

Stone courtyard crumbling under weight of trees in Preah Khan Temple at Angkor

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A stone courtyard in Preah Khan Temple at Angkor is crumbling under the weight of trees and other erosion factors. Preah Khan means "Sacred Sword" in Khmer, and the temple was built at the site of Jayavarman VII's victory over Cham invaders in 1181 A.D. The building complex functioned as temple, monastery, and university. The original carved images in the complex were both Hindu and Buddhist although most of the Buddhas were effaced by subsequent Hindu rulers, probably including the Hindu Jayavarman VIII.

The floorplan of Preah Khan is similar to that of Ta Prohm, also built by Jayavarman VII in the late 1200s. Preah Khan, however, is in a better state of preservation and includes more exceptional stone statues and architectural features such as rounded columns. Preah Khan deliberately has been only partially restored. The site includes both conserved buildings and others that seem wildly overrun by the encroaching tropical forest. Areas where the forest appears to have taken over are stabilized from continued erosion and kept safely open for visitors.

Conservation at Preah Khan is managed by the World Monuments Fund.



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