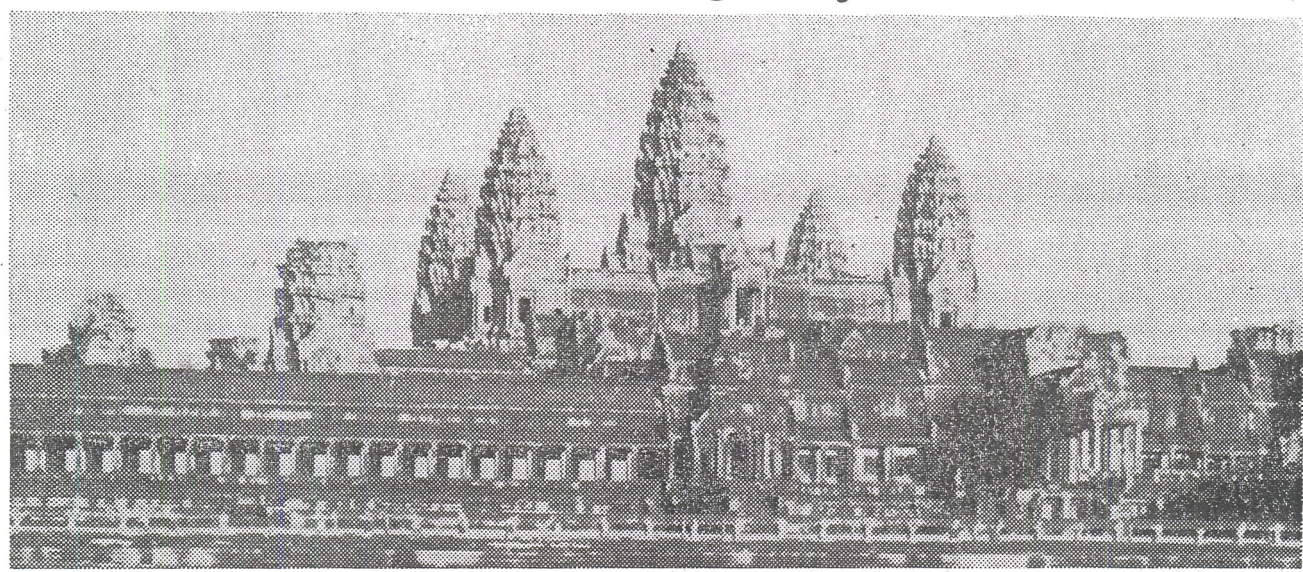


Angkor Wat Reported Damaged by Cambodian Shells



Associated Press

Angkor Wat, part of the ruins of the city of Angkor, was heavily damaged by Cambodian shelling three months ago

By The Associated Press

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, May 11—Authoritative sources said today that Angkor Wat, Cambodia's national treasure and the most famous temple of the ruins of Angkor in northwestern Cambodia, had been severely damaged by a Cambodian Army artillery barrage.

Reports of the shelling came from travelers returning from Siemreap, the town nearest

Angkor, which is controlled by Vietnamese communist forces. The reports were later confirmed by a Government expert who saw photographs of the damage.

The shelling was said to have killed or wounded about 10 peasant refugees in a nearby pagoda and to have heavily damaged the south side of the 12th-century temple. The shelling occurred three months ago but has been kept secret by

the Government, the informants said.

The temple, Cambodia's national symbol, was occupied by Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops last June, after the war spread across Cambodia. Government forces were ordered not to attack for fear that fighting would destroy the temple.

The barrage, fired by a 105-mm. howitzer battery, hit the south side of Angkor Wat, de-

stroying the third floor of the southern gate, the sources reported.

One shell smashed into the second-floor gallery, the sources continued, and three more exploded in the gallery of history on the first floor, damaging a fresco depicting the story of the Khmer, or Cambodian, Empire.

Seven rounds also hit the

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nearby pagoda where the refugees were living, the sources said.

Angkor Wat is the largest single edifice in the vast complex. It covers nearly a square mile and includes a moat, a wall 6,000 yards around and vast courtyards. The whole Angkor complex includes Angkor Thom, a city whose walls are nearly eight miles in perimeter, as well as 500 other monuments, shrines, buildings and statues. Angkor, begun in the ninth century covers nearly 40 square miles.

Built in the 12th century by the Khmer King Suryavarman II, and abandoned in the 15th century, Angkor Wat has been thought by some archeologists to be a tomb as well as a temple.

The history of the Khmer Empire is depicted in its carved stone frescoes, considered among the world's outstanding examples of ba-relief art. Angkor, before its abandonment in favor of Pnompenh, was a capital of the Khmer Empire.

Details of the damage are known because two Frenchmen from the Conservation d'Angkor, a society that has worked for years to restore and preserve the temples, are being allowed by the occupiers to continue their work inside the ruins.

Little Other Action

Their report was apparently submitted to the National Museum in Pnompenh, the archeology department of the University of Fine Arts and top Government officials.

Informed sources said that the artillery barrage had been ordered by a battery commander without permission from higher authority. The sources reported that the officer, a captain, had been transferred to another unit outside the Siemreap area but had not been punished, apparently because the high command be-

lieved that punishing him would damage morale in the Cambodian Army.

Travelers said that in the year that anti - Government forces have held the temples there has been little other action in the immediate area. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese are reported to have set up an anti-aircraft position about two miles north of Angkor Wat, but it has not been active and there has never been bombing in the temple area.

Sources say that most of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong have moved out of the temples into the surrounding jungle or back across the country to base areas in eastern Cambodia. Khmer Rouge, or Cambodian Communist, forces garrison Angkor.

About 2,000 to 3,000 Cambodians who fled their homes in the nearby countryside after war broke out sought sanctuary in the temples and have lived there since.

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Angkor Wat Reported Damaged By Cambodian Army Barrage



The New York Times

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