



Henri Mouhot (1826-1861) was a French naturalist and explorer born into a Protestant family on 25 May 1826 in Franche-Comté, who is renowned for his popularisation of Angkor, Cambodia. He married Ann Park, a descendant (probably a granddaughter) explorer Mungo Park, at St Marylebone in 1854 or 1855, before settling in 1856 in the island of Jersey.

Mouhot spent ten years in Russia, working as a language tutor at the St Petersburg Military Academy. He travelled widely in Europe and studied photography before turning to Natural Science as the age of thirty. After a year Mouhot decided to travel to Indochina to collect new zoological specimens and eventually received the financial support of the Royal Geographical Society and the Zoological Society of London after being turned down by the French government. He sailed to Bangkok and then made several trips to Cambodia where he came across Angkor, a place consisting of sites such as ancient terraces, pools, moated cities, palaces and temples. Mouhot is often mistakenly credited with "discovering" Angkor when in fact the site had been visited by several westerners since the sixteenth century.



What he did was popularize Angkor in the West as he wrote more evocatively than any previous explorers (through his illustrated journals "*Voyage dans les Royaumes de Siam, de Cambodge, de Laos et Autres Parties Centrales de l'Indo-Chine*" published in 1868).

Although Mouhot made known his insights into this area of Cambodia, he did initially make a grave error in his dating of its formation. Because the explorer saw the Khmer inhabitants as barbaric he made the assumption that they could not have been the original settlers and so dated Angkor back over two millennia, to around the same era as Rome. Its true history was later pieced together in the book *The Customs of Cambodia* written by Chinese diplomat Zhou Daguan.

Mouhot died of a malarial fever on his 4th expedition, in the jungles of Laos.

The popularity of Angkor generated by Mouhot's writings, led to the popular support for a major French role in its study and preservation. The French carried out the majority of research work on Angkor until recently.



The sepulchre of Henri Mouhot at Luang Prabang



Commemorative stamp issued on 7 November 2011