Angkor Wat: An Epitome of Buddhist Heritage in Cambodia

By **Dr. Arvind Kumar Singh**[1]

" Buddhist history or the history of Buddhism is an interesting topic to study in order to bring a diverse understanding of the formation and spread of Buddhism. Buddhism arose in the eastern part of Ancient India, in and around the ancient Kingdom of Magadha (now in Bihar, India) spans from the 6th century BCE to the present. The history of Buddhism it spread from the northeastern region of the Indian subcontinent through Central, East, and Southeast Asia. At one time or another, it influenced most of the Asian continent.

According to the historical history of Buddhism and objective judgments from scholars, Buddhism can be adapted to many social situations, many types of people, many customs of different periods, and therefore, today Buddhism continues to exist and increasingly widely developed all over the world, even in countries with advanced science such as the United States and Western Europe - Western world.

Readers who refer to this research topic will find many interesting things, bringing a multi-dimensional consultation about the history of Buddhism in the national territory. The author has brought to you in each survey in the research paper, the Editorial Board has found it useful and I have a shared opinion that you will not miss these research pages.

- Thich Giac Chinh, Chief Editor.

[1] Assistant Professor, School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization
Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, UP-201310

Angkor Wat: An Epitome of Buddhist Heritage in Cambodia

At the very outset, I am of the view that Cambodia is known to all outside world for her wonderful Angkor Wat. Angkor Wat (Capital Temple) etymologically the term 'Angkor' is a vernacular form of the word 'Nokar', a Khmer word which is derived from the Sanskrit word Nagar (Capital). Angkor Wat is a symbol of Cambodian's National Heritage and grand glorious past of Cambodian history. Cambodia, a country situated in Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, between Thailand, Vietnam and Loas. Dominant features are the large, almost centrally located, Tonle Sap (Great Lake) and the Mekong River, which traverses the country from North to South. This paper is an attempt to analyze and explore the rich Buddhist Heritage of Cambodia.

Cambodia like most other Asian countries has immense influence by the Indian culture where Buddhism and Hinduism have played an important role in developing and integrating Cambodia into a civilized country. It has a long journey combining with the glory and collapsing starting from its ancient states Funan (100-600), Chenla (600-800) and Angkorian Empire (802-1431). During Angkorian Empire, Cambodia has expanded its territory widely from the China Sea to the Gulf of Bengal in the west. The initial design and construction of the temple took place in the first half of the 12th century, during the reign of Suryavarman II (1113-1150) which is dedicated to Brahmanical god Vishnu. The Temple was built as the king's state temple in the capital city. As neither the foundation stela nor any contemporary inscriptions referring to the temple have been found, its original name is unknown. It is located in north of the modern town of Siem Reap, which was centered on the Baphuon temple.[2] In 1177, Angkor was sacked by the Chams, the traditional enemies of the Khmer and thereafter the empire was restored by a new King named Jayavarman VII, who established a new capital and state temple which lie a few kilometers to the north. Angkor Wat is unusual among the Angkor temples because it was never completely abandoned.[3]

One of the first Western visitors to Angkor Wat Temple was Antonio da Magdalena, a Portuguese monk who visited in 1586 and mentions that the temple "*is of such extraordinary construction that it is not possible to describe it with a pen, particularly since it is like no other building in the world. It has towers and decoration and all the refinements which the human genius can conceive of.*"[4] However, the Angkor Wat Temple was popularized in the West only in the mid-nineteenth century on the publication of Henri Mouhot's travel notes. The French explorer wrote of it: "*One of these temples, a rival to that of Solomon, and erected by some ancient Michelangelo, might take an honourable place beside our most beautiful buildings. It is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome, and presents a sad contrast to the state of barbarism in which the nation is now plunged*".[5] Mouhot, like other early Western visitors, was unable to believe that the Khmers could have built the temple, and mistakenly dated it to around the same era as Rome. In the twentieth century, Angkor Wat underwent considerable restoration work including the removal of accumulated earth and vegetation.[6] Work was interrupted by the civil war and Khmer Rouge control of the country during the 1970s and 1980s, but relatively little damage was done during this period other than the theft and destruction of mostly post-Angkorian statues.

[2] http://www.autoriteapsara.org/en/angkor/temples_sites/temples/angkor_vat.html. Retrieved October 20, 2010.

[3] *The Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art.* College of the Arts, The Ohio State University. http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/seasia/angkor.html. Retrieved October 20, 2010.

[4] http://www.ourworldwonders.com/AngkorWat/History.htm Retrieved October 20, 2010.

[5] Glaize, *The Monuments of the Angkor Group* p. 59.

[6] Higham, *The Civilization of Angkor* pp. 1-2.

A Brief Historical Description of Cambodia:

The Carbon dating of a cave of Loang Spean in North West Cambodia reveals people who made pots were living in Cambodia as early as 4200 BCE. Archaeological evidence indicates that other parts of the region now called Cambodia was inhabited from around 1000-2000 BCE by a Neolithic culture. Skulls and human bones found at Samrong Sen date from 1500 BCE. By the first century CE, the inhabitants had developed relatively stable, organized societies and spoke languages very much related to the Cambodia or Khmer of the present day. The culture and technical skills of these people of the first century CE far surpassed the primitive stage. The most advanced groups lived along the coast and in the lower Mekong River valley and delta regions in houses constructed on stilts where they cultivated rice, finished and kept domesticated animals. The great pioneering works of French scholarship on ancient Cambodia were primarily concerned with the construction of royal chronologies and with the problem of how Hinduism had been transplanted in an alien setting.[7] The towering figure in the field, George Coedés, had been trained as a Sanskritist and regarded Southeast Asia as a tabula rasa for the reception of Indic religious and cultural ideas and practices, which, rather astonishingly, appeared to bear exactly the same meanings as they had in their land of origin. This is odd, for old Khmer inscriptions are actually slightly more frequent in Cambodia than those in Sanskrit, even from the earliest period. One of the earliest, found at Angkor Borei and dated 611 CE, is written entirely in Khmer, for example.[8] For the joint Sanskrit/Khmer inscriptions, it is a rule of thumb that "the Sanskrit text is concerned only with the spiritual benefits acquired by some pious act or other, while the Khmer text is to some extent a notary's deed placed under divine protection". The Khmer portion, then, is addressed to living men and women; the Sanskrit, to the gods. Given this fact, Vickery[9] has argued that the ancient Khmer were materialists "overwhelmingly concerned with practical, not religious, affairs." Jacques, on the other hand, regards the inscriptions as "exclusively religious documents." Here, then, are some of the quandaries facing the investigator exposed to divergent and incompatible readings of the most basic kind. What can we know about religion in ancient Cambodia? Were the old Khmer effectively "Indianized," or did autochthonous deities survive their exposure to foreign influence by putting on a suit of Indic clothing? There are no clear answers here, although Mabbett has persuasively suggested that the storehouse of imported mythologies would have provided a rich resource for the forging of a unified identity in the expanding polity that emerged in the lower Mekong region in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The efforts of several generations of archaeologists have quite naturally been directed at the clearance, reconstruction, and interpretation of grand temples. The spaces between these impressive structures and much of the larger Khmer region, spaces in which ordinary people can be assumed to have lived, worked, and worshipped, have been largely ignored.[10] Any reconstruction of this enormous period will have many lacunae, and, in consequence, it would be unwise to claim that one could offer a coherent account. The earliest known settlement in Cambodia, dating from c.

[7] Associated with figures like Doudart de Lagŕee, Harmand, Aymonier, Barth, Bergaigne, Senart, and Lévi, culminating in Coedés.

[8] For a comprehensive list of Cambodian inscriptions discussed in this book, see appendices A and B.

[9] Vickery, Michael (1998). *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia: the 7th-8th centuries.* Toyo Bunko, 139.

[10] For an exception, see Jacob 1979 and 1993b.

4200 BCE, is Laang Spean, near Battambang. The site appears to have been occupied down to the ninth century CE, yet the first significant polity in the region is generally known as Funan. The word is thought to be the Chinese equivalent of the Khmer *"bnam,"* meaning "mountain." Evidence relating to Funan is restricted to a small body of Chinese writings from differing periods of history, some roughly contemporary epigraphic materials in Khmer and Sanskrit,[11] and the growing data assembled through recent archaeological investigation. The paucity of sources has meant that considerable imagination has been used in the reconstruction of Funan's history. Even Coedés fell into the trap when, with little evidence at his disposal, he argued that the kings of the region who employed the Khmer title *"kurun bna³"* (Sanskrit *sailaraja,* or "king of the mountain") ruled from somewhere near Ba Phnom. This identification is now known to be untenable. The most likely candidate for the capital, called Vyādhapura, appears to be Angkor Borei[12]. Certainly, Funan seems to have been a socially stratified society in which rice production and hydraulic works had both reached a significant level of sophistication. The ethnic character of the people is unknown, although the existence of inscriptions from the early seventh century points to the Khmer identity of at least some of the inhabitants, probably for many centuries prior to this period. Vickery[13] has argued that, possibly for reasons of prestige, some of the village chiefs of the region, previously known under the Mon-Khmer title of *Poñ,* began to take the Indic suffix *"Varman"*[14] from perhaps as far back as the fifth century CE. These individuals were probably ritual and clan chieftains who claimed descent from pre-dominantly female, pre-Sanskritic deities *(Kpoñ)*. These, in turn, slowly transmogrified into higher-status divinities designated by the honorific term "our lord" *(vrah kamratan añ)*[15].

Present levels of knowledge make it impossible to be certain about when Buddhism first arrived in Cambodia. The evidence is "at best sketchy", but around forty carved Buddha images from the Mekong Delta region and from areas of Thailand associated with Funan[16] have been found in a variety of materials, including stone, wood, glass, clay, bone, and metal. Their iconography is varied.[17] Given the concentration of finds around Wat Romlok, near Phnom Da, this area has been regarded as a center of Buddhist cult activity, although both Angkor Borei and Tra Vinh Province in Vietnam must also have been important.[18] Dating must remain tentative,[19] but other significant discoveries include a fine standing Buddha in *varamudra,* probably dating from the seventh century, discovered at Tuol Tahoy, Kompong Speu Province; two images of buddhas in *parinirvana,* dating from the fifth– sixth centuries, one from Oc Eo and the other from Angkor Borei; and a roughly contemporary image of the Buddha seated under a multi-headed *naga,* also from Angkor Borei. According to Boisselier, the Tuol Tahoy Buddha shows many similarities to Dvāravati

[11] Only three Sanskrit inscriptions have been definitively attributed to the Funan period. Vickery (1998n47) holds that this is insufficient evidence to argue for the presence of an Indian population in the region.

[12] Vickery, Michael (1998). *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia: the 7th-8th centuries.* Toyo Bunko, p. 19.

[13] Vickery, Michael (1998). *Op. Cit.*, p. 19-20.

[14] Meaning "armor, defense, coat f mail, etc.," i.e., the idea of protection. Often found at the end of names of members of the Indian warrior class *(kœatriya).*

[15] Vickery, Michael (1998).*Op. Cit.*, p. 153.

[16] Skilling (pefs. comm.) observes that this association can be established only by circular arguments.

[17] For a detailed discussion, see Dupont 1955. 189-210. For illustrations, see Tranet 1998.

[18] Bhattacharya, 1961: 18.

[19] For a recent contesting of received wisdom on the topic, see Dowling, 1999.

statues, a fact that could be used to support the generally accepted thesis that Cambodian Theravāda Buddhism was originally influenced by the Mon culture.[20] However, the most characteristic element of Dvāravati art, the wheel of the law *(dharmacakra)*, is not attested in ancient Cambodia. This need not imply that there were no links between Funan and Dvāravati, but the evidence is slender. Nevertheless, a few pieces imported from India and China have been found, indicating Funan's position as the hub of complex trading connections. Of particular note is a Gandhara-style Buddha head of probable Indian origin, dated to the 5th-6th centuries and discovered at Wat Kompong Luong, Angkor Borei.[21]

Scholars of an earlier generation tended to regard these finds as evidence of Indianization in the sense that Brahmanical and Buddhist artefacts were exported from their place of origin by powerful individuals intent on establishing familiar religious and cultural ideas in alien lands. Coedés, for instance, postulates waves of emigration of southern Indians to Funan in the first half of the 5th century, perhaps as a result of the campaigns of Samudragupta (335–375) and the resulting submission of the Pallava dynasty. But we know that the people of coastal Indochina were skilled seafarers from early times, and it is perfectly possible to envisage mariners bringing back familiar images as souvenirs from their trading activities around maritime Asia. This theory has a number of attractions. It obviates the need to establish why Indians might have been motivated to engage in Hindu-Buddhist missionary activity, and it fits with what we know about the seafaring traditions of early Southeast Asia.[22] But, most significantly, there is little evidence that imported Buddhist objects had any great influence on the evolution of Cambodian sculptural styles. Certainly much of the Buddhist imagery from Funan reflects though not slavishly, the schools of Buddhist art that were flourishing within greater India at the time, but native aesthetics were not compromised. Had such images been introduced with missionary intent, one would surely have expected them to have exercised a more substantial influence on the indigenous artistic tradition.

Scattered Chinese sources illuminate the scene a little further.[23] A fifth-century account given by an individual named Che suggests that "two *hundred* Fodu (probably Buddhists)... from India" were living in Tuen-siun, a vassal state of Funan. *History of the Southern Qi Dynasty (Nan Qi shu)*, written between 479 and 502 CE, preserves a poetical account of the religion of Funan by a Buddhist monk Nagasena (Na-kia-sien). It seems that in 484 he had been sent as an envoy to the Chinese emperor by a king of Funan, perhaps called Kaundinya-Jayavarman, in an unsuccessful attempt to induce the Chinese to provide military aid. Nāgasena is reported to have told his hosts that Brahmanism and Buddhism both flourished in Funan. Although he emphasizes that "the custom of this country was to worship the god Mahesvara (Siva)," he uses a number of technical terms when speaking of Buddhism, such as "*paramita*" and "*bhumi*," which strongly suggest a Mahāyāna presence. A further point worthy of note is that, in both this embassy and its successor in 503, the Funanese king is said to have sent Buddhist presents to the emperor, including two ivory *stupas* and a coral Buddha image, a sound indication that Buddhist ideas and practice had, in some form, infiltrated royal circles.

Another two Buddhist monks from Funan,

[20] Jean Boisselier, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1, No. 1 - No. 2, 1834-1990, Cambridge University Press, April, 1967.
[21] Tranet 1998, 439.
[22] Discussed in detail by Vickery, 1998: 53-56.
[23] For a good survey of Chinese sources relevant to the study of Cambodian history, see Yang Baoyun 1994.

named Sanghapala (460-524) and Mandra,[24] arrived at the court of Liang in Nanjing in 506 and 503, respectively. The Sanskritic forms of their names give no indication of their ethnic identity, and there is little justification in assuming, as some scholars have done, that they were Indians. Having said that, both had competences in Sanskrit, for translations into Chinese of Indic canonical texts are ascribed to them, and they appear to have stayed at the Bureau of Funan (Funan-guan) while at Nanjing. As was the case with Nāgasena, it is difficult to derive a feel for the doctrinal affiliations of these important early intermediaries. Of the two, Sanghapala appears to have been the more able scholar, yet both tended to work on Mahāyāna sources. This is, however, insufficient evidence to conclude that they were Mahayanist monks. Sanghapala's biography tells us that the majority of his translations concerned Mahāyāna doctrine, although he was also interested in the Abhidhamma.[25] One of the texts he brought from Funan and subsequently translated, although from what original language it is difficult to be certain, was the *Vimuttimagga,* a work probably composed by a certain Upatissa in the second century CE in northern India. This work will be of interest to us when we start to examine the much later features of traditional Theravāda Buddhism in Cambodia. The *Vimuttimagga* has widely, though not universally, been thought of as a text associated with the heterodox AbhayagiriVihāra of medieval Sri Lanka, which may have played some role in shaping the forms of Buddhist practice in Cambodia following the fall of Angkor in the 15th century.[26] The presence of the *Vimuttimagga* might suggest the existence of both Mahāyāna and Sravakayana styles of Buddhism in Funan.

A Sanskrit inscription at Ta Prohm of Bati probably from just before the middle of the sixth century mentions both Jayavarman and Rudravarman and begins with an invocation addressed to the Buddha. This is followed by mention of holy relics, the Buddhist triple jewel *(triratna)*, and details of how a Brahmin court official became a Buddhist lay-disciple *(upasaka)*. A roughly contemporary inscription from Prasat Pram Loveng, Thap Muoi, in the Plaine des Joncs[27] on the other hand, commemorates the installation by Prince Gunavarman[28] of Vaisnava cult objects at the temple of Cakratirthasvamin in a ceremony presided over by Brahmins well versed in Indic sacred writings and traditions. The text also mentions the existence of Hindu priests of the Bhagavata sect.[29] From this evidence it seems likely that both Buddhism and Brahmanism were supported by influential figures. However, the presence of Buddhist artifacts and inscriptions from Funan is greatly outweighed by those influenced by Brahmanism. Indeed, the finest works of art associated with the region are statues of Krsna Govardhana, Visnu Balarama, Visnu Parasurama, and Laksmi, probably dating from the early to mid-sixth century.[30] For most of its history, then, Funan had some of the

[24] These two monks are also called *Sanghavarman* (= Sien k'ie po' lo) and Mandrasena (= Man t'o lo sien), respectively. The latter 'tayed until c. 520 CE.

[25] Sanghapala cooperated with Mandra on a translation of the *Ratnamegha søtra* (T. 659) and also rendered the *Saptastika prajñaparamita* (T. 233) into Chinese. His other works, preserved in the Chinese canon, are Taisho 314, 358, 430, 468, 984, 1016,1491,1648, and 2043. Mandra's rather poor Chinese translations also include the *Ratnamegha søtra* (T. 658) and the Saptastika prajñaparamita (T. 232).

[26] For a more detailed uiscussiol1, see Skilling 1994a.

[27] Vickery (1998, 136 -137) believes it to he later, perhaps from the ninth century.

[28] Possibly the son of Kulaprabhavati, the author of K. 40.

[29] Later inscriptional evidence confirms the presence of the Bhagavata, or Pañcaratra, sect in Funan. K. 806 (dated to 961), for instance, appears to attest their presence through explicit reference to the Pañcaratra doctrine of the Tour emanations of Viœµu *(caturvyøha)* (Bhattacharya 1955a, 113).

[30] These are in what art historians term the Phnom Da style A. Dowling (1999) has suggested a somewhat later date.

characteristics of a Hindu state in which an atmosphere of religious tolerance seems to have operated. Bhattacharya's view that the kings of Funan sponsored Buddhist activity for "purely political imperatives" seems a little harsh and difficult to justify on the basis of available evidence. Both Vaisnava and Saiva cults certainly operated at the level of the court, but Mahāyāna and Sravakayana styles of Buddhism also oscillated in importance. It goes without saying that the majority of the population continued to practice ancestral cults.

According to Chinese sources, Funan was eventually subdued by a neighboring vassal state called Zhenla. Like Funan before it, there is no mention of such a place in Cambodian epigraphy, yet it must certainly have existed, given that an enormous growth in the inscriptional record in the seventh century confirms the existence of a polity very like that described by the Chinese. In Funan the *poñ* had not claimed ownership of the land, which remained communal property, but this type of local authority figure was eventually supplanted by a different form of ruler, the *mratañ-varman*, who became a distinctive element in the early Zhenla political landscape. These changes appear to be associated with transformations in the religious cult. In the words of Russian scholars, "Earlier temples developed] from the sacred place of lineage god ancestors of the commune into a focus of wealth separated from the commune, and held by a privileged commune upper class. This was conducive to the replacement of pre-Indic local beliefs by Hinduism and the formation of priesthood."[31] A fair quantity of statuary has survived from the early Zhenla period. It retains earlier features but is characterized by a certain stiffness and "frontality." This mild degeneration into the so-called Phnom Da style B is nicely illustrated by an early eighth-century image of Avalokitesvara from Rach-Gia, near the Mekong Delta.[32] A number of Buddha images, mostly from the south, also date from this transitional period. The most important of these is a Buddha image from Tra-vinh, the hair of which is rendered by large, flat spiral curls with an almost absent *usnisa*. The architecture, on the other hand, usually consists of lone or grouped brick towers with stone-framed doors. The earliest of these exclusively Brahmanical sites are the brick tower of Preah Theat Touch in Kompong Thom Province and the sandstone structure of Asram Maha Rosei on the slope of Phnom Da, near Angkor Borei.[33] These structures have been regarded as the first examples of a truly Khmer art, the initial phase of which is sometimes termed the Sambor style after Isanapura (modern Sambor Prei Kuk, to the North of Kompong Thom), an early capital of Zhenla that was founded by Isanavarman I (616-635). The southern group of temple buildings at Isanapura certainly seems to date from this reign. Although in a ruinous state today, the brick core of its central shrine is supposed to have housed a gold *linga*, while the eastern enclosure tower acted as a stable for Siva's mount, Nandin. Both were oriented to catch the rays of the rising sun.[34]

Vickery's survey[35] of extant Khmer inscriptions dating from Zhenla lists ninety differently named Indic gods. More than half, given their *-isvara* suffix, are probably references to Siva. Of those remaining, fourteen concern Visnu, eight mention Siva-Visnu combinations (i.e., Harihara), and there is one reference to the sun

[31] Vickery 1998, 48, quoting from Kozlova, Sedov. and Churin 1968.

[32] Bronze images of Avalokitesvara from Ak Yom are a little earlier and could be the earliest extant explicitly, Mahāyāna pieces of an in Southeast Asia (Nandana Chutiwongs 1984, 377-378).

[33] Some scholars have regarded this as a conscious imitation of the Pallava temple of Panamalai; see Longhurst 1930, 7-8. Girard-Geslan (1997, 159), on the other hand, suggests a Calukya influence.

[34] For full details of the site, see Tranet 1997.

[35] Vickery's Survey, 1998: 140–141.

god, Surya. Ratnabhanu and Ratnasimha, are named and described as brothers. In the Sanskrit portion we discover that they have donated slaves, animals, and land toward the foundation of a religious property.[36] In addition, King Jayavarman will guarantee that a certain Subhakirti is to have hereditary rights over the establishment. The Khmer portion of the text ascribes the title *sthavira*, or "elder," to both monks. Bhattacharya[37] has suggested that this means they must have belonged to the Theravāda. This is possible, but the term, although monastic, really implies monastic seniority and is not convincing evidence of sectarian affiliation. Of rather more significance as evidence of possible Theravāda presence in Cambodia is a portion of Pāli text engraved on the back of a seventh-century Buddha figure from Tuol Preah Theat, Prey Veng Province.[38] Pāli is, of course, the canonical language of the Theravāda. Furthermore Dupont believes[39] that the figure shows some Dvāravati influences. Another Khmer inscription from Prachinburi Province, Thailand, dated 761 CE, is not listed by Vickery, because it was discovered fairly recently. It contains three Pāli stanzas in homage to the Triple Jewel that appear to come from the *Telakataha-gatha*, a poetical text believed to have its origin in Sri Lanka. As such, it represents the strongest evidence of a Theravāda presence at this period of time. Two more inscriptions refer to the long-standing practice of monastic slavery.[40] One, in joint Khmer and Sanskrit from Khlau Rang, Prachinburi Province dated 639 CE, enumerates the gift of pagoda slaves *(kñuṃ Vihāra)*, plantations, and treasure to a *Vihāra* by a certain Sinahv.[41] Poñ Prajñacandra is recorded as having donated slaves to a trinity of Buddhist deities: *vramkamratañañ sasta* (Buddha), *vramkamratañ Maitreya*, and *vramkamratañañ sri Avalokitesvara.* The presence of Avalokitesvara as one of the triad has led some scholars to regard this inscription as the earliest explicit evidence for the existence of the Mahāyāna in the region. Bernard-Philippe Groslier has gone somewhat further, suggesting that the gradual increase in production of Mahayanist images throughout the Zhenla period could represent a gradual broadening of Buddhist practice beyond the confines of the court into the mass of the people. Coedés, on the other hand, has chosen to characterize Prasat Ta Keam, Siem Reap Province as the first explicit piece of evidence for the existence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Cambodia; it is specifically dated 791 CE and mentions the erection of an image of Lokesvara, consecrated with the title *Jagadisvara.* Both theories are problematic, most notably because the veneration of Avalokitesvara is attested in Theravāda settings and cannot be taken as a decisive indication of Mahayanist activity.[42]

Although these specific inferences may not be correct, there does appear to have been a considerable expansion of the Mahāyāna

[36] This is the earliest dated reference t a Buddhist "work of merit" *(puµya)* in the inscriptional record (Vickery 1998,106).

[37] Bhattacharya, 1961, 16.

[38] Discovered by Robert Dalet and now in the Musée Guimet, no. 18,891. The inscription renders this famous passage : *"ye dhamma hetuprabhava teœa³ hetu³ tathagato avaca / tesañ ca yo nirodho eva³vadi mahasamano"* (Whatever phenomena arise from a cause, of these the Tathagata has told their cause, / And that which is their cessation, the Great Contemplative has such a doctrine) *(Vin.* i.40). The formula occurs quite frequently in the inscriptional record of Southeast Asia. For detailed coverage, see Skilling 1999.

[39] Dupont: 221.

[40] It is difficult to find a precise English equivalent for this term. The term "serf" or "bondsman" may be more appropriate. The provision of staff to maintain a religious structure and its properties was common in India and Southeast Asia until modern times.

[41] Another probable seventh-century text [K. 755] -found on the pedestal of a seated Buddha image at Wat Chnah, Prei Krabas, Takeo-also mentions the donation of *kñu³ Vihāra.*

[42] For consideration of the cult of Avalokitesvara in Theravāda Sri Lanka, see Holt 1991.

throughout the Southeast Asian region from the mid-eighth century, perhaps as a result of the sponsorship of the Pala kings of northeast India and the growing influence of Nalanda university. In some ways it would be surprising for there not to have been resurgence in Buddhist contacts with Southeast Asia during the Pala period, for these royal patrons of Buddhism controlled and made accessible the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites. In consequence, Nalanda became a Mecca for Buddhist scholars, so much so that Bālaputra, king of Srivijaya, built a monastery for monks from his realm in the precincts of the great monastic center around 860 CE.[43] It seems that a combination of tantric ideas and symbols contained within a Hindu-Buddhist syncretism, common to Bengal and surrounding regions, began to make its presence felt in Cambodia from around this time.[44] The erection of an image of Sri Vidyadharani (Prajñaparamita) by a physician from Sambor Prei Kuk and dated 708 CE, may conceivably fit this context, while a Sanskrit inscription from the same location dated 627 CE, tells us that a Brahmanical teacher of the Saiva Pasupata sect, Vidyavisesa by name, had studied Buddhism, although it is impossible to say whether this study took place in Cambodia or in India.

The founding figure of the Angkorian period, Jayavarman II (802-850), was connected by blood to earlier rulers. He arrived in the region from a place named Java[45] around 800 CE, setting up a power base at Indrapura, a not completely identified location but probably Banteay Prei Nokor, to the east of Kompong Cham. He then gradually extended his influence across much of Zhenla, subsequently moving his capital to Hariharalaya, fifteen kilometres southeast of modern-day Siem Reap, and finally to Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kulen), where a Brahmin named Hiranyadama "learned in the magical science *(siddhi vidya)"* ordained Sivakaivalya as royal chaplain *(purohita)*[46]so that he might perform rites associated with the cult of *devaraja.*[47] Earlier scholars, such as Csdés and Dupont, understood the *devaraja* to be either the deified king himself or a singular image of Siva standing in the king's stead. The matter has not been adequately resolved, but it now seems more likely that the *devaraja* was a special mobile image *(calanti pratima)* of a protective deity[48] or, perhaps, some sort of sacred fire.[49] The next important king, Indravarman (877-889), had a chaplain *(purohita),* Sivasoma, who was not only a member of the royal lineage but also appears to have been a disciple of Sankara (788-820), the great Indian Saiva founder of the Advaita Vedanta school of orthodox Hindu philosophy.[50] Inscriptional evidence from the reign certainly demonstrates that Buddhism had not entirely disappeared as an element in the religious life of the region. A Sanskrit inscription from Ban Bung Ke, near Ubon in the Mun valley, dated 886 CE, and erected by one Somaditya, mentions Indravarman as the reigning king and describes the donation of fields, gardens, slaves, and buffalo to make merit for Somaditya's deceased father. The text also notes the installation of a stone image of "the master of all the *munis,* Trailokyanatha." As Majumdar notes[51], Trailokyanatha is "evidently a Buddhist god." Indravarman's successor, Yasovarman

[43]His realm is assumed by many to have been in southern Sumatra. See Kulke and Rothermund, 1990: 119.

[44] See Briggs 1951 in this connection.

[45] Probably not the island with the same name. Vickery (1998, 29) has suggested that it is a reference to Champa.

[46] Evidence suggests that the priestly office was transmitted down the female line, and many prominent Brahmanical families may have been related to the royal blood.

[47] A Sanskritized form of the old Khmer *"kamraten jagat ta raja."*On the *devaraja* cult, see Kulke 1978, Kulke 1993, and Vickery 1998, 429-425.

[48] Kulke, 1993: 355.

[49] Woodward, 2001: 257–258.

[50] See the Sanskrit/Khmer inscription [K.809] from Prasat Kandol Dom, Siem Reap Province.

[51] Majumdar, 1953: 74.

(889-900), was associated with another enormous hydraulic project: the Eastern Baray, to the northeast of his new capital, Yasodharapura. One of Sankara's great practical achievements had been to establish monasteries *(matha)* in the four corners of India, and it was perhaps in imitation of this that, in the year that he acceded to the throne, Yasovarman commissioned one hundred hermitages *(asrama)*, some of which have been discovered by recent archaeological investigation.[52]

During the reign of Rajendravarman (944-968) a high-ranking Brahmin named Kavindrarimathana, the only named architect in the epigraphically record, was charged with the construction of the Eastern Mebon temple and according to Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions on its three towers, Bat Chum enshrined a triad of deities: the Buddha, Avalokitesvara-Vajrapani, and Prajñaparamita.[53] A mystical diagram (yantra) of forty-eight Sanskrit syllables arranged on a lotus blossom was engraved on one of the foundation stones of the temple, appearing to emphasize further that the cult practiced at the site was Mahayanist and tantric.[54] However, some caution is required in this context, for we know that later forms of Theravāda Buddhism practiced in the region[55] employed similar imagery. Whether Bat Chum represents an early manifestation of this latter tradition or was fully Mahayanist must, given our present state of knowledge, remain an open question. Whatever the answer, there can be little doubt that Buddhism was patronized at the highest level, for one of Kavindrarimathana's relations, Virendravikhyata, was also associated with the Buddhist cult. Furthermore, the foundational inscription of Kdei Car, Kompong Thom Province tells us that the *Vihāra* was constructed to house pure bronze images of Lokesvara and Devi (Prajñaparamita) donated by Rajendravarman himself.[56]

The situation begins to change from the second half of the tenth century, when we witness a steady increase in the production of Buddhist statuary and, for the first time, we discover Buddhist episodes inscribed on temple lintels. Little of this material has been discovered with supporting epigraphy, and it has consequently been rather neglected. Nevertheless, much of the material exhibits stylistic parallels with Brahmanical statuary, most of which has been more fully studied and stratified, so it is possible to arrive at some fairly accurate datings.[57] On this basis we can say that sculpted images of Buddha's and *Bodhisattvas* were quite common in the late tenth century. Good examples are the seated Buddha from Peam Cheang, encircled and protected by the *naga*-king Mucalinda, now in the Phnom Penh National Museum, and a bronze Maitreya from Wat Ampil Tuk[58]. Both show Indic influences, particularly in the way that the conical *usnisa* is composed of many fine braids of hair in the style of a tiara *(mukuṭa)*. During the reign of Rajendravarman's son, Jayavarman V (968-1001), Saivism was still in the ascendant. However, a detailed Sanskrit inscription from Wat Sithor, dated 968, indicates the extent to which Buddhism was percolating the region. The first section starts with an invocation to the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Bodhisattvas*, followed by verses expressing adoration for the Buddha's triple body *(trikaya*). The statement that "this world is nothing but mind *(cittamatra)*" indicates that we are in Mahayanist territory. The author of the text,

[52] A unique feature of the inscriptions discovered at some of these sites is that they are digraphic; i.e., they contain contain test in the usual Pallava-derived Khmer characters alongside writing in a Nagari-derived script from northern India.

[53] Vv. 1-3, 25-27, 65-67.

[54] Cœdés 1952.

[55] For a detailed discussion , see chapter 4.

[56] Another Buddhist temple, Prasat Lak Nan, was also established nearby around the same period.

[57] This methodology has been less successful for pre-Angkorian Buddhist materials, for fairly obvious reasons. Boisselier 1966, 271

[58] Girard-Geslan 1997, 182

Kirtipaṇḍita, is a servant of the king. It's commendable to the later's efforts, "*the law of Buddha reappeared from the darkness, as autumn brings out the moon that up to a short time before had been veiled by the clouds of the rainy season.*" The servant continues, "*In his [the king's] person the doctrines of emptiness (nairatmya) and subjectivity (cittamatra) . . . reappear like the sun that brings back the day. He reignited the torch of the true law, the Sastra Madhyantavibhaga, and the other, that the destructive gusts of sin had extinguished. He brought in from foreign lands, in order to spread their study, many philosophical books and treatises, such as the Tattvasaṅgraha commentary*". There is a strong suggestion here of an attempt to reestablish the intellectual credentials of Buddhism in Cambodia after a period of persecution. It is difficult to be precise about the context, although the occurrence of Mahayanist concepts. Specific mention of the commentary to the *Tattvasar³graha* and the *Madhyantavibhanga*, a key work of the Mahayanist Yogacara school, is particularly intriguing, given that Paramartha, a great champion of the same school, had a connection with the region some four centuries before.

The inscription of Phnom Banteay Nan, dated 982, is also connected with Jayavarman V's reign.[59] The text's author, Tribhuvanavajra, is "celebrated for his discipline *(vinaya).*" In Sanskrit he praises the Buddha's triple body *(trikaya)* before invoking Lokesvara and Prajñaparamita, the "mother of the buddhas." The Khmer portion also mentions his many donations to Trailokyavijayagisvari (Prajñaparamita). Another purely Buddhist inscription from Thmar Puok, dated seven years later, invokes an even more complex set of six Buddhist deities, the Buddha, Prajñaparamita, Lokesvara, Maitreya, Vajrin (Vajrapani), and Indra, said to have been enshrined by the sage Padmavairocana.[60] A preoccupation with Mahayanist pantheons, then, is a distinct feature of the period. Suryavarman I (1002-1050) was accorded the posthumous title "Nirvanapada," clearly Buddhist in inspiration. Both epigraphy and the northeastern Thai Pāli chronicles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such as the *Camadeviva³sa,* suggest that Khmer power began to extend to the Chao Phraya basin during his reign.

Buddhist Temple Complexes: A Symbolism of Temple and State

The various capitals of the Angkorian kings may be read symbolically as miniature images of the universe. The rivers and *barays* represented the cosmic ocean; the enclosing walls, the iron-mountain chain *(cakravala)* at the limit of the worlds golden disk; and the temples, the central world mountain, Mount Meru. We find this arrangement first at Kulen, but it may also be observed at Angkor Wat and the great Buddhist temple complexes of Jayavarman VII. From his cosmic center the king ruled; he both "consumed" his domains and, by the proper performance of the royal cult, radiated back quasi-divine power. In this way, order and prosperity were sustained. The temple of Ta Prohm,[61] one of Jayavarman's first great Buddhist temple projects, was constructed in

[59] For detailed treatment of K. 214, see Kern 1906.

[60] The text is inscribed on a miniature temple, just over a meter in height, with sculpted representations of some of these divinities sitting in its six niches. It might seem strange that Indra is included in the list, but the evidence suggests that he was co-opted by Buddhism relatively early in its history. A later inscription at the Bayon [K. 294] does refer to Indra as a "servant of the Buddha" (Pou 1995, 147). Another contemporary inscription at Prasat Kok [K. 339] invokes the triple jewel and talks about the restorations conducted at the site, most notably to an earlier image of the Buddha.

[61] The present Khmer names of Angkorian monuments often bear little relation to the original names that are still attested by the incriptional record. "Ta Prohm" is a modern name, meaning "grandfather Brahma." It inscriptional designation was "Rajya-Vihāra," meaning "the king's monastery." For detailed coverage, see Pou 1990.

1186 to house an image of his mother, Jayarajacudamani, in the form of Prajnaparamita, the mother of the Buddhas. Its foundational inscription includes invocations to the Triple Jewel, Lokesvara, and Prajnaparamita. It also tells us that Ta Prohm was supported by enormous royal donations, including 3,140 villages and their 80,000 residents, plus more than 600 female dancers. The king and various landed proprietors *(gramavant)* also supplied more than 5,000 kilos of gold plate, 4,500 jewels, and much else besides. However, the cosmology of temple design is best illustrated at Preah Khan of Angkor, founded several years later on the basis of the astonishing donation of 13,500 villages and 306,372 male and female slaves from various foreign regions.[62] In its foundational inscription, dated 1191 CE, we read that the great temple housed an image of Lokesvara, rendered in the form of Jayavarman's father, as its central divinity. Its cosmological significance is that it lies in the neighbourhood of three *barays*, or sacred tanks *(tirtha),* representing Buddha, Siva, and Visnu. In one of these, the Preah Khan *baray,* or Jayataṭaka, Jayavarman built another temple, Neak Pean.[63] The structure is a reference to the mythological Lake Anavatapta, whose waters were deemed so pure and inaccessible that anything coming into contact with them must be thoroughly cleansed. Only those with advanced magical powers, like the Buddha, who supernaturally transported himself to Anavatapta for his daily ablutions, can journey there, and it is said that gods brought sixteen pots of its holy water for the daily use of Aśoka, the archetypal Buddhist king.[64] Kingship, then, is strongly linked to the mythology of the lake.[65]

According to Boisselier,[66] the construction of an artificial version of Anavatapta was *de rigueur* for any self-respecting Buddhist monarch. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, for instance, is supposed to have seen such a structure fed by both hot and cold springs on the outskirts of Rajagaha when he visited India in the seventh century, and the Sinhalese tradition also describes something similar built by Parakkamabahu I (1153-1186), who was an al-most exact contemporary of Jayavarman VII. According to Buddhist traditions, the four great river systems of the world issue from Anavatapta, so canals oriented in the four cardinal directions also naturally flowed from Neak Pean. Its sanctuary incorporated an image, Balaha, the horse avatar of Avalokitesvara, with human figures clinging to him for dear life, to the east of a central lotus-throned Buddha. These figures appear to be the shipwrecked merchants mentioned by the *Karandavyuha sutra*, one of the principal Indic sources of the cult of Avalokitesvara. To the west is a reclining male figure identified as Visnu; to the north is a block holding sculptures comparable to the thousand *lingas* found at Phnom Kulen and clearly related to Siva.[67] Unfortunately, the southern image is too eroded to be identified, but Boisselier[68] has concluded that this architectural *mandala* is a political statement of

[62] The name "Preah Khan" (lit. "Holy Sword") is modern. The temple is called Jayasri in the inscription.

[63] Another modern name, "Neak Pean" Probably means "coiled snakes." The coiled-snake motif occurs in the sanctuary of Neak pean and may represent the *nagas* Nanda and Upananda. Alternatively, "Neak Pean" may be a version of *"nirpean" = "Nirvaμa."* The inscription refer to the temple as Rajyasri.

[64] Sp. I. 42.

[65] Some scholars have thought that Jayavarman VII suffered from leprosy and was, in fact, the Leper King so widely mentioned in Cambodian myth and legend. Some have also argued that Neak Pean's association with Avalokitesvara suggests that the structure was a place of healing, given that in medieval India the deity was thought to have the power to cure leprosy (Nalanda Chutiwongs 1984, 319-320). For a fuller discussion of the Leper King, see Chandler 1976a and note 5 in chapter 2 below.

[66] Boisselier, Jean, 1970: 94–95.

[67] See Boulbet and Dagens 1973, 9-10.

[68] Boisselier, Jean, 1970: 99-100.

the universal power of the kingdom committed to the ideology of Mahāyāna Buddhism founded on, and not antagonistic to, the veneration of both Siva and Visnu. The arrangements at Phimai, Banteay Samre, and Beng Mealea, although not so explicit, were probably inspired by similar considerations. We have already had cause to note that the cult of Avalokitesvara had been around in Cambodia for some considerable time. Indeed, the two Sanskrit inscriptions dated 982, from Banteay Nan, Battambang Province and dated 970, from Prasat Chikreng, Siem Reap mention the bodhisattva specifically.[69] The iconography, with Buddhas emerging from every pore of the bodhisattva, is also based on the *Karaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*.[70] Banteay Chmar once possessed eight unique two-meter-high figures of Avalokitesvara, carved in low relief on the southern side of the western gallery.[71] Iconographically, they are in surprising conformity with the *Karaṇḍavyūha.*

Jayavarman's great temple-mountain, the Bayon,[72] was constructed quite late in the reign. It housed a colossal stone image of the Buddha protected by the *naga* Mucalinda. But its most distinctive external features are its towers, each with four faces.[73] Unfortunately, there is little consensus over their identity. It has customarily been believed that they are the faces of Lokesvara. However, to Bernard-Philippe Groslier, and to Mus before him, the 54 towers with their total of 192 faces are an architectural expression of the Buddha's famous miracle at Sravasti, where he manifested multicolored beams of light from every pore. To these scholars the faces are those of the historical Buddha, whereas Thompson[74], if I understand her correctly, suggests a link with Maitreya. Woodward has argued that the faces were originally conceived as representations of Vajrasattva, though, when sometime later the Bayon was redesigned under the influence of resurgent Brahmanism, they were reinterpreted as images of Brahma. The Lokesvara-Buddha-Prajñaparamita triad is found in earlier strata of the inscriptional record, but, as we have already noted, Jayavarman VII specifically associated Lokesvara and Prajñaparamita with his father and mother. What we seem to have here is a Buddha family in which the central figure in the triad, the Buddha, equates to the king himself. To put it another way, father/Lokesvara and mother/Prajñaparamita act as the Bodhisattva lieutenants of the king/the Buddha. The *cakravartin* ideal is given added resonance by the fact that Jayavarman VII also constructed 121 "houses of fire" (probably rest houses) along the principal roads of his kingdom and 102 hospitals, perhaps in imitation of Asoka.[75] Hawixbrock believes that there is good reason to regard some of Jayavarman's temples, Ta Prohm and Preah Khan at Angkor, Banteay Chmar, and Wat Nokor are good examples, as sites of important victories over the Cham. At the center of the great city Angkor Thom stands Jayavarman's pantheon, the Bayon, representing Mount Meru; the nearby Royal Palace is homologized to the residence of Indra; and Neak Pean, to the sacred lake Anavatapta. We

[69] Boisselier, Jean, 1965: 81-82, believes that they both make reference to the *Karaṇḍavyūha Sūtra.*

[70] See Mallmann 1948.

[71] For a detailed treatment of the scenes, see Nalanda Chutiwongs 1984, 321-323. Unfortunately, at least one of these has been removed in its entirety by professional thieves in recent years.

[72] From the Pāli *"bejayant,"* the name of Indra's palace. For Mabbett (1997, 352), the Bayon represents "a dynamo of royal charisma … plugged into a great bank of batteries of spiritual power" in which the center feeds on the religious potencies of the periphery.

[73] Prasat Preah Stung at Preah Khan of Kompong Svay seems to have been the first structure to use similar face towers.

[74] Thompson, 2000: 261.

[75] One of the hospital edicts [K. 368, v. xiv] compares the activities of warriors and healers, since both get rid of the kingdom's ills. Preah Khan also had a hospital within its precincts. Most of the hospital edicts are rather similar; they refer to their royal foundation and lay down rules for the organization of the facility. For a list of sites, see Majumdar 1953, 493-494.

do know that the Siem Reap River, which flows through the city, had been identified with the Ganges sometime previously.[76] To complete the vision, the great provincial temples of the reign, like Ta Prohm of Kompong Svay and Banteay Chmar, represent the various islands surrounding the world mountain of traditional Buddhist cosmology. Symbolically, then, the Angkorian state has become coextensive with the entire world. Jayavarman VII's cult of state Buddhism was undoubtedly the high-water mark for the Mahāyāna in Cambodia.[77]

The Rise of Theravāda Buddhism in Cambodia

It seems that Jayavarman VII had inherited a strong attachment to Buddhism from his father, Dharanindravarman II (1160), who "found his satisfaction in this nectar that is the religion of Sakyamuni."[78] The construction of Preah Pālilay may have occurred during the father's reign. Unlike previous examples, this temple appears to have been conceived as a uniquely Sravakayanist structure, since it contains no tantric imagery, such as crowned Buddhas, and its narrative scenes depicting incidents in the life of the Buddha are quite reminiscent of those found in much more recent Theravāda contexts. Indeed, the scene on the eastern pediment of the north entrance to the *gopura,* depicting the Buddha being served by an elephant, Parileyya, and a monkey, gives the structure its modern name.[79] Preah Pālilay may have been an inspiration for some of Jayavarman's later Buddhist structures like Banteay Kdei, probably the Purvatathagata (Buddha of the East) mentioned in K. 485, the western *gopura* of which includes a carved depiction of a robed monk that some scholars have held to be characteristic of the Theravāda. Although quite what inspired the incorporation of such elements remains a subject of speculation, Dupont's thesis (1935) that the influence is from Dvāravati is unproven, but we know that the Theravāda had been present in the Pyu and Mon regions of Southeast Asia since the fifth century and that in the mid-eleventh century it had challenged and defeated the tantric Ari sect that had established itself at Pagan several centuries earlier. Contact between Mon and Khmer regions may have catalyzed similar processes during the high to late Angkorian period, yet, as we have seen, Mahayanist forms of the tradition were not abandoned overnight.

Other members of Jayavarman VII's immediate household also had a strong attraction to the teachings of the Buddha. One of his wives, Indradevi, was an important Buddhist patroness, described as having "surpassed in her knowledge the knowledge of philosophers." Her almost faultless Sanskrit inscription at Phimeanakas[80] tells how she taught Buddhism to nuns at three named convents: Nagendratunga, Tilakottara, and Narendrasrama. She also converted the king's first wife, Jayarajadevi, who is said to have organized dramatic enactments of stories of the Buddha's previous lives *(Jatakas),* performed by young nuns recruited from outcaste families.

[76] The Bat Chum inscription [K. 266-268, quoted in detail by Snellgrove (2000, 459)] ascribed such sanctity to the Siem Reap River that "with the exception of the sacrificial priest, no-one may bathe in the waters coming from the *tirtha,* born at the summit of the holy mountain of Mahendra [A.21]." A mid-eleventh-century inscription at Phonom Kbal Spean [K. 1012] characterized it as the "torrent of Rudra, river of ‹iva, the Ganga" (Jacques 1999, 361).

[77] We should not be too simplistic. Brahmanism was not neglected during Jayavarman VII's reign. His Brahmanical chaplain *(purohita)* appears to have come from Burma (Cœdés 1968a, 1973). Nevertheless, his Bayon inscription does state, "the mountain of ‹iva in the Himalayas has been uprooted … New kings must have recourse to me" (quoted in Kulke 1993, 374).

[78] Inscription of Preah Khan, Angkor [K. 908, dated 1991].

[79] "Pālilay" is a form of the Pāli "Parileyya," the name of the elephant, as well as of the forest area in which the scene is set. For a detailed treatment of its iconography, se Boisselier 1966, 99-105, 127-176, 299.

[80] It opens with an invocation to the *trikaya*, Buddha, and Lokesvara.

How large the nuns' order was at this time is impossible to say, but the involvement of two principal wives of such a powerful king must have had a beneficial impact. According to the Burmese *Glass Palace Chronicle*, in 1180 CE one of Jayavarman's sons, Tamalinda, traveled in a party of Mon monks to Ceylon, where he received monastic ordination into the lineage of the Theravāda MahaVihāra, which had been recently purified by Parakkamabahu I. Tamalinda seems to have died in Burma, never returning to his homeland, so it is difficult to know whether the consequences of the journey were felt in Cambodia itself. However, the event may indicate that Angkor now felt the need to reach out, both diplomatically and spiritually, to other influential regions of the Theravāda world.[81] There is some reinforcing evidence in this connection. The *Culava³sa*, a Sinhalese chronicle, informs us of significant tensions between Parakkamabahu and the Burmese ruler, Narapatijayasura, in the early to mid-1170s. One consequence of the deteriorating relations was that a Ceylonese princess was seized by the Burmese while on her way to Cambodia, perhaps to marry a member of the Cambodian royal family. From what we know of the religious situation in Cambodia at the time, there would have been good reasons to establish alliances with other powerful Theravāda polities. The benefits from the Ceylonese perspective would, no doubt, have been equally desirable. Some Ceylonese inscriptions, particularly those from the reign of the next king, Nissanka Malla (1189–1197), also suggest a Cambodian connection. One mentions a group of fowlers, called Cambodi, who were bribed by the king in an effort to discourage them from their scandalous way of life. Some scholars have suggested that they may have been Cambodian mercenaries. In itself this does not constitute very strong evidence of a link between the two regions, but other tantalizing clues reinforce the suspicion. Of particular interest is the appearance of Khmer motifs in contemporary Ceylonese architecture. The Satmahalprasada and the Potgul Vihāra, for example, seem to exhibit a Khmer character,[82] and one of the gates of Polonnaruva was apparently called Kambojavasala.[83]

From the evidence of widespread damage to Buddhist images and their replacement by *lingas* or figures of praying ascetics, it looks probable that a muscular Saivism had an Indian summer during the mid-thirteenth century.[84] The anti-Buddhist iconoclasm was rather more selective than has sometimes been thought, however. Geographically isolated structures, such as Banteay Chmar, escaped harm completely, while even at Angkor itself some sites, such as Preah Pālilay, were left intact. The probable explanation is that the reaction was directed at images of a syncretic or tantric nature representing concepts quite recently imported into the country from an India convulsed by Muslim invasions.[85] The opposition, then, was to alien ideas and practices rather than to long-standing Buddhist traditions. This may account for the rapid disintegration of Jayavarman VII's

[81] Woodward (2001, 251) suggests that a "turn to Theravāda Buddhism" may have taken place toward the end of Jayavarman's reign. One assumes that Woodward has these events at the back of his mind, for he supplies no hard evidence to back up his contention.

[82] See Ilangasinha 1998, 195. A number of authors have also noted the great similarities between the Satmahalprasada and Wat Kukut at Lamphun, Thailand (Silva 1988, 102-106).

[83] Panditha, 1973: 143.

[84] An interesting bronze finial in the Bayon style from the first half of the thirteenth century shows Viœnu standing above an unmistakable figure of the earth goddess, Nang Thorani. The iconography is unique and puzzling. Despite the lack of obvious evidence on the object itself, the only reasonable interpretation is that it replaced an original Buddha figure during the period (Lerner and Kossak 1991, 159-160). If this is the case, Boisselier's thesis will need to be modified, since the finished product is not ‹aivite nor does it look as if it originally had a tantric significance.

[85] Boisselier, 1965: 82–83.

style of state *Mahāyāna* fairly soon after his death. The *Sravakayana*, on the other hand, had been a presence prior to these developments and seems not to have been adversely affected. Whatever the true state of affairs, its rise to prominence in Cambodia dates from the post-Jayavarman period. The inscriptional record for the early thirteenth century is rather bare, but when Zhou Daguan, a member of a Chinese ambassador's entourage, arrived in Cambodia in 1296 CE, he reported the presence of three separate religious groupings active in the country: Brahmins, who wore the sacred thread; ascetic worshippers of the *linga* (i.e., followers of Siva); and individuals he called *zhugu*, who "shave their heads, wear yellow lower garments, uncover the right shoulder, fasten a skirt of material around the lower part of the body, go barefoot."[86] This is a pretty clear reference to Buddhist monks, and, given the color of the robes, they could possibly have been Theravadins. Zhou Daguan observed that there were no Buddhist nuns in the country, which is odd, for they are mentioned in the Jayavarman VII epigraphy, as noted above. But the king went on a journey where he first had to visit "a small golden tower in front of which is a gold Buddha."[87] The king was probably Srindravarman, a pious Buddhist who seems to have abdicated the throne and withdrew to the forests in 1307 CE.[88]

A Pāli inscription at Kok Svay Chek, near Siem Reap, dated 1308 CE, indicates a possible Theravāda presence. It states that King Srindra-jayavarman (1307-1327) donated a village to a senior monk *(mahathera)*, Siri Sirindamoli, and an additional four villages and slaves of both sexes for the funding of a monastery.[89] One must beware of an over simplistic equation of language and religious affiliation, for it might be falsely assumed that Buddhist Sanskrit inscriptions are always Mahayanist whereas materials in Pāli are Theravadin. Yet even in a comparatively well-studied area like medieval Sri Lanka such assumptions cannot be easily supported, as Bechert has convincingly shown. Nevertheless, by the time Jayavarmadiparamesvara took the Angkorian throne around 1327 CE, Theravāda Buddhism was well established in his empire. The Laotian chronicles mentions about an exiled prince from Lan Chang, called Fa Ngum, who spent time in the Cambodian court and being taught by a Buddhist monk called Maha Pasaman. Fa Ngum subsequently married one of Jayavarmadiparamesvara's daughters before returning to his homeland with a collection of Pāli scriptures donated by her father. In due course of time, Fa Ngum, became King of Lan Chang, who sent a return embassy to Cambodia led by his old teacher. In the century following the construction of the Bayon, Buddhist statuary also begins its move in a more definitively

[86] Chandler draws parallels between Zhou's term *"zhugu"* and the Thai *"chao ku"* - a respectful form of address for a monk Zhou Daguan was puzzled by the way palm-leaf strips "Are covered with black characters, but as no brush or ink is used, their manner of writing is a mystery" - a fairly clear reference to the form of writing that continued in Cambodia to the end of the nineteenth century. He also reports that the Cambodian king slept at the top of a golden tower, the Phimeanakas, where he nightly united with a nine-headed *naga* protector appearing in the form of a beautiful woman before rejoining his wives and concubines. See Chandler, 1996: 72.

[87] Quoted from Pelliot 1951, 411-420.

[88] See Cœdés 1936. As we shall see in due course, this pattern is also followed by a number of middle-period Cambodian kings.

[89] The Khmer portion of the inscription tells how the king also sponsored the construction of a Buddha image called ‹rindramahadeva. It is exceedingly rare to find any royal figure described as "god-king" *(devaraja)* in the inscriptional record. ‹rindrajayavarman has this unique distinction in K. 144, a Khmer inscription consisting of a eulogy to a *ku»i* at Prasat Kombot constructed by the King's guru.

Theravadin direction. In particular, wooden buddha images with both hands outstretched in *abhayamudra* are produced in large numbers. Dupont (1959) has pointed to several examples from Preah Pean, Angkor Wat, which were constructed using the same technique of attaching the hands by a tenon joint as at Dvāravati. Wheels of the law *(dharmacakra),* another characteristic of the Dvāravati art, also start to appear in Cambodia around this time, notably at Phnom Kulen. The last inscription in Sanskrit at Angkor dates from 1327, and Mahāyāna Buddhism itself largely disappeared after the fall of Angkor in 1431.

Conclusion

Buddhism has had an active presence in Khmer population zones for approximately one and a half millennia. During that time it has manifested a variety of differing forms, while its influence has ebbed and flowed both among members of the ruling elite and among masses. It was an important ingredient in the religious life of the earliest significant polity in the area, Funan, which flourished from the 5th to the mid 6th century CE. Contact with India seems to have played some as-yet-unspecified role in the establishment of Buddhist presence in the region. The same may be said concerning early intercourse with Dvāravati, although the evidence is rather slender. But Buddhism, despite sporadic evidence of royal patronage, must be regarded as the poor relation of a variety of more dominant Brahmanical cults during most of the Angkorian period. At some points it left little impact on the historical record, and even when it was able to exercise a lively presence, this was largely through the evolution of Hindu-Buddhist syncretisms. A significant exception to this rule can be found during the reign of the last great king of Angkor, Jayavarman VII (1181-1220). Under his patronage, tantric Mahāyāna concepts permeated the ritual life of the state, while the ancient Indian notion of righteous Buddhist kingship appears to have given shape to some aspects of the policy that Jayavarman used to govern his empire. A short but focused period of muscular opposition to the rites of the ancient régime toward the end of the Angkorian period put an end to much of Jayavarman VII's legacy. The symbiosis of Mahāyāna Buddhism with the ritual of state, so visibly expressed in that king's massive architectural projects, did not survive the changed economic, political, and environmental circumstances. The same holds true for Brahmanism. But the influence of Theravāda traditions, perhaps imported from neighboring states, began to increase. By the immediate post-Angkorian period they had achieved dominance, a situation that has continued to the present without significant deviation.

The Buddhism of post-Angkorian Cambodia preserves some interesting and distinctive ideas and practices sometimes at odds with the "purified" or reformed Theravāda represented today in many regions of South and Southeast Asia. Such "unorthodox" and baroquely esoteric elements were first brought to scholarly attention by the work of François Bizot. It seems that the new religious dispensation was less oriented to the demands of an elaborate and centralized state. Neither did it require large-scale temple construction or the territorial expansion that made that possible. Such changes were not a radical break with the past, for Theravāda Buddhism, once it had anchored itself in Cambodian soil, possessed a remarkable facility for assimilation and accretion. Despite the shift in religious regime, certain key preoccupations and dichotomies were preserved. Theravāda cult activity, for instance, owes a significant debt to quite archaic ways of understanding reality, while basic structural and sociological features of the tradition largely persisted down to the present, particularly in the field of monastic economy.

Upto the 13th century CE Buddhism was in a flourishing condition, it was neither the state

religion nor even the dominant religious sect. The change came due to the influence of the thesis of the Thailand, who were ardent Buddhist and had conquered a large part of Cambodia, the role was now reserved and Cambodia, under the influence of the Thai, was converted, almost wholesale to Buddhism. L.P. Briggs thinks that it is unlikely that the Thai people of *Sukhodaya*, who invaded Cambodia, proper, were responsible for the introduction of *Theravāda* Buddhism in Cambodia. He argues that they were comparatively new in the Khmer Empire more or less hostile to the Khmers and were comparatively new converts to *Theravāda*. The main people from Lapburri on the lower Chaophraya River valley and Khmer settlers from Lappurri; who fled away from that region during Thai invasion in the Thirteenth century and who came to Cambodia were mainly responsible for the introduction of Sihala Buddhism in Cambodia. The conclusion of Brigs is not without justification but we cannot rule out the possibility that Thailand too played a part in the popularization of *Theravāda* Buddhism in Cambodia. The growing power of Thailand had not only exercised an influence on the political history of Cambodia but made a contribution to the establishment and development of *Theravāda* Buddhism. Testimony of *Chau Ta Kuan*, amember of the late thirteenth century mission to *Angkar*, indicates that Theravāda monks were present in the Khmer capital during that period. With the passage of time, the *Brahmanical* gods in the great sanctuaries like Angkar Wat were replaced by Buddhist images. It cannot be traced the exact stages of this conversion, but, gradually, Buddhism became the dominant creed in Kambuja and today there is hardly any trace of the Brahmanical religion in the country, expect in some of the ceremonies and festivities of the people of Kamboja.

References:

1. Ang Choulean, 1988. "*The Place of Animism within Popular Buddhism in Cambodia: The Example of the Monastery*." Asian Folklore Studies 47 (1) : 35-41.
2. B. Groslier and J. Arthaud, *The Arts and Civilization of Angkor* (rev. ed. 1966);
3. Bapat, P.V.; *2500 years of Buddhism*, Delhi; Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India.
4. Bapat, P.V.; Jakasaki, J.N. 1959. Progress of Buddhist Studies in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Loas, Vietnam, China and Japan.
5. Briggs, Lawrence Palmer. 1951. "The Syncretism of Religions in Southeast Asia, Especially the Khmer Empire." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71: 230-249.
6. Broman. Barry M. 1988. "*The Royal Palace of Cambodia*." Arts of Asia 28: 52-60.
7. Brown. R. L., and N. Eilenburg, eds. 1997. *Living Life according to the Dhamma : Papers in Honour of Professor Jean Boisselier on His Eightieth Birthday*. Bangkok : Silpakorn University.
8. C. Jacques, *Angkor: Cities and Temples* (1998) and *Angkor* (1999).
9. Chairpat Prapandvidya. 1990 "*The Sab Bak Inscription : Evidence of an Early Vajrayana Buddhist Presence in Thailand*." Jss 78(2): 10-14.
10. Chandler, David P. 1972. "Cambodia's Relations with Siam in the Early Bangkok Period: The Politics of a Tributary State." JSS 60 (i) : 153-169.
11. Clayton, Thomas. 1964. "Some Problems in the Ancient History of the Hinduized States of South East Asia." *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 5:1-14.
12. D. Rooney, *Angkor: An Introduction to the Temples* (1998);
13. E. F. Gardner, ed., *Angkor* (1986);
14. E. Mannikka, *Angkor Wat: Time, Space and Kingship* (1996);
15. Ebihara, May, 1966. "*Interrelations between Buddhism and Social Systems in Cambodian Peasant Culture.*" In Anthrophological

Studies in Theravāda Buddhism, ed. Manning Nash, Cultural Report Series no. 13, 175-196. New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Series.
16. Ebihara, May, 1984. "Societal Organization in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Cambodia." JSEAS 15(2): 280-295.
17. Ebihara, May, Judy Ledgerwood, and Carol Mortland, eds. 1994. "*Cambodian Culture since 1975 : Homeland and Exile*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
18. H. I. Jessup and T. Zephir, ed., *Sculpture of Ankor and Ancient Cambodia* (1997);
19. Harris, Ian 2005 Cambodian Buddhism, University of Hawai's Press.
20. Harris, Ian, 2005. "*Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*", Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
21. J. Audric, *Angkor and the Khmer Empire* (1972);
22. J. Myrdal and G. Kessle, *Angkor: An Essay on Art and Imperialism* (1971);
23. Jacques, Claude, 1970. "*The Inscriptions of Cambodia." Nokor Khmer* (January-March):18-25.
24. Majumdar, R.C. 1953, *Inscriptions of Kambuja*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society.
25. Majumdar, R.C. 1994, Kamboja-Deca or an Ancient Hindu Colony in Cambodia; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
26. Marston, John and Guthrie, Elizabeth. 2005 "*History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*". Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
27. Rawson, Philip, 1990, *The Art of Southeast Asia*, Thames & Hudson.
28. See M. Giteau, *Khmer Sculpture and the Angkor Civilization* (1966).
29. Vickery, Michael, 1998. "*Society, Economics and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th-8th Centuries*, Japan, Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for Unesco, the Toyo Bunko.
30. Wyatt, David 2003, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven: Yale University, Press.