

**IN THE FAR EAST: A NARRATIVE
OF EXPLORATION AND
ADVENTURE IN COCHIN-CHINA,
CAMBODIA, LAOS, AND SIAM**

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In the Far East: a narrative of exploration and adventure in Cochin-China, Cambodia, Laos, and Siam by W. H. Davenport Adams

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W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS

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IN THE FAR EAST:

A Narrative of Exploration and Adventure

IN COCHIN-CHINA, CAMBODIA,
LAOS, AND SIAM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Arctic World," "The Mediterranean Illustrated,"
&c. &c.

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

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IN THE FAR EAST.

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH LAOS TO CHINA.



CONSIDERABLE portion of the Indo-Chinese peninsula is occupied by the extensive country of Cambodia, or Camboja, known to the natives as *Kan-pou-chi*. It extends from lat. $8^{\circ} 47'$ to 15° N., along the basin of the Mekong, Makiang, or Cambodia river; and is bounded on the north by Laos; on the south, by the Gulf of Siam and the China Sea; on the east, by Cochin-China; and on the west, by Siam. Formerly it was independent; but since 1809 it has been included within the empire of Annam, except the province of Battambang, which belongs to the kingdom of Siam. But since the French established themselves at Saigon in 1858, and have gradually

obtained a controlling power in Annam (or Cochin-China), their influence has also extended to Cambodia.

The largest river of Cambodia, and of the whole Indo-Chinese peninsula, is the Mekong, Makiang, or Cambodia, which, rising in the mountains of China, under the name of the Lan-tsan-kiang, flows in a south-easterly direction across the province of Yunnan; thence, under the name of the Kiou-long, traverses the territory of Laos; and afterwards, as the Mekong, intersects Cambodia, dividing the Annam portion from that which belongs to Siam; separates into several branches, and finally falls into the China Sea, after a fertilizing course of about fifteen hundred miles. Its two principal mouths are those of the Japanese and Oubequum channels. There are several smaller mouths, however, the southernmost of which is situated in lat. $9^{\circ} 30' N.$, and long. $106^{\circ} 20' E.$

Very little was known of this great river until the French had made themselves masters of Saigon. It has since been explored in parts of its course by M. Mouhot, Lieutenant Garnier, and others. The country which it waters possesses many features of interest; and the scenery through which it flows is

often of a romantic and beautiful character. The manners and customs of the people dwelling on its banks are not unworthy of consideration ; and we propose, therefore, to carry the reader with us on a voyage up this magnificent stream,—penetrating, under the guidance of Lieutenant Garnier, into hitherto unexplored parts of Cambodia, and even into China itself.

In 1866 the French Government determined on despatching an expedition to explore the upper valley of the great Cambodian river, and placed it in charge of M. de Lagrée, a captain in the French navy. M. Thorel, a surgeon, was attached to it as botanist ; M. Delaporte, as artist ; Dr. Joubert, as physician and geologist ; and among the other members were Lieutenant Garnier, to whose record of the expedition we are about to be indebted, and M. de Carné. After a visit to Ongeor, the capital of the ancient kingdom of the Khmers, with those vast memorials of antiquity described so graphically by M. Mouhot, the expedition proceeded to ascend the great river, passing the busy villages of Compong Luong and Pnom Penh—the latter the residence of the king of Cambodia. Here they aban-

doned the gun-brigs which had brought them from Saigon, and embarked themselves and their stores on board boats better fitted for river navigation.

These boats or canoes are manned, according to their size, by a crew of six to ten men. Each is armed with a long bamboo, one end of which terminates with an iron hook, the other with a small fork. The men take up their station on a small platform in the fore part of the boat, plant their bamboos against some projection on the river-bank, tree or stone, and then march towards the stern; returning afterwards on the opposite side to repeat the process. This strange kind of circular motion suffices to impel the boat at the rate of a man walking at full speed, when the boatmen are skilful at their work, and the river-bank is straight and well defined. The master's attention is wholly occupied, meanwhile, in keeping the bow of the canoe in the direction of the current, or rather slightly headed towards the shore. It is obvious that such a mode of navigation is liable to many interruptions, and cannot be commended on the score of swiftness or convenience.

On the 13th of July the canoes took their departure from Cratieh, and soon afterwards arrived