

# **Cultural Assimilation and Anthropological Significance of Indian Influence on Khmer Temple Architecture during the Angkor Period**

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## **Abstract**

Khmer architecture, particularly during the Angkor period (9th-15th century CE) showcases a significant influence of Indian architecture. Historically, the Khmer Empire, which was situated in present-day Cambodia, was heavily influenced by Indian culture and religion, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. There is a systematic development of the temples seen from the 5<sup>th</sup> C AD to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century AD through stages of development of architectural elements. The principles of temple architecture of Indian Dravidian architecture practiced during this timeframe could be seen implemented in the temples of Cambodia. Even the political history of the Davida region of India and the Angkor region showcases various anthropological references. Furthermore, through trade, the exchange of goods and ideas between India and Cambodia during this period led to the development of a vibrant and cosmopolitan culture, with Indian and Khmer traders and merchants living and working alongside each other in the bustling cities of the Khmer Empire. The epitome of this cultural assimilation between Indian and Khmer architecture can be seen as the Angkor Wat temple complex, which was built in the early 12th century CE during the reign of King Suryavarman-II, the largest religious complex in the world and World Heritage Site.

Similar to the regional variations of Indian temple architecture, the Khmer architects also incorporated the philosophical idea of the Devaraja cult, local motifs, and styles into their designs, such as the use of serpent-like nagas and lotus motifs, which were common in Khmer art and culture. The paper focuses on the anthropological impact of Indian influence on Cambodia during the Angkor period which was profound and helped shape the cultural and social landscape of Southeast Asia for centuries to come.

**Keywords:** Temple Architecture, Planning Principles, Devaraja cult, Cultural Assimilation, Angkor Region

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