPLE. ONLY AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE COMMUNISM THE CHANCES OF PEACE IN CAMBODIA BECAME REALISTIC. A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE UNTAC IN CAMBODIA, DESPITE THE UNSAFE CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY, I RUSHED TO SEE ANGKOR, THE DREAM OF MY YOUTH. WHO KNOWS HOW IT ALL WILL END, I WAS THINKING, AND MAYBE ANGKOR COULD BECOME UNACCESSIBLE AGAIN FOR ANOTHER TWO DECADES.

"NEEDLESS TO SAY THAT THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE FABLED RUINS OF ANGKOR EVEN SURPASSED MY EXPECTATIONS. FOR A PHOTOGRAPHER ANGKOR IS NOT ONLY AN ATTRACTION BUT A CHALLENGE AS WELL: THE HUGE DIMENSIONS OF THE TEMPLES ON THE ONE HAND AND THE FINEST SCULPTURES ON THE OTHER, AND THEN THE SYMBIOSIS WITH THE TROPICAL VEGETATION. MY TWO DECADES LONG EXPERIENCE WITH PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY WAS VERY HELPFUL. WITHIN THE FIRST HOURS AT ANGKOR I DECIDED TO RESTRICT MYSELF TO BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY ONLY".

JAROSLAV PONCAR

JAROSLAV PONCAR, BORN IN PRAGUE IN 1945, HAS BEEN PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF IMAGING SCIENCES AT THE FACHHOCHSCHULE KÖLN (UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES COLOGNE) SINCE 1973. FOR THE LAST 26 YEARS HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECTS IN THE HIMALAYAS, TIBET AND INDIA. PONCAR'S SPECIAL INTEREST IS IN SLIT-SCAN AND PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY. IN 1995 PONCAR, TOGETHER WITH A TEAM OF STUDENTS, UNDERTOOK THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION OF ALL THE BAS RELIEFS FOUND IN THE GALLERIES AT ANGKOR WAT AND THE BAYON USING THE SLIT-SCAN TECHNIQUE (PUBLICATION: OF GODS, KINGS, AND MEN, *SERINDIA PUBLICATIONS, LONDON*). AT PRESENT JAROSLAV PONCAR IS CONCERNED WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION AND PHOTO-MONITORING OF THE ENTIRE TEMPLE COMPLEX OF ANGKOR WAT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE GERMAN APSARA CONSERVATION PROJECT. THE PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE FROM THE PERIOD OF TIME BETWEEN JANUARY 1993 AND SEPTEMBER 1999.

HERITAGE OF ANGKOR

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TONDA MÁLEK DRAWINGS,
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