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The Descendants of Kambu: The Political Imagination of Angkorian Cambodia

By

Ian Nathaniel Lowman

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

South and Southeast Asian Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Penelope Edwards, Chair
Professor Jeffrey Hadler
Professor Peter Zinoman
Professor Patricia Berger

Fall 2011

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Abstract

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In the 9th century CE, a vast polity centered on the region of Angkor was taking shape in what is today Cambodia and Northeast Thailand. At this time the polity's inhabitants, the Khmers, began to see themselves as members of a community of territorial integrity and shared ethnic identity. This sense of belonging, enshrined in the polity's name, Kambujadeśa (i.e., Cambodia) or "the land of the descendants of Kambu," represents one of the most remarkable local cultural innovations in Southeast Asian history. However, the history and implications of early Cambodian identity have thus far been largely overlooked.

In this study I use the evidence from the Old Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions to argue that Angkorian Cambodia (9th-15th centuries CE) was at its conceptual core an ethnic polity or a "nation"—an analytic category signifying, in Steven Grosby's words, an extensive "territorial community of nativity." The inscriptions of Cambodia's provincial elite suggest that the polity's autonomy and its people's common descent were widely disseminated ideals, celebrated in polity-wide myths and perpetuated in representations of the polity's foreign antagonists. I contend that this culture of territorial nativity contradicts the prevailing cosmological model of pre-modern politics in Southeast Asian studies, which assumes that polities before the 19th century were characterized by exaggerated royal claims to universal power and the absence of felt communities beyond extended family and religion. At the same time I seek to problematize standard historical accounts of the nation which fail to observe the affinity between territoriality and fictive kinship in select political cultures before the era of ideological nationalism.

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Acknowledgments

One of the many advantages of writing a dissertation is that it affords me the opportunity early in my career to publicly thank those who have so far contributed to my research and overall education. I count myself fortunate to have had two extraordinary mentors. My advisor, Penny Edwards, has guided me through every step of the dissertation process with energy and good humor, giving me small but crucial incentives to keep me from faltering under the weight of the greater goal. When Penny arrived in Spring 2007, I was preparing to research a relatively modern topic about which I knew something. After taking her course entitled "Placing Nation, History, and Memory in Southeast Asia," and having discovered a possible angle with which to pursue my latent interest in Angkorian Cambodia, I made a last minute decision to switch to a discipline, epigraphy, about which I knew next to nothing. I would not have done so without her enthusiastic consent. Though I have much to learn and improve upon as an early Cambodian historian, I have Penny to thank for letting me take the plunge and seek out my true intellectual vocation. The identity of my second, unofficial mentor will be no surprise to anyone involved in Khmer studies. David Chandler took an interest in my work long before it was worthy of interest, checking in frequently to request new drafts, providing honest and encouraging assessments, writing recommendations, and introducing me to other members of the field. The many young scholars who have received similar assistance can attest that he gives it with a sincere and selfless desire to enrich the field and motivate the next generation. It has truly been an honor to witness his example of tireless academic service even in retirement.

Several individuals have played a formative role in my graduate experience in the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies at UC Berkeley. I appreciate Ashley Thompson for originally encouraging me to select the department and for inspiring me with her ability to read obscure texts from the remote past creatively and without cynicism. Jeff Hadler, a consummate teacher, has been my primary guide to the historiography of Southeast Asia. He has also been a constant source of practical advice, a valuable reader, and a good friend. I thank Peter Zinoman for serving as my mentor during my floating years and for championing my academic goals even when—and especially when—they were only half-formed. In seminars and in our personal communication, Peter has modeled the lost art of lucid, even-handed argumentation; the introduction to this dissertation is my imperfect attempt to emulate his example. Joanna Williams also mentored me temporarily, and I benefitted greatly from her art history course. I am very grateful to Patricia Berger for generously serving as the outside member of my committee and to the many people who recommended her to me. I thank my department's superb graduate advisor Lee Amazonas for

answering all my logistical questions, however silly and inconvenient, with a patience and tact that I never deserved. Sarah Maxim at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies has been consistently resourceful, particularly in helping guide me through Berkeley's funding maze.

In the process of becoming a Southeast Asian historian, I have had the chance to study several languages. If the cumulative effect of this training has proved to be inadequate, it has not been for the lack of talented language instructors. I wish to thank my Khmer teachers in the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo, my senior missionary companions, and the teachers in the Advanced Study of Khmer (ASK) program in Phnom Penh. Most of all, I want to single out Frank Smith who instilled in me and my peers at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) a love for Khmer language and culture. I was fortunate at Berkeley to take two years of Thai with Susan Kepner. I am especially indebted to Sally Goldman and Kristi Wiley for introducing me to Sanskrit. Despite my deficiencies, Sally cheerfully agreed to advise me in my independent study of Cambodian Sanskrit inscriptions (alongside fellow graduate student Sophearith Siyonn). Our sessions peering at photocopied rubbings in Sally's office were perhaps the most enjoyable moments of my graduate education.

Over the past five years I have benefitted from conversations with several established scholars of early Cambodian epigraphy and history. Michael Vickery very generously read over Chapter Four and led me to make significant improvements. Of course, Vickery's authority in matters related to epigraphy and history is felt throughout this dissertation. The Sanskritist Gerdi Gerschheimer introduced me to the elephant hunt inscription K. 1258, which inspired me to write Chapter Four. M. Gerschheimer also kindly sent me a transcription and a pointed critique of my attempted translation. Dominic Goodall subsequently sent me a complete translation, which I follow nearly verbatim; his additional critique was invaluable. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya likewise offered me a transcription, while Sally Goldman helped me improve my notes and analysis. Arlo Griffiths sent me his translation of some fascinating Sanskrit verses about the Mons (*Rāmanya*) in K. 1198. Michel Antelme has been a reassuring presence during my visits to Paris and a great resource for talking through various linguistic problems in the Old Khmer inscriptions. I wish to thank Julia Estève for sharing with me her recent thesis on early Cambodian religious syncretism. I wrote Chapter Six before becoming aware of her work on the deity called Kamrateṅ Jagat Chpār Ransi, and I became immediately self-conscious of the fact that her analysis was far more thorough, professional, and linguistically informed than my own. While I have made some changes to the chapter since then, I feel obliged to refer the reader to her work for the now standard account of this deity.

While conducting my research in Cambodia it was a pleasure to get to know and receive generous assistance from archaeologists such as Damian Evans of the Greater Angkor Project (GAP) and Christophe Pottier of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). I have had many

stimulating conversations with Mitch Hendrickson whose pathbreaking work on Angkorian roads and networks of exchange gave me the incentive to write about Preah Khan of Kampong Svay in Chapter Six. I am thankful to Bertrand Porte for permitting me to use photographic images of two inscriptions from the National Museum of Cambodia, which he kindly sent me.

Many others have fielded my questions, commented on my writing, or otherwise assisted me up to this point in my academic career, including Geoff Wade, T. S. Maxwell, Gérard Diffloth, Philip Jenner, Olivier Cunin, Erik Davis, Anne Hansen, Martin Polkinghorne, Sachchidanand Sahai, William Aspell, Philippe Peycam, Virginia Jing-yi Shih, Grégory Mikaelian, Chhany Sak-Humphry, Paul Kerry, Carl Young, Lee Butler, Michael Murdock, Michael Farmer, Jack and Jeannie Welch, James Tueller, Chad Emmett, the staff at the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), the librarians at the EFEO in Paris, APSARA which offered me a research pass to the Angkor Archaeological Complex, and the staff of Angkor Conservation.

None of this would have been possible without funding from multiple sources. I thank the Fulbright-Hays Program for enabling me to do research in Paris and Siem Reap, CKS in Siem Reap for a generous grant and access to the center's climate-controlled library, ACLS and the Henry Luce Foundation for support during this last year of writing, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the FLAS Program, and the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies.

I am grateful to my family and friends who have helped me reach this point while maintaining (most of) my sanity. My parents, Winfield and Jan Lowman, listened sympathetically when I was at wit's end and encouraged me to soldier on. Surprisingly to some but not to anyone who knows them, they have read and helped revise multiple drafts of this dissertation. My sister Nadia Smith called to follow up on my writing goals and to remind me that perfect is the enemy of good. My brother Andrew Lowman and my friend Emmanuel Laumonier helped break up the monotony of research in Cambodia by letting us take them temple-hunting around Siem Reap Province. The extended Tueller and Pritchett clans and the Loughran family have been a consistent support. We have received fellowship and the occasional free meal from our fellow Saints in the Oakland 1st Ward, the Siem Reap Branch, and the Berkeley 1st Ward.

My dear wife and friend Anne has shared in the adventures and borne all the burdens of this experience. She has fed me, clothed me, and reminded me to brush my teeth these last eight years. She has helped me explore nearly every single one of my ideas. She has refined my arguments, corrected my grammar and footnotes, and motivated me to meet my deadlines. She has worked to pay the bills and has done so ungrudgingly. I owe her a debt of gratitude that will take me an eternity, if I am so fortunate, to repay.

I direct my final thanks to Him who has always reached out to me with comfort and grace.

for Anne

1: Introduction

In the 8th and 9th centuries two significant transformations occurred in the political history of the Khmers. The first was the establishment of a series of royal capitals north of the Tonle Sap Lake in present-day Cambodia at Hariharalaya (Roluos), Mahendraparvata (Kulen) and eventually at Yaśodharapura which was named after its first king Yaśovarman I; this last city is now known as *nagara* (Sanskrit for "royal city"), or *aṅgar* (Angkor) in modern Khmer. The kings of Yaśodharapura or Angkor developed an urban complex unprecedented in Southeast Asia, featuring numerous hydraulic works and vast religious monuments. They also created a novel centralized system of governance, appointing royal functionaries to provinces throughout the region from the Mekong Delta to the Mun River Basin of present-day Northeast Thailand. Yaśodharapura remained the capital of this kingdom with only one known exception until the 15th century. This period of remarkable political power and stability has been called the Angkor or Angkorian period (9th-15th centuries) after the modern Khmer name of the city.

The second political innovation of this period has received comparatively little attention: the advent of an idea that the polity was not explicitly defined by its royal center but by its territory and people. In the 7th century before the rise of Angkor we read only of cities (*pura*)—Bhavapura, Īśānapura, and Purandarapura—which served as charismatic centers to ill-defined kingdoms and their outlying tributaries. In contrast, the polity in the Angkorian period (9th-15th centuries) was not called after its capital city, Yaśodharapura, but had a distinct designation: Kambujadeśa, "the land of the descendants of Kambu." While Yaśodharapura referred to a political place or royal city (*pura*), Kambujadeśa (i.e., Cambodia) represented a territory or space (*deśa*) inhabited by a certain human collectivity, the Kambuja or the descendants of Kambu. Members of the polity of Kambujadeśa/Cambodia were not only perceived to be descendants of this primordial ancestor Kambu, but they were also by implication born in or native to (*ja*) a particular political space. Thus, early Cambodia was more than an extension of a capital or of a king's personality; it was conceived, perhaps uniquely among polities in early Southeast Asia, to be an extensive "territorial community of nativity."[1]

Some will question whether this kind of political identity was as unprecedented as the polity's new name suggests. After all, we cannot assume that a notion of territorial identity was absent before the rise of Kambujadeśa/Cambodia any more than we can propose that the capital of Yaśodharapura in the Angkorian period lacked the cultural power of its pre-Angkorian antecedents. Nonetheless, the extant inscriptions of early Cambodia allow us to observe considerable changes in how the polity was experienced and imagined after the 9th century. These include a new awareness of politicized ethnic others such as Champa, and the

[1] Steven Grosby, *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

widespread adoption of political foundation myths that gave meaning to an idea of political community and that accounted for the country's sovereignty. These innovations suggest that the ideas of territory and common descent implicit in the name Kambujadeśa constituted an entirely new political worldview.

In this dissertation, I will argue that Angkorian Cambodia was understood by its political elite to be a community of territorial integrity, common descent, and shared history. In the process I will critique a model of early Southeast Asian political culture that presents the polity as essentially universalistic, precluding the role of borders, ethnicity, and collective memory in the early political imagination. I contend that Cambodia in the Angkorian period fails to fit the model.

The Cosmological Model

When scholars first began deciphering the inscriptions and translating the court literature of pre-19th century Southeast Asian kingdoms, they observed that the kings were regularly compared to gods and their kingdoms to the cosmos or the heavens. Because these cosmological representations of royal power were the most consistent and noticeable feature of political culture in the early art and architecture of the region, they have rightly been viewed as essential to understanding how early polities were imagined and how they operated. Unfortunately, the prevailing model of the early Southeast Asian polity also tends to suggest that transcendent kingship was the sole figurative conception of the extensive political community, and that political culture throughout the mainland and archipelago was more or less uniform and static before the rise of ideological nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The underlying assumption of the cosmological view is that both ruler and ruled experienced the polity as a transcendent, unbounded ritual space. The cosmological underpinnings of the early Southeast Asian polity became a key point of academic discussion about the region after the publication of the German anthopologist Robert Heine-Geldern's 1942 article "Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia." In this article Heine-Geldern established the cosmological model as a way of understanding the very recent political culture supplanted by the colonial order.[2] Heine-Geldern argued that at the heart of Southeast Asia politics was a belief that the state was a microcosm of the universe and that the royal capital was a further microcosm of the state; "the capital stood for the whole country" and the country for the cosmos.[3] Both the capital and the state were believed to embody the

[2] Robert Heine-Geldern, "Conceptions of the State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (Nov. 1942): 15-30; for an earlier version of his argument, see Heine-Geldern, "Weltbild und Bauform in Südostasien," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Asiens* IV (1930): 28-78.

[3] Heine-Geldern, "Conceptions of the State," 17.

cosmological model of the *maṇḍala*, a geometric diagram of concentric circles with a "magical center." At the center of the *maṇḍala*—the capital and the state—there was often a tower or temple-mountain evoking Mount Meru, 9th century Cambodia's "Central Mountain" (*vnaṃ kantāl*), Phnom Bakheng, being one example.[4] For Stanley Tambiah, the *maṇḍala* consisted of minor encircling *maṇḍala* imitating the center and positioned neatly around it, the more distant satellites falling lower on the hierarchy of importance and becoming "more or less independent 'tributary' polities."[5] This "galactic polity," in Tambiah's terminology, was found in 14th century Sukhothai with its surrounding tributary cities or *muang*. It was also prevalent in island Southeast Asia (Java, Sumatra, and the Malay peninsula) where a basic five-unit system—four units surrounding a central unit—characterized conceptions of political territory (as well as the number and hierarchy of a king's counselors).[6] According to Clifford Geertz, the political space of Java's Majapahit detailed in the 14th century Javanese vernacular poem *Desawarnana* can be understood to represent a vast *maṇḍala* incorporating over one hundred tributaries (rather than territories) in a sprawling orbit throughout Southeast Asia, including nearby islands like Bali and Lombok but also more distant polities like Ambon and the Minangkabau (*manangkabwa*) and the kingdom's distant "friends"—Siam, Cambodia, Champa, and "Vietnam" (*yawana*).[7] Beyond these tributary "maps," the Southeast Asian polity's cosmological space was most commonly perceived as a formal pantheon of gods surrounding a capital, such as the Mon pantheon of the 32 *myos* and the cult of 37 *nats* in Burma.[8] It was primarily through these orbiting shrines that the king's subjects witnessed the cosmic rituals enacted by and for the royal center and experienced a sense of belonging to an ordered political universe.

The integrity of the cosmological polity was sustained by a widespread belief in the supernatural benefits of a ritual hierarchy. In Clifford Geertz's study of the 19th century Balinese polity or *negara*, he proposed that the purpose of the state was to accommodate as many subjects as possible into a vertical structure of reverence for the god-like king by representing that structure in the form of tiered temple-mountains, in the elaborately staged royal progress, and in a formal system of offices or dignities—a culture of symbols less inspired

[4] Ibid., 17-18.

[5] Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 112.

[6] Ibid., 103-104.

[7] Clifford Geertz, "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 130-132; Stuart Robson, *Desawarnana (Nagarakrtagama) by Mpu Prapanca* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995), 33-34.

[8] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 109-110.

by the functional needs of the state than by a quest for symmetry and ritual perfection.[9] Control over people and resources, on the other hand, was left to local, overlapping institutions such as irrigation committees and village councils.[10] Service and distribution in such a polity were accomplished within the context of personal dyadic relationships between patrons and clients.[11] According to Geertz, the state was a collective celebration of a royal ideal with all its aesthetic trappings but not much else.

While expending much of its energy towards meeting ritual expectations, the cosmological polity tended towards atrophy and territorial indifference. Tambiah believes that the capitals of galactic polities or *maṇḍala* "were not so much centers with defined surrounding circumferences as areas of diminishing or increasing control analogous to a field of radiation of light or of heat from a source,"[12] implying that such ritual centers could be easily snuffed out when new centers from the former periphery sought to take their place. O. W. Wolters describes the fluid *maṇḍala* arrangement in the region in similar fashion as "a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security."[13] The image of multiple waxing and waning centers has come to define the early Southeast Asian polity. Ritually centered and practically dispersed, kingdoms such as these would have made it very difficult for any large-scale political communities, let alone territorially-delimited communities, to form and endure.

Several reasons have been given for why the early polity operated so inefficiently. For James Scott, a primary explanation lies in simple geography. In political situations like that of early Burma, the *maṇḍala* was typically centered in the lowlands while people in the inaccessible hills were able to sustain a pattern of half-hearted accommodation and resistance to the center. Moreover, during the seasonal monsoons each year impassable roads made it practically impossible for the center to enforce its more distant claims.[14] Seasonality and the problem of terrain before the days of the modern highway and airport guaranteed that the sovereignty of the center was in perennial flux and that alternative political and ethnic

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[9] Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 121-136.

[10] On these irrigation organizations or *subak* in pre-colonial Bali, see ibid., 68-85.

[11] James Scott, "Patron-client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (March 1972): 92-96.

[12] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 123.

[13] O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), 28.

[14] James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 61.

identities could flourish on the perimeter. The Burmese example appears to fit the assumed practical ramifications of the cosmological political model, providing a coherent explanation for why the model fits that particular context. Of course, not every supposed *maṇḍala* was Burma; in the lower Malay Peninsula and coastal Sumatra seasonality was a non-factor in politics (as there are no distinguishable seasons), and in Angkorian Cambodia there was no signficant difference in altitude between its key constituent parts. If we were to claim to observe *maṇḍalas* throughout early Southeast Asia, we would not be able to point to one set of geographical constraints as a reason for this uniformity.

In contrast, O.W. Wolters argued that the *maṇḍala* was a manifestation of certain underlying cultural, rather than geographical, features common throughout Southeast Asia that gave rise to the polity's perrenial instability and to the region's lack of enduring political identities. He believed that these features were based on a propensity in both the pre-historic and historic periods towards a system of cognatic or bilateral kinship in which inheritance rights passed through both male and female lines. This flexible system "downgraded" the importance of lineage in determining who could wield political power.[15] Thus, leaders were forced to rely on personal charisma for their status claims. These "men of prowess," being concerned with their image in the present over historical or genealogical legitimacy, were especially inclined to take on "Hindu" and other foreign cultural forms (such as the cosmological model of the *maṇḍala*) to create a "heightened perception of [their own] superior prowess."[16] Because these charismatic men wielded their power through personal relationships rather than through impersonal bureaucracies, their polities were defined less by territory than by a circle of loyal underlings, all of whom had their own smaller circles of power. This characteristically Southeast Asian situation, in Wolters' view, neatly accommodated the Sanskritic notion of the *maṇḍala*, reflecting a Southeast Asian habit of "localizing" foreign materials and giving them new significance.

While there may have been structural reasons for the cosmological model's success in early Southeast Asia, Wolters likely overstated the case for its distinctly Southeast Asian character. Sheldon Pollock has stressed that the cultural features observed by Wolters—charismatic kingship, political universality, and ritual obsession—were all found in early South Asia. This trans-regional consistency cannot be explained in terms of similar indigenous kinship practices (those of the Indian subcontinent were very different) or in reference to shared pre-historic norms like ancestor veneration or the fertility cult. Rather, the political

[15] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 18.

[16] Ibid., 22.

culture common to these places, in South and Southeast Asia (in Pollock's words, "southern Asia"), was the result of a concrete historical process of cultural exchange—Sanskritization.[17]

The successful dissemination of Sanskrit political culture and the cosmological model in southern Asia after the 5th century can be largely attributed to the Sanskrit language's unique capacity for communicating the extraordinary, that fundamental attribute of kingship, in a way that was generally appealing and infinitely transferable. The literary language went out as a ready-made package of terminology, symbolism, mythic formula, and verbal sophistry that was by its own definition transcendent or "perfected" (*saṃskṛta*). The origins of the political culture itself lay perhaps in the political theology of Achaemenid Persia.[18] That culture was eventually monopolized by the language of liturgy and formalized as the language of kings.[19] Sanskrit political expression, characterized by the artful manipulation of correct grammar and literary device and put to use in panegyric poetry that compared kings to gods, reached its apogee in Gupta India, whence it rapidly and without coercion spread across the subcontinent and, by the 6th century, into Southeast Asia and Cambodia. Paradoxically, once adopted, Sanskrit was never considered a foreign mode of expression distinct from the local vernacular. Sanskrit's position was always above the vernacular but not outside it. Its conventional effect was to raise the level of discourse above such inside-outside distinctions, covering, as it were, the tracks of its own foreign origins.

Sheldon Pollock has called this trans-local feature of Sanskrit culture "cosmopolitan" to suggest, in one sense, how Sanskritization resembled more recent globalizing ("cosmo-") processes, and in another sense how this culture was concerned above all with raising the standards of political expressivity.[20] Pollock's most important insight has been to move beyond a paradigm that assumes Sanskrit culture and its receiving society to be in a state of philosophical conflict—that it is the historian's prerogative to tease out indigenous or pre-Indic statements from texts composed in Sanskrit's universalistic style.[21] Conventional Sanskrit, as Pollock rightly argues, eschews the very notion of a circumscribed indigenous identity because indigeneity contradicts the matchless, immeasurable quality that was believed to typify the power of kings.

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[17] Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 122-134.

[18] Ibid., 537.

[19] Pollock suggests that the first use of Sanskrit for political purposes likely occurred in northern India around the first century CE. Ibid., 72.

[20] Ibid., 12

[21] Pollock, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300-1300: Transculturation, Vernacularization, and the Question of Ideology," in *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*, ed. Jan Houben (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 234.

For Pollock this trans-local conception of political space was directly opposed to an ideal of difference characteristic of Western culture and the modern nation-state. Where Rome and its political emulators in the West sought self-definition against their Barbarian frontiers, a polity like Angkorian Cambodia supposedly found its identity in a superimposed, trans-local Hindu geography: the state temple was the mythic Mount Meru, the principal river became the Ganges (e.g., the Me-*kong*), and cities derived from Sanskrit epic came to dot a seemingly transplanted Indian universe.[22] Thus, attempting to compare the political imaginations of Angkorian Cambodian and Carolingian France would be an exercise in futility. The Franks looked to the Roman imperium of the past for their model while the Khmers, undoubtedly ignorant of Cambodia's real-world antecedents in India, sought to imitate the fictive world of the *Mahābhārata* and the divine world of Hindu mythology. The universalism expressed in early Southeast Asian political rhetoric was not due to cultural traits inherent to the region or to how politics functioned in Southeast Asia's unique geographical space. Rather, it was simply the only way people knew how to think about politics within the cultural framework available to them.

If the early Southeast Asian polity was chiefly imagined in terms of fictive universal space and cosmological diagrams, we might reasonably question to what extent boundedness was relevant to political representation. If limits were at least conceptually possible in polities like Angkorian Cambodia, these boundaries were, in the opinion of Thongchai Winichakul, at best "thick lines" or vague frontiers of multiple sovereignty which ultimately amounted to an unbounded sense of political space for those living on either side of those lines, in contrast to the obsessive sense of territorial sovereignty in the modern cartographical imagination.[23] In other words, boundedness did not guarantee sovereignty, and in Thongchai's view, it was only incidental to governance, to how authority was measured, and to how the polity was imagined.

Assessing the Model

Before presenting my critique of the cosmological model, I believe that it is important to recognize its measured impact on early Cambodian political culture. In the late 9th century King Yaśovarman I, founder of Cambodia's great royal city of Yaśodharapura (Angkor), erected his largest sandstone stela on an artificial island, now known as Lolei, at the center of his father's reservoir near the site of the previous capital to the southeast of Angkor. The Lolei inscription was composed in Sanskrit, the first side in a newly introduced northern Indian script which the inscription calls the "Cambodian script" (*kambujākṣara*), the opposite face

[22] Pollock, *Language of the Gods,* 259-280.

[23] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*: *A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 74-80.

reproducing the same text in the traditional local script (hence the inscription is called "digraphic").[24] Apart from outlining the rules governing the royal shrine established on the island, the purpose of the inscription was to publicly celebrate the king's unprecedented dominion, the new "Cambodian script" apparently signaling that Yaśovarman's kingdom was to transcend the divisions and petty loyalties of the past. Scholars have previously assumed that that the "Cambodian script" refers to the recognizably local script, no doubt assuming that the northern Indian pre-*nāgarī* script could not have possibly been construed to be "Cambodian" and must have therefore been considered "foreign."[25] However, this interpretation was based on the assumption that Cambodians consciously maintained an Indian/indigenous dichotomy in their political culture—an idea that Pollock's account of Sanskritization has roundly contradicted. The cosmological model makes better sense of this new "Cambodian script" adopted from northern India: it was a symbol which Yaśovarman I used to convey his elevated and expansive, rather than "Indian," vision of a subjected Cambodian space.

The Lolei inscription also informs us that Yaśovarman I, in this effort to symbolically unify his realm, constructed one hundred hermitages (*āśrama*) corresponding to many of the country's preexisting local shrines. A large number of these hermitages, each originally containing a digraphic stela similar to the one at Lolei, have been discovered throughout present-day Cambodia and in northeast Thailand and southern Laos. Thus a *maṇḍala*-like space similar to the ones described by Tambiah and others as circuits of sacred sites surrounding a preeminent center was replicated in 9th century Cambodia. Yaśovarman was bent on establishing the kind of ordered sacred space predicted by the cosmological model and echoing the cults of the Mon *myos* and the Burmese *nats*.[26] In 10th century Cambodia there was a similar cult of the "30 self-created gods (*svayambhū*)" encircling the capital at Angkor and conveying a

[24] See verse XCIII on side A of inscription K. 323, Auguste Barth and Abel Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites du Champa et du Cambodge* (*ISCC*) (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1885), 222.

[25] Barth calls the local script "Cambodian" and the new pre-*nāgarī* script "foreign." Ibid., p. 183. The scholar of Javanese epigraphy J.G. de Casparis may have recognized the true identity of the *kambujākṣara* or "Cambodian script" when he wrote of a "Cambodian Nāgarī" as distinct from the local "Khmer" script. See J.G. de Casparis, "Palaeography as an Auxiliary Discipline in Research on Early South East Asia," in *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*, ed. R. B. Smith and W. Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 394, note 43. The same article has a useful discussion of a pre-*nāgarī* script used in Javanese inscriptions a century earlier.

[26] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 110.

very real sense of sacred or cosmological political space, a symbolic universe, for the religious pilgrim.[27]

In seeking to excavate this political culture of universality for something more contextually subtle or locally informed, we should avoid the temptation to characterize the cosmological model as a "thin and flaking glaze" hiding a more authentically "Cambodian" conception of politics.[28] In the same way, however, we should be careful not to discount real claims to bounded territorial sovereignty in the Cambodian inscriptions as somehow nonessential to the early Cambodian imagination. The eulogy section of the Lolei inscription concludes with the boast that "the land protected by [the Cambodian king] was measured from the border with China to the sea (*cīnasandhipayodhibhyāṃ*)."[29] This claim, concluding a long list of hyperboles comparing Yaśovarman's qualities to those of various gods and heroes in Hindu mythology, would appear in the cosmological analysis to be little more than a hyperbolic figure of speech, closer to saying that the king's realm was "boundless" than to giving us a useful measure of the polity's extent. It was, after all, common practice in the Sanskrit rhetoric of the inscriptions to present the king's domain as an endless world stretching to the invisible horizons. Perhaps in reality, one might claim, Cambodia was nothing more than an amorphous idea—a name attached to a royal city and beyond that consisting of a loose collection of semi-autonomous political centers on the kingdom's indistinct perimeter. However, the boundaries specified in the Lolei inscription were not merely royal bombast. Cambodia's authority clearly extended to the Mekong Delta and the seacoast in the late 9th century, while at the same time Cambodia's presence to the north was felt in parts of the Mun River Valley (Northeast Thailand) only several days distant from the hinterland of the Red River Delta (northern Vietnam) still occupied by Tang China. If we have no evidence that Cambodia's "border with China" (*cīnasandhi*) was a true fortified frontier, we can nonetheless accept the possibility that this frontier to the northeast was felt and experienced in real ways that may have shaped and affirmed a distinctly Cambodian territorial identity.

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[27] See K. 806 in George Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (hereafter *IC*) *I* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1937), 101, verse CCLXX. On pilgrimage and pre-modern conceptions of space, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 21-36.

[28] The phrase "thin and flaking glaze" is J.C. Van Leur's characterization of "foreign cultural forms" in island Southeast Asia, which he believed to be superficial, masking a more fundamental indigenous reality. J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1967), 95. Van Leur was right to warn against assuming that such things as Javanese Islam can be understood in purely pan-Islamic terms. Nonetheless, his foreign-indigenous dichotomy anachronistically evokes certain 20th century anti-colonial sentiments; these were, of course, irrelevant to the processes of cultural interchange and conversion in pre-modern Southeast Asia.

[29] *cīnasandhipayodhibhyāṃ mitorrvī yena pālitā. . .* See verse LVI of K. 323, Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 219.

The image of a Cambodia stretching "from China to the sea" poses the following interpretative problem: Was the kingdom of Cambodia in the Angkorian period an elaborate metaphor for the imagined universal power of a supreme king, or was it an entity defined by specified limits and by the question of who did or did not belong? On the one hand, the polity idealized in royal rhetoric was conceptually boundless, as the supreme king could incorporate any number of minor kings into his expanding circle of collective awe; this situation of kingdoms within kingdoms was particularly prevalent on Cambodia's western frontier. On the other hand, the Cambodian polity explicitly did not include China and the polity of Champa to the east in its circle. Cambodia's extensive territory may have been unwieldy at its edges, but it was nonetheless believed to be a territory, a *bounded* space of governance. The "border with China" may not have been an immediate policy concern in the late 9th century; nonetheless, if territoriality had been conceptually irrelevant in pre-modern Cambodia, it would never have been so boldly expressed. Pollock asserts that comparative pre-modern border practices in southern Asia have yet to be thoroughly studied,[30] and he suggests that in this regard "the strong formulation of radical conceptual difference invariably drawn by theorists of nationalism may well be overdrawn."[31]

Expressions of territorial sovereignty in pre-modern South Asian polities influenced by Sanskrit culture have convinced Pollock that politics was not exclusively universalistic.[32] He locates these territorial ideas in the epigraphy and literature of polities that experienced a transition from Sanskrit's distinctive political consciousness to one informed by local literary vernaculars. At different times and in different political contexts after the 9th century, political space began to be equated with language usage, with local languages becoming "languages of place" (*deśabhāṣā*). This process was especially evident in South Asia where languages like Kannada incorporated Sanskrit's poetic forms and acquired its political function. Unlike Sanskrit, vernaculars regularly articulated political boundaries. Pollock cites the territorial self-representations of the Hoysaḷanāḍu (land of the Hoysaḷa dynasty) of Karnataka (10th-14th centuries) which by the 12th century had become more or less consistent from one reign to the next. The polity was largely coextensive with a region of Kannada culture and literature, and

[30] For a recent nuanced consideration of boundary practices in pre-colonial Cambodia and their survival in the territorial ideas of the modern state, see Ian Harris, "Rethinking Cambodian political discourse on territory: Genealogy of the Buddhist ritual boundary (*sīmā*)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41 (2010): 215-239.

[31] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 556.

[32] Ibid., 15-417. Pollock chooses to avoid the term "territory" when speaking of pre-modern political space, no doubt because it is often understood to mean the absolute unitary sovereignty of a modern state. I prefer territory as a convenient way of expressing the idea of a bounded space of authority. Whether sovereignty was uniformly "absolute" across an entire political space (which it rarely is in even the most institutionally advanced polity) is beside the point.

more importantly, it "was no longer cosmic or universal, but sharply de-fined and firmly em-placed."[33] Pollock is not entirely clear about how vernacular usage in itself promoted this political boundedness, and there is good reason to believe that vernacularization and territoriality were separate, even if at times mutually reinforcing, phenomena. Angkorian Cambodia never adopted Khmer as a literary vernacular, which would make Cambodia in Pollock's implicit view perhaps the purest manifestation of the universalistic Sanskrit polity in southern Asia. However, it is in Cambodia that we find, as early as the late 9th century and expressed in Sanskrit, a clear articulation of the polity's boundaries. Thus vernaculization, or at least the use of the vernacular for literary expression (though vernacular Old Khmer certainly had expressive potential even if it was not literary), was not a precondition for the expression of territorial sovereignty.

The most important revelation from Pollock's discussion of "vernacular polities" in South Asia after the 9th century is that territorial visions that depart from the ideal of universality could arise in many political contexts, and perhaps for various reasons, within the greater ecumenical space of Sanskrit culture. These exceptions underline the primary weakness of the cosmological model, which is that in its strictest interpretations it tends to present patterns of early Southeast Asian politics and political self-representation as more or less static. If the cosmological model appears equally applicable to polities as disparate as Angkorian Cambodia, maritime Śrīvijaya, and nineteenth century Bali, then it leaves little room for discussing obvious structural differences or changes over time. Indeed, integration or centralization is theoretically impossible in Wolters' *maṇḍalas* because they are by nature always disintegrated, regardless of a political center's expanding or contracting claims. Responding to Wolters, Jan Wisseman Christie has argued that early Javanese polities "were more cohesive than predicted by the *maṇḍala* and 'galactic polity models," and that these models erroneously assume that the region was burdened by "historical stasis."[34] Victor Lieberman's recent work on pre-19th century political integration in *Strange Parallels* proposes a history of mainland Southeast Asia that featured periods of integration from 800 until the rise of 19th century European imperialism. For Lieberman, the political world envisioned by Tambiah and Wolters is too static to accommodate these processes of integration, which were nearly simultaneous throughout mainland Southeast Asia and greater Eurasia.[35] He suggests that political fortunes and cultural convergence were grounded in profound structural

[33] Ibid., 419.

[34] Jan Wisseman Christie, "Negara, Mandala and Despotic State: Images of Early Java," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A.C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 85.

[35] See Victor Lieberman's discussion of "autonomous" historiography in *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830, Vol. 1, Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9-15.

changes related to such things as technology, climate, and trade. Whatever pre-historic norms or Indic models prevailed throughout the region, there was bound to be significant political variation over time—change that the cosmological model downplays or implicitly denies.

Alongside its problematic assumption of political stasis, the cosmopolitan model seems at times to fall back on an easy East-West cultural dichotomy. Geertz's brilliant "theatre state" model proposes that European states used pomp to legitimize the accumulatation of power while the Balinese (and by extension, South and Southeast Asian) polity, the *negara*, was all pomp but no power.[36] Notwithstanding its originality, this thesis adheres closely to a Weberian tradition of positing a fundamental "ontological difference in the mentalities" of Europe and Asia.[37] While this kind of contrast demonstrates a healthy suspicion of incongruous "Western" categories that may not have universal applicability, it can also lead to unwarranted generalizations about our objects of analysis—such as that Southeast Asian kings who presided over elaborate state ceremonies could not wield effective political power, or that a polity with a vague frontier of overlapping sovereignty in one direction could not have a contested border and a sense of territorial prerogative in another. A tendency for historians to oversimplify more remote periods of history should not force us to dismiss the cosmocratic ideal altogether, but we should be sensitive nonetheless to the possibility that alternative political models may be required to more fully explain seemingly anomalous cultural artifacts of the early Cambodian imagination.

The Nation

Two notable features of the early Cambodian imagination, territorial self-consciousness and an idea of common descent or ethnicity, betray the insufficiency of the cosmological model. Of course, such terms as "territory" and "ethnicity" are problematic, not least because they evoke two even more controversial terms, "nation" and "nationalism." These terms are diligently avoided in the study of the early Southeast Asian polity because they are widely interpreted to be synomymous with modernity. Hence the modern nation-state of the post-colonial era has become in many ways the measure of what early Southeast Asian polities were supposedly not. This assumption has the potential to both illuminate our object of inquiry, Angkorian Cambodia, and also to obscure it; to repeat Pollock's words of caution, "the strong formulation of radical conceptual difference" between the nation and its pre-modern

[36] Clifford Geertz, *Negara*, 13.

[37] Christie, 86. To a certain extent, the East-West contrast may respond to a perceived need to preserve the disciplinary "authenticity" and autonomy of Southeast Asian studies. See Craig Reynolds. "A New Look at Old Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 2 (May 1995): 437-440.

antecedents "may well be overdrawn."[38] Certainly an abstraction like the nation has its greatest relevance for 20th century Southeast Asian history when global nationalism was embraced by colonized elites, the nation in that context being the embodiment of an adopted ideological movement. However, a case can also be made that the nation is an interpretative term which, if appropriately defined, may have broader applicability. At the very least a consideration of the meanings attributed to the nation may help us pare down some excessive claims about the nation's modernity and identify a few of its more perennial features.

It is important from the outset to draw a clear distinction between the nation as an element of culture and nationalism as an ideological construct. In its ideological sense nationalism can be understood to be a more or less standardized system of ideas that, however one chooses to trace its development historically over the long term, took root in late 18th and early 19th century Europe (i.e., revolutionary to post-Napoleonic France), whence it spread eventually throughout the globe. It is therefore a modern doctrine, and not merely an analytic category, that envisions a world entirely made up of nations in which all legitimate political power naturally resides and the sovereignty of which guarantees people's freedom.[39] I concur that no such formal ideology can be said to have existed in pre-19th century Southeast Asia and that the technological and cultural milieu of the post-colonial era commonly termed "modernity" was the dominant factor in the rise of that ideology and consequently of the current international order. According to the standard modernist interpretation, a nation is simply a political-territorial realization of this nationalist ideological vision.

Ernest Gellner, a persuasive proponent of the modernity of nations, believed that the nation could best be defined by understanding the material and institutional preconditions of nationalist ideology.[40] For Gellner the nation as an objective entity can only exist in the context of the industrialized state, the power of which is believed to depend on citizen masses being educated and ideologically uniform. A national culture is a carefully crafted product of institutions such as the state media, the public school system, and the modern military. Ideological components of the nation such as territory and common ethnicity are novel phenomena linked to the propaganda state's unprecedented capacity (due in large part to improved modes of transportation and communication) to shape ideas of polity-wide solidarity and to efficiently harness popular support. Hence, the nation is in the words of John Smail a constructed "elite-mass" relationship unique to the industrialized world,[41] while the

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[38] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 556.

[39] On nationalism as an ideological movement, see Anthony Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 15-16.

[40] See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[41] John R. W. Smail, "On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia," in *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths*, ed. Laurie Sears (Madison: University of Wisconsin SEAS, 1993), 63.

world before the nation was in Gellner's terminology "agro-literate," divided between thin literate elite classes and non-politicized (and hence pre-nationalized) masses of illiterate peasants.[42] Though this seems to be a more appropriate definition of populism than of nationalism, it provides a stimulating material explanation for why nationalism, the ideology of the nation, was popularized in Europe when it was. Because for Gellner the nation is a state project solely oriented towards the accumulation of power by a cynical few, it should be the object of our most profound skepticism, particularly when nations invent stereotyped members and outsiders and project themselves anachronistically into a fabricated past.

Not all modernists are comfortable with Gellner's view of the nation as chiefly an instrument of state power, as it neglects the nation's cultural roots and hence its popular appeal. Like Gellner, Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities* links the nation to a cluster of cultural features specific to the material conditions of the modern era.[43] However, for Anderson the culture of the nation is not merely the cynical ideology of the modern state; it is in fact a kind of social relation like kinship or religion that needs to be taken seriously as such. Like religion, the nation is an extensive "imagined community" of anonymous membership that has the ability to give meaning to life in the face of death's uncertainties. Unlike religion, the nation is imagined as inherently limited and specifically defined against other nations. In Anderson's view, the nation supplanted religion as the chief object of popular allegiance when secularism took hold in Europe in the 19th century. But nationalism could not effectively spread until the industrial age had ushered in the unwieldy mobilizing force of "print-capitalism," which enabled Enlightenment thinkers to explore and marginalized elites to espouse the idea of a nation's sovereignty or freedom, rejecting the divine pretense of empire. These free-thinking nationalists transformed vernaculars into languages of identity and allegiance in post-Absolutist Europe, composing them in the radically new chronologically-linear media of the novel and the newspaper and supplanting circular conceptions of time more appropriate to traditional scripture and epic, the media of the Absolutist or universalist state. The integrated self-consciousness of vernacular communities allied to fledgling nation-states replaced a cultural world in which social ties beyond family and village (and beyond the universalistic perspective of the religious community) "were once imagined particularistically—as indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship."[44]

Anderson's theory of the nation helpfully shifts the emphasis away from strict ideology, which merely explains the statist obsession with the nation in the 20th century, and

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[42] Ernest Gellner, 9-11.

[43] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

[44] Ibid., 6.

towards certain elements of culture that characterize a certain community's identity. The nation as an imagined community is directly related to other forms of human belonging, though unique in its scope and in Anderson's analysis unprecedented in its explicitly political shape. Of course, Anderson's notion of pre-modern communities being either radically local (the family and the village) or loosely universalistic (religion) invites controversy. Pre-modern polities in his view, unlike their modern state counterparts, were not effective vessels of community identity, though the political history of classical Athens, among many other examples, would seem to contradict this perspective.[45] In fairness, Anderson's subject is the rise of modular nationalism which can best be understood against the backdrop of European vernacularization, print-capitalism, and anti-colonialism. His juxtaposition of the globally-observed political imagination shaped by these historical variables against the loosely politicized communities of pre-modernity was never intended as a novel and fully-formed theory of pre-modern politics. Moreover, his notion of "indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship" is not wholly an evasion of what pre-modern historians have previously claimed; this notion is, after all, largely consistent with early Southeast Asia's supposed cosmological framework outlined above.

For all its explanatory virtues, Anderson's treatment of the nation as an antithesis of the cosmological model of pre-modernity is historically reductive and theoretically insufficient. Prasenjit Duara asserts that the "modern/premodern polarity" in Anderson's thesis is unjustified not because institutions and technologies were not radically different by the 19th and 20th centuries, but because national consciousness did not, as Anderson and Gellner assume, constitute a major "epistemological break with past forms of consciousness."[46] Anderson appears to deny that self-aware communities could be co-extensive with pre-modern polities in any real sense. In contrast, Duara observes that in 12th century Song-Dynasty China the ideal of universal empire was replaced by "a circumscribed notion of the Han community… in which the [Jin] barbarians had no place." In other words, a certain portion of the literati conceived China to be a politicized community of specified belonging.[47] As we have seen, Sheldon Pollock's nuanced treatment of pre-modern political universalism suggests that many of the advances which Anderson links with the modern nation, such as the

[45] Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22-30; Edward E. Cohen, *The Athenian Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[46] Prasenjit Duara, "Bifurcating Linear History: Nation and Histories in China and India," *Positions* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 782.

[47] Ibid., 786.

proliferation of vernacular literatures and the imagining of circumscribed political spaces, were equally visible in the pre-national polities of medieval South Asia.[48]

Pollock's critique of the modernist theory of the nation goes a step further by positioning the origins of European national consciousness in the pre-modern period. For Pollock the beginnings of national identity lie in the complex of "ethnic fictions" which circulated in the literary traditons of medieval Europe, from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* to the *Grandes chroniques de France*.[49] These fictions recounted the origins of autonomous peoples who assumed biological descent from certain mythical forebears (like Aeneas who left Troy to found the city of Rome). Pollock calls this imagined blood inheritance "ethnicity," which he defines as "the political salience of kin group sentiment." While vernaculars began to replace Latin as the preferred literary media for ethnic stories in the royal courts of Europe (particularly after the 11th century), these vernacular languages became identified with certain self-identified ethnic peoples (French, German, Castilian, etc.), forming politicized linguistic communities of ethnic orientation centuries before the 15th century advent of print or the 19th century rise of ideological nationalism. Hence, much of the culture and content of Anderson's national communities had very early roots in medieval European politics, if not earlier. In contrast, Pollock believes that "narratives of ethnicity and histories of ethnic origins of the sort that obsessed late-medieval Europe did not exist in any form in South Asia before the modern period."[50] South Asian polities may have experienced vernaculization before the modern era, but these descendents of the universalistic Sanskrit polity, which were for whatever reason less inclined to use literature to "mobilize" peoples than to simply make local languages more noble and literary,[51] did not form into politicized ethnic communities until the coming of ideological nationalism. Pollock argues, in effect, that one of the core cultural features which allows us to define the nation as a social relation as Anderson does (i.e., in terms of ethnic consciousness) has deep origins in the European experience but was in contrast entirely alien to the Sanskritized world. Pollock therefore intimates a close connection between the early ethnic community in Europe and the later nation. The theorist of ethnicity Anthony Smith has likewise proposed the near equivalence and historical relationship between the two cultural forms. Smith would agree that the symbolic and cultural essentials of modern nationalism originated in Europe's antecedent ethnic communities. Like Pollock, Smith is not clear about what role, if any, ethnicity played in other areas of the world before the era of modular nationalism.

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[48] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 539-565.

[49] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 473.

[50] Ibid., 476.

[51] Ibid., 484.

Several Southeast Asian historians would no doubt take issue with Pollock's distinction between an ethnic Europe and a pre-ethnic Asia before the 19th century. Victor Lieberman reasons that in the late pre-modern polities of mainland Southeast Asia "a discourse of cultural distinction helped to structure political thought and action."[52] He understands this discourse to be partly ethnic in character. Departing from Pollock's definition of ethnicity as a politicized sentiment of kinship or common descent, Lieberman defines the ethnic group more broadly as "a collectivity within a larger society that claims a common name and history and that elevates one or more symbolic elements as the epitome of that common identity and as a boundary against outsiders."[53] Lieberman partly attributes the success of certain dynasties in pre-19th century mainland Southeast Asia to the deliberate politicization of ethnic difference. For example, Burmans held up their language and Theravada Buddhist religion as signs distinguishing them from their rivals, the ethnic Shans. Politicized ethnicity in post-16th century Burma gave a ready structure to the future (Burmese) nation just as it did to early modern England and France.

Leondard Andaya's recent study of Malayu ethnic identity further complicates Pollock's East-West dichotomy. Malayu identity was the focus of various political claims on the island of Sumatra and on the Malay Peninsula before the 19th century. Though in Andaya's view this identity was fluid and constantly manipulated for political advantage, Andaya demonstrates that extensive regional communities, however ambiguous they were in practice, displayed certain enduring traits which merit the specific use of the term "ethnicity." Andaya defines ethnicity as a way of forming a distinct community by creating visible cultural boundaries, by emphasizing "real and fictive kinship ties," and by preserving shared myths.[54] Fictive extended "families" or perceived ethnic groups formed in Malayu through the marital and symbolic alliances of various clans or kin groups. While Andaya's definition of ethnicity as a perception of extended kinship agrees with that of Sheldon Pollock, his account of Malayu ethnicity counters Pollock's suggestion that ethnicity so defined was an exclusively European phenomenon. Moreover, as Malayu was part of the once Sanskritized world (it only converted to Islam after the 14th century), there are no grounds to Pollock's implicit claim that Sanskritized polities were inherently opposed to the politics of ethnicity. Even if such were the case for pre-colonial South Asian history, the relevance of Pollock's definition of ethnicity to early Southeast Asian history is nonetheless beyond question.

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[52] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 41

[53] Ibid., 37. We may ask whether Lieberman's definition of ethnicity is sufficient to distinguish the phenomenon from religion; after all, the Buddhist community in Angkorian Cambodia, which no one would reasonably define as an ethnic group, had a common name and history and tried to distinguish itself from outsiders.

[54] Leonard Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 6.

The existence of early Southeast Asian ethnic communities and polities not only complicates Pollock's theory of the uniquely European origin of the cultural ideas constitutive of the national form, but it also contradicts the logic at the core of the cosmological model. If the cosmological polity was the conceptual reverse of the nation—unbounded, obsessed with ritual transcendence rather than with the primordial bonds of extended kinship, burdened with petty local loyalties to the detriment of any potential horizontal community—then it is difficult to understand how politicized ethnicity could have simply co-existed with the political norms—cultural universalism and political heterarchy—of the *maṇḍala* situation. By staying close to Wolters' vision of the *maṇḍala* as an indigenously Southeast Asian political situation characterized by charismatic leadership, bilateral kinship relations, and decentralized power, Andaya claims to observe an extraordinary fluidity and malleability of ethnic identity in early island Southeast Asia.[55] However, fluidity and human agency are perennial features of ethnic consciousness even in our modern world of censuses and birth certificates; these do not diminish the power of ethnic ideas to define and integrate communities. The very fact that ethnicity was a factor in early Southeast Asian politics at all suggests that Wolters' view of the *maṇḍala* as essentially disintegrated is overstated.

While Victor Lieberman's history of political and ethnic integration in early mainland Southeast Asia is in many ways a direct challenge to the static cosmological model, he takes pains to differentiate what he calls "politicized ethnicity," which he believes operated in an as yet cosmological world, from modern nationalism.[56] For Lieberman the politicized ethnic community still looked to the cosmos, and not to its people, as the basis for its sovereignty; society was hierarchic rather than democratic; power was "universal rather than culture-specific"; and the polity's capacity to mobilize people was limited.[57] In other words, the nation in Lieberman's definition is inextricably linked to 19th century ideological nationalism in an age of populist movements, Republicanism, and "an interstate system composed of similar units," i.e., what Anderson terms "official nationalism."[58] Lieberman's strict formulation of nationalism seems somewhat paradoxical given that he describes a similar, anticipatory phenomenon in pre-modern Southeast Asian politics. He claims that in 18th century Burma kings were not simply cultural universalists—that they sought "to standardize key cultural definitions and symbols" (spelling, orthography, normative histories, etc.).[59] Popular mobilization, though unrelated to a secular populist ideology like civic Republicanism or

[55] Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*, 11-13.

[56] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 42.

[57] Ibid., 41-42.

[58] Ibid., *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830, Volume 2: Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 488.

[59] Ibid., *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 191.

Marxism, was achieved through growing monastic networks linking the society both horizontally and vertically.[60] Lieberman's assertion that pre-modern polities were essentially hierarchic and modern nations popular is debatable given the modern Thai nation's doctrine of sovereignty abiding in the person of the king. Ultimately, Lieberman settles for a clean rupture between the pre-modern ethnic polity and the modern nation to preempt the charge of essentialism and to avoid the kind of "erosion of precision" which he sees in "Marxist attempts to lump together medieval European and 20th-century Latin American societies as 'feudal.'"[61] Applying the term "nation" to 18th century Burma or Siam would risk conflating, in Lieberman's view, a secular and populist ideology originating in the French Revolution with a wholly religious and class-divided form of consciousness.

Though I sympathize with Lieberman's effort to prevent the semantic baggage of modern European and post-colonial ideological movements from weighing down his comparative study of pre-modern Europe and Asia, I believe that he and others tend to overemphasize such phenomena as the secular state and the ideally classless society, which are characteristic of a certain nationalist ideology but are not necessarily germane to every national context. I also remain uncomfortable with terms like "politicized ethnicity," which Lieberman himself concedes is an "awkward" interpretive substitute for the nation.[62] Mary Elizabeth Berry believes that Lieberman's project is more or less a globally-comparative history of the formation of nations before 1800, and she suggests that the use of "nation" in that context is not anachronistic.[63] Thus Berry applies "nation" to pre-Meiji Japan, where she perceives the right combination of territorial definition, state governance, and cultural community (animated by the proliferation of wood-block printing) to justify use of the term.[64] Her definition of the nation is, as Lieberman notes, very minimalist;[65] it is in fact simlar to Pollock's notion of the pre-national vernacular polity of South Asia, characterized by a territorial identity and a local literary culture though lacking the quality of fictive kinship or nativity. While I find Berry's definition insufficient in this regard, I agree with her main contention, which is that "labels [like 'nation'] are heuristic devices... that help organize

[60] Ibid., 190.

[61] Ibid., *Strange Parallels, Vol. 2*, 488.

[62] Ibid., *Strange Parallels, Vol. 1*, 42.

[63] Mary Elizabeth Berry, "Was Early Modern Japan Culturally Integrated?" *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1997): 558-559.

[64] Ibid.,, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 211-212.

[65] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. 2*, 488.

inquiry rather than hallowing absolutes. By making 'nation' a synonym for the modern order, we forfeit its descriptive and comparative utility."[66]

By raising the question of the nation's value as a tool for interpreting modern and pre-modern political contexts, Berry builds on a recent scholarly trend, popularized by Anderson, of defining the nation as a kind of cultural community and not only as a modern state construct. Unlike Anderson, Berry and others see examples of this social relation, i.e., the political community of nativity that is imagined as sovereign and limited, variously in Hasmonean Judea, pre-Meiji Japan, and late-medieval France and England.[67] Anthony Smith suggests that the few nations that existed in pre-modern times looked different from those today because they made use of different cultural resources, such as royal authority over a circumscribed religious community or the idea of the covenant people, to arrive at a concept of separate community—whereas modern nations, adapting the civic Republicanism of revolutionary France, stress the importance of secularism and equality in guaranteeing the community's sovereignty.[68] Smith notes, moreover, that modern nations have become an amalgam of hierarchical, covenantal, and Republican values.[69] Royal and religious authority and the idea of divine election were central to English and Japanese national identity in the early 20th century, and one need only look to the populist Tea Party movement to see how notions of chosen land and chosen people continue to animate national consciousness in the United States.

Ultimately, I agree with Smith that the nation in its most consistent sense has little to do with secularism or class *per se*, though these issues were clearly elevated by political expediency with the advent of ideological nationalism in the 19th century. Rather, the nation is an interpretative term signifying, in Steven Grosby's words, "a territorial community of nativity."[70] I would add to this definition Anderson's important insight: a national community is large enough that its members, who never actually meet each other in person, must "imagine" it into being. Therefore, I define the nation as an extensive, named territorial

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[66] Berry, *Japan in Print*, 212.

[67] For Hasmonean Judea, see Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 66 and 82-83; for pre-Meiji Japan, see Berry, *Japan in Print*; for late-medieval France, see Collette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, tr. Susan Ross Huston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); for medieval and early modern England, see Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[68] Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 76-80.

[69] Ibid., 179-181.

[70] Grosby, *Nationalism*, 7.

community whose anonymous members assume common descent.[71] Fellowship in a nation is based on the principle of shared nativity within a given political space. Just as the ideological or religious character (Republican, Islamic, etc.) of any particular nation, modern or otherwise, is complex, so too are the conditions that bring the nation into being. As Anthony Smith has argued, the extent to which members of a nation assume common descent depends on the presence of community-wide symbols, on shared myths that narrate the political community's origins, and on proximity to political outsiders who could be perceived as a threat to the nation's integrity and sovereignty.[72]

Because symbols and myths appear historically, and because they are susceptible to change over time, the character of a nation is always in flux. Moreover, in most periods of history and in many political situations (city-states, empires, tribal confederations, etc.) nations simply do not exist.[73] National consciousness may be a perennial phenomenon in human history, but nations are not the eternal givens that their members imagine them to be. If the modern Cambodian nation happens to share its name with the polity that existed in the Angkorian period, that fact alone is not sufficient grounds to claim that the subjects of early Cambodia thought of their polity in national ways. A historical polity's national culture cannot be assumed; it must be assessed through a rigorous study of the polity's past subjectivities.

Sources

Accordingly, we should resist the temptation to base any recontruction of Angkorian-period perspectives anachronistically on modern Cambodian sources. Perhaps fortunately, there is an unbridgeable divide between the Angkorian inscriptions and Cambodia's 19th century chronicular traditions, which are largely fictional for periods prior to the 16th century.[74] This points to a significant cultural rupture that seems to have accompanied the post-Angkorian transition (16th-19th centuries). There is a curious advantage to this narrative gap, as it precludes a complicated separation of hard Angkorian history from later extrapolation, teleology, and myth-making. Unlike Pagan Burma, the historical narratives of

[71] This definition is a reworking of definitions proposed by Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 19; Grosby, *Nationalism*, 7; and Berry, *Japan in Print*, 212.

[72] Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 32-36.

[73] Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 120-123.

[74] On the unreliable character of the 19th century chronicles, especially for pre-16th century history, see Michael Vickery, *Cambodian after Angkor: The Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (PhD diss, University of Michigan, 1977).

which are infused with the biases of later tradition,[75] the history of Angkorian Cambodia relies almost entirely on Angkorian-period texts, the inscriptions. Historians of early Cambodia do not have to spend their time peeling back layers of later nationalist myth and backdated prejudice from their sources. If certain "national" features can be identified in Angkorian-period texts, it is not because modern nationalists put them there.

What we know of the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods has been gleaned almost exclusively from nearly 1300 stone inscriptions in which were recorded the names of kings and dignitaries, their deeds, and corresponding dates.[76] Kings and elites of various rank had these texts inscribed on stelae (upright stone slabs with one, two, or four polished writing surfaces placed within or near a shrine) or on temple door-jambs (the large stones holding up the lintel at the entry-way to a shrine). In a very few cases they have been found on stone boundary markers, metal objects, or unfinished stone slabs. They have been inventoried throughout Cambodia's former empire, from the Mekong Delta to what is now southern Laos, northeast Thailand, and central Thailand. The inscriptions are for the most part written in what can be called the "Khmer" script, which was derived from an original model common to many Southeast Asian scripts and ultimately based on a script of Southern India.[77]

The authors of the inscriptions were bound by certain conventions. Typically an inscription would have a Sanskrit and a Khmer portion: the former, in elaborate verse, praising a god, king, or noble donor to a temple, and the latter documenting in list form legal decisions, gifts given, or property exchanged. In Sheldon Pollock's apt description of the epigraphic genre throughout South and Southeast Asia during Sanskrit's golden age, Sanskrit had an expressive purpose, the vernacular, in this case Khmer, a documentary purpose.[78] The unfortunate result of this division of epigraphic discourse into two formal codes is that there are perceived limitations to what we can do with the texts. Sanskrit eulogy is concerned with pushing the limits of Sanskrit's poetic potential, couching events and relationships in elaborate metaphors. Old Khmer, with its lists of names and goods, is to many at best a secondary appendage to the study of material history or archaeology (though the historian

[75] See, for example, the 18th century Burmese chronicle Mahayazawingyi which features the legend of the 11th century King Aniruddha's conquest of Mon Thaton. Michael Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Rāmaññа* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 136-139.

[76] George Cœdès published editions of a majority of these inscriptions in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (*BEFEO*) and in his magisterial eight-volume *Inscriptions du Cambodge* [hereafter *IC*], Vol. 1-8 (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1937-1964). Editing of old and new inscriptions continues with the "Corpus des inscriptions khmères" project under the direction of Gerdi Gerschheimer.

[77] The same script is used with some modification today in modern Cambodia as well as in some Thai and Laotian liturgical texts.

[78] Sheldon Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 3.

Michael Vickery has also demonstrated their utility for social and economic history).[79] Cultural historians have understandably used the inscriptions, particularly those in Sanskrit, to focus on literary and religious questions.[80]

Writing early Cambodian cultural history strictly as a story of modular Sanskrit poetics and religious diffusion leaves us with an unsatisfying picture, however, as we would find much the same picture replicated among the Chola in India or on the island of Java. In fact, the political culture of Angkorian Cambodia was very different from that of its antecedent polities and from that of its political neighbors, even though these all followed the same Sanskrit-vernacular epigraphic formula.[81] In a forward-looking essay on the future of Cambodian epigraphic studies, Claude Jacques proposed that the inscriptions should be read for evidence of the country's internal cultural development and idiosyncracies.[82] On a closer reading of both the Sanskrit and Old Khmer inscriptions we find territorial claims, complex geneaological histories, and legendary asides that illuminate the Cambodian elite's unique conceptions of space, ethnic identity, and history. This cache of cultural information suggests that the epigraphic medium was adaptable to different modes of expression in spite of its surface rhetorical constraints.

The Cambodian Community

The political imagination of Angkorian Cambodia as viewed through the extant sources was clearly not constrained by the received cosmocratic culture of Sanskrit. But does a political culture that gives special weight to territorial sovereignty, ethnicity, and collective memory justify our calling that culture a "nation?" If by a Cambodian "nation" one means a political community that was imagined in precisely the same terms as the modern nation of Cambodia is imagined today, then Angkorian Cambodia was nothing of the sort. Modern Cambodian identity is partly a product of a pre-colonial mythology that has no relationship to

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[79] See Michael Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th-8th Centuries* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1999); and "The Khmer Inscriptions of Roluos (Preah Ko and Lolei): Documents from a Transitional Period of Cambodian History," *Seksa Khmer* 1 (1999): 48-88.

[80] Some recent studies of early Cambodian religion using epigraphic sources are noteworthy examples of work that is both rigorously comparative and attentive to local historical developments. See, for example, Alexis Sanderson, "The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers, Part 1," *BEFEO* 90-91 (2003-2004): 349-462; and Julia Estève, "Étude Critique des Phénomènes de Syncrétisme Religieux dans le Cambodge Angkorien" (PhD diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2009).

[81] See Ian Mabbett's study of *varṇa* ("caste") in Angkorian Cambodia. Mabbett, "Varnas in Angkor and the Indian Caste System," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36 (1977),: 429-442.

[82] Claude Jacques, "Nouvelles orientations pour l'étude de l'histoire du pays khmer," *Asie du Sud-Est et Monde Insulindien* 13 (1982): 39-57.

its Angkorian-period counterpart, being heavily influenced by the Singhalese Buddhist culture adopted in the post-Angkorian period. More importantly, modern Cambodia has been shaped significantly by the ideological nationalism introduced in the French colonial period. It was at that time, for instance, that Khmers receptive to French ideas of civilization and racial hierarchy began to think of themselves as the collective inheritors of Angkor's greatness, and it was only then that the current word for nation, race, or ethnic group, *jāti*, entered the Khmer lexicon via Thailand.[83] One can make a persuasive case that an idea of nationality could not have existed prior to the introduction of the term for nation into the language. The goal of this dissertation is not, however, to demonstrate that early Cambodians had an explicit term for "nation." Rather, I wish to explore how the nation as a certain category of analysis illuminates, in ways the standard cosmological model cannot, some peculiarities of early Cambodian political culture.

In the following chapter I will examine how Cambodia came to be understood as a bounded ethnic polity after the 9th century. The historian O.W. Wolters, while emphasizing the disintegrated nature of early Southeast Asian polities, once cited the "territorial integrity" of Angkorian Cambodia as the region's "single exception."[84] Cambodia's frontiers were believed to delineate a salient collective space because of the territory's perceived ethnic character, made explicit in the country's formal name Kambujadeśa ("land of the descendants of Kambu") and in its 11th-century colloquial name *sruk khmer*, "Khmer country." I argue that this novel ethnic style of political imagination gave new meaning to the country's confrontations with its political neighbors, particularly Champa, after the 9th century. Chapter Three examines an important exception on the western frontier where an imperial experiment in what is today Central Thailand (the Menam Basin) resulted in a system of kingdoms within a kingdom, anticipating the kind of multiple sovereignty observed by Thongchai Winichakul in 19th century Siam.[85]

Coincident with the rise of territorial consciousness was the transformation of Cambodia into a community with a perceived common history. I will describe in Chapter Four and Chapter Five how the identity of elite families became closely tied to two collective memories—the elephant hunt myth and the foundation myth of independence from "Javā"—featuring two semi-legendary ninth-century kings. These myths took different shapes, figuring in various provincial elite claims to historical entitlement. They suggest, nonetheless, the

[83] For modern Khmer *jāti*, see Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 118.

[84] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 36.

[85] Thongchai, 106.

polity-wide circulation of a common political narrative, pointing to a significant level of cultural integration and sense of common identity even among peripheral Cambodian elites.

In picturing a political community of this sort, I do not mean to suggest that political integrity was only understood in "national" ways, nor do I intend to present a neat history of cultural integration. Cosmological notions of sacred space and cross-cutting domestic loyalties were an essential feature of the political landscape. In Chapter Six, I will address one of Angkorian Cambodia's internal communities, the Buddhist community, which appears to have formed its own sacred center even at the risk of marginalization from Cambodia's Brahmanical elite. Nonetheless, Buddhists managed to differentiate themselves in ways that explicitly affirmed existing notions of Cambodian space and in so doing established their Cambodian identity. Internal political conflicts like this sectarian example suggest that a vision of Cambodian community and space in the Angkorian period became a standard of unity and allegiance for those who professed to politically belong.

Whether these particular ideas of Cambodian belonging survived after the demise of Angkor in the 15th century is an important question that is nonetheless beyond the parameters of this study. Certain key features of early Cambodian identity—the descent of ethnic Khmers from Kambu, political independence from Javā, and the popular myth of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt—did not survive past the 15th or 16th centuries. With the disappearance of these integrating "national" principles, it is possible that the post-Angkorian polity, though still called Cambodia (*kambujā*), was imagined in more exclusively non-ethnic and cosmological ways. Whatever the case may be, Ian Mabbett is no doubt correct in saying that "unity [in Angkorian Cambodia] was not eternally predestined; after all, the Mon communities [in present-day Central and Northeast Thailand] did not turn into a comparable nation. Unity was the product of particular historical conditions."[86] These "historical conditions" that gave rise to early Cambodia's extensive political community of nativity, and which appear to have been absent outside Cambodia and before the Angkorian period, are the focus of my inquiry.

[86] Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 92.

Chapter Two: An Ethnic Polity

In this chapter I argue that the Angkorian Cambodia was an "ethnic polity."[1] The political community was, in other words, distinctly "Khmer" not merely in terms of its outward culture or language but in its own imagining. Departing from the practice of naming polities after royal cities (*pura*), Khmer elites after the 8th century adopted a name that had both ethnic and territorial connotations: Cambodia or Kambujadeśa ("the land of the descendants of Kambu"). The name suggests that Khmers began to view their polity as an extensive, bounded community of nativity.

In approaching the problem of ethnic self-consciousness, I define ethnicity as a way of conceiving group identity through the adoption of a shared name, a separation from specified others, and a belief in the group's common kinship and history. An ethnic community may be consistent with a certain religious or political community, but it is distinct in its implication of extended kinship or blood inheritance. A common language is probably the most recognizable outward component of ethnic identity. The social glue of this identity is primordial tradition, or the "shared belief that the ethnic grouping has its origins in a remote past."[2]

Any study of ethnic identity in history assumes that human populations have had an inherent propensity to embrace "us" and exclude "them" in ways that transcend loyalties to the immediate family or locality. In some cases an ethnic identity may merely be the perception of an outsider arbitrarily applied to a superficially defined human grouping, as with the *montagnards* of colonial Vietnam. Though the *montagnards* or hill peoples have not always been considered ethnic communites in their own terms of self-awareness, they were no less ethnically real to the lowland Vietnamese or to the colonial French. Whether a certain ethnic identity is subjective, stereotyped, or invented, it still reflects a certain *objective* manifestation of ethnicity at work in another group's self-representation, and it is therefore accessible to a kind of historical analysis. We can perhaps most easily detect the cultural patterns of ethnic self-consciousness and othering in modern nationalism, but ethnicity is no more a modern phenomenon than classism or religious sectarianism. Ethnic perspectives are simply more elusive to early historians because they are constantly reinvented according to modern priorities of belonging and exclusion. These perspectives are only discernable historically in

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[1] This is what Anthony Smith calls the rare "congruence between *ethnie* [i.e., ethnic community] and polity" in antiquity. Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988), 89-91.

[2] Irad Malkin, Introduction to *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15. It is this belief in ancient co-origins that explains the prominence of origin myths as an expression of ethnic identity. See Smith, *Ethnic Origins*, 13-16.

dated sources like the early Cambodian inscriptions that have not been reshaped to suit a more recent definition or tradition.

The temptation to apply modern ethnic designations uncritically to pre-modern contexts is one of the basic methodological problems facing any historian of ethnicity. As an ethnic identity fostered by the modern nation-state of Cambodia, the term "Khmer" presents a special risk of anachronism. Even if we can conclude that "Khmer" was a living ethnonym during the early historical period, we cannot assume that it meant for either self-identified Khmers or for members of foreign ethnic groups what it means for modern Khmers today. The same should be said for other ethnonyms in the historical record. Michael Vickery has rightly cautioned that "given the variability and shifting of ethnic designations, which is now a commonplace in Southeast Asian archaeology, it requires great daring to propose any identity between a modern ethnonym, particularly the popular designation of one group by its neighbors, with a term which may have been an ethnonym, but again may not, in the 5th-6th centuries."[3] Certain confusions about who precisely constitutes a given ethnic group today are symptomatic of this historically common "shifting of ethnic designations." For example, when Thais and Khmers in Buriram province in contemporary Northeast Thailand refer to the Kuay, they mean that province's linguistically Mon-Khmer/Katuic minority, while for the minority speakers of Nyah Kur (a language related to Old Mon) in Nakhon Ratchasima province to the immediate west, the *kuay* represent the majority Thais.[4] The historian is faced with the possibility that, over centuries, names may have been too randomly applied among various contiguous communities to allow one to confidently associate an old ethnonym with an apparent modern equivalent.

Charged with this potential for anachronism, modern ethnic designations can result in a dissonance between academic ethnic categories and historical ethnic perceptions. How a 10th century Cambodian elite perceived the vertical and horizontal extent of Khmerness is bound to differ in important ways from how an epigrapher, art historian, or archaeologist today would choose to define Khmer culture historically in terms of, say, the use of the Khmer language in public inscription or the reproduction of a so-called "Khmer" style of lintel. Speaking of a "Khmer zone of habitation" along the lower Mekong, the tributaries of the Tonle Sap Lake, the Mun and Chi rivers in present-day northeast Thailand, and the central Thailand plain—the zone in which Old Khmer inscriptions have been found—has heuristic value inasmuch as it focuses our attention on a common artistic and material culture, but doing so

[3] Michael Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th-8th Centuries* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1999), 67.

[4] Gérald Diffloth, *The Dvaravati Old Mon Language and Nyah Kur* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Printing House, 1984), 345n11.

does not allow us to conclude that a majority of the people in these separate areas spoke or thought of themselves as Khmer. These observations perhaps go without saying, given the current anthropological understanding of ethnicity as a particularly contextual phenomenon. They do nonetheless need to be said, if only to caution against assuming that the region throughout which the early Khmer-language inscriptions have been found was ethnically homogenous. There is no certain evidence, for instance, that those who spoke or wrote the vernacular language used in the inscriptions, "Old Khmer" in academic nomenclature, called that language "Khmer"—though I would argue that such a linguistic distinction was at least partly responsible for how Khmerness was understood. More importantly, Khmer inscriptions veil an undoubtedly diverse mixture of ethnic groups and their languages—Monic, Pearic, Bahnaric, Katuic, to name but a few of their descendants in the Mon-Khmer family—spoken by a majority of the population and eclipsed by only a thin layer of Khmer-speaking elites.

Because the nature of our sources privileges elite actors, it is especially difficult, if not impossible, to characterize a popular majority in ethnic terms.[5] Elite-centered notions of ethnic identity are not irrelevant, however. If only a small number of educated "native" elites in late-colonial Indonesia considered themselves nationally "Indonesian," we cannot conclude that Indonesian identity was at that time inconsequential.[6] The same can be said of 11th-century Khmer elites, whose shared notion of what it meant to be a subject and descendant of Cambodian royalty lent elite culture of that period a striking uniformity across a vast regional space. In any case, it is *elite* forms of identity that have the most power and durability in history, insofar as elite institutions have the capacity to control, promulgate, and sustain culture. Thus, the political ramifications of ethnicity explored in this chapter are logically tied to elite perspectives. If popular, "demotic" perceptions of Khmer ethnicity had political implications for the elites—and we cannot assume that they did not any more than that they did—they are nonetheless unknowable.[7]

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[5] One tentative way of approaching the issue of popular ethnicity is through onomastic studies, by analyzing, for instance, "slave" or temple personnel lists in the inscriptions for possible patterns of shared identity. This may prove to be a fruitless exercise, however, because the names of temple personnel were not necessarily birth names but names given in contempt by overseers. Michael Vickery suggests that "slaves might have been arbitrarily given names of the dominant language." Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 223. Nonetheless, some of these names of derision may have had ethnic connotations. For some examples of pre-Angkorian "name calling," see Vickery *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 250.

[6] Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 341-342.

[7] On the phenomenon of "lateral-aristocratic," as opposed to "demotic," ethnic communities in the pre-modern world, see Smith, *Ethnic Origins*, 79-83.

Ethnicity before Angkor

If we temporarily suspend our focus on mentalities and representations and examine the most predictable "objective" indicators of ethnicity—ethnonyms and common language—we can use the 7th century Khmer-language inscriptions to suggest a plausible geographical range of an early ethnic Khmer elite. These inscriptions are particularly concentrated in what is today southern Cambodia, the Mekong Delta of southern Vietnam, and central Cambodia in proximity to the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Stung Sen rivers. They are also found in fewer numbers along the smaller tributaries to the north and west of the Tonle Sap Lake and, in an isolated case, in Chanthaburi on the gulf of Thailand.[8] In Northeast Thailand, in contrast, there is no proof of any Khmer-language inscriptions before the 8th century.[9] In Central Thailand the vernacular inscriptions of the 7th century are in Mon, and to Cambodia's west the Cham language was the exclusive local language of inscription.

A hypothetical map of Khmer settlement would therefore tend to place the Khmer "homeland" in south and central Cambodia, where a significant polity developed in the 7th century. This was the conclusion of Michael Vickery, who has argued against another theory that would place the Khmer homeland in northwestern Cambodia and southern Laos.[10] This placement was based on an assumption that a corpus of early 7th century Sanskrit inscriptions of King Mahendravarman in northwestern Cambodia and northeastern Thailand indicated the original range of that king's political territory. However, these inscriptions state that Mahendravarman was on a mission to "conquer all the lands" or "conquer the whole land" along the upper Mekong, Mun, and Chi rivers, presumably from a base to the south in present-

[8] For two 7th century inscriptions from Chanthaburi, see George Cœdès, "L'expansion du Cambodge vers le Sud-Ouest au VIIe siècle (Nouvelles inscriptions du Chantaboun)," *BEFEO* 24 (1924): 352-358.

[9] An 8th century date given to two inscriptions from Northeast Thailand has also been questioned. See K. 388 and K. 389 from Pak Thong Chai district, Nakhon Ratchasima province. Cœdès dates these inscriptions to the 8th century "at the latest" based on the pre-Angkorian form of the script. Cœdès, *IC* V, 73. However, Michael Vickery believes that two names in K.388, Indravarman and Soryavarman, "sound suspiciously Angkorian," and he suggests that the texts are from the Angkorian period though composed in a local, archaic dialect. Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 132. The title of "Soryavarman" (not "Sūryavarman") is *vraḥ kaṃmratāṅ añ*, the pre-Angkorian title for royalty. A short Sanskrit inscription from Phimai with a similar pre-Angkorian script, K. 1000, mentions a king "Sauryavarman." See Claude Jacques, "Inscriptions diverses récemment découvertes en Thaîlande," *BEFEO* 56 (1969): 61.

[10] See George Cœdès, "Le site primitif du Tchen-la," *BEFEO* 18, no. 9 (1918): 1-3. Cœdès believed that the polity and people that the Chinese called "Chenla" in the 7th century were located at or near Wat Phu in present-day southern Laos.

day Cambodia.[11] Inscriptions from central and southern Cambodia suggest that Mahendravarman was, like his predecessor Bhavavarman and his successor Īśānavarman, part of a lower Mekong political dynasty that was making power claims beyond its core area throughout the 7th century.

Was Mahendravarman a Khmer king, from a predominantly Khmer region in the lower Mekong valley, conquering an area to the north that was non-Khmer? We cannot answer this question with any certainty. Whether Mahendravarman or any other pre-Angkorian king was "Khmer" is unknowable so long as his inscriptions fail to identify him as such. The fact that a Cham king of the mid-6th century proudly claimed King Īśānavarman, Mahendravarman's father, as his maternal grandfather suggests that royal pedigree was more politically salient than ethnic identity at that time. This same Cham king returned to Champa after having lived in Īśānavarman's realm (called "Bhavapura" in the Sanskrit inscription).[12] Could not Mahendravarman and his older brother and Bhavavarman have likewise come to power in the lower Mekong from some ethnic elsewhere? Then again, let us assume that Mahendravarman perceived himself to be a Khmer king over a Khmer people. When his inscriptions say that Mahendravarman "conquered the whole land" in reference to northeast Thailand, are they suggesting that Mahendravarman had to that point ruled over part of a pre-conceived Khmer territory, i.e., the lower Mekong, before laying claim to the rest of it in the north? Perhaps a "land of the Khmers" which included Northeast Thailand existed in the minds of the pre-Angkorian Khmer elite. The possible use of Khmer in 8th century inscriptions as well as a large number of Khmer inscriptions and monuments in this region in the Angkorian period prevents us from dismissing the possibility of an early pre-Angkorian Khmer identity north of the Dangrek Range.[13]

Nonetheless, the only conclusion we can draw from the evidence of the inscriptions is that Khmer ethnicity before the 8th or 9th century advent of Kambujadeśa or Cambodia was not an important part of royal or elite claims to prestige. Any perceived Khmer space was not necessarily consistent with the territorial visions of polities at the time. However extensive the centralized political formations of the 7th century reigns of Īśānavarman and Jayavarman I in practice, they remained vaguely defined by shifting royal capitals and loose regional alliances. If we can affirm that they were kings over what would later be called Kambujadeśa, we cannot say for certain what they themselves called their realm. It is possible that under Īśānavarman

[11] See, for example, K. 363 ("the whole country") in Auguste Barth, "Inscription sanscrite de Phou Lokhon (Laos)," *BEFEO* 3 (1903): 442-446; and K. 509 ("all the countries") in Erik Seidenfaden, "Complément à l'inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge pour les quatre provinces de Siam oriental," *BEFEO* 22 (1922): 55-58.

[12] Louis Finot, "Les inscriptions de Mi-son," *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 923, verse XV.

[13] For doubts concerning the existence of 8th century Khmer inscriptions in Northeast Thailand, see note 9 above.

the king's "territory" in what is today southern and central Cambodia was named Bhavapura. A 7th century inscription from My Son in Champa states that the Cham king's father went to Bhavapura where he married Īśānavarman's daughter.[14] Because it is known that Īśānavarman's immediate capital was called Īśānapura (assuming that Īśānavarman was still on the throne at the time of this marriage), Bhavapura may have indicated the king's extended realm or sphere of influence as inherited from his predecessor Bhavavarman I, Bhavapura's namesake. However, in this same period we read that Īśānavarman's son had been governor (*svāmī*) respectively in Bhavapura and in a place called Jyeṣṭapura, perhaps located in Aranyaprathet in eastern Thailand, suggesting that Īśānavarman's realm was in fact made up of multiple territories of which Bhavapura was only one.[15] Jayavarman I inherited this anonymous, multi-centered realm later in the 7th century. As the only named political unit linked to Jayavarman I in the epigraphy is Purandarapura, his capital,[16] we must either conclude that a formal idea of Khmer political space was still nonexistent during his reign, or if it did exist, it was not deemed essential to 7th century royal self-representation.

This lack of an expressly ethnic polity may relate to the particular way politics functioned in the 7th century. Far more than in the Angkorian period, 7th century politics operated not as an organized system governed by appointed royal agents but as a web of semi-autonomous polities connected by oath or marriage to a king. An emphasis on alliance over centralized control and territorial aggrandizement may have precluded the need to capitalize on the idea of boundaries, whether ethnic or territorial, for political gain. In this scenario, the polity could consist of various loyal but unincorporated territories or tributaries of different and multiple ethnicity, recalling what William McNeil has called the predominantly "polyethnic" character of pre-modern politics.[17]

This is not to claim that ideas of ethnic difference were inconsequential before the Angkorian period. Designations for different human communities are perhaps more pronounced in the pre-Angkorian epigraphic record, though it is unclear whether these communities were perceived in "ethnic" ways at the time. The 7th century inscriptions mention three such groups in particular: the Khmer (*kmer*), the Maleṅ, and the Vrau. At no time do we read of a "Khmer country" (this would only become a reality in the 11th century), though it is clear that Khmerness was a distinct group identity. An inscription from northern Prei Veng Province in southern Cambodia and likely dated to the mid-7th century contains a

[14] Louis Finot, "Les inscriptions de Mi-son," 923, verse XV.

[15] Vickery. *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 338-339.

[16] On the location of Purandarapura, ibid., 352-356.

[17] William McNeil, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 2-29.

list of temple servants (*kñum*) whose names are listed under two ethnic headings: *kñum kmer* (Khmer servants) and *kñum maleṅ* (Maleṅ servants).[18] The text furnishes us with little information about these Khmers except that they were not Maleṅ. It does inform us, however, that Khmers could be bonded servants; in other words, Khmers did not always constitute an aristocratic ethnic community lording it over ethnic others.[19] Any perceived hierarchical difference between the Khmer and the Maleṅ is elusive in this text.

Nonetheless, there is good reason to believe that Khmerness in the pre-Angkorian period did imply some kind of ethnic superiority or capacity to exploit. Gérald Diffloth has proposed an etymology of the word *kmer/khmer* which suggets that Khmers in the lowlands had a perceived exploitative role vis-à-vis their neighbors in the more marginal parts of the region. Diffloth sees in *kmer* a derivative of a verb *ker* with a bilabial nasal infix indicating agency: "one who *ker*."[20] Although a word with the spelling *ker* does not exist in the Old Khmer epigraphic corpus or in modern Khmer, Diffloth has shown that modern Khmer *kier* and Thai *ken*, both meaning "to gather, to muster," must both be derived from an Old Khmer form *ker*. Diffloth emphasizes a secondary meaning of this verb which he encountered among Khmers in Surin who spoke of going to the Tonle Sap region of Cambodia to "collect" or "trade for" (*kier*) fish paste; he supposes that a *kmer/khmer* was originally someone who traded or transported goods,and that this perceived function came to define the ethnic group. I prefer to take the hypothetical root verb *ker* to mean "to muster troops" or "to recruit" people into forced labor, following the meaning of Thai *ken*. Thus, a *kmer/khmer* was probably someone who exploited someone else's labor. It is not difficult to see how this term could have taken on ethnic significance. That Khmers habitually forced minority ethnic groups to be agricultural laborers in the lowlands is implied in an inscription of the first half of the 7th century, K. 939. This inscription records a certain official's instructions to maintain a temple of Vraḥ Kamratāṅ Añ

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[18] This inscription, which Saveros Pou names the "stèle de Tuol Prasat" and labels Ka 64, is from a site called locally Tuol Chak Noreay or Melob, Prei Veng province, inventory number (IK) 67.06. The stela is two-sided, side A containing nine lines of Sanskrit and thirteen lines of Khmer, and side B two lines of Sanskrit and thirty-three lines of Khmer. Saveros Pou does not provide a transcription or translation of the Sanskrit. See Saveros Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions du Cambodge*, *II & III* (Paris: EFEO, 2001), 200-203. The Sanskrit of side A mentions a king named Bhavarvarman, perhaps Bhavavarman II who reigned in the mid-7th century. See a photograph of the rubbing of side A, ibid., 323. For a discussion of these two ethnic terms, see 201-202n1.

[19] Smith, *Ethnic Origins*, 79-83.

[20] See Gérard Diffloth, "History of the Word 'Khmer,'" in *Khmer Studies = Khmerologie = Khemarawidyā: International Conference on Khmer Studies, Phnom Penh, 26-30 August 1996*, edited by S'an Saṃnāṅ (Phnom Penh: Krasuaṅ Apraṃ, 1996), 644-651. Of course, several alternative etymologies of the word *khmer* have been suggested. For an exhaustive review of these alternatives, see Michel Antelme, "Quelques hypotheses sur l'étymologie du terme 'khmer'," *Péninsule* 37, no. 2 (1998): 157-192. Antelme suggests the possibility, for example, that *khmer* is derived from a base /*mer*/, related to south Bahnaric /mi:r/ ("rice field"), with a /k/ prefix.

Śrī Tribhuvanaṃjaya at Angkor Borei (southern Cambodia, Takeo Province) and to "command the Vrau, Maleṅ, and *ksok* to cultivate the eight directions in [i.e., throughout] the country of Bhavapura."[21] The inscription appears to record the practice of moving ethnic others from outlying areas into the Khmer-dominated lowlands of Bhavapura to be agricultural slaves. If the above derivation of *kmer/khmer* is correct, it suggests that this practice of gathering people from the hinterland became the defining characteristic, and eventually even the name, of the Khmer ethnic group. We can see in K. 939 that by the early 7th century this core feature of Khmerness had significant political implications as the Khmer polity of Bhavapura came to rely on the labor of distinct ethnic others for its own maintenance. As the polity became formalized and centralized in the early 7th century, the gathering of "foreign" laborers would likely have involved planned military expeditions into the hinterlands. This may have resulted in a growing sense of ethnic Khmer solidarity and territoriality and the framing of ethnic others on the polity's fringe as political adversaries.

As the practice of exploiting distinct ethnic others became political policy, it may have inspired some of these ethnic others to form their own political solidarities. This may be seen in the example of the Maleṅ, who appear to have developed a certain degree of political cohesion and autonomy vis-à-vis the Khmers in the 7th century. K. 451 was commissioned by a certain *kuruṅ* ("chief" or "king") Maleṅ in 680 in Siem Reap province, northwest of Angkor, to make a donation where a king called by the posthumous name Śivapura, probably Jayavarman I, had donated ricefields to a temple's deity.[22] Vickery has correctly cautioned against supposing that this *kurun* Maleṅ was an entirely independent king; *kurun* is usually a title for a regional chief or minor king, and the *kuruṅ* Maleṅ is not given the royal titles that king Śivapura receives in the same text ("*vraḥ kamratāṅ añ*"). However, the title of *kuruṅ* does convey a considerable sense of authority, if not out-right autonomy, and may illustrate that seemingly dispersed, multi-centered, polyethnic character of pre-Angkorian politics. Interestingly, Vickery notes that in the same inscription there may be features of the Pearic languages, leading Vickery to propose that the inscription's "peculiar nomenclature may reflect both political isolation and ethnic differences in [western Cambodia] which was still in modern times the habitat of Pearic-speaking peoples."[23] The Pearic language groups have historically been found in and around the Cardamom Range in Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Chnang, and Kampong Speu provinces. Vickery's Pearic connection is based in part on

[21] *pre vrau maleṅ ksok toy gi poṣaṇā aṣṭadiśa ta gi sruk bhavapura*. K. 939, line 7, from Angkor Borei, Takeo Province, Cœdès, *IC* V, 56. Michael Vickery believes that the inscription, which mentions a *mratāñ kloñ bhavapura*, indicates "an intervention of Īśāanvarman's appointee, possibly a son, in the region's affairs," which, if true, would give this inscription a date in the 620s or 630s. Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 339.

[22] K. 451, Cœdès, *IC* V, 49-52.

[23] Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 249.

phonetic peculiarities in three pre-Angkorian inscriptions that mention Maleṅ.[24] However, it may be confirmed by a modern place-name Amleang in Kampong Speu Province and at the foothills of the Cardamom Mountains. Amleang could be a slightly contracted form of pre-Angkorian Maleṅ and especially Angkorian Malyāṅ. Moreover, two pre-Angkorian inscriptions mentioning Maleṅ, K. 78 and K. 786, were found directly to the east of Amleang, at locations just north of Phnom Penh.[25] Of course, by placing Maleṅ in the region of the Cardamoms we discount the *kurun* Maleṅ of K. 451 from Siem Reap Province, which could arguably indicate where this Maleṅ was originally located.

Evidence from Angkorian-period inscriptions nonetheless supports the theory that Maleṅ was a semi-autonomous region around the Cardamom Range in central and western Cambodia, perhaps characterized by Pearic ethnicity. From the 9th century onwards, Cambodian inscriptions speak of a district or province called Malyāṅ, which is very likely Maleṅ in a phonetically Angkorian Khmer form. An 11th century inscription K. 449 with specific information on this Malyāṅ was found in Pursat Province almost in the foothills of the Cardamom Mountains, a traditionally Pearic area whose remoteness from more typical ancient Khmer settlements has led scholars to question whether the inscription had been removed from some other location.[26] The text claims that in the late 8th or early 9th century the Cambodian king Jayavarman II ordered an invasion of Malyāṅ. When the people of Malyāṅ had been conquered and were forced to pay "tribute," some of Jayavarman II's supporters were given land in the new territory at the site of the inscription. The text then relates how during the succeeding reign of Jayavarman III, this king "went to Malyāṅ" before arriving at the same site. Hence, there is significant evidence for placing this site in the foothills of the Cardamoms in a former territory of Malyāṅ. The only other Angkorian inscription that indicates the location of Malyāṅ, the 11th century K. 693, happens to have been found a mere twenty kilometers distant from K. 449 in the upper reaches of the Mong River where it exits the Cardamom Mountains.[27] The text speaks of several officials participating in a royally approved demarcation of lands, presumably around the site of the inscription, on behalf of a certain Vāp Brahmaputra. One of these officials is named the "inspector of the royal service in all the territory of Malyāṅ," which must almost certainly be understood to mean that the site of the inscription was under the territorial jurisdiction of provincial Malyāṅ.[28] These two inscriptions have led most scholars to believe Malyāṅ (and Maleṅ) to be located in northwestern Cambodia.

[24] The peculiarity in question is the confusion of /t~k/ before a nasal; hence, K. 451 has *tnam* instead of *kñum* for the common word for temple servant. Ibid., 249n236.

[25] Ibid., p. 442.

[26] Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl (province de Mòn Ru'sei)," *BEFEO* 13, no. 6 (1913): 27-36.

[27] K. 693, Cœdès, *IC* V, 202-209.

[28] Cœdès, *IC* V, 205, lines 25-26.

What has not been observed is that the two inscriptions are from a relatively isolated region of western Cambodia far from any other inscriptions or significant archaeological sites and located precisely in the foothills of the Cardamom Mountains that was predominantly Pearic in ethnicity as late as the 19th century.

Maleṅ/Malyāṅ is not the only recurrent ethnic group in the pre-Angkorian inscriptions, though it is the most plausibly identified geographically and linguistically.[29] A name "*vrau*" has been proposed as an ethnonym, though the word is typically found as part of a name of a temple servant, which does not help us draw any conclusions about the ethnic nature of the term. However, if this *vrau* was an ethnonym in the pre-Angkorian period, it would coincide perfectly with a current Khmer name for an ethnic group, or collection of ethnic groups, along the Mekong's tributaries in mountainous northeastern Cambodia and southern Laos: the Brau, speakers of a West Bahnaric language in the Mon-Khmer language family.[30]

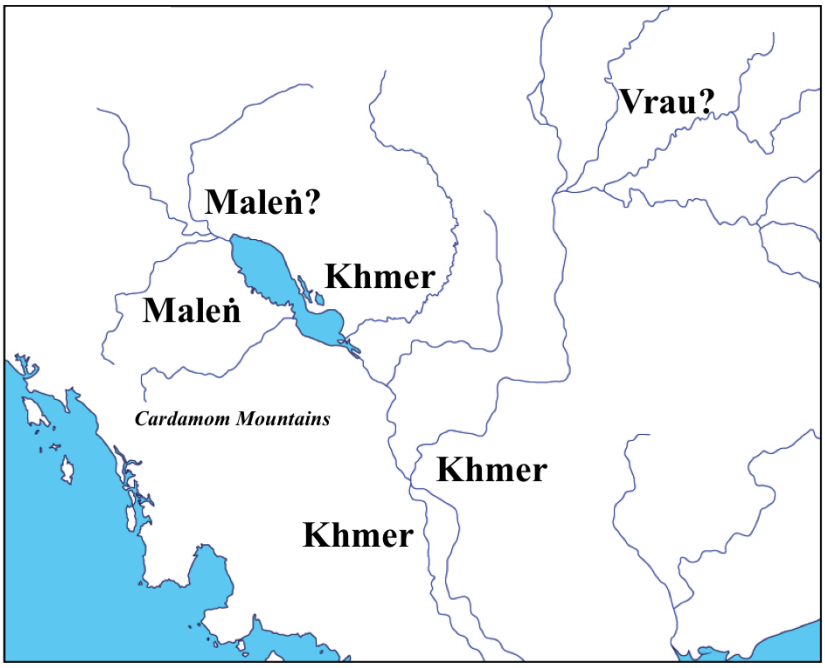

Figure 1. A hypothetical map of the 7th century ethnic landscape. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," *http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=cambodia_map&num_car=136&l ag=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).*

[29] Undoubtedly there were other minority ethnic groups for which we have no names in Old Khmer (unless we have simply failed to identify them). The most important of these is the group now called the Kuay who live in present-day Preah Vihear province and Northeast Thailand, who have long been known for handling the local iron industry and for their skill with elephants.

[30] For "*vrau*," see Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 223-224. Vickery also indicates a possible correspondence with the Brou, of the Katuic branch of Mon-Khmer, but also located in the region of southern Laos.

Taken together, the Maleṅ and the Vrau would seem to be ethnic groups in mountainous or otherwise marginal regions, the Maleṅ positioned in the northwest, especially around and throughout the Cardamom Mountains, and the Vrau in the hill country of the northeast (see fig. 1). These groups may have inhabited a distinctly upland agricultural niche where Khmer lowland rice farming was less sustainable. They might have maintained a certain degree of autonomy in the pre-Angkor period; the 11th century memory of a Cambodian invasion of Malyāṅ/Maleṅ in southern Battambang Province suggests that this region was at times politically out of reach, and the presence of unique pre-Angkorian ruins in the isolated northeast where Brau tribes live today could indicate a semi-political ethnic community whose control over upriver trade made them partners and potential rivals of the downriver Khmer.[31]

Although these vaguely distinct zones of common ethnicity may have had political implications for pre-Angkorian Khmers who plundered ethnic others for labor and traded with them for metals and forest products, we cannot decide on the basis of the evidence to what extent ethnic distinction was a driving force behind political thought and action in the 7th and 8th centuries. The evidence informs us only that ethnic groups were named and distinguished and that they inhabited frontier regions occasionally outside direct Khmer supervision in the period before Angkor. It may be said that ethnicity in the pre-Angkorian period was an ever-present reality with potential political ramifications but was never an expressed *raison d'être* of the polity.

Ethnic Kambujadeśa

It was only after the 8th century with the formation of a polity radiating out from Angkor that ethnicity became central to how the political community was conceived. The appearance of Kambujadeśa at that moment may represent the most significant rupture in the region's political history. It is significant not merely because it implies that autonomous local political communities became incorporated into a newly integrated whole. The polity of Kambujadeśa was unprecedented in the region's history because it was imagined to be an extensive, bounded, and named polity of shared ethnicity. More importantly, it was a territorial community of nativity, consisting of people who were believed to belong to the polity by virtue of birth (*ja*).

The most important characteristic of Cambodia's ethnic polity was a belief in the community's shared nativity. The Sanskrit name *kambuja*, "born of Kambu," clearly designates such a community of descent. Originally the term *kambuja* was likely reserved for members of

[31] These sites are Preah Put (IK 392.02) and Tuol Kalay Ta Vang in Ratanakiri province, notably the former where can be found remains of brick temples, a large enclosure, and an artificial basin. See Henri Parmentier, "Complément à l'inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge," *BEFEO* 13 (1913): 48.

a circumscribed royal lineage. The Angkorian kings traced their lineage back to a sage (*brahmarṣi*) named Kambu who was the father of the legendary first king of the *kambujendra*, "kings descended from Kambu," named Śrutavarman.[32] In the 10th century Kambu was said to have "created all the kings of Kambuja."[33] An 11th century inscription calls the official record of this royal lineage beginning with Śrutavarman the *kambuvaṃśa*, or "lineage of Kambu."[34] Thus, all Cambodian kings who sought historical legitimacy claimed descent from a single famous progenitor. Kambu eventually lent his name to the land inherited by his supposed royal descendents, *kambujadeśa*, or "the land of the descendants of Kambu."

The lineage of Kambu superseded a certain pre-Angkorian lineage lacking in territorial specificity. The marriage of the brahmin Kauṇḍinya and the daughter of the Nāga king, Somā, was believed to have given rise a certain lineage of kings. Kauṇḍinya was believed to be the founder of the pre-Angkorian polity of Bhavapura.[35] This myth persisted locally in Bhavapura into the Angkorian period, which is one reason why in the 10th century King Rājendravarman, whose father was "lord" (*īśvara*) in provincial Bhavapura, featured the Kauṇḍinya myth in his own eulogies.[36] However, by this time the Kauṇḍinya myth was only of secondary importance in the king's eulogies, as can be seen in K. 286, which states that Kambu and the first king of his lineage Śrutavarman came before Kauṇḍinya and the first king of the pre-Angkorian lineage, Rudravarman.[37] Thus, by the 10th century the old Kauṇḍinya lineage of Bhavapura (of which Rājendravarman was a descendent) had been sidelined by a newly transcendent lineage, the lineage of Kambu, which was believed to have greater polity-wide significance.

While the sage Kambu was just one example in a category of legendary dynastic founders common throughout Sanskritized South and Southeast Asia, the application of this founder's name and lineage to the entire royal realm was unprecedented. In point of comparison, the 9th-10th century inscriptions of Champa (Campā) in the vicinity of the temple My Son record that the founder of "Campāpura" was named Bhṛgu after a famous sage in Indian mythology.[38] Bhṛgu's reputation reflected his role as the legendary founder of the Cham

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[32] K. 958, Cœdès, *IC* VII, 144, verse I; K. 286, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 96, verse XIII.

[33] K. 675, Cœdès, *IC* I, 66, verse VIII.

[34] K. 380 west, Cœdès, *IC* VI, 261, lines 15-16. See also K. 156, Cœdès, *IC* V, 180, verse XII: "born in the lineage of Kambu."

[35] Finot, "Les inscriptions de Mi-son," 101, line 23, verse XV.

[36] See, for example, K. 806, Cœdès, *IC* I, 79, verse XII, line 13. Other references to Kauṇḍinya in Rājendravarman's inscriptions can be found in K. 263, K. 286, K. 528, and K. 669.

[37] K. 286, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 90; compare verses XIII and XVI, lines 25-26 and 31-32 of the south doorjamb.

[38] See the 9th century stela of Dong-duong in Finot, "Inscriptions de Quang Nam," *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 63, side A, verse III, lines 4-6; and the early 10th century inscription of Bhadravarman in Edouard Huber, "L'épigraphie de la dynastie de Dong-Duong," *BEFEO* 11 (1911): 289, side B, line 2, verse XV.

temple in My Son dedicated to Śiva Bhadreśvara, which served as the sacred center of Campāpura or Campā.[39] Bhṛgu was also believed to be the primordial ancestor of the Cham royal lineage of the 9th-10th centuries, thus lending his name to the dynasty *bhṛguvaṃśa* (lineage of Bhṛgu), which clearly parallels Angkorian Cambodia's *kambuvaṃśa* (lineage of Kambu).[40] However, Bhṛgu never replaced Campā as the de facto name for the Cham political community.[41]

As the lineage of Kambu began to transcend local pre-Angkorian descent communities, symbolic membership in the community of Kambuja was expanded to include all the country's elite subjects. These subjects often remained members of their respective pre-Angkorian lineage groups descended from the royal families of 7th century petty chiefdoms like Bhavapura, Aninditapura, and Vyādhapura. To counteract these entrenched loyalties to pre-Angkorian lineages, the kings contrived small lineage communities or *varṇa* associated with certain ritual functions at the capital.[42] However, the community that was likely most successful at incorporating these local elites was the broadly inclusive ethnic category formerly expressed by the ethnonym *khmer* but now given new political shape in the idea of Kambuja, "the descendants of Kambu."

The new correspondence between the ethnonym *khmer* and the Sanskritic ethnonym *kambuja* in the Angkorian period is confirmed in the Baksei Chamkrong inscription of Rajendravarman K. 286.[43] It calls Kambu *svāyambhuva*, or "the Self-Created," which is another name for Manu, the progenitor of mankind in Hindu mythology. In this context Kambu is clearly more than just an ancestor of kings. The inscription provides Kambu with a wife—and Srutavarman with a mother—Merā. This Merā, whose name has no basis in Hindu mythology, is said to have surpassed the procreative gift of the creator god Dakṣa. In a note to the relevant verse, Cœdès observed why her name is otherwise unknown: "One must ask whether the name Merā has been contrived to explain the name of the Khmers and to provide it with something like an etymology."[44] Cœdès brilliantly observed that Kambu and Merā together appear to constitute a creative etymology for the pre-existing word "Khmer" (via a supposed compound *kambu-mer*). In my opinion there be can be no other interpretation. "Merā" is nonsense in

[39] Finot, "Inscriptions du Quang Nam," 43, lines 1-6; and 44, line 14, verse XII.

[40] See Huber, "Nouvelles découvertes archéologiques en Annam," *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 219, line 11, where King Bhadravarman is described as descended from the *bhṛguvaṃśa* ("lineage of Bhṛgu").

[41] Only in early 13th century Cambodian inscriptions did descent from Bhṛgu connote a political/ethnic community. See below.

[42] On the function of *varṇa* in the Angkorian period, see Ian Mabbett, "Varnas in Angkor and the Indian Caste System," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36 (1977): 429-442.

[43] See verses XI and XII in Cœdès, *IC* IV, 90.

[44] Ibid., 95n2.

Sanskrit; it can only be explained as a local Khmer invention to account for the origin of the ethnonym *khmer*. This etymology confirms that by the mid-10th century it was believed that being Khmer in origin and being a descendant of the mythical Kambu (*kambuja*) were one and the same. Kambu had become, in a sense, the Manu or original man of the Khmers. The Kambu myth was no longer merely a dynastic myth; it was the origin myth for the Khmer ethnic community.

An 11th century inscription from Nakhon Ratchasima province in northeast Thailand, K. 1158, proves that the ethnonyms *khmer* and *kambuja* became entirely interchangeable in the Angkorian period. In two other 11th century texts we read that Kambujadeśa, "the country of the descendants of Kambu," was able to gain its independence from Javā in the distant past. The related story in K. 1158, written in Old Khmer, calls this liberated polity *sruk khmer*, "Khmer Country."[45] Intriguingly, *sruk khmer* remains the colloquial term for the country or nation of Cambodia to this day, just as *kambujā* remains the country's formal name. The distinctly ethnic designation for the country embodied by the terms *kambujadeśa* and *sruk khmer* suggests that Angkorian Cambodia was founded on a close conceptual alignment of royal lineage, political territory, and ethnic self-consciousness.

Becoming Kambuja

The conceptual link between polity and ethnicity in the early Cambodian imagination undoubtedly influenced the way in which the polity confronted its periphery. In many cases the polity centered at Angkor simply had to secure the allegiance of provincial Khmer elites who were already a part of the perceived ethnic community before the politicized version of that community took shape. In more peripheral regions the elite population may have belonged to a different linguistic group. This discrepancy can be seen in the region of Northeast Thailand where much of the land south of the Mun River was occupied by Khmer-speaking elites from at least the 8th century onward, whereas to the north of the Mun River and in the western part of the Khorat Plateau the population appears to have spoken or written in Mon. While Cambodia came to occupy this entire region and demand allegiance from its elite subjects, it is likely that local elite others gradually adopted the Khmer/Kambuja identity as their own.

The first reference to the name *kambudeśa*, or "the land of Kambu," in the Cambodian inscriptions gives one of the earliest indications of the potential for ethnic tension on the country's frontier in a very early stage in the polity's expansion. The 9th century inscription K.

[45] Chirapat Prapapandvidya, "The Sab Bak Inscription: Evidence of an Early Vajrayan Buddhist Presence in Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society* 78 (1990): 12, line 32.

400 was found on the Khorat plateau in Muang Sema in Nakhon Ratchasima province just to the east of the central Thailand plain on one of the farthest perimeters of Cambodian influence in the early Angkorian period.[46] The inscription consists of an earlier 7th century Buddhist inscription in Sanskrit, no doubt related to the pre-Khmer Mon polity at the site, while the relevant text in Sanskrit and Old Khmer is written on the back of the stone and is dated 868 CE. This would make K.400 the only known inscription from the reign of Jayavarman III. The script used in the inscription is distinctly pre-Angkorian in the style of other 8th-9th century Khmer inscriptions from this region. The Sanskrit portion of the text says that an individual named Aṅśadeva obtained an abandoned domain "inside the land of Kambu/Cambodia (*kamvudeśāntare*)" where he established a liṅga at the site of the inscription in the year 790 *śaka* (868 CE).[47] This inscription poses several problems for historians. Why, for instance, would the author of the inscription find it necessary to specify that the area of Muang Sema was "inside Cambodia?" Was its location in Cambodia not generally assumed by the mid-9th century? It is possible that the Cambodian conquest of Muang Sema had just occurred and that Muang Sema's position "inside Cambodia" was a recent development. Perhaps Aṅśadeva, a Khmer, had recently accompanied this conquest, signaling in his inscription that this territory was now Khmer, rather than Mon, territory. The establishment of a liṅga on an abandoned site that had previously been Buddhist (according to side A of the inscription) suggests a process of religious conversion which may be related to a process of ethnic succession (from Mon to Khmer) after Cambodia's takeover of the region. Another possibility is that Aṅśadeva was an ethnically Khmer elite whose local jurisdiction was still outside the domain of the kings at Angkor. The use of a regional script in the inscription would seem at first to exclude the influence of Angkorian Cambodia. In this scenario the idea of an ethnic *kambudeśa*, "country of Kambu," may have preceded the spread of power from Angkor into this region that had already witnessed the rise of a local Khmer elite in the 8th century. Of course, we don't know enough about the origins of *kambudeśa/ kambujadeśa* to say if the idea of a greater ethnic Khmer territory was common among Khmers in the Mun River Basin before the advent of the polity at Angkor. Whether or not we choose to take Aṅśadeva as a royal representative or as simply a Mun Basin Khmer, it seems likely that his occupation of the abandoned land in Muang Sema

[46] Cœdès, *IC* IV, 83-85.

[47] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 84, side B, lines 3-10, verses II-V. Cœdès originally translated the key phrase, *kamvudeśāntare*, to mean "outside Kambudeśa." Jacques has observed the ambiguity of the Sanskrit noun *antara*, which typically means "interior," but which as an adjective can also mean "other" as in the compound *deśāntaram*, "another country." See Claude Jacques, "Les Khmers en Thailande: ce que nous dissent les inscriptions," in *La Thailande des débuts do son histoire jusqu'au XVe siècle* (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1er syposium Franco-Thai, 1995), 42. In this context, however, it is probably best to take *antara* to mean "interior" as Jacques has done, otherwise *kamvudeśāntare* would have to be rendered incomprehensibly: "in another Cambodia."

followed the recent expansion of "the land of Kambu" into the Khorat region and the replacement of Mon elites by Khmers.

The most important revelation of Aṅśadeva's inscription is that by the mid-9th century there was an ideal of Cambodian territorial sovereignty. By territory I mean a bounded political space and not merely a fleeting emanation of charismatic power from a political center as theorized by O. W. Wolters and others. Interestingly, Wolters singled out the inscription of Aṅśadeva to suggest that the Khmer elite recognized and "had a vested interest in the territorial integrity of metropolitan Cambodia," therefore making Angkorian Cambodia the "single exception" to what he saw as the absence of bounded ethnic and political identities in early Southeast Asia.[48] Cambodia's territorial identity, perhaps unique in the whole region, appears to have been defined by the presence of Khmer elites, which suggests that areas "outside" Cambodia were those where the governing elites were believed to hail from an alternative community of descent.

The line between ethnic Cambodia and its others was in constant retreat as these Khmer elites continued to advance. Several inscriptions from the province of Nakhon Ratchasima attest to a process of Khmerization in this peripheral area "inside Cambodia." There is no question that the Nakhon Ratchasima region was predominantly Mon in ethnicity in early centuries; a linguistic study of the region's original vernacular, still spoken in rural areas, has shown that the Nyah Kur language is in fact descended from Old Mon.[49] It should, however, be noted that by the late 9th century Nakhon Ratchasima was definitely within the political reach of Khmer elites. A Khmer inscription, K. 388, from the southern part of the province and tentatively dated to the 8th or 9th century applies a Mon title *kyak* to a local dignitary.[50] Another late 10th Khmer inscription from near the provincial capital, K. 1141, uses the title *tralav*, which is equivalent to the common Old Mon title *trala*.[51] These titles indicate the incorporation of a Mon-speaking elite into an expanding Khmer political culture. The expansion was especially dramatic in the 9th century. The fact that the area of Muang Sema was already "inside Cambodia" in 868 CE goes against many assumptions about the lackluster reign of Jayavarman III. The early 10th century K. 1073 from Buriram Province, to the immediate east of Nakhon Ratchasima, lists in detail gifts of land given to a local shrine by Jayavarman III in the mid to late 9th century.[52] Moreover, the Khmer temple of Phanom Wan, located a few kilometers northeast of Ratchasima, has an inscription, K. 1065, dated 899 from the reign of

[48] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 36.

[49] Diffloth, *The Dvaravati Old Mon Language and Nyah Kur*, 341.

[50] Cœdès, *IC* VI, p. 77.

[51] Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, 117.

[52] Ibid., 102-105.

Yasovarman I.[53] By the late 9th century the Cambodian polity with its Khmer culture and Khmer-speaking elite was quickly enveloping this previously Mon-speaking region.

While we can imagine that conflicts arose during this process of ethnic succession, we can also expect that Khmer ethnicity and identity was for some a desirable commodity. If being Khmer sealed one's belonging in the Cambodian political community, thereby increasing one's station and legitimacy, non-Khmers may have embraced Khmer culture and language. It is possible that the above inscriptions with scattered Mon features were sponsored by Mon pragmatists who conducted their politics in a Khmer fashion to gain access to the Khmer culture of prestige. Perhaps even Aṅśadeva in the 9th century K.400 was a non-Khmer who declared that his donations were made "inside Cambodia" to prove his allegiance to Cambodia and to position himself as a member of the newly arrived Khmer community in the region. Certainly membership in the Khmer political community was not limited to those who could claim Cambodian nativity or descent from ethnic Khmers.

Of course, birth being the defining feature of ethnic belonging, claiming Khmer descent may have been more rhetorically empowering than declaring one's allegiance to the Cambodian king. Barring proof of such an identity, one could simply fall back on the virtue of good intentions. An 11th century inscription, K.1158, from southern Nakhon Ratchasima province suggests the desirability of Cambodian nativity in this peripheral Mon region (which is still inhabited by Mon speakers today). The Sanskrit portion of this text relates the work of a certain Guru of Dharaṇīndrapura in teaching Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism—a religion that appears frequently in the art and epigraphy of northeast Thailand. The text states that the Guru of Dharaṇīndrapura "got rid of the threat to Buddhism" and "consolidated Buddhism in Cambodia (*kambuja*) until the present day." His pupil, named Vrah Dhanus, installed tantric images in the year 1066. He then made the following petition to these Buddhist deities: "If I were to obtain the fruit of this meritorious deed, I would be reborn immediately in Cambodia (*kambuja*)."[54] Perhaps one reason for this affirmation of Cambodian nativity and identity is to present the Buddhist community as essentially Cambodian in an effort to counter suspicions of Buddhist disloyalty to the Cambodian crown.[55] A more intriguing explanation, however, for this proclaimed desire to be reborn Cambodian is that there was an incentive in peripheral regions of majority non-Khmer ethnicity to change one's ethnic affiliation, if not in this life then in the next.

The attraction to Khmer/Cambodian identity may not have always been so directly professed, but it was probably a key factor, perhaps more so than the use of force, in the

[53] Ibid., 89-90.

[54] *cet phalaṃ me sti puṇyāṇāṃ jāto haṃ kamvuje drutaṃ*. Chirapat Prapandvidya, 28, line 29.

[55] See Chapter Six.

consolidation of Cambodian political culture in what is now northeast Thailand after the 8th century. Pre-existing populations of Khmers in the Mun Basin south of the river, particularly in southern Buriram and Surin, would have had ready access to the new Cambodian political community by virtue of their perceived ethnic inheritance. In areas farther afield, however, that Khmer identity was not a given but was a matter of choice. By the 11th century elite culture in northeast Thailand was entirely Cambodian, suggesting that many Mons and others believed that becoming Khmer was a choice well worth making.

Ethnic Antagonism

While the political dynamic in the Mun River Basin and Khorat Plateau in Cambodia's north was one of gradual integration and Khmerization, the dynamic on other frontiers was often one of confrontation. It is possible that certain 8th century political developments beyond the unnamed Khmer core were responsible for the adoption of a more concrete idea of territorial sovereignty. In later Angkorian memory in the 11th century Khmers apparently believed that their country had once been subject to a polity called Javā, from which they gained their independence through certain heroic and magical deeds. The credibility of this independence from Javā is debatable, and in any case its significance may have been more a function of 11th century memory than 8th century history, as will be discussed in Chapter Five. Nonetheless, there may have also been some kind of exterior maritime incursion in the 8th century that helped spark an idea of Cambodia's territorial sovereignty and that inspired the later independence myth.

Another factor in the development of Cambodian territoriality was the rise of a sophisticated, though perennially disunited, political formation to the east in coastal Champa which had the capacity to invade the Cambodian interior in the 8th and 9th centuries.[56] Judging from the rhetoric of the inscriptions, the underlying theme on Cambodia's eastern border with Champa was confrontation. Of course, relations between Cambodia and Champa must have featured significant peaceful exchanges throughout their respective histories. Nonetheless, in the early Cambodian political imagination Champa stands out as the classic political antagonist. More importantly, this antagonism eventually came to be expressed in ethnic terms, as two descent communities fighting over common borderlands and for regional supremacy. Cambodia's volatile relationship with coastal Champa in the Angkorian period was therefore an important factor in the formation of an ethnic Khmer political consciousness.

It is perhaps no surprise that the earliest mention of the polity of *kambuja* is in a Cham inscription in Sanskrit from Po Nagar of Nha Trang dated 817 CE (see fig. 2). It says that a Cham general named Pār defeated the armies of *kamvujapura* ("the city of Kambuja") and that his

[56] Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 387.

valor "extended to the middle of *kamvuja.*"[57] It appears that Kambuja in this inscription refers to a royal city, "the city of Kambuja," at the center of a vague sphere of influence. It would seem that Kambuja was therefore a typical *maṇḍala* polity defined not by any sense of bounded territory but by its political center located in the region of Angkor. Perhaps this vision of Cambodia accurately describes the nascent Cambodian political imagination in 817 CE, at a time when Jayavarman II was still in the process of consolidating Cambodia's future territory. However, it could also merely reflect a 9th century understanding of Cambodia from the perspective Champa, which rarely in its history managed to unite the string of polities along its thin, mountainous coastline into a single coherent territory.

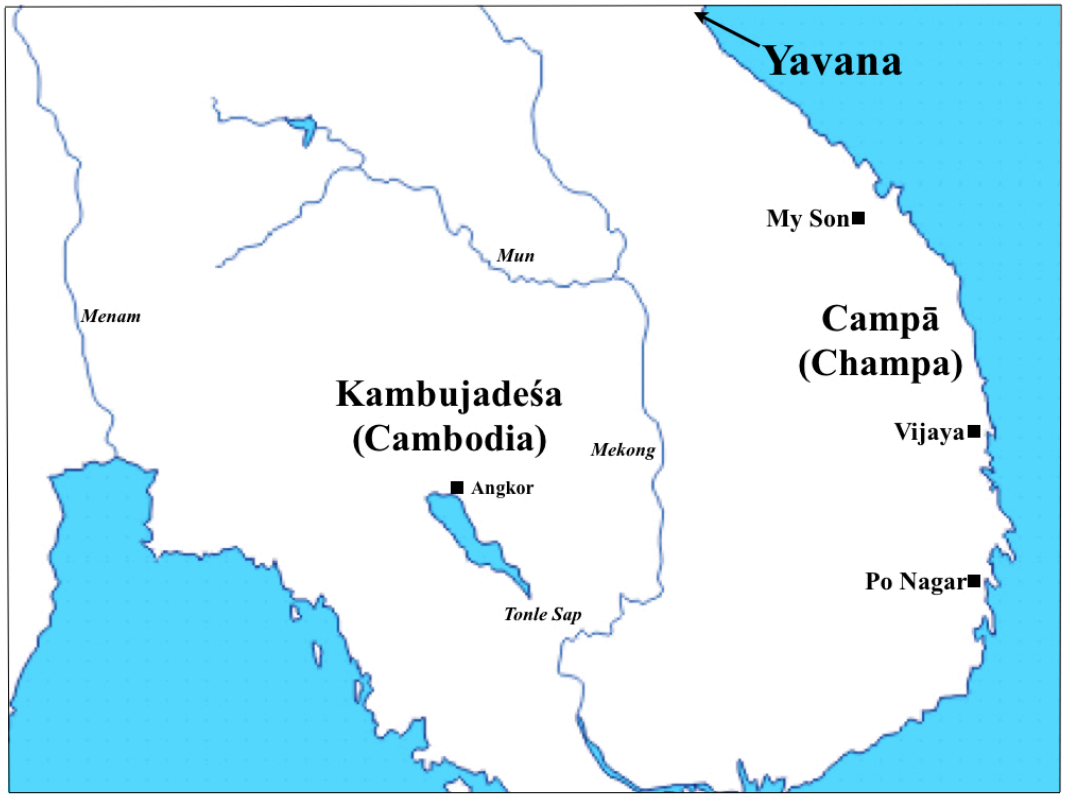

Figure 2. Champa and Yavana. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=southeast_asia_map&num_car=66&lang=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

In the 10th century the Cambodian inscriptions introduce the idea of Champa as a single polity and territory. Two inscriptions, one 10th century and the other 11th, name the country (*deśa* or *viṣaya*) of Champa (*campā*) as Cambodia's eastern frontier.[58] In contrast, the Cham inscriptions speak only of a city or polity (*pura*) of Champa (*campāpura*) in the north that was

[57] Anne-Valérie Schweyer, "Po Nagar de Nha Trang, seconde partie: Le dossier épigraphique," *Aséanie* 15 (2005): 104-105.

[58] *campāviṣaya* in K. 989, Cœdès, *IC* VII, 175, side B, line 1; *campādideśa* in K. 286, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 91, line 12.

just the most powerful of several rival kingdoms on the coast. Perhaps the Cambodian view of its eastern political neighbors as a single territory was not so much a misunderstanding of the region's status as a reflection of Cambodia's own novel ethnic self-understanding projected onto its neighbors. Hence, while for Chams the political standard was the amorphous *maṇḍala* governed by a "king of kings," for Cambodians the polity tended to viewed in territorial ways. In the late 12th century inscriptions Cambodians appear to have had a more nuanced picture of Cham politics, as an inscription of Jayavarman VII mentions two contemporary Cham kings. Another inscription from this period calls Champa *dvīpa cāmpa*, "the Cham land," where *dvīpa* appears to signify a large terrestrial body or region and not necessarily a cohesive political territory.[59] Though Champa failed to fit the territorial model in reality and at times even in Cambodian perception, it was the closest approximation of that model among Cambodia's political rivals before the rise of Siam on the western frontier.

Just as Champa was made to fit the Cambodian political imagination, it was also a factor in shaping that imagination. Prior to the 12th century the struggle between Cambodia and Champa did not have territorial connotations. Though the epigraphy of Cambodia and Champa at this time is replete with examples of military conflict between the two political cultures, the inscriptions give little sense of the actual magnitude of these conflicts. Anne-Valérie Schweyer is probably right to suggest that the attacks boasted about in the inscriptions before the mid-11th century were merely isolated raids rather than "extended regime-threatening incursions."[60] One of these Cham raids occurred in 1056 at the Cambodian port city of Śambhupura along the Mekong, approximately midway between Angkor and My Son;[61] a few years later a Cham inscription records that captives taken from Śambhupura were given to the temple of My Son (see fig. 2).[62] Similarly, defeats of the Chams in the early Angkorian period likely occurred in the intermediary zone between the main centers of Cambodia and Champa where a principal concern of war was not occupation of territory but access to new sources of human labor. However, alongside the struggle for human labor was a conflict over access to trade and hence over land, and the Cham attacks on Śambhupura should certainly be seen in this light. When Suryavarman II targeted the Cham coastal city of Vijaya in the early 12th century in order to more directly access Chinese trade,[63] the goal was undoubtedly to hold a

[59] Cœdès, "Nouvelles données chronologiques et genealogiques sur la dynastie de Mahidhapura," *BEFEO* 29 (1929): 309, line 15.

[60] Anne-Valérie Schweyer, "The Confrontation of the Khmers and Chams in the Bayon Period," in *Bayon: New perspectives*, ed. Joyce Clark (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 54.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 56

[63] Ibid., 57.

strategic geographical position and its surrounding territory. These growing conflicts over territoriy were bound to affect the way Cambodians thought about political sovereignty.

A culture of politicized ethnicity accompanied this growing pattern of conflict. Already by the 11th centuries Cambodians were beginning to refer to the subjects of the kings of Campā on the eastern frontier by the name of Cāmpa (Cham). This can seen in one 10th or 11th century inscription from northwestern Cambodia that refers to an owner of land named Cāmpa Lkai, the first word being the apparent ethnonym and the second word (*lkai*) in the Cham language meaning "male," thus "a male Cham."[64] The strengthening of the initial syllable from *cam* to *cām* indicates a person or people "belonging to" Campā: "the people of Campā." Interestingly, this word, derived from the name of the polity of Campā and signifying Cham ethnicity, is common in Cambodian epigraphy but is unknown in Cham epigraphy. Why were Cambodians more likely than the Chams themselves to use this ethnonym? I believe that Cambodians once again applied their own understanding of political space and belonging, as seen in the term Kambujadeśa, to their political other. This may explain why two alternative ethnonyms *bhārgava* ("people of Bhṛgu) and *bhṛguja* ("descendants of Bhṛgu"), referring to Champa's primordial founder Bhṛgu who was the Cham equivalent to the Khmer Kambu, only appear in the Cambodian inscriptions.[65] Cambodians saw their own world and at least some of their political others in terms of communities of ethnic descent. Hence, it is quite likely that the concept of a Cham ethnic community coextensive with a single polity of Champa was born in Angkorian Cambodia rather than in Champa itself. No doubt this Cambodian notion of a unitary Cham other fed into a growing belief in Khmer distinction and superiority, particularly during times of heightened military conflict between the two regions.

In the late 12th and early 13th centuries the two countries witnessed unprecedented hostilities, including a brief military victory of a Cham king at Angkor and subsequently a Cambodian invasion of Champa and occupation of its port city of Vijaya (see fig. 2). At this time the politicization of ethnic difference became standard royal rhetoric in the art and epigraphy of the Cambodian king, Jayavarman VII. We find, for example, monumental depictions of Khmers fighting Chams in the bas-reliefs of the Bayon and Banteay Chmar. We also read of these battles in the king's inscriptions where the ethnonyms *cāmpa* (Cham), *bhārgava*, and *bhṛguja* are frequently used to refer to a political and ethnic adversary. The Old Khmer inscription K. 227 from Jayavarman VII's temple of Banteay Chmar, dated to the early 13th century, recalls one of these battles between a Cambodian prince Śrīndravarman and the

[64] K. 566, Cœdès, *IC* V, 118, side A, line 10.

[65] See, for example, *bhārgava* in K. 908, George Cœdès, "La stele du Práḥ Khan d'Aṅkor," *BEFEO* 41 (1941): 274, side A, line 57; and *bhṛguja* in K. 692, Cœdès, *IC* I, 236, side C, line 33.

Chams in the "Cham region" (*dvīpa cāmpa*).[66] After suffering a significant defeat in which only 30 of his men survived, the prince led an army of Khmers (*anak khmer*) in a series of battles in "78 places" (*anle bhai piy tap prampiy*) without a single Khmer death before returning heroically to Cambodia (*lvaḥ kamvujadeśa*).[67] The text does not present the conflict as one between the armies of Jayavarman VII and the armies of his adversary to the east; in fact, Jayavarman VII is never mentioned in the text. It is simply a Khmer-Cham conflict. The purpose of the text is to eulogize the prince and several of his bodyguards who died defending him, memorializing the prince's braver acts and his remarkable leadership in preserving the lives of Khmer soldiers, and perhaps by implication Cambodia's sovereignty, in a hostile region of Cham ethnicity. The eulogy of these heroes is only powerful insofar as the reader is assumed to believe in and celebrate the valor of Khmers and the villainy of Chams.

There has been a tendency in recent scholarship to downplay the conflict between Jayavarman VII's Cambodia and Champa in this period to counter a potentially simplistic historical assumption of Khmer-Cham ethnic incommensurability.[68] In some respects this kind of revisionism is welcome if only to help us avoid glossing over the messier details. The Cham inscriptions inform us, for instance, that local Cham princes allied themselves with Jayavarman VII; in one case a Cham prince Vidyānandana helped Jayavarman VII put down a Malyāṅ (the pre-Angkorian Maleṅ) rebellion in Cambodia (see fig. 1).[69] Chams may have even been depicted as mahouts in the Khmer military processions of the Bayon bas-reliefs.[70] Nonetheless, the overall rhetoric of the inscriptions and bas-reliefs of Jayavraman VII emphasizes Khmer-Cham antagonism.[71] Moreover, there is good evidence that Cham participants in the wars of Jayavarman VII in Champa viewed the conflict in the same way.

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[66] Cœdès, "Nouvelles données chronologiques," 309, line 15.

[67] Ibid., 309, lines 27-28.

[68] Thus Claude Jacques writes: ". . . it is wrong to affirm that the Chams were always enemies of the Khmers. . . During the 12th century it's clear to me that certain Cham kingdoms were the enemies of certain Khmer kingdoms, while at the same time, other Cham kingdoms had friendly relations with certain Khmer kings. Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture from the Death of Suryavarman II to the 16th century," in *Bayon: New perspectives*, ed. Joyce Clark (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 35.

[69] Schweyer, "The Confrontation of the Khmer and Chams," 68.

[70] Vittorio Roveda, "Reliefs of the Bayon," in *Bayon: New perspectives*, ed. Joyce Clark (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 287, eastern gallery southern section, "low gallery between towers 23 and 24" (IIIb). No one has attempted to explain why coastal Chams, rather than Cambodia's traditional elephant caretakers the Kuay, should be portrayed as mahouts in Khmer armies.

[71] Vickery notes that the the Chams in the war scenes depicted at the Bayon and Banteay Chmar have been identified "without epigraphic evidence." Michael Vickery, "Champa Revised," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 37, published March 2005, http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/publication_details.asp?pubtypeid=WP&pubid=304 (accessed August 10, 2011), 59.

Three later Cham inscriptions refer to the period starting from Jayavarman VII's first invasion of Vijaya in 1190 and ending with his death around 1222 as the "32-year war."[72] We cannot ignore the implication that the 12th century conflict was perceived by many if not most Chams to be a struggle against Khmer/Cambodian assailants.

Though history "as it actually happened" was certainly more complex, the narrative of Cham-Khmer ethnic war is no mere academic invention. The primary sources themselves say otherwise. Perhaps the rhetoric in these sources masks a more nuanced Cambodian view of the conflict, but we would be mistaken to dismiss rhetoric as historically irrelevant. Emblazoned on the temple bas-reliefs and in the king's inscriptions, the message of Khmer supremacy over the Chams was what the polity wanted its people to think.

Ethnic antagonism was a predictable reaction to certain Angkorian-period political realities in the region, such as the growing power of the Cham political sphere and the occasional Cham incursion into Khmer lands. The message of ethnic war, particularly after the brief of capture of Angkor by the Cham king, Jaya Indravarman, was likely crafted by kings to persuade local powerholders, on whom the kings were dependent for manpower, to equate their own interests with the sovereignty of the country as a whole. This period also witnessed the rise of the so-called Yavana, the people of the Red River Delta of northern Vietnam who only became independent from Tang China in the 10th century (see fig. 2). The use of the term Yavana, the Sanskrit word for "Greeks" (Ionians) and apparently a flexible term for a politicized ethnic adversary in the Sanskritized world beyond India,[73] by Chams and Khmers suggests that polities on the eastern half of mainland Southeast Asia were becoming increasingly integrated around pre-existing ethnic cores. Moreover, the rhetoric of ethnic antagonism with these newly free political players to the northeast was likely a reflection of Cambodia's post-9th-century ethnic imagination. As Khmers began to see themselves as descendants of a certain Kambu whose autonomous land was their common political inheritance, they extended that vision of self-generation and autonomy to others, first to Champa, and then to the "Vietnamese" (Yavana) and others.

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[72] Schweyer, "The Confrontation of the Khmer and Chams," 69.

[73] The Yavana are mentioned alongside the Chams (*cāmpa*) and Burmese (*pukāṃ*) in the late 12th century Preah Khan inscription of Jayavarman VII. See Cœdès, "La stele du Práḥ Khan d'Aṅkor," *BEFEO* 41 (1941): 283, line 67. Claude Jacques notes that Siamese Ayutthaya referred to the people of Tai ethnicity in what is today northern Thailand as *yuan*, no doubt from *yavana*, and he believes that the 12th century *yavana* in the Cambodian inscriptions signifies this group. Claude Jacques, "Deux problèmes poses par la stele de Praḥ Khan K. 908," *Aséanie* 15 (June 2005): 29. The use of the ethnonym *yavana* to refer to the "Vietnamese" in the Cham inscriptions of the 12th century and the retention of *yavana* (or: *yuan*) to mean "Vietnamese" in modern Khmer strongly suggests otherwise.

Ethnic Polity or Nation?

In this chapter I have argued that even though certain group distinctions, perhaps ethnic in character, had existed in earlier centuries, ethnic politics in the Khmer zone of habitation was largely an innovation of the Angkorian period. Early Khmer/Cambodian political identity was inspired by a myth linking the origins of a royal lineage to the primordial ancestor of the greater Khmer ethnic community. Kings who claimed descent from Kambu inherited a territory of felt kinship that was more conceptually durable than the pre-Angkorian realms that consisted of ceremonial centers and multiple subjected city-states. The realization of a Khmer ethnic polity inevitably coincided with the naming of certain ethnic others like the Chams and Yavana ("Vietnamese") who managed for the most part to evade the expansion of Cambodia's frontiers and were believed to inhabit polities of relative territorial and ethnic integrity in their own right.

I have to this point cautiously described Angkorian Cambodia as an "ethnic polity." While this basic terminology articulates an idea of polticized common descent and explains the the antagonistic relationship between Khmers and Chams, it fails to fully account for the territorial dimension of Cambodian identity. After all, the universalistic Neo-Assyrian Empire (10^{th}-7^{th} century BCE) could also be termed an "ethnic polity": it was governed by an at times thin layer of ethnic elites, and these elites traced their origins back to common ancestors—the rulers of the city of Assur. The similarity is superficial, however. Angkorian Cambodia linked territory and ethnicity in the polity's formal name, Kambujadeśa, and in its casual alternative, Khmer Country (*sruk khmer*). In contrast, most of the regions subjected to the Assyrian empire, perhaps apart from the city of Assur (which was not always the Assyrian capital), were distinctly cosmopolitan, tied together not by any sense of territorial co-residence but through coercion of ethnic others and through the dissemination of a (non-Assyrian) Aramaic public culture.[74] It seems that, unlike the Assyrian empire with its pluralistic ethnic hierarchy, Cambodia maintained a significant Khmer territorial core. While the Assyrian Empire was a polity of collected territories ruled by Assyrians, Cambodia was to a great extent a single territorial polity *of* Khmers—like Hasmonean Judea was a single polity of Jews.[75]

The interpretive term that best describes the convergence of territorial and ethnic identity in a political situation like Angkorian Cambodia is "nation." Ethnicity by itself indicates an idea of extended kinship. Nationality, on the other hand, explicitly merges this notion of kinship with the image of a land. The nation is therefore a fictive kin group that is

[74] Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 68-69.

[75] Ibid., 66.

not only believed to descend from an eponymous ancestor but is also defined by common birth and co-residence in an extensive territory—hence, a "territorial community of nativity."[76] I submit that in early Cambodia, this idea of territorial nativity was expressed in the name Kambujadeśa, "the land (*deśa*) of those born (*ja*) of Kambu," and in the 11th century inscription K. 1158 where the provincial Buddhist worshipper writes of his wish to be "(re)born in Kambuja" (*jāto. . . kamvuje*).[77] Cambodia was, in essence, its people's desired homeland.

[76] Steven Grosby, *Nationalism*, 7.

[77] Chirapat Prapandvidya, 28, line 29.

Chapter Three: The Western Frontier

The formation of a Cambodian "national" community had varied implications outside of the polity's territorial core. While political integration in Cambodia's northern region (the Mun River Basin/Northeast Thailand) appears to have coincided with the gradual entrenchment of Khmer ethnic identity, and ethnic antagonism came to define Cambodia's relationship with Champa to the east, the political situation on Cambodia's western frontier during the Angkorian period is more difficult to characterize. The lack of a politicized Mon ethnic community in the region and the presence of petty tributary kingdoms which were only nominally subject to the kings of Angkor created a sense of ambiguity and multiplicity that contrasts with Cambodia's territorial vision of its other frontier regions. Although the Mun River Basin to Cambodia's north and the Mekong Delta to the south were likewise relatively peripheral, the Menam Basin to the west was not clearly part of the perceived Cambodian space even when it was under Cambodia's political sway.

There is also reason to believe that the political situation on the western frontier was especially precarious, with various competitors vying for control over the strategic position between Angkor, the Malay Peninsula, coastal Burma, and the scattered Mon polities to the northwest. Cambodia's influence in the region during the Angkorian period was strongly felt, though direct control was often limited to the city of Lopburi, a frontier garrison town. There were undoubtedly challengers to Cambodian hegemony in the region, and there were probably many more minor polities that acquiesced out of expediency or because there was little to lose in paying some token tribute. While the concept of the expanding and contracting *maṇḍala* seems a poor fit for the relatively uniform political zone of Khmer ethnicity within the Lower Mekong and Mun River basins, it has heuristic value for the fluid situation of "multiple sovereignty" in these contested borderlands.[1]

One consequence of this ambivalent political situation was that from the 12th to 14th centuries the region began to assert its autonomy from Angkor. The Cambodian outpost at Lopburi was one instigator of the east-west struggle, and it is possible that a Mon "kingdom" in the west may have also challenged Angkor's hegemony in the 12th century. The perception of what Cambodia faced on its western frontier was therefore in constant flux as the prospect of a single political adversary like Champa to the east gradually became a reality. Tension between Angkor and this nemesis set the pattern after which Cambodia engaged its centuries-long conflict with Siamese Ayutthaya in the post-Angkorian period.

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[1] Thongchai, 106.

Sūkṣmakāmrāta

The first problem in reconstructing early Cambodia's perception of its western frontier is identifying the Cambodian name for this frontier. It seems to have been called Sūkṣmakāmrāta or Sūkṣmakāmrātaka in the 10th century Baksei Chamkrong (K. 286) and the early 11th century Prasat Ben (K. 989) inscriptions.[2] Unfortunately, this Sanskrit compound and place-name remains unidentified. Although it is not cited as being explicitly in the west in either of these inscriptions, its direction is implied by the position of Cambodia's other named frontiers: China to the north, Champa to the east, and the sea to the south.

In Cœdès' initial translation of K. 286, he proposed that Sūkṣmakāmrātaka was located near Pegu in coastal southern Burma on the basis of his interpretation of the Sanskrit compound.[3] He separated Sūkṣmakāmrātaka into two parts, *sūkṣma* and *kāmrāta*, which he considered together to be an ethnonym or the name of two ethnic groups otherwise unknown. Although he had no explanation for the meaning of these terms, he cited the existence of two ethnic groups in Sanskrit literature that look vaguely similar, the Suhmas and the Karvaṭas, said to reside in the far east of India.[4] Cœdès gave no other reasons for placing Sūkṣmakāmrāta so far to Angkor's west, but his assumption was not unreasonable. Cambodia's imagined territory was vast, delimited by two major political cultures to the east and north, respectively Champa and the southernmost province of the greater Chinese empire (northern Vietnam and its hinterland). Cambodia's boundaries with these polities were "thick" frontiers—large gray zones of montagnards, the transient, and the politically unaffiliated.[5] A boundary to the west beyond the Tenasserim Hills separating modern Thailand and Burma seems consistent with these other relatively distant frontiers.

In contrast, Claude Jacques has proposed that Sūkṣmakāmrāta was much closer to the Cambodian center. Observing that the inscription fails to specify whether this boundary was a polity or something else entirely, Jacques assumes that it was a mountain range (even though a word for "mountain" is absent in the compound).[6] He separates the compound, no doubt correctly, into two parts: *sūkṣmaka* for *sūkṣma,* "fine" or "subtle," and *āmrāta*, which Jacques takes to be "a name of a mango."[7] Curiously, from these two words Jacques makes a semantic

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[2] For the reference in K. 286, see Cœdès, "L'inscription de Baksei Caṃkroṅ," *Journal Asiatique* 10, no. 13 (1909): 491 (line 12 of the northjamb, verse XXVII); and Cœdès, *IC* IV, 91. For K. 989, see Cœdès, *IC* VII, 175, side B, line 1, verse XXX.

[3] Cœdès, "L'inscription de Baksei Caṃkroṅ," 499n1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] On the "thick lines" of early Southeast Asian boundaries, see Thongchai, 75 and 79.

[6] Yoshiaki Ishizawa, Claude Jacques, and Khin Sok, *Manuel d'épigraphie du Cambodge, Vol. 1* (Paris: EFEO, 2007), 85n60.

[7] Ibid.

leap, linking *sūkṣmaka* to the term *sūkṣma elā*, which signifies a small (*sūkṣma*) kind of cardamom, and associating *āmrāta* with the name of a mountain in the *Rāmāyana*. He suggests that Sūkṣmakāmrāta could therefore have meant "Cardamom Mountain(s)," which is the modern name of a mountain range in southwestern Cambodia.[8] I disagree with this identification for three reasons. First, *sūkṣma* by itself would very rarely mean "cardamom," and *āmrāta* is certainly nothing like a general word for "mountain." If the compound were supposed to mean "Cardamom Mountain(s)," *vnaṃ kravāñ* in Old Khmer, would we not expect a straightforward translation into Sanskrit (such as *elāgiri*)? Secondly, it seems unlikely that Cambodians would claim a distant boundary with China while naming a small mountain range to the south of the Tonle Sap lake and within modern Cambodian territory as the country's western frontier. Finally, the early 10th century K. 286 states that the late 9th century territory of Yaśovarman I was bounded by Sūkṣmakāmrāta. One of this king's digraphic inscriptions (K. 479) comes from the coastal Thai city of Chanthaburi to the southwest of (and hence beyond) the Cardamom Range.[9] Thus, we can safely assume that these mountains were not believed to represent the western limit of this king's domain.

Even if Jacques' identification of the place-name Sūkṣmakāmrāta is mistaken, his correct division of the compound into *sūkṣmaka* and *āmrāta* may eventually aid us in identifying the place-name. One possibility is that if *sūkṣmaka* is synonymous with *sūkṣma*, "subtle" or "small," an adjective, it may have served to modify *āmrāta*, a noun, which is not merely "the name of a mango" but specifically signifies the hog plum, the genus of fruits called *spondias*. It is tempting to take *sūkṣmakāmrāta* as a Sanskrit translation of an Old Khmer toponym meaning "the small hog plum." The equivalent of *āmrāta* in modern Khmer is *mkāk*, while there exists another variety of hog plum called *bon*, probably *von* in Old Khmer. However, there is no evidence of this or any other toponym meaning hog plum or small hog plum in the Old Khmer corpus.[10]

I propose that Sūkṣmakāmrāta was not a Sanskrit translation of a Khmer place-name but was rather the name of a Hindu deity or shrine located on Cambodia's western frontier. I believe that the two parts of the compound should be understood as two nouns in apposition: "Āmrāta (the Hog Plum) which is [or 'who is'] Sūkṣmaka ('the Subtle One')." In other words, the

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[8] Ishizawa, Jacques, and Sok, 85.

[9] Cœdès, *IC* VIII, 156-157.

[10] Cœdès identified what he thought to be a toponym *von* (i.e., *bon*) in the name of a certain "Vāp Śivavrāhma from Von" (*vāp śivavrāhma ta von*) in the 10th century K. 255. George Cœdès and Pierre Dupont, "Les inscriptions du Prasat Kok Po," *BEFEO* 37 (1937): 385, line 6. However, on close inspection the rubbing probably reads *vāp śivavrāhma taṃvon*, "Vāp Śivavrāhma of *taṃvon*." As Cœdès indicates, *taṃvon* is written over *vāp śivavrāhma*, apparently as an afterthought or a revision. It may actually correspond to the end of line 5 or the beginning of line 6. I assume that *taṃvon* was the name of a certain family of royal functionaries; see K. 175 E, line 11.

compound stands for a deity or shrine with two interchangeable names. We know that Āmrāta or Āmrātakeśvara ("Lord of the Hog Plum") was a popular deity in pre-Angkorian Cambodia.[11] This deity had its origins in India where its shrine was one of many important Śaivite pilgrimage destinations. According to the *Prāṇtoṣaṇī Tantra,* the name of the deity at the *pīṭha* ("holy seat" or pilgrimage site) of Āmrātakapura (or Āmrātakeśvara) was Sūkṣmā (feminine) or Sūkṣma (masculine).[12] The *Devī Gīta*, which contains a long list of important female deities in early India, also names a shrine to a goddess Sūkṣmā "in Āmrātakeśvara."[13] Hence, the Hindu textual tradition confirms that Sūkṣma or Sūkṣmā ("the Subtle One"), written "Sūkṣmaka" in the Cambodian inscriptions, was closely associated with or was another name for Āmrātakeśvara. The name used in Angkorian Cambodia for this deity, "Sūkṣmakāmrāta," would seem to be a simple amalgam of two interchangeable names.

If we equate the Angkorian form Sūkṣmakāmrāta with the pre-Angkorian Āmrātakeśvara, we arrive at a good candidate for a shrine and polity that may have represented a western boundary in early Cambodian's territorial imagination. A Sanskrit copper plate inscription from the prominent early urban center of U Thong in the western part of the Menam Basin, dated to the mid to late 7th century, names an apparently local King Harṣavarman who was a grandson of the pre-Angkorian king Īśānavarman I.[14] This Harṣavarman made donations to the god Āmrātakeśvara (*śrīmadamrātakeśvare*). The inscription does not say explicitly that this deity was located at the site of the inscription, and even if it did, the portable nature of copper plate inscription suggests that it could have originally come from somewhere other than U Thong. Nonetheless, the best guess is that Harṣavarman made his donations to a Śaivite deity called Āmrātakeśvara at U Thong. The archaeological evidence does not contradict this hypothesis, as several Hindu objects, including liṅgas, have been found there.[15] I propose that Angkorian Sūkṣmakāmrāta may indicate a prominent shrine to Āmrātakeśvara at U Thong, and that a kingdom centered at or in the vicinity of U Thong came to represent for Khmer kings the western limit of their domain (see fig. 3).

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[11] On this deity, see Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, *Les religions brahmaniques dans l'ancien Cambodge d'après l'épigraphie et l'iconographie* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1961), 50-53; Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 149; T. S. Maxwell, "Religions at the Time of Jayavarman VII," in *Bayon: New Perspectives,* ed. Joyce Clark (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 112-114.

[12] Dines Chandra Sircar, trans., *The Śākta pīṭhas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private, 1973), 81.

[13] See C. Mackenzie Brown, *The Devi Gita, The Song of the Goddess: A Translation Annotation, and Commentary* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998), 246.

[14] Cœdès, "Nouvelles données épigraphiques sur l'histoire de l'Indochine centrale," *Journal Asiatique* 246, no. 2 (1958): 129-131. It is probably not coincidence that another of Īśānavarman's grandsons became king of Champa (*campāpura*, i.e., the region of My Son) in the 7th century.

[15] Robert Brown, *The Dvāravatī Wheels of the Law and the Indianization of South East Asia* (London, New York and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 51.

Figure 3. The Menam Basin. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=thailand_map&num_car=65 8&lang=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

Identifying Sūkṣmakāmrāta with the shrine of a pre-Angkorian deity in the Menam Basin would suggest that a territorial conception of the royal domain had very early beginnings, probably even in a period before the idea of Cambodia had taken root. Whereas Cambodia (*kamvujadeśa*, "the land of those born of Kambu") was by definition the territory of an ethnic community implicitly surrounded by ethnic others, the domain of Yaśovarman I in the 10th century K.286 was said to be bounded by a political other to the west that had no ethnic connotations. Indeed, if Īśānavarman I's grandson was king in the vicinity of Sūkṣmakāmrāta in the mid-7th century, then it is possible that the ruler on the western frontier was himself "Khmer." The same can be said of the eastern frontier of Champa, or "Campāpura," where another of Īśānavarman I's grandsons, Vikrāntavarman, became king in the mid-7th century when there was not yet a political concept of Cham ethnicity.[16] As I argued in the previous chapter, ethnicity had not yet become a dominant factor in a 7th century political culture marked by broad interregional family alliances. Significantly, while Cambodia's relationship with Champa (Campāpura) came to take on ethnic significance in the

[16] Finot, "Les inscriptions de Mi-son," 923.

following centuries, the western frontier of Sūkṣmakāmrāta continued to follow the pre-Angkorian pattern.

The Mons

The relative lack of overt ethnic politics on the western frontier throughout most of the Angkorian period was not due to an absence of non-Khmer communities in the region. The Menam Valley or what is today Central Thailand was largely populated by ethnic Mons throughout this period. Three Cambodian inscriptions of the 10th-11th centuries confirm that the ethnonym "Mon," *Rāmanya* in Sanskrit and *Rmañ* in Old Khmer, designated a group of people residing in the west. Cambodians do not appear to have recognized the Mons as a distinct political community like the Chams, however. Instead, the western region seems to have been viewed as a collection of petty Mon kingdoms and transplanted Khmer colonies, all of which were governed, however indirectly, by representatives of the Cambodian king.

Today the ethnonym Mon refers to an ethno-linguistic group residing mostly in coastal southern Burma as well as in parts of central and southern Thailand. The Mon language is one of the first vernacular languages found in Southeast Asian epigraphy, and the use of Old Mon in 7th-8th century central and northeast Thailand and throughout Burma in the Pagan period suggests that Mon was an early prestige language in the region. Unfortunately, the story of Mon expansion remains mysterious. The largest early concentration of Mon inscriptions have been found in central Thailand in urban Buddhist sites near the coast. Several short inscriptions mention a polity called Dvāravatī, a name that has been applied generally to the political culture of the 6th-8th centuries in the region. A similar Buddhist culture using the Mon language was also present in the Khorat Plateau and Northeast Thailand, the descendants of which continue to speak the Nyah Kur language, a relative of Old Mon. There is no evidence of any direct political relationship between these regions, however, and it is not known if Khmers or others considered them to be part of the same ethnic family.

We cannot say for certain that the Mons themselves had any conception of a Mon territory or nascent Mon polity during the Angkorian period. Terms for "Monland" (*rāmañadesa* or *raḥ rman*) only appear in the Middle Mon inscriptions of the 15th century,[17] and only in the context of post-Pagan Lower Burma when Mons began to carve out a newly ethnicized political community in that region independent from the Burmans of Upper Burma.[18] It is tempting to suppose that Mons also thought of the Menam Basin as a "Monland"

[17] Harry Shorto, *A Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions: From the Sixth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 317-318.

[18] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. I*, 130; see also Aung-Thwin, 47-49.

distinct from the Khmer empire, but expressions of pan-ethnic aspirations are entirely lacking in the sources.

In fact, the earliest references to Mons are found in Khmer, rather than Mon, inscriptions. One 7th century Khmer inscription from southern Cambodia seems to list a number of "Mon slaves" (*kñuṃ rmañ*);[19] this is probably the earliest example of the ethnonym in any language. By the Angkorian period the Khmers clearly associated the Mons with their western frontier. A late 10th century inscription from Ta Phraya in eastern Thailand near the Cambodian border lists a land's southern boundary as being "the Mon road" (*phlu rmmañ*).[20] This was undoubtedly a road originating in the east, probably at Angkor, and extending to the west into central Thailand. The existence of this so-called "Mon road," perhaps the route by which Khmer armies traveled westward, suggests that there may have been an informal conception of a Mon region on Cambodia's western frontier, though any sense of a single geographical unity was offset by the region's perceived plurality and subservience to Angkor.

No doubt Cambodians were aware that the Mons could become potential political adversaries on the western frontier much like the Chams were in the east. A 10th century Sanskrit inscription from the reign of Rājendravarman suggests that this king had recently defeated armies of both ethnic groups: "Launching his arrows left and right like another Rāma, he conquered in battle the Mons (*Rāmaṇya*), the Chams (*Campā*), etc., powerful like demons."[21] The text implies that the Mons and the Chams came from opposite directions ("left and right"), which would seem to confirm again that the Mons originated in the west. More interestingly, it informs us that the Mons had the capacity to resist their would-be Cambodian overlords.

Nonetheless, the Mons and their region to the west of Cambodia were never perceived to be a single independent territory or political unit, in contrast to Champa which 10th century Cambodians consistently placed outside of Cambodian territory. Even if the Cham populations were occasionally subjugated, there is no evidence that Cham territory in its perceived totality was ever considered a part of the Cambodian domain. The same cannot be said of the Mon region. A recently discovered Sanskrit inscription from northwestern Cambodia, K. 1198, informs us that, at least by the early 11th century, the Mons and their lands had become subject to the Cambodian king. The patron of the inscription, a royal official named Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman, is said to have become their "governor":

> XXIII. First this warrior was assigned by the king to be the governor of the Mons (*rāmaṇya*) who are found in the west.

[19] K. 76, Cœdès, *IC* V, 8, line 2.

[20] Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions*, 127.

[21] K. 872, Cœdès, *IC* V, 99, verse VII, line 13.

XXIV. This strategist, subduing them by means of force and with clever strategies according to the desire of his master (i.e., the king), collected a large amount of taxes.[22]

Aside from making it explicit that the Mons lived to Cambodia's west, these verses suggest that the Mons were subjected to some kind of Cambodian governance. What did the subjecting of the Mons to Cambodian rule entail? Did it result in the creation of a series of semi-autonomous Mon principalities that sent occasional tribute to Angkor? Or did it create something like a western dependency in the Mon-inhabited region, managed by Khmer overlords and gradually peopled with new Khmer settlers? Perhaps both scenarios existed simultaneously in different parts of the region. On the one hand, Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman duty as a tax collector may have involved more symbolic gestures than coercive measures—receiving tribute from the rulers of independent Mon cities and issuing relatively empty threats when they failed to comply. On the other hand, the fact that he was assigned to be the "governor of the Mons" may hint at a relatively direct administrative relationship—a "colonial" relationship as opposed to a tributary one. Two later verses in this same inscription, seemingly describing Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman's role as governor of the Mons, would seem to confirm the latter interpretation:

XXXVII. With the vices of the Kaliyuga, Lopburi (*lavapūr*) [had become] a forest, its beauty lost, all of its splendors destroyed, teeming with savage beasts such as tigers, as terrible as a cremation ground.

XXXVIII. The king commanded Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman to restore the western countries (*viṣaya*) [or: districts]—abandoned and obscure, completely lost for a long time during the Kaliyuga, their habitations overgrown with trees—to how they were before, making them full and prosperous once again.[23]

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[22] *ādau yas tena bhūbhartrā paścimāśāvakāśināṃ*
rāmanyānām adhīśatve niyukto yuddhadohadaḥ ||
yathābhilaṣitaṃ bhartur vvikramāntair nayair nayī
yas tān nītvā vaśe nekān karaughān kṛty akārayat ||
I thank Arlo Griffiths for the transcription of verses XXIII-XXIV. Arlo Griffiths, "Zolang als Zon en Maan nog Schijnen [As Long as the Sun and the Moon still Shine]," paper presented at Leiden University, June 2, 2006, 20n29. Compare my translation to Griffiths' on page 8. K. 1198 has yet to be officially edited and published in its entirety. Saveros Pou translates the Khmer portions of K. 1198 (called "Ka. 18") in Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions*, 240-260.

[23] *kāleyadoṣair lavapūr aranyaṃ*
pranaṣṭarūpā hatasarvvaśobhā
vyāghrādibhir vyālamṛgaiḥ prakīrṇṇā

We can probably assume that the "western countries" restored by Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman are cities like Lopburi that were inhabited by the Mons who, according to verse XXIII, were "found in the west." It seems that Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman was in charge of repopulating these districts and making them economically viable, "full and prosperous," again. This may have required the forced movement of Mons into the region's urban districts so they could be closely observed and, as verse XXIV indicates, efficiently taxed and conscripted. The contrasting images of death and destruction in the long dark age or Kaliguya and prosperity in a renewed golden age is a poetic expression of the material benefits, from the perspective of the Cambodian elite, of a reestablished political order.

An interesting problem posed by this inscription is whether this event was the first subjection of the "western countries" of the Mons or if it suggests a reimposition of Cambodian authority. One may be tempted to interpret Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman's text to mean that Suryavarman I, with Laksmipativarman as his proxy, conquered the abandoned region for the first time. In this interpretation, when the Khmers discovered the Mon cities in the jungle, they opted to restore these ancient cities of their neighbors to the west and revitalize a lost Mon civilization. However, it is possible that the Khmers were simply restoring order in recently unruly province. We have seen that Yaśovarman I was said to have ruled as far west as Sūkṣmakāmrāta, which may have been located at U Thong or in that general region of the western Menam basin. It seems entirely feasible that Rajendravarman's defeat of the Mons in the 10th century could have allowed him to claim the same extensive territory in the eastern half of the basin. The above passage of K. 1198 seems to support the latter interpretation. The "long" dark age of the Kaliyuga cited in the text may indicate, with some hyperbole, the violent decade when Suryavarman I and Jayaviravarman were fighting for the exclusive claim to the Cambodian throne, during which time Cambodia's dependents on the periphery (i.e., the Mons) were able to flee temporarily from the population centers under direct Khmer control. The Sdok Kak Thom inscription (1052 CE) informs us that many *sruk*, or habitations, were abandoned in western Cambodia "when [Suryavarman I] conscripted his troops" during this

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śmaśānabhūmer api bhīmarūpā ||
sarvve śūnyatamāś ciraṃ kaliyuge naṣṭā dhruvaṃ vāruṇāḥ
saṃrūḍhadrumarāśayo pi viṣayā rājñā niyuktenā ye
śrīlakṣmīpativarmmaṇā kila punaḥ kartuṃ yathāpūrvvakaṃ
te kṛtvādiyuge yathātibharitan nitās samṛddhiṃ punaḥ ||

Griffiths, 20n31, verses XXXVII-XXXVIII. Compare my translation to Griffiths' on page 8. Griffiths observes that these two verses are placed within artificial brackets in the inscription. Griffiths, 9. Though these brackets are curious, they do not raise any questions about the passage's authenticity.

civil war.[24] When the war was over, Suryavarman I may have sent his generals out to trouble areas, including Lopburi and the region of the Mons, to reestablish Angkorian Cambodia's territorial claims and possibly to herd slaves and foreign subjects back into contained urban areas where they could be managed more effectively by the Cambodian center.[25]

This pattern of exploitation was probably intensified in certain parts of the western frontier region due to the dynamic of Khmer-Mon ethnic confrontation. It is also possible that some of the "western countries" on the periphery were allowed to keep to themselves but were nevertheless required to pay a certain amount of tribute to Suryavarman I (via Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman) as symbolic recognition of Cambodian sovereignty. However we choose to characterize the political situation in this region, it seems reasonable to suggest that its ambivalent relationship to the Cambodian center was unique. The Menam Basin was part of the extensive Cambodian royal domain, but it wasn't part of the old ethnic core that gave Angkorian Cambodia its distinctive unity and identity.

Lopburi

Watching over this semi-colonized Mon region were the Khmer inhabitants of Lopburi, the preeminent Cambodian city in the west and the first city restored by Lakṣmīpativarman in the early 11th century. Lopburi was something like a frontier garrison town, or in the words of Hiram Woodword, more "an outpost of Khmer culture rather than a true extension."[26] Until its fall to the armies of Ayutthaya in the late 14th century, the region around Lopburi was the focus of Cambodian expansion and, outside of Angkor, a symbol of Cambodia's imperial identity. Nonetheless, it also came to be something of an internal nemesis, striking out independently of Angkor at times and perhaps asserting its own authority over Angkor at others.

The history of Lopburi extends back to the earliest period of Mon urban culture in the Menam Basin. The city rests on the Lopburi River 50 km. north-northeast of Ayutthaya and about 120 km. north of modern-day Bangkok (see fig. 3). Although it was proximate to the coast, it was also far enough north to be accessible to the Khorat Plateau to the east along with any upriver polities further north. Therefore, its location would have been strategically ideal for mainland polities concerned with controlling the mobility of goods and people in the region. By the 7th century Lopburi was clearly within the Mon cultural sphere of "Dvāravatī"

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[24] *kāla vraḥ pāda nirvvāṇapada krīdā vala*. See side D, line 46, of K. 235 in Pierre Dupont and George Cœdès, "Les stèles de Sdok Kak Thom, Phnom Sandak et Prah Vihar," *BEFEO* 43 (1943-46): 90.

[25] On the forced resettlement of conquered populations in early Southeast Asian politics, see Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 120.

[26] Hiram Woodward, *The Art and Architecture of Thailand* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill N.V., 2003), 135.

known for its Mon inscriptions and Buddhist art, though it is unknown to what extent a Dvāravatī polity governed the region round about. While 7th century silver medals found at Nakhon Pathom to the southeast refer to a "lord of Śrī Dvāravatī," similar medals from the area of U Thong mention the polity of "Lavapurā" (i.e., Lopburi).[27] It is likely that Lopburi was one of several competing Mon centers in the Menam Basin in the so-called Dvāravatī Period of the 7th century.[28]

The date of the first Cambodian occupation of Lopburi remains unknown. Extrapolating from the above discussion of Cambodia's border with Sūkṣmakāmrāta, it is possible that Yaśovarman I claimed the Lopburi region in his sweeping territorial vision of Cambodia. While no inscriptions or constructions of this king have been found in the city, the temple of Prang Khaek has been compared to the early 10th century Baksei Chamkrong temple at Angkor.[29] Unfortunately, no inscriptions from Lopburi can be conclusively dated to the 10th century. The inscription of Lakṣmīpativarman cited above suggests that Lopburi had at least been a nominal Cambodian dependency in the 10th century before the civil war of the first decade of the 11th century, after which the Mon population was restored to the city and a Khmer government was reinstated. In any event, the presence of the Khmers in Lopburi by the 11th century reign of Suryavarman I is confirmed by a Khmer inscription from the vicinity of Lopburi dated 1025 CE.[30]

If 11th century Lopburi was a Cambodian garrison town with a majority Mon population, a very different demographic situation than what we find in the ethnic Khmer core, it does not necessarily follow that the structure of administration in the area was unique. In one inscription perhaps datable to the 11th century we find reference to elite titles common to inscriptions from throughout the greater Cambodian polity such as *mratāñ*, *chloñ*, *vāp*, and *khloñ*.[31] Notably absent are the Mon titles found in inscriptions of Northeast Thailand, which may suggest that Lopburi's local rulers, like Lakṣmīpativarman "governor of the Mons," were Khmers who had been hand-picked by the king to ensure loyalty to the crown in a potentially volatile frontier zone. One title found in two fragmentary inscriptions, the *tamrvac viṣaya* or "district inspector," supports this idea of relatively direct Khmer governance.[32] Though these inscriptions cannot be definitely dated, the presence of the title *tamrvac* may suggest an early

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[27] J. J. Boeles, "A Note on the Ancent City called Lavapura, *Journal of the Siam Society* 55 (1967): 113-114.

[28] Robert Brown lists five cities cited in the early Mon inscriptions of the region: Dvāravati, Lavapurā, Taṅgur, Śāmbūka, and Anurādhapura. See Brown, 55.

[29] Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 142.

[30] K. 410. George Cœdès, *Receuil des Inscriptions du Siam: 2. Inscriptions de Dvāravatī, de Śrīvijaya et de Lavo* (Bangkok: Bangkok Times Press, 1929), 21-23.

[31] K. 703 in Cœdès, *Receuil des Inscriptions du Siam: 2*, 26-27.

[32] Ibid., 6, line 2; and K. 412, ibid., 30, line 4.

11th century date during the reign of Suryavarman I, as this was the title of the officials who swore a loyalty oath to this king and were assigned to various local districts throughout Cambodia as his direct representatives.[33]

This method of highly centered control was extended to the administration of local religion. Inscription K. 410 from Lopburi records a royal edict of Suryavarman I commanding the various forest ascetics of the area, including Śaivites, Mahāyānists, and Sthavira Buddhists, to offer sacrifices (*tapas)* on the king's behalf, and prescribing punishment for those who interrupt the ascetics in performance of this duty.[34] The edict suggests that even though Lopburi had a relatively diverse religious landscape, no group was exempt from the maintenance of the royal cult. It is tempting to see in the establishment of this cult an effort to counterbalance perceived loyalties to local religious traditions and communities which could potentially transform into unwanted political alternatives. In another inscription, K.412, several provincial officials are said to have participated in the consecration of a local deity named Vraḥ Kamrateṅ Añ Paramavāsudeva. As part of this ceremony, dancers and musicians were sent from the temple of "the god in Lopburi" (*vraḥ kaṃluṅ sruk lvo*) to perform daily services on behalf of this new local deity.[35] A possible implication of this otherwise ordinary detail of a temple's foundation is that the Khmer rulers of Lopburi took special care to populate the various cults of the surrounding region with servants of the main royal cult centered in the provincial capital.

While this direct, centripetal approach to governing Lopburi in the Menam Basin may have had the intended short-term effect of consolidating the authority of the kings of Angkor in the region, in the long term the concentration of provincial power in Lopburi may have better served the agents of local autonomy. According to the historical traditions of 16th century Haripuñjaya, Lopburi during the Angkorian period was Khmer (at least in terms of the language of its elite) and the main force to be reckoned in the region; and it appears that this semi-legendary Lopburi, though nominally "Cambodian,"[36] was distinguished from the original polity of Cambodia centered at Angkor. Of course, these chronicle traditions are far from accurate history, but they likely reflect a certain political reality in the late Angkorian period. During times of weakness at the Angkorian center Lopburi was the *de facto* political actor on Cambodia's western frontier.

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[33] K. 292, Cœdès, *IC* III, 205-210.

[34] Cœdès, *Receuil des Inscriptions du Siam: 2*, 22-23.

[35] Cœdès, *Receuil des Inscriptions du Siam: 2*, 30, lines 9-12.

[36] In the *Cāmadevīvaṃsa* of Haripuñjaya, a prince of Lopburi is said to have traveled through the region of present-day northern Thailand with his army; in the process he supposedly named several sites in the region in "the Cambodian language" (*kambhojabhāsa*). The toponyms do appear to be Khmer in origin. See George Cœdès, "Documents sur l'histoire politique et religieuse du Laos occidental," *BEFEO* 25 (1925): 152 and 168.

By the early 12th century Lopburi was in a position to assert a measure of independence from Angkor. A tribute mission from Lopburi arrived in Song-Dynasty China under its own name, Luo-hu (羅斛), in the year 1115 CE.[37] The Song records are silent about this Luo-hu for the remaining first half of the 12th century during the long reign of Suryavarman II, though it has been assumed that the depiction of the "armies of Lopburi" (*vala lvo*) in the military procession of a king named Paramaviṣṇuloka in the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat prove that the city was no longer independent during Suryavarman II's reign.[38] Whatever the case may be, Lopburi did not send a mission to China again until 1155, probably after Suryavarman II's death. Significantly, the Song records state that this mission originated in "Chen-la Luo-ho" (Cambodia-Lopburi).[39] The meaning of this apparent compound is unclear. Does it signify an independent Lopburi, still culturally "Cambodian" but now politically separate from Angkor? Or does it mean that Cambodia *was* Lopburi—in other words, that Lopburi on the western frontier had become Cambodia's new capital in the 1150s? A final possibility is that "Chen-la Luo-ho" was not a compound at all, but signified "Cambodia and Lopburi" as two separate polities.[40]

To my knowledge, the possibility that Cambodia was governed from Lopburi for a short time between the reigns of Suryavarman II and Jayavarman VII has never been explored. In fact, there is intriguing evidence that a King Tribhuvanādityavarman from Lopburi may have succeeded in shifting Cambodia's center briefly to its western periphery. We learn about the origin of this obscure king in one of the Prasat Chrung inscriptions of Jayavarman VII in the late 12th or early 13th century.[41] In this verse the author is explaining why Jayavarman VII decided to build the massive defensive walls around his city of Angkor Thom. Jayavarman VII was concerned about the recent success of usurpers coming from both the western and eastern frontiers, as seen in my proposed translation of this verse:

pūrvvaṃ śrīdharaṇīndravarmmanṛpateś śrīsūryyvarmmā vinā
rakṣāṃ rājyam aharyudhaiva jagṛhe bhartur yaśovarmmaṇaḥ
bhūpād etya lavodāyāt tribhuvanādityaś ca tasmād api

[37] Geoff Wade, "An Early Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, 900-1300 CE," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no. 2 (June 2009): 247.

[38] This inference is based on the assumption that Paramaviṣṇuloka was the posthumous name of Suryavarman II and that Angkor Wat was this king's mortuary temple.

[39] Wolters, "Tāmbraliṅga," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 21, no. 1 (1958): 605-606.

[40] Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors in the 15th century," in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor*, ed. Geoff Wade and Sun Laiche (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), 282.

[41] This is the stela from the southwest Prasat Chrung, K. 288.

cāmpendro jayaindravarmmavidito vīryyāvalepād iti.[42]

> Formerly Sūryavarman [II] seized the kingdom from King Dharaṇīndravarman without resistance in a day-long battle; Tribhuvanāditya, having come from Lopburi (*etya lavodayāt*), [seized the kingdom] from his master King Yaśovarman [II]; and the king of the Chams named Jaya Indravarman [seized the kingdom] from that one [i.e., Tribhuvanāditya], arrogant in his valor.

This proposed translation may significantly alter our understanding of the role of Lopburi in the latter half of the 12th century. In his own transcription and translation of this passage, Cœdès did not observe the reference to Lopburi.[43] Jacques recognizes the reference, but he translates the section concerning Tribhunāditya to mean: "To his protector King Yaśovarman who was coming back from Lopburi [Lavodaya], Tribhuvanāditya did the same thing [i.e., seized the kingdom from him]."[44] Elaborating on this translation, Jacques proposes that Yaśovarman was returning from a campaign in Lopburi when his servant Tribhuvanāditya took advantage of the king's absence and seized the capital. In fact, the verse says that it was Tribhuvanāditya who came from Lopburi, probably accompanied by a hostile force from Cambodia's western frontier.[45] Hence, I believe that a powerful internal enemy from Lopburi seized the Cambodian throne in the mid-12th century.

Who was this usurper named Tribhuvanāditya from Lopburi? Cœdès demonstrated the likelihood that this Tribhuvanāditya is the same individual as a certain King Tribhuvanādityavarman who, according to three inscriptions, reigned in the years 1166-67 CE. One inscription relates the donation of a gold plate (on which the inscription is written) by "[Vraḥ Pāda (?)] Kamrateṅ Añ Tribhuvanādityavarmmadeva to the god of Liṅgaparvvata." This plate was found in southern Vietnam alongside another seemingly contemporaneous plate

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[42] Claude Jacques' transcription corrects the erroneous forms in Cœdès' original transcription of line 30, *bhūmā daityatamojayāt* to *bhūpād etya lavodayāt*. See Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture from the Death of Suryavarman II to the 16th century," in *Bayon: New Perspectives*, ed. Joyce Clark (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 38. Having examined the rubbing and the stone, I agree with Jacques' transcription, which is reproduced here.

[43] Cœdès, *IC* IV, 219, verse CVIII, lines 29-30.

[44] Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer culture," 38.

[45] Jacques' translation assumes that the agent of the clause *etya lavodayāt*, "having come from Lavodaya," is the king Yaśovarman. This would be tempting given the word order and the fact that a gerund (*etya)*, being indeclinable, does not need to be taken with an agent in the nominative case as would an active finite verb. However, the gerund generally represents the verb of a relative clause in a multiple clause sentence with a finite verb. In this case, the finite verb implied in the sentence is *jagṛhe*, "he seized," an active verb which can only be construed with an agent in the nominative case. The agent of both the main verb and the gerund in the sentence is in the nominative, *tribhuvanādityaḥ*, while Yaśovarman is in the ablative (*yaśovarmmaṇaḥ*).

naming a deity Śrī Tribhuvaneśvara. The second inscription is dated 1166 CE (1088 *śaka*), and there is every reason to believe that the king in the first inscription was reigning in that year.[46] This date has been confirmed by a third inscription of unknown origin, written on a bronze vessel, which says that the vessel was given by Vraḥ Pāda Kamrateṅ Añ Śrī Tribhuvanādityavarmmadeva in 1167 CE (1089 *śaka*) to the god of Chpār Ransi.[47] The typical Angkorian royal title and the near certainty of the date confirm that a king by this name was reigning in the 1160s CE.

Many questions about Tribhuvanādityavarman's Cambodian regime remain unanswered. If this king did in fact reign in the years 1166-67, how long before these dates did he inhabit the throne at Angkor? One possibility is that the tribute mission sent by "Cambodia-Lopburi" in 1155 marked the beginning of Tribhuvanādityavarman's reign, and that he ruled from Lopburi;[48] this would mean that the king reigned for over a decade at least until 1167, the year of his last dated inscription. Another possibility is that Cambodia-Lopburi's mission to China in 1155 occurred before the rise of Tribhuvanādityavarman, in which case the mission would have merely been a sign of Lopburi's autonomy from the part of Cambodia still subject to Angkor and governed by Yaśovarman II. Tribhuvanādityavarman's attack on Angkor may have only occurred later in the 1160s, after which he likely ruled from Angkor. I prefer this interpretation because the context of the Prasat Chrung inscription implies that each of the Cambodian kings whose power was usurped in the 12th century before the reign of Jayavarman VII were defeated due to the lack of a defensive wall around the city, which suggests that each of these kings, including Tribhuvanādityavarman, ruled from Angkor. In any case, whether Tribhuvanādityavarman ascended the Cambodian throne in 1155 or in the 1160s, and whether he ruled from Lopburi or Angkor, we can assume that during his reign Lopburi was an integral part of this king's Cambodia.

Knowing that Tribhuvanādityavarman came from Lopburi helps us make sense of his anomalous name. It suggests the influence of a political tradition beyond Angkor, namely the dynastic tradition of Pagan Burma to Lopburi's immediate west where a series of kings went by the name of Tribhuvanāditya from the 11th century onwards.[49] Tribhuvanadityavarman (or Tribhuvanādityavarmadeva) seems to have combined the distinctly Burmese title with the Khmer *–varmadeva*, reflecting his origin in the territorial middle ground between the mainland's two greatest empires. To what extent Lopburi was culturally influenced by its

[46] The two inscriptions are inventoried as K. 418. Cœdès, "Nouvelles données chronologiques," 297.

[47] K. 1219. See Estève, 435, following the edition of Dominique Soutif.

[48] Wolters, "Tāmbraliṅga," 605-606.

[49] For example, the Pagan king Kyanzittha took the name of Tribhuvanāditya Dhammarāja in the late 11th century. Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1964), 286.

Theravada Buddhist neighbor beyond this significant example in the 12th century is difficult to know; no doubt many of Lopburi's Buddhist traditions were of considerable antiquity.[50] However, it is possible that the rise of Buddhist Pagan in the 11th and 12th centuries provided some of the inspiration for Lopburi's sudden claim to the spotlight on the Cambodian stage.

If there was an extra-Cambodian impulse behind Tribhuvanādityavarman's regime, it is nonetheless clear that retrospective accounts portray him as a Cambodian insider. The lack of the ending *-varmadeva* in Tribhuvanādityavarman's name in the Prasat Chrung inscription merely reflects the fact that he was perceived to be a provincial upstart rather than a legitimate king by Jayavarman VII's contemporaries. We are told that Yaśovarman II was his "master,"[51] while in a damaged verse in the Phimeanakas stela, also from Jayavarman VII's reign, this Tribhuvanāditya from Lopburi is said to have been merely "a dependent whose ambition was to obtain royal power."[52] Observe that the Cham Jaya Indravarman, in contrast, is explicitly called a "king."[53] The ruler of late 12th century Lopburi was not considered politically "other" from the perspective of Angkor.

Nonetheless, Lopburi was believed to present a political threat to Angkor, and thus was comparable to Champa in that respect. If the local rulers of Lopburi were officially "dependents" rather than foreigners, they were no less potentially subversive. Of course, Lopburi's power in the 12th century may have been relatively short-lived. It is unclear when the Cham king Jaya Indravarman put an end to Tribhuvanādityavarman's reign and shifted much of Cambodia's political drama to the eastern frontier with Champa. It has long been assumed that Jaya Indravarman captured Angkor in 1177; however, Michael Vickery has demonstrated that the Chinese account of an 1177 attack is suspect.[54] What we know at this stage is that Jayavarman VII ascended the Cambodian throne in 1182. Therefore, the only dates we possess for Tribhuvanādityavarman are 1166 and 1167, and we do not know when his reign began or ended. If he was responsible for sending the mission from "Cambodia-Lopburi" to China in 1155, we could hypothesize that Angkorian Cambodia experienced a "Lopburi period" that lasted over a decade in the 1150s and 60s, perhaps even extending into the 1170s. Alternatively, Tribhuvanādityavarman may have only reigned for a few years in the 1160s. In either of these scenarios, Lopburi became a major political player in Cambodia's 12th century empire before the reign of Jayavarman VII, foreshadowing the gradual rise of the Menam Basin in the western mainland and the coming eclipse of Angkor.

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[50] For several Buddhist inscriptions in Mon and Sanskrit from the 7th century CE, see Cœdès, *Receuil des Inscriptions du Siam: 2*, 13-19

[51] *bhartṛ*, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 219, verse CVIII.

[52] Cœdès, *IC* II, 169, verse LXIV, line 23.

[53] *cāmpendro*, "king of the Chams," Cœdès, *IC* IV, 219, verse CVIII.

[54] Vickery, "Champa Revised," 56-70.

By the late 12th century Lopburi was once again fully integrated into a Cambodian empire governed from Angkor. The Chinese *Zhu-fan-zhi* of 1225, probably recalling the political situation during the reign of Jayavarman VII, cites Luo-hu (Lopburi) as a dependency of Cambodia.[55] The Phimeanakas stela composed by Jayavarman VII's queen seems to say (in a damaged context) that their son (compared to Lava, son of Rāma and Sītā), "-tīndravarman," was the "Lord of Lopburi" (*lavodayeśa*).[56] Apparently the king assigned princes to watch over strategic outposts on the empire's frontier. We also learn from the Preah Khan inscription (K.908) that Lopburi (*lavodayapura*) was the location of one of 23 sanctuaries housing the king's deity Jayabuddhamahānātha,[57] which shows that Lopburi remained a fundamental outpost of the Cambodian empire. Nonetheless, several other temples to this royal god were established in the Menam Basin, which suggests that in the greater Cambodia of Jayavarman VII Lopburi was no longer the unique center of imperial culture in the west.

Beyond Lopburi

For the first time in Cambodian history, the Preah Khan inscription of Jayavarman VII explicitly names several Cambodian-controlled cities beyond Lopburi. This apparent expansion of Cambodia's governed domain appears to have followed a military struggle between Jayavarman VII and a certain "king of the west" (*inam aparaṃ*).[58] Cœdès supposed this to be a king of Pagan Burma, but it is more likely that this "king of the west" was a newly powerful king on the western frontier.

As a result of the Jayavarman VII's victory, he claimed much of the Menam Basin, constructing temples as far south as Petchaburi and as far north as Si Satchanalai. The most important remains of these temples are found at Muang Singh on the Kwae Noi river near the Three Pagodas Pass into Burma;[59] at the shrine of Wat Phra Phai Luang of Sukhothai, which consists of a square enclosure with a vast eastern moat in typical Bayon style, where a damaged statue-portrait of a meditating Jayavarman VII was discovered;[60] and at Wat Chao Chan of Si Satchanalai which closely resembles one of Jayavarman VII's so-called hospital chapels.[61]

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[55] Wade, "Age of Commerce," 247.

[56] Cœdès, *IC* II, 168, side C, verse LVII, line 9.

[57] Cœdès, "La stèle de Prah Khan d'Aṅkor," 279, side C, verse CXVI, line 68.

[58] The stela of Prasat Tor or K. 692 in Cœdès, *IC* I, 236, XLV, line 34.

[59] Claude Jacques and Philippe Lafond, *The Khmer Empire: Cities and Sanctuaries from the 5th to the 13th Century*, tr. Tom White (Bangkok: River Books, 2007), 258-260.

[60] Betty Gosling, *Sukhothai: Its History, Culture, and Art* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), 9-10.

[61] Vittorio Roveda, *Images of the Gods* (Bangkok: River Books, 2005), 494.

The Preah Khan inscription informs us that several shrines to a Buddhist deity called Jayabuddhamahānātha were established in cities throughout the Cambodian empire, including in Central Thailand. Cœdès thought that the statues of this deity could be identified with the so-called "statue-portraits" of Jayavarman VII.[62] Hiram Woodward has instead proposed that this Jayabuddhamahānātha is the statue of the so-called "radiating" Avalokiteśvaras, several of which have been found in central Thailand.[63] Whatever the case may be, the Preah Khan inscription lists several of the cities where this deity was found, including Lopburi (Lavodayapura), Suphanburi (Svarṇapura), and Ratburi (Jayarājapurī). Several other listed cities cannot be as easily identified, though their location in central Thailand is probable. These include a city called Śambūkapaṭṭana (a polity attested in a 7th century inscription from Lopburi),[64] a Jayasiṃhavatī and a Śrī Jayasiṃhapurī which may represent Muang Singh and modern Singburi,[65] and a Śrī Jayavajrapurī and a Śrī Jayavajravatī which can probably be identified with modern Petchaburi and Kamphaeng Phet.[66] It is remarkable to find proof that these cities existed at, and undoubtedly before, the time of Jayavarman VII and have largely retained their names to the present.

Apart from these significant pieces of evidence, the extent of Khmer political influence in the Menam Valley outside of Lopburi in the 12th and 13th centuries is difficult to determine. The region's ambiguous relationship to Angkor was due, I believe, to a system of governance that was unique in greater Cambodia. Unlike the majority of districts (*viṣaya*), which were subject to royal appointees or families connected to Cambodia's old royal lineages, the districts beyond Lopburi appear to have maintained autonomous royal traditions. In effect, much of the Menam Basin probably resembled the *maṇḍala* pattern which defined, in O. W. Wolters' view, the early Southeast Asian political condition: various kingdoms within kingdoms all gravitating towards an ultimate charismatic center (Angkor) in an ever-changing state of nominal allegiance or independence.[67] This loose system of shifting alignments, unknown or at least outdated in the ethnic Khmer core of the late Angkorian period, allowed for a unique degree of local autonomy even while Khmer political culture and language gradually colonized the outer frontiers of Cambodia's west.

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[62] Cœdès, "La stèle de Prah Khan d'Aṅkor," 265.

[63] Woodward, "The Jayabuddhamahānātha Images of Cambodia," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 52/53 (1994/1995): 105-111.

[64] Cœdès, "La stèle de Prah Khan d'Aṅkor," 296, note 3.

[65] Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors in the 15th century," in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, 278.

[66] Ibid., 297n17. Cœdès identified Śrī Jayavajrapurī with Petchaburi, while Vickery makes a persuasive case for Kamphaeng Phet, citing evidence that Kamphaeng Phet was called *bajrapurī* or *kāṃbaeṅ bejrapurī* in the inscriptions of Sukhothai. I assume that Śrī Jayavajravatī represents one of the alternatives.

[67] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*, 27-40

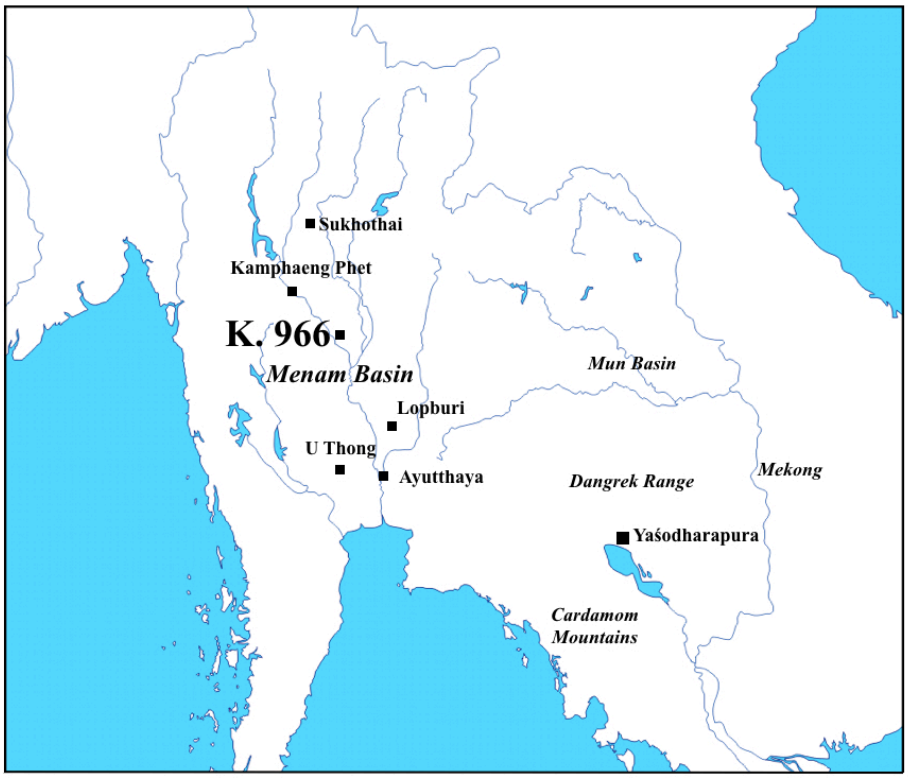

Figure 4. K. 966 and the Menam Basin. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=thailand_map&num_car=65 8&lang=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

This situation of multiple, overlapping centers on the Cambodian periphery is particularly apparent in the inscription of Dong Mae Nang Muang, K. 966, discovered at an archaeological site on the Ping River 140 km. northwest of Lopburi (see fig. 4).[68] The archaeological context of this site appears to be Mon, but the inscription, dated 1167 CE, is in Pali and Khmer. While the lack of Khmer architecture is notable, the use Pali rather than Sanskrit in the eulogistic section of the inscription is striking; in fact, it is unique in the Old Khmer corpus until the early 14th century. The use of Pali is related to the religion of the inscription, which is Theravada Buddhist. The inscription records the giving of various gifts to a Buddhist reliquary apparently at the site of Dong Mae Nang Muang. The unique religious context also reflects a distinct political situation, as the ruler named as the donor in the inscription is clearly not the main Cambodian king. As we have seen, the reigning Cambodian king in 1167 was Tribhuvanādityavarman, the usurper from Lopburi, whereas the principal king in the present inscription is named Asoka Mahārāja in the Pali or Kuruṅ ("King") Dharmāśoka in the Khmer. The text records how in 1167 CE one of this king's subjects, another "king" (*rājā* in Pali, *kuruṅ* in Khmer) Sunat "who was in charge of Dhānyapura" (*ta prabhutva nā*

[68] Cœdès, "Nouvelles données épigraphiques sur l'histoire de l'Indochine centrale," 132-139.

dhānyapura), carried out his superior's order to worship a god (*kamrateṅ jagat*) by the name of Dharmāśoka (named after the principal king) in the district/country of Dhānyapura at the site of the inscription.[69]

Though scholars have agreed that this Dharmāśoka cannot be the Cambodian king, they have not reached any consensus on where this Dharmāśoka was from or how his kingdom related to Cambodia to the east. One option is that Dharmāśoka was a Khmer king from an autonomous Lopburi;[70] after all it has generally been believed that the record of tribute from "Cambodia-Lopburi" to China in 1155 suggests Lopburi's independence from Angkor at the time. However, in my opinion the king of Cambodia in 1167, Tribhuvanādityavarman, was the ruler of Lopburi. Therefore, King Dharmāśoka must have ruled from elsewhere. As the Dong Mae Nang Muang inscription was found to the north of Lopburi, it has also been suggested that Dharmāśoka was a Mon king, perhaps ruling at Haripuñjaya or Lamphun in the northwest where a Mon polity was active in the 13th century.[71] The religion of Haripuñjaya was Theravada Buddhism, which would seem to support its identity with King Dharmāśoka. However, there is no evidence of a king by the name of Dharmāśoka in the historical traditions of Haripuñjaya, and the Lamphun region would appear to be located too far north to assert political influence in an area relatively near to Lopburi.

Alternatively, Hiram Woodward has suggested that we identify King Dharmāśoka as the king of a polity at or near Nakhon Si Thammarat on the Malay Peninsula.[72] This was likely the polity called Tambralinga, which Khmers might have known by the name of Javā.[73] Woodward points to the common recurrence of the name Dharmāśoka in the late royal chronicles of Nakhon Si Thammarat as evidence that the king mentioned at Dong Mae Nang Muang was from the Malay Peninsula. This connection is tempting because of the use of the title *mahārāja* in the inscription, which was in common use throughout the early political history of island Southeast Asia. There is also no reason to doubt that the area of Nakhon Si Thammarat was Theravada Buddhist in the 12th century.[74] Of course, the distance between Nakhon Sri Thammarat on the Malay Peninsula and Dong Mae Nang Muang in the northern Menam Basin casts considerable doubt on this possibility, given that Dong Mae Nang Muang would have been more likely within the immediate orbit of Lopburi.

Although I am not entirely opposed to the scenario of a king from Nakhon Sri Thammarat making claims so far north, and by implication along the whole western strip from

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[69] Ibid., 133.

[70] Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 164.

[71] Cœdès, "Nouvelles données épigraphiques sur l'histoire de l'Indochine centrale," 136-138.

[72] Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 165.

[73] See Chapter Six.

[74] Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 195-198.

the upper Malay Peninsula to the upper Menam Basin, I think it is more reasonable to suppose that Dharmāśoka was a local ruler in the region west or northwest of Lopburi. As mentioned above, the kingdom of Dharmāśoka may have resembled Haripuñjaya where several (Mon) Buddhist inscriptions date to the second decade of the 13th century.[75] It also resembled the later polity of Sukhothai, which subscribed to Theravada/Sri Lankan Buddhism, composed royal inscriptions in Pali and Khmer, and used similar royal titles.[76] Unlike Haripuñjaya and Sukhothai, however, Dharmāśoka's capital was likely relatively proximate to Dong Mae Nang Muang, the location of the district of Dhānyapura in the inscription. The only important early city near Dong Mae Nang Muang (80 km. to the northwest, as opposed to Lopburi which was about 140 km. away), situated upriver on the Ping, is Kamphaeng Phet, a major Theravada Buddhist center that was governed by the kings of Sukhothai in the latter half of the 14th century (see fig. 4). Michael Vickery has noted that the royal title of Dharmāśoka (or *dharmāśokarāj*) is found in an inscription from Kamphaeng Phet dated 1510.[77] Though there is no certain evidence that a significant polity existed at Kamphaeng Phet before the Sukhothai period, Kamphaeng Phet may have been the city named Jayavajrapurī in the late 12th century Preah Khan inscription,[78] which strongly suggests the city's existence in 1167 when Dharmāśoka was asserting his claim over Dhānyapura. It is also possible that the kingdom of Dharmāśoka was located to the south of Dong Mae Nang Muang, perhaps at Suphanburi where evidence of a 12th century Buddhist tradition has been found.[79]

While I believe that Dharmāśoka ruled over a minor Buddhist kingdom identifiable with Kamphaeng Phet, Suphanburi, or some other local Theravadin center in the Menam Basin, I doubt that this kingdom was necessarily outside of the expansive circle of Cambodian allegiance in 1167 CE. Instead, I prefer to view the kingdom of Dharmāśoka, like its own internal "kingdom" of King Sunat, as a member of a hierarchy of petty polities on Cambodia's western frontier with the ability to govern its respective region independently but without the ambition to position itself as Cambodia's rival or equal. Note that the inscription, for all its cultural idiosyncrasies indicative of Mon influence, is mostly composed in Khmer, which underscores the currency of that prestige language for the purpose of administration even on Cambodia's farthest fringe. It is also telling that the Khmer title of Dharmāśoka, like that of his

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[75] Shorto, *A Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions*, page x.

[76] Compare, for example, Dharmāśoka's title of *mahārājādhirāja* and the title of Sukhothai's Lithai: *mahādharmmarājādhirāja*. Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés*, 400.

[77] Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors in the 15th Century," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 27, published June 2004, http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/publication_details.asp?pubtypeid=WP&pubi d=276 (accessed August 10, 2011).

[78] See note 66 above.

[79] Woodward *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 182.

underling Sunat, is merely *kuruṅ*. Though it can be translated to mean "king," *kuruṅ* in this period was used specifically to denote lesser kings.[80] It is therefore curious that the subjects of Dharmāśoka called their own ruler *kuruṅ*, rather than endowing him with the lofty Angkorian royal title *vraḥ pāda kamrateṅ añ*. In contrast, in the mid-14th century the king of Sukhothai used the highest Angkorian royal title freely. It would seem that the minor 12th century kingdom of Dharmāśoka in the Menam Basin did not yet consider itself on par with the kingdom of Cambodia and hence worthy of Angkorian titles.

The best explanation for this apparent culture of acquiescence on the western frontier is that 12th century petty kingdoms in the upper Menam Basin and on the upper Malay Peninsula were not by their own measure strictly autonomous. They typically governed their own domains, but they also embraced the Cambodian political tradition (along with the Khmer language) in which the sovereignty of the Cambodian kings (in this case Tribhuvanādityavarman from Lopburi) over the entire western frontier was an unquestionable given. Such was the power of the Cambodian political imagination in the Angkorian period that those who resided on the edge of Cambodian territory were obliged to take the imperial message seriously even when the empire could not be enforced. Moreover, Cambodia was likely able on occasion to realize its sweeping territorial vision. Cambodia may have made this vision a political reality in the early 11th century during the reign of Suryavarman I, and Suryavarman II may have had similar success in the first half of the 12th century. As we have seen, Jayavarman VII left a visible stamp of his authority on the entire western frontier beyond Lopburi. One possible result of these periods of increased hegemony was a tendency for petty kingdoms to retreat into their established role as internal "others," keeping to their own orbit and paying occasional tribute rather than challenging the status quo.

On the other hand, direct colonization may have also had the reverse effect by encouraging the rise of sophisticated political emulators and adversaries on the frontier. In other words, Angkorian Cambodia may have been the victim of its own success. In the early 11th century we read of the "western countries" (plural) but of no unified threat to Cambodia from the Mons.[81] By the 12th century, however, after a century or more of Cambodian imperial rule, the presence of powerful political alternatives in the west becomes evident. The usurpation of the Cambodian throne by Tribhuvanādityavarman from Lopburi is perhaps one example of a frontier post emboldened by its access to the Cambodian administrative model and by its growing autonomy. The kingdom of Dharmāśoka to Lopburi's west may have also

[80] See the 12th century K. 1036 (Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions*, 151, lines 27-28), where only pre-Angkorian kings (rulers before the Angkorian dynasty of Jayavarman II) are referred to as *kuruṅ*; see also K. 227, which calls the Cham king *kuruṅ cāmpa*. Cœdès, "Nouvelles données chronologiques," 309, lines 15-16.

[81] Griffiths, 20n31.

sought to imitate the Cambodian political model, which may explain the use of Khmer in the Dharmāśoka inscription. Though I have presented reasons to believe that Dharmāśoka's kingdom in 1167 was not independent from Angkor, it is possible that after the defeat of Tribhuvanādityavarman by the Cham king Jaya Indravarman the western frontier may have become ripe for the taking. The so-called "king of the west" eventually defeated by Jayavarman VII, perhaps the ambitious Dharmāśoka or his successor, may have sought to fill this vaccum by establishing a new political order in the Menam Basin.[82] This may explain why Jayavarman VII, after defeating this "king of the west,"chose to leave his mark on the entire basin instead of concentrating only on the city of Lopburi. The appearance of Jayavarman VII's constructions and one of his statue-portraits at Sukhothai in the northern basin (see fig. 4) may be a sign that the Cambodian king was no longer willing to allow provincial rulers to cultivate an autonomous identity and to present themselves as legitimate others and a challenger—"kings" and no mere "dependents"—to Cambodian sovereignty.[83]

Siam and the End of Empire

The reference in the late 12th century to a "king of the west" is the first sign that Cambodians were beginning to see the western frontier in a new light. A single political other, a "king," had replaced the plural "western countries" or "Mons" of the early 11th century. Meanwhile, the vague vision of a territory extending to Sūkṣmakāmrāta was no longer expressed, and Lopburi had become a powerful internal nemesis rather than a peripheral garrison town. By the 13th century the region had politically evolved to the point that Cambodian sovereignty was no longer a given.

Perhaps the one constant in this time of transition was the persistent Cambodian identity of Lopburi even as the city established a pattern of local autonomy. For example, there is also no reason to believe that Lopburi reclaimed its independence after the end of Jayavarman VII's reign (c. 1218). An intriguing short inscription composed on a gold and silver vase has introduced a King Tribhuvanādityavarman reigning in the year 1230 CE who may have been Jayavarman VII's successor and whose name suggests a relationship to the 12th century Tribhuvanādityavarman. The text says that he was from "the holy city of Tribhuvanādityapura" (*vraḥ sruk śri tribhuvanādityapura*), a city that may have been created by his predecessor of the same name.[84] Of course, it is tempting to suppose that this new Tribhuvanādityavarman was also from Lopburi. Though this would prove the growing power of Lopburi into the 13th century, it does not necessarily suggest that the rulers of Lopburi

[82] Cœdès, *IC* I, 236, verse XLV, line 34.

[83] Gosling, *Sukhothai*, 8-10.

[84] K. 1217. Dominic Soutif graciously sent me his edition of this inscription on Oct. 21, 2009.

aspired to separate themselves from Cambodia. After all, the 12th century Tribhuvanādityavarman from Lopburi became king at Angkor. Chinese mission records only give evidence of an independent Lopburi in a ten-year period from 1289 to 1299;[85] perhaps only in the late 13th century were conditions such that Lopburi's separation from Angkor was inevitable.

It can hardly be coincidence that this decade of Lopburi independence in the late 13th century was contemporaneous with the rise of a new challenger to Cambodia in the west, the polity of Siam. The first reference to this polity can be found in Chinese records, listing a mission from "Xian" in 1282/3.[86] In the memoir of Zhou Daguan, who visited Angkor in 1296, he recalls that a recent war between Cambodia and Siam had devastated the countryside,[87] and that all the common people had been conscripted.[88] We can guess that this war provided the opportunity, or rather made it practical necessity, for Lopburi to strike out on its own in the 1290s. Nonetheless, Lopburi faced its own immediate challenge from Siam, which would eventually lead to the end of the city's Cambodian/Khmer identity.

There remains some controversy about what and where Siam was in the 13th century. The original consensus was that Siam was centered on Sukhothai where the archaeological evidence of 13th and particularly 14th century political power is undeniable.[89] However, Chinese records from the period seem to place Siam (Xian) on the coast. For example, Zhou Daguan placed Xian to the southwest of Cambodia, which is curious given that coastal Thailand is actually further north in relation to Angkor.[90] In any event, it would seem that the Chinese Xian was in the southern Menam Basin rather than in the north at Sukhothai. We know that Siam (or Xian) was present in the far south, as the Chinese records state that Siam had been fighting Malayu (Jambi) in Sumatra in the 1290s.[91] Yamamoto Tatsuro has argued that a Chinese gazetteer from 1297-1307 proves that Siam was not the same as Sukhothai. The gazetteer records that "Xian controls Shang-shui ('upriver') Su-gu-di (Sukhothai)," where Shang-shui may be the name of another polity or simply a word describing the location of Sukhothai. Tatsuro concludes that Siam, as it "controlled" Sukhothai, must have been a

[85] There are records of missions from Lopburi to China in 1289, 1291, 1296, 1297, 1299 CE. See Paul Pelliot, "Deux itineraries de Chine en Inde," *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 241-43; Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 227.

[86] Chris Baker, "Ayuthaya Rising: from land or sea?" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (Feb. 2003): p. 44.

[87] Zhou Daguan, *A Record of Cambodia: The Land and its People*, tr. Peter Harris (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2007), p. 79.

[88] Ibid., 82.

[89] Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés*, p. 356; Lawrence Briggs, "The Appearance and Historical Usage of the Terms Tai, Thai, Siamese and Lao," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1949): 62-63.

[90] Zhou Daguan, 46.

[91] Wade, 247.

separate polity, probably on or near the coast. However, I do not find the above examples sufficient to prove that Siam was originally a coastal polity. They merely show that by the late 13th century an extensive polity called Siam was active on the coast as far south as the Malay Peninsula and as far north as Sukhothai. The evidence may suggest that Siam was originally either an inland polity with recent conquests on the coast or a maritime polity that had made recent inland gains. I prefer the former option because the name Siam is clearly related to the ethnonym Shan in northeast Burma, which suggests that Siam/Shan was a region-wide name (perhaps not used by "Siamese" themselves) for the ethnic Tai who migrated south from southern Yunnan during the 13th century. In any case, we can confidently conclude that by the 1290s Siam extended throughout the Menam Basin from the coast to Sukhothai, though it apparently did not include Lopburi which was still sending independent missions at that time.

It is generally believed that the first half of the 14th century witnessed the gradual consolidation of Siam into a confederation of *muang*, with Ayutthaya in the southern basin taking precedence after its foundation in 1351 (see fig. 4). Naturally it is also believed that Cambodia had ceased to be a factor in the region, with Lopburi becoming one of the many Siamese *muang*, even though there is no certain proof that Lopburi was independent from Cambodia in the early 14th century. There is, in fact, a curious piece of contrary evidence in an 15th century Ayutthaya inscription found in Tenasserim which includes as one of the titles of the Ayutthayan king the distinctive title *śrīśīndra*. This title clearly echoes the name of the Cambodian king who ascended the throne in 1296 CE, Śrī Śrīndravarman, as well as that of his successor Śrī Śrīndrajayavarman.[92] One might suppose that this early 14th century title was preserved in 15th century Ayutthaya because this city was before its foundation in 1351 CE subject to these Cambodian kings earlier in that century. Even if such were the case, however, by the second half of 14th century it is beyond question that Siamese Ayutthaya and several of its neighboring cities, including eventually Lopburi, were completely independent of Angkorian Cambodia.

The rise of Siam as the single polity on Cambodia's new western frontier in the 14th century was unprecedented, not least because of its ethnic Tai character. However, Siam also stepped into the ready-made role of its political predecessors in the Menam Basin. It took Lopburi's place as the principal military power in the southern basin even as it embraced its new identity as a maritime power. The kingdom of Dharmāśoka was likely another model for Siam's success, particularly if Dharmāśoka was the so-called "king of the west" in the 12th century. As Siam became Cambodia's primary nemesis after the demise of Angkor, it put an end to the pattern of ambivalent sovereignty that Cambodia's imperial experiment on its western frontier had so effectively prolonged.

[92] Vickery, "Cambodia and its Neighbors in the 15th century," in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, 281.

Chapter Four: The Elephant Hunt Myth

On the farthest periphery of the Cambodian Empire beyond the Khmer core, the polity was held together by pledges of tribute and, to lesser degree, enforced servitude. For most Khmers in the Angkorian period, however, being "Cambodian" was less a matter of kowtowing and coercion as it was a reflection of certain generally accepted cultural norms. In this chapter I will consider the advent of a unique historical tradition that undergirded a sense of shared Cambodian identity. Throughout the Khmer core this tradition may have been largely oral and occasionally diffuse, assuming different shapes in different places over time. Nonetheless, the various stories inspired by this tradition had an analogous narrative structure, featured a similar set of historical actors, and addressed a common theme of political belonging. This early Cambodian historical culture reached its apogee in the myth of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt.

What I choose to call the elephant hunt myth is recounted in five texts from the 10th-12th centuries alluding retrospectively to the activities of the 9th century Cambodian king Jayavarman III.[1] This king is remembered in a number of inscriptions for being the son of Angkorian Cambodia's founding father, Jayavarman II, in several others for his gifts of land to or patronage of ancestors of the Cambodian elite, and in five inscriptions for his losing, chasing, capturing, and releasing of elephants. This last strange detail of his semi-legendary personality, his passion for elephants, has elicited few comments from historians.[2] For a king about whom we know so little else historically and for whom not a single contemporary

[1] Four of these inscriptions were edited and translated by George Cœdès his *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (*IC*). The fifth has only recently come to light. I will refer to each of these texts by their K. number, accompanied when appropriate by the name of the site as well as line number. I include here specific or proximate dates, listing the texts in a hypothetical chronological order: K. 175 from Kok Rosei in Siem Reap province, late 10th century CE, edited in Cœdès, *IC* VI, 173-180, and the summary gloss of Étienne Aymonier in *Le Cambodge : Le royaume actuel, Vol. 1* (Paris : Ernest Leroux, 1900), 422 ; K. 956 from Vat Samroṅ, Prei Veng province, 11th or 12th century CE (for problems with dating this inscription, see my discussion below), Cœdès, *IC* VII, 128-136 ; K. 449 from Palhal, Pursat province, c. 1079 CE, Cœdès, "La stèle de Pàlhàl," 27-36; K. 521, Prasat Cak, Siem Reap province, located just south of Angkor within Siem Reap city limits, late 11th or early 12th century CE, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 167-170; K. 1258, unedited, from Takeo province (the provenance remains uncertain), in my hypothesis dated 12th century CE.

[2] Ian Mabbett's laconic, though entirely accurate, statement about Jayavarman III is emblematic: "little is known about him except that he liked to hunt elephants." Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers*, 261. Taking the elephant hunt stories literally, Lawrence Briggs leaps to the conclusion that Jayavarman III, obsessed with elephants as he was, must have "lost his life in the chase." Lawrence Palmer Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1951), 97.

inscription has been found, it is perhaps understandable that his elephant hunts have been treated almost as a disappointing curio.[3]

If the presence of these elephant hunt episodes has occasionally been noted, their strangeness has not. Though we may well imagine that every Angkorian king was active, whether personally or through proxy, in capturing elephants for his court, it happens that only the enigmatic Jayavarman III was remembered posthumously for this activity. More significantly, the king's elephant hunts were recalled in relatively straightforward prose. Claude Jacques, comparing Cambodia's modern chronicle tradition to the content of the Angkorian inscriptions, commented on this narrative quality in the "exceptional" account of Jayavarman III's miraculous recapture of an elephant in inscription K. 521 from Prasat Cak, which resonates with certain legendary asides in Cambodia's 19th century chronicles and may represent, in Jacques' view, a locally reworked passage from Angkorian Cambodia's vernacular histories.[4]

It is in many ways surprising to encounter these brief narrative passages in a genre, epigraphy, which is notorious for a vagueness imposed by the formalized extremes of eulogistic Sanskrit poetry and terse vernacular inventory.[5] An unwelcome result of the formal division between poetic eulogy and the mundane list is a relative lack of narrative history. The past in Sanskrit panegyric, mixing Hindu myth with vague historical details, effects at times a kind of stylized timelessness. For example, a 10th century reference in a Sanskrit inscription to one of the "ancient kings" (*pūrvabhūpāḥ*) Karandhama is merley a literary allusion, demonstrating one Khmer poet's facility with Hindu puranic lore.[6] The typical royal genealogical list (*vaṃśa*) in the Sanskrit inscriptions, while based in a more tangibly Cambodian past, may allude to certain historical facts such as names and dates, but its chief purpose was often to provide a simple structure within which the poet could display his literary skill—forming puns (*śleṣa*) and quoting stock fictions from Sanskrit literature. One such

[3] To date the only article dealing comparatively and exclusively with the elephant hunt of Jayavarman III is the contribution of Ham Chay Li, "Sīlacārik prāsād cak niṅ braḥ pād jayavarma dī bī [the Prasat Cak inscription and Jayavarman III]," *Kambuja Suriya* 53, no. 1 (1999): 44-54. The author translates K. 521 into modern Khmer and, comparing this text to K. 449 and K. 956, presents what he deems to be literal evidence that the historical Jayavarman III was a prolific and well-traveled elephant hunter. For brief insights into the significance of the elephant hunt that have inspired this chapter, see also Saveros Pou, "Vocabulaire khmer relatif aux éléphants," *Journal Asiatique* 274, no. 3-4 (1986): 319; and Claude Jacques, "Nouvelles orientations," 47.

[4] Claude Jacques, "Nouvelles orientations," 47. This forward-looking and overlooked article is a stimulating introduction to the possibility of an intellectual history of Angkorian Cambodia.

[5] One possible exception is Yaśovarman II, whose reign is remembered vividly, if only in a fragmentary way, in the inscriptions of the late 12th century king Jayavarman VII. See, for example, the Khmer inscription of Banteay Chmar, K. 227, edited by Cœdès in "Nouvelles données chronologiques," 297-330.

[6] K. 806; see Cœdès, *IC* I,104, verse CCXCV.

fiction common in both Cambodian epigraphy and royal genealogies throughout the Sanskrit ecumene is the myth of royal descent from a king of the solar lineage and a *nāga* queen of the lunar line, which represents a general trope of royal inheritance from the divine rather than a specific vision of Cambodia's royal past.[7]

On a cursory reading, the prevalence of these allusions to puranic lore and the frequent lack of historical narrative in the more impressive Sanskrit inscriptions seems to suggest that Cambodians placed little value on their own political past. At the very least, we know that the royal Cambodian past was recorded. An 11th century inscriptions states that a family was charged with keeping "the writings concerning the royal lineage of Cambodia (*kamvuvaṅśa*) and the functions of the royal service, writings concerning the deeds of the kings from His Majestry Śrutavarman until the deeds of His Majestry Śrī Sūryavarman."[8] The royal genealogies featured so prominently in the inscriptions must have been based on a historical manuscript tradition of this kind, though now lost to us. Unfortunately, we cannot determine just how rigorously historical and narrative these writings were—if their historical details were crowded out by the fanciful, universalistic rhetoric often found in the Sanskrit inscriptions, or if they resembled the formulaic lists of royal ritual observances often found in the 19th century Khmer royal chronicles. If we apply Shelley Errington's characterization of the Malay *hikayat* (chronicular) tradition to the hypothetical historical tradition in the Angkorian period, the past in much early Cambodian writing may have been employed less to narrate history than to display "a succession of images" illustrating certain royal virtues or functions—in other words, to evoke royal power rather than to tell compelling stories.[9]

Though Errington and others are right to distinguish a discursive style in early Southeast Asian historical traditions that downplays facts as it celebrates ritual observance

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[7] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 476. That Cambodia appears to have had its own name for this mythical solar king, Kauṇḍinya, does little to contradict Sheldon Pollock's assertion that this trope was deliberately "cosmopolitan," or translocal and ahistorical, as opposed to the more clearly localized Cambodian genealogical myth in one Cambodian inscription (K. 286), the descent of Cambodia's (*Kambuja*) kings from Kambu and Mera. For a study of the long tradition of the *nāga* queen in a Cambodian context, see Éveline Porée-Maspero, "Nouvelle études sur la Nagi Soma," *Journal Asiatique* 238, no. 2 (1950): 237-267. For the Khmer ethnic myth of Kambu and Mera, see George Cœdès, "L'inscription de Baksei Caṃkroṅ," *Journal Asiatique* 10, no. 13 (1910): 473.

[8] *. . . gi ta mān santāna ta cāṃ likhita kamvuvaṅśa nu aṅga vraḥ rājakāryya likhita kīrtī kamrateṅ phdai karoṃ daṃnepra gi vraḥ pāda śrutavarmmadeva lvoḥ ta vraḥ kīrtti vraḥ pāda kamrateṅ kaṃtvan añ śrī sūryyavarmmadeva. . .* See K. 380 W in Cœdès, *IC* VI, 261, lines 15-17; see also Cœdès' translation on 266.

[9] Shelly Errington, "Some Comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1979), 26-27.

and royal transcendence, this characterization can be taken too far.[10] In Cambodia's 19th century royal chronicles, narrative asides and local etiological tales frequently embellish the otherwise mundane list of royal rites and successions. In much the same way, historical narrative finds its way into the one medium accessible to us from the Angkorian period—the epigraphy. George Cœdès once noted that all inscriptions are historically-oriented, in that they publicly document, however briefly, a memorable event from the immediate or distant past.[11] Inscribing a text in permanent stone was often accompanied by an act of historical commemoration, the purpose of the Sanskrit text being to record the time and place of that act. Just as Sanskrit inscriptions were capable of recording events in historical time, Khmer inscriptions could be, if not poetic, more expressive and imaginative than mere lists, particularly in Khmer texts detailing the history of a family's property. We will see that the content of these "property histories" often diverged considerably from the standard vernacular style, and that some "property histories" were even composed in substandard Sanskrit. The authors of the five elephant hunt inscriptions, four of which happen to be property histories, wrote them in both Khmer and Sanskrit—three in relatively verbose Khmer and two in strangely prosaic Sanskrit. If this inconsistency in Sanskrit and vernacular usage seems awkward, it was not necessarily the result of ignorance. It suggests that for whatever reason publicly inscribing meaningful stories and imaginative claims in direct Old Khmer or Sanskrit prose occasionally took precedence over standard epigraphic prescriptions.

The elephant hunt stories offer insight into why Cambodians in the Angkorian period, at the risk of awkwardness, began to value narrative history in their public inscriptions. The key, I believe, is to recognize the Cambodian elites' new reverence for and sense of common ownership of their country's history. The elephant hunt stories serve to explain the origins of specific elite families and local places, but more importantly, they are intentionally set within a single frame narrative of Cambodia's illustrious beginnings. If this frame narrative may help illuminate an "actual history" of king Jayavarman III catching elephants along his country's periphery, it shines a steadier light on how Angkorian Cambodians thought retrospectively about their common past than on the historical facts themselves. I argue, in other words, that the elephant hunt was a widely disseminated myth, or to borrow a phrase of Jan Assmann, a

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[10] Pollock notes exceptions to the overall aesthetic function of Sanskrit eulogy in a section entitled "the pragmatics of inscriptional discourse," in which he recognizes, to use an immediately pertinent example, the narrative land claim inscriptions of the 11th century Khmer elites. Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 148-149.

[11] George Cœdès makes this observation in his study of the Thai Ramkhamheng inscription in 1918: "Il est sans exemple qu'une inscription n'ait pas été gravée à l'occasion d'un évènement déterminé. Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse dans l'ancienne épigraphie indochinoise, khmère, chame ou autre, citer une seule *praśasti* (panégyrique) composée uniquement pour perpétuer sur la pierre les vertus ou les hauts faits du roi regnant. . ." George Cœdès, "Notes critiques sur l'inscription de Rama Khamheng," in *The Journal of the Siam Society* 12, no. 1 (1918): 21.

polity-wide "fiction of coherence" that informed Cambodia's collective memory and territorial identity after the 10th century.[12] A comparative reading of these stories, bracketing questions of historicity, underscores the significance of this myth in the early Cambodian imagination.

The Historical Jayavarman III

For early Cambodia's royal historians, the elephant hunt myth may have compensated for the general mystery surrounding its protagonist. George Cœdès once noted that the Jayavarman II and Jayavarman III of the inscriptions are at best semi-legendary figures.[13] Jayavarman III, also known by his posthumous title "He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka," or Viṣṇuloka in abbreviated form, is by any measure underserved by the epigraphic record. Royal inscriptions are especially terse. We assume that he died in 877 CE, the first year of his successor Indravarman's reign.[14] The genealogical inscriptions of Yaśovarman, dated 889 CE, inform us that Jayavarman III was the son of Jayavarman II and that his pre-regnal name was Jayavardhana.[15] A mid-10th century royal inscription from the temple of Baksei Chamkrong at Angkor (K. 286) suggests that he came to the throne while he was still young[16] and was eventually succeeded by his first cousin, Indravarman, the son of his maternal uncle.[17] Apart from these sparse details, we have nothing of an "official" biography for this king.

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[12] Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharoahs*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 7-8.

[13] "Pour l'epigraphie angkorienne qui commence en fait avec le regne d'Indravarman en 877, ceux de Jayavarman II et de son fils dont on n'a pas encore trouvé d'inscription constituent un époque semi-legendaire." See Cœdès, *IC* VII, 129.

[14] Indravarman's reign began in 877 CE, while his first inscriptions at Roluos (K. 310-313, K. 315-322, K. 713) are dated 879 CE. These inscriptions, which contain a replicated Sanskrit text, were edited by Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 117-130. Verse V on the fourth line of the Sanskrit text gives the date:

navarandhrādrirājyastha- ś śrīndravarmmeti yaḥ prajāḥ
hlādayām āsa tāsāñ ca saṃṛddhim vidadhe tadā

"Indravarman, who has become king in (the year) nine, openings, and mountains (or 799 *śaka*, 877 CE), has made his subjects happy and assured their prosperity."

[15] Stèle de Prah Bat (K. 95) in Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 185, verse X, lines 8-9.

[16] Baksei Chamkrong (K.286), 869 saka, or 947 AD, in Cœdès, *IC* IV, p. 91. North door-jamb, verse XXII, lines 1-2:

tasyātmajo jayy ajayaśriyo yo ripuñjayaś śrījayavarmmanāmā
vṛddhapriyatvād iva vṛddhavidyā- rāgī yuvā śrītaruṇīviraktaḥ

"His victorious son, possessing an unconquered fortune, vanquisher of his enemies, named Śrī Jayavarman, was, in keeping with his affection for the elderly, passionate about the ancient science, and though young, without passion for the young Śrī."

[17] Ibid., p. 91. North door-jamb, verse XXIII, lines 3-4.

Though like his father, Jayavarman II, he has not been positively linked to a single contemporary inscription,[18] neither the number nor the historical details of the retrospective accounts referring to him compare with those referring to his father.[19] This imbalance may explain in part Pierre Dupont's conclusion that Jayavarman III was "but a shadow in his father's wake."[20] While the 11th century Sdok Kak Thom inscription (K.235) abundantly details Jayavarman II's movements between four different capitals and recounts his creation of a royal cult on Mount Mahendra and his ceremony to free Cambodia from "Javā,"[21] concerning Jayavarman III's reign the inscription merely informs us that the king resided at Hariharalaya, or present-day Roluos to the southeast of Angkor.[22] Unfortunately, even this one simple fact of Jayavarman III's reign has found little substantiation. Though the art historian Philippe Stern hypothesized another intermediary style coincident with Jayavarman III's reign between the art of Kulen and that of the temples of Indravarman at Roluos and represented by a small selection of shrines near Roluos and the West Baray, there is nothing like the unified and distinctive style that may characterize the reigns of his predecessor and successor.[23] Compounding this king's obscurity is the sudden reappearance of royal inscriptions in Cambodia after 150 years of near silence, inaugurating the reign of Indravarman. Early scholars understandably interpreted this epigraphic and architectural gap to mean that

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[18]Claude Jacques argues in a study of the reign of Jayavarman II that a Jayavarman mentioned in two inscriptions from the latter half of the 8th century (called provisionally "Jayavarman I^{bis}" by George Cœdès) may be Jayavarman II early in his career. Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II," *BEFEO* 59 (1972): 205-220. However, the earliest date, 770 CE, in K. 103 from Preah Theat Preah Srei in Kampong Cham, would seem to be far too early for a king who would later establish his capital at Kulen in 802 CE, and whose son reigned until 877 CE. Michael Vickery accepts Jacques' identification of Jayavarman I^{bis} with Jayavarman II in *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 399.

[19] I count 20 texts, including four discovered since the publication of Cœdès' inventory (K. 1036, K. 1073, K. 1185, K. 1258), referring to Jayavarman III, in contrast to 44 texts referring to Jayavarman II (or Parameśvara) listed in Cœdès' inventory alone. Cœdès, *IC* VIII, 31 and 44.

[20] "Il n'est guère qu'une ombre à la suite de son père." Pierre Dupont, "Études sur l'Indochine Ancienne: Les Débuts de la Royauté Angkorienne." *BEFEO* 46 (1952): 166.

[21] The memory of Jayavarman II establishing himself on Mount Mahendra may perhaps be confirmed by the unique intermediary style of temples in the Kulen Plateau to the northeast of Angkor, though no contemporary inscriptions have been discovered. See Philippe Stern, "Le style du Kulên (Dècor architectural et statuaire)," *BEFEO* 38.1 (1938): 111-149.

[22] Dupont and Cœdès. "Les stèles de Sdok Kak Thom. . .," 87-88, side C, line 82 through side D, lines 1-5.

[23] Stern's examples for this style all consist of 9th century extensions to existing pre-Angkorian shrines. They include one temple of the Trapeang Phong group and part of Svay Prahm near Roluos, as well as two sanctuaries of Prasat Kok Po north of the West Baray. See Philippe Stern, "Hariharalaya and Indrapura," *BEFEO* 38 (1938):186-189. The dating of the monuments of Roluos is complicated by evidence of sustained urban development in the area from the 7th to 9th centuries. See Christophe Pottier and Annie Bolle. "Le Prasat Trapeang Phong à Hariharalaya: histoire d'un temple et archéologie d'un site," *Aséanie* 24 (Dec. 2009): 1-30.

Indravarman's reign represented a moment of significant rupture, and that Jayavarman III's reign was, by comparison, "short and insignificant."[24]

Even so, the number of retrospective accounts of King Indravarman is equal to those of Jayavarman III,[25] and we only know significantly more about Indravarman's reign due to his own inscriptions and architectural legacy. In effect, even though Jayavarman III failed to leave a personal record of his reign, we cannot conclude that his reign was insignificant. Some early Angkorian inscriptions seem to confirm his objective importance. For example, a detailed, 18-line record of donations (*vraḥ kalpanā*) made by Jayavarman III to a temple in what is today Buriram province in Northeast Thailand, far from the king's capital, is dated to 925 CE, less than fifty years after the king's death in 877 CE.[26] The list can probably be taken as a reliable indicator of the king's influence in a relatively distant locale at that time. Hence, we can safely assume that the king was more than a semi-legendary figure whose posthumous stature was greater than his reign merited, even if a contemporary record fails to confirm this.

In fact, the length of Jayavarman III's reign, long assumed to be brief, has become a subject of debate. When Aymonier made a loose translation of the first elephant hunt inscription in 1900, he assumed the problem to be solved. The four-sided stele of Kok Rosei (K. 175), in Khmer, narrates at the top of its east face an incident in which "He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III) caught an elephant" in a forested area.[27] Aymonier, assuming that this east face was a continuation of the text from another face, read the name Jayavarman "who reigned in -91," with a missing initial numeral, at the bottom of the south face.[28] Aymonier determined that the incomplete number should be restored as 791 śaka, or 869 CE, that it should be accepted as the first year of Jayavarman III's reign, and that consequently the king's reign lasted only eight years (869-877 CE). Aymonier's comment on the historical significance of this discovery is telling: "The eight-year reign of this 'young man' would have seemed brief to contemporaries—*and we know that such was their opinion*; the spirit of his reign was left dazzled by the splendors of his illustrious father's 67 years in power."[29] Aymonier's assumption that Cambodians thought little of Jayavarman III's reign was likely influenced by

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[24] Louis Finot, in "Inscriptions d'Angkor," *BEFEO* 25 (1925): 293: "Jayavarman III était vishnuite et n'eut qu'un règne court et insignificant."

[25] Approximately 20 according to Cœdès' inventory.

[26] The Ssèle of Prasat Prei Bat, K. 1073, edited by Saveros Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions du Cambodge*, 102-105.

[27] *dhūli vraḥ pāda ta stac dau viṣṇuloka stac cāp taṃmrya*. K. 175, Cœdès, *IC* VI, 177.

[28] Aymonier, *Le Cambodge, Vol. I*, 422. Though the inscription is in Khmer, the date is written out according to Sanskrit convention in reverse order: *ekanava*--- (19-), or -91. See Cœdès, *IC* VI, 177, line 15.

[29] "Le règne de huit ans de ce "jeune homme" a pu paraître bref aux contemporains—et nous savons que tel est leur sentiment—dont l'ésprit resté ébloui par les splendeurs des soixante-sept années de pouvoir de son illustre père." Ibid., 422. Emphasis added.

the sparse details in the "official" inscriptions. In any case, the evidence of K. 175 for attributing Jayavarman III with a forgettable eight-year reign, and his father with a stunning 67-year reign, appeared to be convincing.

In 1928 George Cœdès introduced a third elephant hunt inscription (Prasat Cak, K.521) into the discussion about the end of Jayavarman II's reign (and hence about the beginning of his son's) that contradicted Aymonier's date of 869 CE.[30] Cœdès' revision also involved a critique of Aymonier's reading of K. 175. He noted that the east face of K. 175 containing the elephant hunt episode is in fact the beginning of the stele's text, not a continuation from the south face as Aymonier assumed, and that the Jayavarman observed on the south face refers not to Jayavarman III but to Jayavarman V who was the reigning king when the inscription was composed in the late 10th century. The date -91 associated with the beginning of this Jayavarman's reign should not be 791 śaka as Aymonier supposed, but 891 śaka (969 CE).[31] In establishing a new regnal date for Jayavarman III, Cœdès read in the new Prasat Cak inscription (K.521) the year 791 śaka (869 CE)—ironically the same as Aymonier's originally proposed date—but he also observed in the same inscription that Jayavarman III had reigned for 16 years (*svey rāja chnaṃ tap pramvāy*) by this date, placing his year of ascension to the throne, and Jayavarman II's death, at 775 śaka, or 853 CE.[32] This interpretation of the date did not last long, however. In 1943 Cœdès noted that the inscription of Tuol Ta Pec (K.834), an early 11th century text, gives 772 śaka, or 850 AD, as the date of Jayavarman III's ascension, and he therefore felt obliged to reread and retranslate the text of Prasat Cak (K.521) accordingly, correcting his reading of the date 775 śaka to 772 śaka (850 AD). This interpretation was based on the assumption that the 16 years mentioned in K. 521 refer not to how long Jayavarman III had reigned, but rather to his age upon gaining the throne.[33]

It would appear that Cœdès had decisively solved the issue of Jayavarman III's regnal dates. However, Claude Jacques, in a critique of the Tuol Ta Pec stele (K. 834) published in 1971, convincingly demonstrated that the inscription had been altered or faked as a means of legitimating the claims of a usurping family. Those parts that listed the regnal dates of kings had especially been changed, and Jacques asserted that those dates, including the year 772 śaka

[30] Cœdès, "Les capitals de Jayavarman II," *BEFEO* 28 (1928): 114-115. For the edition of the Prasat Cak inscription, see Cœdès, *IC* IV, 167-170.

[31] Subsequently in 1954, Cœdès identified the text of the south face as a near replica of the inscription of Kampong Thom (K. 444) and that of Tuol Dan Khcan (K. 868) located near Sisophon, Banteay Mean Chey province, both dated 974 CE. See Cœdès, *IC* VI, 175.

[32] Cœdès, "Les capitals de Jayavarman II," 130-131.

[33] Cœdès, "Nouvelles précisions sur les dates d'avènement de quelques rois des dynasties angkoriennes," *BEFEO* 43 (1943): 12-13. For Cœdès' edition of the Tuol Ta Pec stele (K. 834), see *IC* V, 244-269.

(850 CE) for Jayavarman III, are consistently wrong.[34] Setting K. 834 aside, Jacques turned to K. 521 in which the phrase *svey rāja chnaṃ tap pramvāy* (reigned-year-16) could not, in Jacques' opinion, refer to age, but must be read as "[Jayavarman III] reigned for 16 years."[35] Therefore, Jayavarman III, having reigned for 16 years in 772 śaka (Jacques is confident of the reading of this number), came to power in 756 śaka, or 834 CE.[36] Claude Jacques has since been hesitant about this proposed translation, but Michael Vickery has recently argued energetically from the simple rules of Old Khmer grammar—*svey rāja chnaṃ tap pramvāy* can mean nothing else than "he [had] ruled for sixteen years"—that 834 CE must for now be accepted as correct, giving Jayavarman III an impressive reign of 43 years (834-877 CE), perhaps one of the longest in Angkorian history.[37]

The question remains open as to which of these dates, 834 or 850 CE, is truer to history. If we accept K. 521 from Prasat Cak as an objectively superior text, then Jacques' date of 834 CE should, as Vickery argues, become the standard date of Jayavarman III's accession to the throne. I hesitate to accept this, however. K. 521 is dated to the late 11th century at the earliest, over 200 years after the fact, and presents, in the voice of the minor official who wrote it, an elephant hunt story that has elements of historical fancy. If we dismiss the date of 850 CE given in K. 834 from the early 11th century because of authorial manipulation or textual incongruities, why should we trust the accuracy of a date in a text that is perhaps equally subjective? Even if K. 521 is not a *deliberate* fiction, it carries all the potential for retrospective error. The recent discovery of a new elephant hunt inscription K. 1258 seems to support this possibility. In this text Jayavarman III is said to have given land to one of his officials in the year 862 śaka, or 940 CE—63 years after he is known to have died![38] K. 1258 begs the question of just how accurately retrospective inscriptions in general, and especially those written after the 10th century, could recall the history of Jayavarman III's 9th century reign. It is possible that the historical tradition itself by the 11th century, though for whatever reason firm on the year 724 śaka/802 CE as Jayavarman II's first regnal year on Mount Mahendra, was ignorant about most other 9th century specifics. Given the variety of possible dates for Jayavarman III's reign listed in the inscriptions, it appears that Jayavarman III was especially prone to this kind of forgetting.

It would contradict the evidence to dismiss Jayavarman III as a figment of the early Cambodian imagination, just as it would go against common sense to treat each contradictory

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[34] Claude Jacques, "Sur les données chronologiques de la stele de Tuol Ta Pec (K. 834)," *BEFEO* 58 (1971): 165-166.

[35] Ibid., 165.

[36] Ibid. 166.

[37] Michael Vickery, "Resolving the History and Chronology of 9th century Cambodia," *Siksacakr* 3 (2001): 1-7.

[38] See my interpretation of this unedited inscription below.

piece of information about his reign as objective fact. If the historical Jayavarman III was imperfectly remembered, we should not assume, pace Aymonier, that his contemporaries were unimpressed or that later Cambodians thought less of him.[39] Jayavarman III features in inscriptions set in a distant past, in local stories intended as arguments for ancestral claims to property and position in the present; the stories surrounding his half-forgotten personality were susceptible to what Tacitus in his account of German origin myths called "the license of antiquity."[40] The question we should ask of the inscriptions that take part in this historical tradition is not whether they speak the truth about past, but how they capitalize on the past's mutability.

The Property History

The meaning of Jayavarman III and his elephant hunt in retrospective accounts is inseparable from the style in which Cambodians remembered and reshaped the past. In order to appreciate these stories as texts, we must understand why recording certain memories on stone inscriptions became such common practice. Some historical content, often genealogical in nature, is found in the Sanskrit eulogies of royalty, but there is a richer source of history in a second kind of epigraphic discourse composed in both Sanskrit and Old Khmer which I will call the "property history." This is my translation of the Old Khmer technical term *śākha* (sometimes spelled *śāka*), derived from the Sanskrit word for "branch," and what Philip Jenner defines as "a succinct statement of the origin and successive ownership of landed property."[41] Though Jenner's definition is accurate, one should add that not all of these statements were succinct, and though the inscriptions typically addressed ownership of land, human (i.e., servant or "slave") property was also within their purview.[42] In the 10th and 11th century inscriptions, *śākha* texts sought to trace, whether succinctly or at length, the history of a certain claimant's territorial or human property, detailing the claimant's lineage and the role

[39] Aymonier, *Le Cambodge, Vol. I*, 422.

[40] *Licentia vetustatis*. In Harold Mattingly's freer translation, "the remote past invites guesswork." Harold Mattingly, *Tacitus on Britain and Germany* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951), 102.

[41] Philip Jenner, *A dictionary of Angkorian Khmer* (Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 2009), 587n3. Saveros Pou prefers a broader definition, "history," in *Dictionnaire vieux khmer – français – anglais* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 526-527.

[42] 15 inscriptions from the Angkorian period in Cœdès' inventory use the word *śākha*/*śāka* conveying this sense of a "property history": K. 19, K. 158, K. 175, K. 235, K. 254, K. 255, K. 262, K. 263, K. 373, K. 425, K. 468, K. 591, K. 679, K. 702, K. 754. K. 255 from Kok Po, late 10th century, prefaces a list of slaves and a description of the means by which a temple donator acquired them with the phrase *neḥh gi roh śākha khñuṃ neḥ:* "Here is the origin of the slaves." Cœdès and Dupont, "Les inscriptions du Prasat Kok Po," 384, line 1. An inscription from Ubon province in Thailand, K. 697, hesitantly dated by Cœdès to the reign of Īśānavarman II (c. 925 CE), uses exactly the same formulaic language before listing the order in which a certain Loñ Myaṅ acquired various lands: *neḥ gi roḥ śākha...* An early 10th century date for this inscription is reasonable but not certain. Cœdès, *IC* VII, 96, side B, line 2.

of his/her ancestors in accruing and preserving that property to the present. Unlike royal genealogies, *śākha* inscriptions were not commissioned by the king, but rather by provincial officials and landed elites. Elites often prefaced *śākha* inscriptions with eulogies in honor of the king or of the inscription's patron, but their more immediate aim was less to glorify themselves poetically than to specify and narrate the causes of personal and familial entitlement.

That property was paramount in early Cambodian politics is reflected in the quantity of *śākha* inscriptions in the corpus and their persistence as a public mode of communication throughout the Angkorian period. The *śākha* inscriptions appear in the 10th century, beginning in the reign of Rājendravarman (944-969 CE)[43] and lasting into the 14th century.[44] They become particularly prevalent during the reign of Sūryavarman I (1002-1050 CE) when a drastic reordering of loyalties and property ownership seems to have taken place. Michael Vickery has argued persuasively that the ascent of Sūryavarman I opened the floodgates of discontent among downgraded members of the provincial elite—Cambodians who traced their entitlements back to the 9th century kings and yet were marginalized from the centralized administrative expansion of the 10th century.[45] The inscriptions from this period suggest a feverish effort on the part of this marginalized elite to lay claim to property and position by appealing to family history. Vickery points to several examples of impossible or invented claims, including one bizarre case where a series of thirteen brothers in one generation are said to have received titles from kings for over a span of two hundred years.[46]

Before we assume that the *śākha* inscriptions were the work of a fomenting underclass, we should note the consistent reverence in these texts for the status quo as embodied by the king. Land claims depended, as a matter of custom if not law, on a pretense of royal favor and legitimacy. Hence, the well-known *śākha* text, the Sdok Kak Thom inscription (K. 235) dated 1052 CE, honors the reigning dynasty by presenting a historical case for an extended family's privileged position in the service of each king from Jayavarman II to Udāyadityavarman II

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[43] The stèle of Trapeang Sambot, K. 19, dated 964 CE, in Cœdès, *IC* VI, 143-146. See 144, line 13 in Khmer: *niveda[na] gi śākha aṃviy khñuṃ phoṅ man steñ nādānta mān...* "[They] informed [Rājendravarman] of the origin [of the property], beginning with all the slaves, which Steñ Nādānta possessed..."

[44] See the mixed Pali and Sanskrit inscription of "Śrīndravarman dated 1230 śaka, or 1308 CE. The use of *śākha* in the enumeration of villages (*sruk*) is found in the Khmer portion. George Cœdès, "La plus ancienne inscription en pali du Cambodge," *BEFEO* 36 (1936): 17.

[45] On the politics of land claims in the 11th century inscriptions, see Michael Vickery, "The Reign of Sūryavarman I and Royal Factionalism at Angkor," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (1985), 226-244.

[46] Ibid., p. 233. This is the 11th century inscription K. 834, translated in Cœdès, *IC* V, 244-269, and briefly discussed above; see also the discussion of the text's obvious irregularities in Claude Jacques, "Sur les données chronologiques," 163-176.

(1050-c. 1066 CE).[47] Underlying this family's role as a lineage of officiants for the king's god (the *kamrateṅ jagat ta rāja*) is the family's gradual accumulation of land in each new generation.[48] Following the claim that "Parameśmara (i.e., Jayavarman II) gave the lineage of the people of Stuk Ransi and Bhadrapattana the right to officiate for the *kamrateṅ jagat ta rāja* (i.e., the deity)," the Sdok Kak Thom inscription proceeds to narrate a history of that family's property (*śākha santāna noḥ*). The property history argues on behalf of the family's territorial claims by embedding those claims within a validating history of the family's unstinting priestly service to the reigning kings. We read that when Jayavarman II moved his capital, the family's ancestor followed to officiate for the king's deity, after which the king is said to have given the family villages and lands in the capital's vicinity. The mutually reinforcing character of the property history and the sacerdotal history suggests that either one may constitute a fiction. Regardless, the two parallel narratives—one royal and prestigious (the journeys of the king and his royal deity), the other legal and mundane (the family's legitimate acquisition of lands)—serve to explain the scattered nature of the Sdok Kak Thom family and its lands and, simultaneously, to magnify the role of the family's illustrious ancestors as actors on the stage of royal Cambodian history. The story of the king and the god, however true it is to fact, lends the property history a majestic quality.

Though not all the *śākha* inscriptions feature an elaborate royal frame story, nearly all participate to some extent in the vision of an ideal royal past. The notion that all things had a royal beginning, that all property was once a royal gift (*karuṇā prasāda*), pervades the thought-world of the inscriptions. Even if we agree with M.C. Ricklefs that the royal gift in Cambodia was in a practical sense typically little more than a charade, present in every exchange in which it had no business as a sort of nod of approval and solicitation of respect,[49] we would be remiss to strip the king, or more precisely the image of the king, of social consequence. Angkorian Cambodians recognized the force of the king's image in all social experience; it motivated all public behavior from the gift of land to the inauguration of a community's shrine.[50] Perhaps more importantly, the king's image stood for the intangible and transcendent

[47] For K. 235, see Dupont and Cœdès, "Les stèles de Sdok Kak Thom. . .," 56-154; Adhir Chakravarti, *The Sdok Kak Thom Inscription, Part 2: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College Research Series 111, 1980); Chhany Sak-Humphy and Philip Jenner, *The Sdok Kak Thom Inscription (*Phnom Penh: Buddhist Institute, 2005).

[48] This deity is the *kamrateṅ jagat ta rāja,* called in the Sanskrit *devarāja*, about which a considerable amount of debate has taken place as to its origin and function. See Hermann Kulke, *The Devarâja Cult*, tr. Ian Mabbett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

[49] M.C. Ricklefs, "Land and the Law in the Epigraphy of Tenth-Century Cambodia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 3 (1967): 411-420.

[50] For an overview of the culture of Angkorian kingship, see Ian Mabbett, "Kingship in Angkor," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 8 (1978): 1-58.

qualities of life beyond the particular, the circumscribed and the mundane. Just as the presence of a king symbolically constituted a trans-local community of subjects who were otherwise consigned to a practical periphery, the "discovery" of a semi-legendary king in a family's genealogy and history gave definition to a distant past that may have otherwise been beyond imagining. A desire for a sharpened picture of a transcendent past likely inspired the practice of inscribing family property histories, motivating local elites to couch stories of their ancestors in the myths of Cambodia's most famous kings.

The Elephant Hunt Tradition in History

The myth of the royal elephant hunt provides an ideal setting for this kind of local history in which a king from the distant past is remembered to have legitimized a certain family's claims to property. In the first place, because the elephant hunt was a common royal sport, the story gives a plausible explanation for the king's presence far from his capital. The elephant hunt narrative also conveniently lends itself to hyperbole; the king's hunt is not merely a pleasure trip but also a political rally, the king being accompanied on his march by his whole court, including his favorite companions (typically the ancestors of the story's author). Finally, the elephant hunt features a richly specialized vocabularly that makes it especially adaptable for use in local traditions, especially those which explain the origin of place-names.[51] When seen together in a property history, these narrative elements—long-distance travel, the accompanying retinue of officials, and toponym etiology—signal a kind of pattern and purpose.

If the elephant hunt was the subject of compelling stories, it was because it was believed to be an archetypal event of real politial significance. The hunt in early South and Southeast Asia was a preoccupation of the political elite and a major object of royal patronage. It would perhaps be more accurate to call the hunt a chase, both because much of the significant action involved the journey itself and not just the moment of capture, and because a "hunt" implies killing, which was never its purpose. The primary end of hunting elephants was to take them captive, domesticate them, and make use of them in the secular (war) and aesthetic (ceremony) functions of the state. According to the traditional Indic "elephant lore" that either influenced or paralleled early Cambodia's hunting culture, prizes were ranked by certain "favorable marks"—size, strength, and coloration—the "white" or albino elephant being the most prestigious catch as it was considered a sign of the king's legitimacy and the

[51] For an interesting discussion of similar popular etymologies, their etiological function and diversity in the Hebrew Genesis, see Brevard S. Childs, "The Etiological Tale Re-Examined," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (Oct. 1974): 387-397, and Herbert Marks, "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 21-42.

kingdom's well-being.[52] The hunt for these rare wild elephants was necessary and expensive as tamed elephants failed to breed in captivity; hence, considerable resources in early South and Southeast Asian polities were dedicated to the on-going effort to replace and multiply them.

The resources necessary for a successful hunt were both practical and religious because the elephant hunt was as much a form of ritual as a sport. In the early 20th century, elephant hunts observed in Northeast Thailand were performed by teams of men who were required, like ascetics, to be ritually pure before petioning the forest spirits with chants and offerings for permission to pass through their realm.[53] The ceremonial aspect of the hunt was intensified when the king and his entourage participated. In early Southeast Asia the elephant hunt was an occasion for the sovereign to be seen traveling throughout the kingdom accompanied by armies and retainers. For a 17th century Acehnese queen, it was not enough to send out her servants to catch elephants for her court; she would take part in the hunt herself alongside all who were fortunate enough to be invited.[54] Even if the hunt was unsuccessful, the royal progress was itself a powerful symbol of territorial power, serving to map out, by a sort of performative tracing, a "diagrammatic" vision of Indic cosmology onto the actual realm.[55] The 14th century Javanese text *Desawarnana*, a "description of the country [of Majapahit]," illustrates this "cosmic ordering of the state" by following the itinerary of King Hayam Wuruk's royal procession.[56] The same territorial symbolism applied in the early Cambodian royal progress. In the first south-facing bas-relief panel at Angkor Wat, the king is depicted in a procession flanked by armies representing various territorial units within the empire, as if

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[52] The prestigious practice of catching white elephants is common to both South and Southeast Asia, though the tradition has perhaps become more deeply engrained in mainland Southeast Asia, where Angkor's most notable successor state, Siam, far more than any polity in South Asia, was famous for its white elephants in the 19th century. The origin, or at least similar importance, of the white elephant tradition in ancient India can be seen as early as the 3rd century BCE work the *Indica* by the Greek ethnographer Megasthenes, where he reports that an Indian king once attempted to seize a white elephant captured by one of his subjects; see J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenês and Arrian; being a translation of Megasthenês collected by Dr. Schwanbeck, and of the first part of the Indika of Arrian* (Calcutta: Thacker. Spink & Co., 1877), 118-119. Curiously, the most important manual on elephant lore in Sanskrit literature from India, the *Mātaṅga-līlā*, fails to mention white or pale coloration as a "favorable mark" of elephants. See Nilakantha, *The Elephant-Sport (Matanga-Lila)*, tr. Franklin Edgerton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 54-57.

[53] A series of such ceremonies before and after an elephant hunt in Northeast Thailand are meticulously described in Francis H. Giles, "Adversaria of Elephant Hunting (together with an account of all the rites, observances and acts of whorship to be performed in connection therewith, as well as notes on vocabularies of spirit language, fake or taboo language and elephant command words)," *Journal of the Siam Society* 23, no. 2 (Dec. 1929): 71-96.

[54] Leonard Andaya, "Aceh's Contributions to Malayness," *Archipel* 61 (2001): 62.

[55] See Clifford Geertz, "Center, Kings, and Charisma," 130.

[56] Ibid. See also Robson, *Desawarnana*; and Theodore Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century: A Study of Cultural History. The Negara-Kertagama by Rakawi Prapanca of Majapahit, 1364* A.D, 5 vols. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960-63).

they are gradually joining the king's ranks as he passes through their domains.[57] The royal elephant hunt seems to have served a similar political function: to ritually and symbolically actualize the king's extensive territorial dominion.

Late Khmer oral traditions about the elephant hunt provide several examples of this theme of political integration within the context of the royal journey. In the late 19th century Etienne Aymonier recorded an elephant hunt story from the area of Sangkha in Surin Province, a historically Khmer region in present-day northeast Thailand. A humble Kuay woodcutter (the Kuay being the predominant ethnic group, along with the Khmer, in southern Surin) befriends and aids the Cambodian king while the king is hunting a white elephant in a forest far from the capital. Because of this service, the woodcutter is awarded the title of Lord of Saṅghapura (i.e., Sangkha) when he visits the king at Angkor.[58] This etiological tale, in explaining the origin of Sangkha's traditional politial elite, communicates a significant political-cultural message that resonates with the underlying theme of the Angkorian elephant hunt inscriptions. The king's elephant hunt in a distant land transforms a lowly member of a peripheral ethnic minority into a person of title and high esteem. By extension, it implicitly accounts for the political conversion of the territory Sangkha and its people from a once-wild frontier to a centered, royally sanctioned province. The civilizing function of the hunt in this political myth is nothing unique to Cambodian culture; Thomas Allsen in his comparative study of the pre-modern hunt notes the symbolic struggle between polity and wild in the royal hunts of "state formation tales" throughout pre-modern Eurasia.[59] This tension between the civilized and the uncultured, anticipating the triumph of rule over the unruled and unruly, gives the royal hunt a special expository power. Elephant hunt stories were especially apt at accounting for the moment when a place was first civilized or integrated into the royal domain.

These stories likewise served to explain the mythic origins of place-names. Two early 20th century recensions of Cambodia's royal chronicles give a legendary account of the early 17th century king Jaijeṭṭhā hunting for elephants.[60] Having captured several elephants, the king commands his fellow hunters to lead the animals to a village supposedly in the vicinity of modern Phnom Penh where they are to be domesticated. The story explains that this is how the village came to be called Bniet Ṭaṃrī, "corral for the elephants," before it came to be

[57] The "historial procession" relief of Angkor Wat is described in Vittorio Roveda, *Sacred Angkor: The Carved Reliefs of Angkor Wat* (Bangkok: River Books, 2003), 29-37.

[58] Aymonier, *Le Cambodge, Vol. 2*, 193.

[59] Thomas Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 179.

[60] Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge (de 1594 à 1677)* (Paris: EFEO, 1981), 151. This story is found in a chronicle labeled P63, authored by royal commission in 1903, and is taken up again in the *Vāṃṅ Juon* (VJ) chronicle of 1934.

known simply as Bniet.[61] I suspect that this story, relating an event 200 years previous, was an etiological tradition explaining the origin of a local (and at present unknown) toponym in southern Cambodia, and which was eventually inserted into the royal chronicles in the early 20th century by a historian fishing for local anecdotes around Phnom Penh. A similar toponym tradition with more general circulation can be seen in the story of the "white elephant king" (*stec ṭaṃrī sa*), which is attached to various place-names and features in present-day northern Cambodia.[62] Much like the myth of the civilizing elephant hunt, these imaginative toponym traditions likely respond to certain anxieties about local origins and provinciality. A distant memory of a king traveling through the country helps establish local identity and prestige, linking the otherwise insignificant to the politically extraordinary.

The Elephant Hunt of Jayavarman III

The theme of royal domestication and the etiology of toponyms are integral to the myth of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt, which seems to have spread throughout Angkorian Cambodia as a polity-wide formula for the fashioning of local origin stories. Taken together, the five versions of the elephant hunt, found in disparate parts of the country, seem to embellish a basic myth of Jayavarman III roaming the country's outer provinces, catching kingly elephants, and bequeathing land, nobility, and history to his peripheral subjects. The authors of the property history inscriptions, all owners of inherited land, sought to frame their 9th century ancestors as the recipients of the itinerant king's approval and grace. By the late 10th century the elephant hunt story was far enough removed from the present to justify a multitude of retellings; it was also ubiquitous, free to circulate and be altered outside of official discourse, and powerful enough to affect the way provincial subjects defined themselves and their homelands.

The first such story is recounted in the inscription K. 175, featuring the most concise elephant hunt episode of the Angkorian corpus.[63] Discovered at the site of Kok Rusei just east of the Kulen mountains and northeast of Angkor (see fig. 5), K. 175 is a four-sided stele dated to the late 10th century during the reign of Jayavarman V. Three faces of the stele speak of the

[61] Mak Phoeun, 305.

[62] I have heard several versions of a "white elephant king" myth in northern Cambodia used to explain the origin of an archaeological site. A large mound behind the temple-mountain or *prāṅ* of Koh Ker in Preah Vihear province is called the "tomb of the white elephant king" (*phnūr stec daṃrī sa*). Another example, Prasat Kong Phluk (Gaṅ Bhluk) at the southeast corner of the *baray* (reservoir) of Beng Mealea in Siem Reap province, was described to me as the place where the white elephant king, while searching for his lost daughter, stopped to rest his tusks (*gaṅ bhluk*, note the folk etymology) on a nearby tree. I am not aware of any study of this modern Cambodian etiological tradition.

[63] K. 175, Cœdès, *IC* VI, 173-180.

king's servant Śivācārya and the history of his land acquisitions in the vicinity of that site, which the inscription calls *vraḥ ganloṅ*.[64] The damaged commencement of the text informs us that four "village elders (*grāmavṛddhi*)" were responsible for verifying Śivācārya's claims to the village of *vraḥ ganloṅ*.[65] The text then identifies itself as "a property history of this forested land" (*śākha bhūmi vrai neḥ*). "The village elders (*grāmavṛddhi*)," it continues, "have said that the forested land of *vraḥ ganloṅ* was where He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III) once caught an elephant."[66] Two centuries later, "officials and village elders surveyed this forested land which had never been a village and never been a ricefield and set up boundary stones,"[67] after which they informed the king Jayavarman V, who gave the forest to Śivācārya to be cleared for a new settlement.[68]

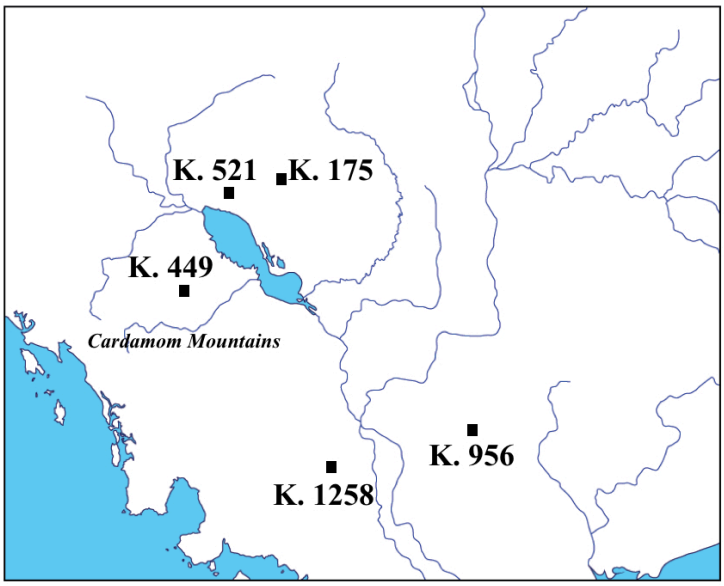

Figure 5. The Elephant Hunt Inscriptions. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=cambodia_map&num_car=136&l ag=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

[64] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 175, line 2. The fourth face of the inscription is a near replica of two other inscriptions from the Jayavarman V period, the inscription of Kampong Thom (K .444) and that of Tuol Dan Khcan (K. 868). Mention of the elephant hunt occurs on the third line of the east face; only the first five lines of that face are relevant to a discussion of the myth.

[65] Ibid., 175, line 1. On the function of *grāmavṛddhi*, or *grāmavṛddha*, in Angkorian Cambodia, see S. Sahai, *Les institutions politiques et les administrations dans l'ancien Cambodge* (Paris: EFEO, 1970), 84-85. This was a kind of local official in charge of determining the veracity of land claims, origins, and boundaries.

[66] *Grāmavṛddhi kathā man bhūmi vrai vraḥ ganloṅ ti dhūli vraḥ pāda ta stac dau viṣṇuloka stac cāp taṃmrya. . .* Cœdès, *IC* VI, 175, lines 2-3.

[67] *pratya nu grāmavṛddhi chvatt bhūmi vrai ta vvaṃ tel jā sruk ta vvaṃ tel jā srey saṅ gol. . .* Ibid., 175, lines 3-5.

[68] Ibid., 178, lines 1-6.

By prefiguring the clearing of the forest and the establishment of a new territory, the story of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt contains not only an anecdotal local memory but also a political statement. It would appear that identifying a place as the site of a royal elephant hunt qualified that site as royal/state property and hence worthy of settlement; Śivācārya received the land only after the village elders had confirmed that it had once been royally possessed, by virtue of the ostensible elephant hunt that had taken place there, and was therefore free to be given away. The village elders' account of how the land came to be royally owned intimates a metaphorical contrast between that which is settled and domesticated and that which is wild and untamed. By taming an elephant in the forest—asserting his political will on a territorial frontier—Jayavarman III makes way for the forest's eventual transformation by Śivācārya into habitation (*sruk*) and rice field (*sre*). New settlers of an isolated area east of the Kulen plateau such as Kok Russei may have found reassurance in the village elders' claim that the site had already been ritually, if not yet physically, transformed into civilized space. The village elders' story about Jayavarman III's elephant hunt may preserve the memory of an actual event, or it may reflect local hearsay, related (*kathā*) to the hopeful claimant Śivācārya as an interpretive myth as much as a fact. In other words, it is possible that the story, based on a trans-local tale about Jayavarman III the elephant hunter, was put together to meet a legal need for historical clarity—and satisfy Śivācārya's desire for free land.

A formula for the elephant hunt consisting of royal giving and the domestication of a frontier is far more explicit—and may lend credence to the above interpretation of K. 175 as a local myth—in a Khmer inscription from the Angkor region, K. 521, from the temple of Prasat Cak within the Siem Reap city limits (see fig. 5).[69] K. 521 actually stands for two inscriptions written seemingly in the same hand on the doorjambs of two adjacent brick shrines dated to the late 9th-early 10th centuries (see fig. 6). As for when the inscriptions were written, we are left to guess. We only know that one of the author's ancestors (*aji*) was a royal servant in the first half of the 11th century, which means that the inscriptions can only date to the latter half of that century at the earliest, and perhaps to the 12th century. The southern doorjamb of the north tower recalls in 15 lines the origin of the shrine,[70] called in the inscription Viṣṇugrāma (the village of Viṣṇu) and dedicated to a deity Śakavrāhmaṇa, and the means by which the temple and its surrounding lands came into the possession of the author (who is only referred to in the first person, *añ khñuṃ paṃcyāṃ*) via a female ancestor (*aji*), Teṅ Hyaṅ. This ancestor and her husband were ordered into the service of the deity of the shrine as royal

[69] Cœdès, *IC* IV, 167-170.

[70] Cœdès confuses the location of the two inscriptions. The first inscription is on the north tower, not the south; the second inscription is on the south tower. Cœdès, *IC* IV, 168.

representatives (*pre paṃmre panlas vraḥ śarira*) of Jayavarman III.[71] They then requested ownership of the adjacent land, Jnaṅ Prāṅ, which Jayavarman III had given to the shrine.

Figure 6. Prasat Cak, north tower in foreground. Photographed by Anne Lowman.

The 16-line inscription of the south shrine, leaping forward a century and half in time, describes how another of the author's ancestors, male and through the matrilineal line (*mātṛpākṣa*), solicited help from the queen of Sūryavarman I (1002-1050 CE) in demarcating the inherited land of Jnaṅ Prāṅ.[72] The property history narrated in K. 521, in both inscriptions, is therefore a legal verification of the author's claims to inheritance of the temple of Prasat Cak (Viṣṇugrāma) and its adjacent land (Jnaṅ Prāṅ).

What the inscription of the north shrine lacks, when compared to the detailed south shrine inscription, in sound proof for the author's claims, it makes up for with imagination and etiological insight. Moreover, even as it introduces the extraordinary circumstances of a divine intervention, the Old Khmer text is terse and familiar (the god in the vision referring to himself in the simple first person *añ*), as if it would have us feel assured of its historicity. In an exceptional example of Old Khmer prose the author narrates the miraculous capture of an

[71] Ibid., 168, line 11.

[72] See a fascinating application of the south tower's inscription, with its listed territorial boundaries, to the question of the relative age of certain Angkorian hydraulic features in Christophe Pottier, "A la recherche de Goloupura," *BEFEO* 87, no. 1 (2000): 95-96.

escaped elephant by Jayavarman III, which precedes the gifting of temple lands to the author's ancestors:[73]

> 772 śaka (850 CE), His Majesty Jayavarman, He who went to Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III], son of Parameśvara (i.e., Jayavarman II) of Vrai Slā in Anin(ditapura),[74] having reigned for sixteen years, captured an elephant and kept it . . . Then the elephant ran away into the forest called Viṣṇugrāma. At night while lying down to sleep (*yap phdaṃ*) the king prayed for counsel (*pratyādeśa*). [In a dream] he saw a Vaiṣṇava deity,[75] who addressed Viṣṇuloka as follows: "If you strive . . . set up my statue and devote yourself to me, I will return the elephant to you." The very next morning (*udaiya guḥ*) the king caught the elephant in this forest. He ordered that the forest be cleared to erect a statue of Lord Śakavrāhmaṇa, gave [the shrine] the name of Viṣṇugrāma, and gave it a plot of riverside land [called] Jnaṅ Prāṅ. My ancestor Teṅ Hyaṅ, the wife of Loṅ Las who was the king's in-law in the royal service,[76] came as royal servants to make offerings to the god and were ordered into its service as representatives of the king. Teṅ Hyaṅ and Loṅ Las requested the land. . .

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[73] See Cœdès' transcription, *IC* IV, 168, south doorjamb of the north tower, lines 1-11: (1) 772 *śaka gi nu vraḥ pāda śrījaivarmmadeva stāc dau viṣṇuloka ta rājaputra* (2) *vraḥ pāda parameśvara vraḥ - - - vrai slā 'nin svey rāja chnāṃ tap pra*(3)*mvāy cāp taṃmrya duk - - - lāṅ mann taṃmrya rat cval ta vrai* (4) *neḥ ta jmaḥ viṣṇugrāṃma yap phdaṃ ta gi svaṃ pratyādeśa yol kaṃ*(5)*mrateṅ añ vaisnava mvay pandval ta vraḥ pāda viṣṇuloka thā da*(6)*ha ñyāṅ vi- - - pi sthāpa rūpa 'añ bhaktiy 'añ oy taṃmrya* (7) *noḥ viṅ udaiya guḥ aṃpān taṃmrya noḥ ta vrai neḥ pandval* (8) *pre chgā ta neḥ sthāpanā rūppa kaṃmrateṅ 'añ śakavrāhmaṇa di*(9)*kṣā jmaḥ viṣṇugrāṃma jvan bhūmi trey jnaṅ prāṅ 'ji añ khñuṃ paṃcyāṃ* (10) *mvāy jmaḥ teṅ hyaṅ jā svāmiy loṅ las jā vraḥ khlaiy to*(11)*y vraḥ dnāy mok jvan ta vraḥ neḥ pre paṃmre panlas vraḥ sarira* (12) *teṅ hyaṅ nu loṅ las paṅgaṃ thpvaṅ nivedana svaṃ bhūmi. . .*

[74] I follow Cœdès' translation on 169, with the exception of this part of line 2, *rājaputra vraḥ pāda parameśvara vraḥ - - - vrai slā 'nin*, which Cœdès translates as "the son of Parameśvara, (residing in) Vrai Slaa in Anin(ditapura)."

[75] From my own photograph of the inscription *in situ* the letters *vais-ava* are clear; the subscript *na* below the *sa* is no longer visible, but the word should undoubtedly be restored as *vaisnav*a, a misspelling of *vaiṣṇava*, "belonging or related to Viṣṇu." Cœdès read *vaiṣṇava*, though he was uncertain about his reading. Cœdès, *IC* IV, 169n1.

[76] The sentence implies that the maternal ancestor of the author was a sister or cousin of Jayavarman III, and thus of the same Aninditapura lineage; this would explain why the lineage of Jayavarman III through his father is specified at the beginning of the text. I interpret the phrase *toy vraḥ dnāy* to mean "in the royal service." In a 12th century inscription (K. 254) *dnāy* appears to have the sense of "royal service," and is relatable to the Thai word, borrowed from Old Khmer, *thanāy*, meaning a representative or counselor. See Jenner, *Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*, 265. However, this definition is less certain in the context of K. 521. Cœdès, *IC* IV, 169n5, refrained from translating the term, though he noted that perhaps it was used like the word *mātṛpakṣa*, "matrilineal," in the inscription of the south tower (line 2) to designate the author's relationship to his ancestor. In modern Khmer *dāy* preserves a technical meaning of "legal heir," though it is derived from Sanskrit *dāya*, and hence should not be considered as the root of an infixed form *dnāy*.

The text begins with a show of specific knowledge related to the past, including the date of Jayavarman III's accession to the throne (sixteen years before 850 CE, or 834 CE) and, if only in abbreviated form, the king's genealogy. I am convinced that *vrai slā 'nin* in the text's introduction should be taken as a marker of Parameśvara' s family identity, not necessarily an indication of territorial residence,[77] and that the missing word is *sruk: vraḥ pāda parameśvara vraḥ sruk vrai slā 'nin* ("Parameśvara of the sacred territory of Vrai Slā of/in Aninditapura").[78] The abbreviated form of Aninditapura, *'nin* or *anin*, is almost exclusively used in the inscriptions following a name to identify a person's lineage. The fact that Jayavarman II was a matrilineal descendant of the royal house of Aninditapura is known from the genealogical portion of the digraphic stelae of Yaśovarman I.[79] This text specifies that Jayavarman II's matrilineal ancestor—"the maternal uncle of the maternal uncle of his mother"—was a certain Śrī Puṣkarākṣa, a "descendant of the lord of Aninditapura." I consider this to be sufficient evidence to conclude that Jayavarman II was principally of the Aninditapura lineage, which would explain the importance placed on that lineage by his successors and by elite families in a text like K. 521.

If K. 521 has more compelling action and genealogical information than K. 175, its explanatory purpose is similarly straightforward. The story seeks to explain the origin of the name of the shrine, Viṣṇugrāma ("village of Viṣṇu"). This was probably understood in two ways. Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III), the one early Angkorian king connected to Viṣṇu, either named (*dikṣā jmaḥ*) the "village of Viṣṇu" after himself, or alternatively, the king named the village after the "Vaiṣṇava deity," Śakavrāhmaṇa, whom the king had promised to honor in the form of a statue at the place of the shrine.[80] More likely than not both explanations are "correct." Such an ambiguous etymology of a place may not have been seen as a contradiction but as doubled affirmation of an event's historicity and the weight of a property history's claims. In the etiology of the place-name Viṣṇugrāma we can begin to see a pattern for structuring a local history of place.

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[77] Michael Vickery observes that there is no evidence that Aninditapura was a large territory, only that it was considered the original *pura* of a politically important lineage group from the 9th century onward. Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 384. This view contradicts Claude Jacques' proposal that Aninditapura be understood as a vast pre-Angkorian polity in Northwest Cambodia which included the area of Angkor. Jacques, "Sur l'emplacement du royaume d'Aninditapura," *BEFEO* 59 (1972): 193-205.

[78] Ham Chay Li follows, correctly in my view, this reconstruction and translation in his "Sīlacārik prāsād cak," 53.

[79] See stèle de Prah Bat (K. 95) in Barth and Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites*, 184, stanza II, lines 1-2.

[80] This so-called "Scythian brahmin," Śakavrāhmaṇa was a common deity in Angkorian Cambodia, though its origin and significance are unknown. See George Cœdès, *Les États Hindouisés* 93. In K. 521 we are led to believe that the god was one of many local deities in a Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

The other etiological strategy common to K. 175 and K. 521 is the juxtaposition of the wild and the tame, the center and the periphery. In K. 521 the progression towards civilization is represented, as in K. 175, by an elephant hunt in the forest. The tension is heightened by the elephant's escape into the forest and the king's need for the deity's aid in retrieving it from the jungle. The successful domestication of the elephant is not an everyday victory; it is, to use Claude Jacques' word, a "marvelous" sign of divine favor.[81] This transcendent event guarantees two dramatic resolutions: the elephant, having successfully evaded the king, is caught; the forest, having sheltered the escaped elephant, is cleared (*chgā*, i.e., *chkā*) for a temple and for its land. The taming of the forest frontier makes way for worship, settlement, and territorial definition. The evolution from forest to settlement, like the transition from wild elephant to tame, parallels the establishment of families and their deities in once peripheral places.[82]

The Provincial Perspective

Unlike K. 175 and K. 521, which contrast the human settlement with the forest frontier, the etiological tales of the final three elephant hunt inscriptions deal with the implications of political peripherality. Significantly, all three inscriptions come from sites on the fringe of the Cambodian polity. In consequence, they suggest a certain historical anxiety over the relationship between the provincial elites and the royal center.

The inscription of Vat Samroṅ, K. 956,[83] comes from the southeastern corner of Cambodia in present-day Prei Veng province (see fig. 5), in a region where the influence of Angkor was particularly subdued felt; pre-Angkorian inscriptions are perhaps more prevalent in the local corpus. K. 956 is actually two texts, the top six lines composed in a stately, impressed pre-Angkorian script (see fig. 7), while the remaining fifty-five lines are an Angkorian cursive, scribbled and shallowly incised on the borrowed stone and covering the entire face as if to squeeze in as much information as possible (see fig. 8). Its content is as confusing as its form. Its narrative ends abruptly, which makes it impossible to date; by comparing it to other *śākha* inscriptions, I suggest we attribute it to the 11th or 12th centuries.[84]

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[81] Jacques, "Nouvelles orientations," 47

[82] The tension between forest (*brai*) and settlement (*sruk)* is a perennial preoccupation of Cambodian culture. For an illuminating meditation on *sruk*/civilization and brai/*wild* in the context of 19th-century Cambodia's war-ravaged society, when "the frontier between the two was not especially sharp" (page 96), see David Chandler, "Songs at the Edge of the Forest: Perceptions of Order in Three Cambodian Texts," reprinted in *Facing the Cambodian Past* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1996), 76-99.

[83] Cœdès, *IC* VII, 128-136.

[84] K. 956 cuts off during the reign of Yaśovarman I (889-c.910 CE), and Cœdès considered dating it to this early period. However, Cœdès noted that an inscription K. 72, found nearby, is perhaps a continuation of the text. K. 72 lists two more kings and then cuts off again. I assume that the original inscription was longer, or had been

Like many *śākha* texts, the Angkorian section of K. 956 seeks to explain the origin of various lands, both immediate and distant, that make up a family's inheritance. However, its explanations are at times so convoluted that it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction.

Figure 7. K. 956. Photographed by the author.

Figure 8. K. 956, magnified.

This is not to say that K. 956 represents an entirely make-believe history. So many names and relationships are given that we can hardly, with lack of outside evidence, call it false. In fact, Michael Vickery has suggested that the inscription's genealogical information concerning Jayavarman II and his successors, particularly Indravarman, clarifies some issues presented by the deliberately fictionalized pedigrees of royal genealogical inscriptions.[85] However, it is also possible that the genealogies in K. 956 are equally if not more fictitious.

The relevant "facts" of the inscription are as follows. The authors, using the plural "we" (*yeṅ*), claim that their ancestors came originally from the pre-Angkorian polity of Bhavapura. Jayavarman II, who had married one of their ancestors in the maternal line, moved the family

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intended to continue up to the 11th-12th centuries. The expository style of the inscription, focusing on a complex family history, is certainly more characteristic of the 11th century than of the 10th, though a 10th century date is not impossible. For K. 72, see Cœdès, *IC* VI, 114. The inscription of K. 956 is now preserved at the depot of Angkor Conservation in Siem Reap.

[85] For a discussion of K. 956 from the perspective of political history, see Michael Vickery, "Some Remarks on early state formation in Cambodia," in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A.C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 95-115.

to southeastern Cambodia where he and his wife had seven children who make up the primary progenitors of the family. Two of the king's daughters subsequently inherited property in southwestern Cambodia, Sratāc at the site of the inscription and Ṛdvāl, while several other relations rose to prestigious positions at the Angkorian court. The most important person in this mix of ancestors is, as we shall see, Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra, granddaughter of Jayavarman II, who married Jayavarman III's successor, Indravarman (877-889 CE).[86]

What is striking about the family record preserved in K.956, aside from the importance given to matrilineal succession in the rules of inheritance, is that Jayavarman III is not shown to have any blood or marital relationship to the family's ancestors unlike the two other kings mentioned in the account. His appearance in his role as the famed elephant hunter simply provides a frame story in which the family's land claims can be neatly contextualized. After listing a cohort of ancestors who had successfully solicited land from Jayavarman III, the text relates how the king himself came to name the land of Sratāc, one of the principal lands previously inherited by the family:

> "Sratāc was originally named Haripura. Then He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III) went [there] to release (*pi tāc)* the holy elephant named Vraḥ ŚrīJaiyaśikṣadharma. He ordered that [Haripura] be called Sāra Tāc ("the powerful elephant has been released").[87] He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka erected [there] Vraḥ Vīra, dug Vraḥ Tvāt, and gave the following lands to Mratāñ Śrī Satyāyudha, our ancestor in the maternal line. . .[88]

Hence, we learn of the family's belief that the land of Sratāc, originally a gift from one of Jayavarman II's officials, received its name and identity during the reign of Jayavarman III. The name Sratāc, the text explains, is the new name for a domain previously called Haripura, derived from a pre-contracted form Sāra Tāc. In my opinion, this form *sāra tāc* ("the released elephant") was likely the local folk etymology of the place-name Sratāc, which was otherwise meaningless.[89] This etymology of *sratāc* from *sāra tāc* embellishes the otherwise unremarkable

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[86] Cœdès, *IC* VII, 130-131.

[87] As Cœdès notes, *sāra* exists in modern Khmer where it means "a robust male elephant." *IC* VII, 134, note 4.

[88] *sratāc jmaḥ haripura teṃ man vraḥ pāda stac dau viṣṇuloka stac dau pi tāc vraḥ tamrya ta jmaḥ vraḥ śrījaiyaśikṣadhaarmma pandval pre hau sāra tāc man vraḥ pāda stac dau viṣṇuloka sthāpanā vraḥ vīra jyak vraḥ tvāt oy vraḥ dakṣiṇa bhūmi ta aṃpāla neḥ ta mratāñ śrīsatyāyudha ta aji yeṅ toy mātṛpakṣa. . .* See Cœdès, *IC* Vol. 7, 131, lines 33-36. I follow Saveros Pou's implied translation of lines 33-34 in "Vocabulaire khmer relatif aux éléphants," 319; compare this with Cœdès, *IC* VII, 134, in which Cœdès takes the phrase *sratāc jmaḥ haripura teṃ* with the preceding sentence.

[89] The discovery of the etymological connection between *sratāc* and *sāra* tāc can be attributed to Au Chhieng, "Études de philologie indo-khmère (IV): Un changement de toponyme ordonné par Jayavarman III," *JA* 254.1 (1966), 151-161. Saveros Pou correctly explains that Sratāc was originally called Haripura (*jmaḥ haripura teṃ*), that

historical tradition surrounding the territory: Jayavarman II commemorates the liberation of the elephant by constructing a shrine in the vicinity, giving it a name, digging a reservoir, and giving more lands to one of the family's male ancestors.

Having explained the reason for Jayavarman III's coming to provincial Sratāc, and giving proof of the historical event in the place-name itself, the story proceeds to draw the most important of the family's ancestors—particularly Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra, the queen of the future king Indravarman—into the story as guests of Jayavarman III in one of his wandering elephant hunts:

> Then He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka (i.e., Jayavarman III) went to catch elephants in the mountains. He who has gone to Īśvaraloka (i.e., Indravarman) also went, which is why Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra went—[as did] Kamrateṅ Añ Vraḥ Mūla who was married to Teṅ Pavitra, mother of Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra (and daughter of Jayavarman II), [as well as] Teṅ Ṇau, her younger sister, who had been given to the royal brahmin entitled Mratāñ Khloṅ Gauri.[90]

The long list of people in the king's hunting party suggests a concerted effort to account for the participation in the famous hunt of each of the family's important ancestors. Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra, followed by her father and sister, goes along *because* her husband, the future King Indravarman, is Jayavarman III's traveling companion.[91] Perhaps a casual claim that one's ancestor was part of the famous hunt would have taxed credulity, because the

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the king had it renamed Sāra Tāc (*pre hau sāra tāc*), and that this name only later became Sratāc ("nom devenu plus tard Sratāc"). See Pou, "Vocabulaire khmer relatif aux éléphants," 319; see also Pou, *Dictionnaire*, "sratāc," 515. In my own interpretation, Sāra-tāc may be an 11th-12th-century popular etymology of Sratāc. The original etymology or meaning of Sratāc, if there is one, may be unrecoverable. Interestingly, there is a Preah Sdach district in southern Prei Veng province. Could this toponym reflect an original toponym "Sratāc" common to this region from a very early period?

[90] *man vraḥ pāda stac dau viṣṇuloka stac dau cāp tamrya āy vnaṃ vraḥ pāda kamrateṅ añ ta stac dau īśvaraloka dau ukk gi pi teṅ hyaṅ narendra dau man kamrateṅ añ vraḥ mūla dā teṅ pavitra ta ame teṅ hyaṅ narendra uk teṅ ṇau ta ph'van ti oy ta vrāhmana rājapurohita ta jmaḥ mratāñ khloṅ gauri.* See Cœdès, *IC* VII, 131, lines 38-42. This is my translation, which can be compared with Cœdès' translation in *IC* VII, 134.

[91] Cœdès, *IC* VII, 134, translates this passage: "Īśvaraloka also went because Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra was going there." I agree that the particles *gi pi* are causal; however, I believe Cœdès had the order of causation reversed. The use of *gi pi* in Old Khmer is often found in the construction: *pi. . . gi pi. . .* ("because. . . that is why. . ."). Alone *gi pi* can mean "this is why." Hence: "Īśvaraloka also went, which is why Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra went." Judith M. Jacob notes this meaning of *gi pi* in "A diachronic survey of some Khmer particles," *Cambodian Linguistics, Literature and History*, ed. David A. Smyth (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993), 190, 203. See also the example of *gi pi*, which clearly means "this is why," in line 45 of this same inscription: *gi pi yeṅ mān sruk āy ldau* ("this is why we have the territory at Ldau").

inscription takes pains to prove that the matrilineal ancestor Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra would have naturally, as wife of Jayavarman III's successor, accompanied the king. The journey of the elephant hunt sets the stage for the moment when, along the way to the mountains, Jayavarman III gives her father Kamrateṅ Añ Vraḥ Mūla (apparently the whole family was invited!) a distant territory called Ldau,[92] and repeats nearly *verbatim* the key familial relationships justifying the royal gift:

> Then when they had arrived at Ldau, Kamrateṅ Añ Vraḥ Mūla—who had taken [as his wife] Teṅ Pavitra, mother of Teṅ Hyaṅ Narendra, who was married to He who has gone to Īśvaraloka (Indravarman)—obtained the land of Ldau as a favor from He who has gone to Viṣṇuloka (Jayavarman III), conducted boundary rituals, placed boundary markers, erected an inscription at Sratāc, and gave [the land of Ldau] to our matrilineal ancestor named Teṅ Som, daughter of Teṅ Pavitra. This is why we have the territory at Ldau.[93]

The story of the elephant hunt and the royal gift therefore elucidates two themes: the family's identity and the nature of its territory. A male ancestor Kamrateṅ Añ Vraḥ Mūla, with a family connection to King Indravarman through his daughter, oversees the incorporation of Ldau into the family's expanding territorial property, and the royal journey that memorializes this event explains and justifies the family's claim. The family's etiological tradition is, on the one hand, a claim of distinction and local autonomy on the Cambodian periphery—it circumscribes a select family's ancestors and delineates their collective territory, however scattered it is in reality, into an imagined, unique whole. On the other hand, the tale is an affirmation of the family's dependence on the political center; it defines the identity of family and territory as peripheral and indebted to that political center, personified in this case by the king traveling in the mountains. Reading the journey to the mountains in K. 956 alongside the hunt in the forest in K. 521, and considering the repetitive persistence with which the family of K. 956 asserts its genealogical and historical connections to Cambodian royalty, we can observe how family ownership and distinction were predicated on, rather than resistant to, the state's territorial dominance of its frontiers.

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[92] The intended destination for the hunt is *āy vnaṃ*, "in the mountains," i.e., probably not in the flat vicinity of Prei Veng Province where the inscription was found. It is relevant to note that there are very few candidates for mountains near Prei Veng province. There is no indication where Ldau could be located.

[93] *man lvaḥ ldau kamrateṅ añ vraḥ mūla kḷṣṭa teṅ pavitra ta 'me teṅ hyaṅ narendra ta ti praveṣa vraḥ pāda kamrateṅ añ ta stac īśvaraloka dā prasāda bhūmi ldau ta vraḥ pāda stac dau viṣṇuloka cāt thve semavidhi sāṅ gol duk ta prasāṣṭa āy sratāc oy ta 'ji yeṅ ta jmaḥ teṅ soṃ ta kvan teṅ pavitra toy mātṛpakṣa gi pi yeṅ mān sruk āy ldau*. Cœdès, *IC* VII, 131, lines 42-46. I follow Cœdès' translation on page 134 apart from the last words *gi pi yeṅ mān sruk āy ldau*, which Cœdès translates: "afin que nous ayons le pays à Ldau."

A belief in the power of the royal center to ennoble the political periphery characterizes the final two elephant hunt inscriptions. These inscriptions were composed in Sanskrit rather than in the vernacular. They differ from standard Sanskrit eulogy, undoubtedly because their purpose is not praise but narration. In this they resemble the vernacular *śākha* texts. Why Sanskrit was used to serve this purpose is difficult to determine, especially as Khmer seems to have been deemed adequate for the same purpose elsewhere. In any case, the Sanskrit in both texts is imperfectly executed and features curious vernacularisms.[94]

The two-sided stele of Palhal, K. 449 narrates the history of a family that settled in a region called Malyāṅ during the time of Jayavarman II, precisely in the year 734 śaka (*avdhitrigiribhiś śakaiḥ*, oceans-three-mountains), or 812 CE (see fig. 9).[95] The inscription itself is firmly dated to 991 saka (1069 CE), which means that its account is long after-the-fact; the text appears to recognize the problem this time gap presents for believability by qualifying the supposedly original measurement of the lands in Malyāṅ with the word *smṛtaṃ*, "according to [oral] tradition."[96] The region of Malyāṅ most likely corresponds to the site of the inscription, on the border of Battambang and Pursat province in western Cambodia and nearly in the foothills of the Cardamom Mountains—as peripheral a location for an inscription as any in the corpus (see fig. 5). The inscription names the site "Garyāk," the property history of which, in 61 lines (54 verses of Sanskrit and seven lines of Khmer), occupies the entirety of the text.

This property history, though primarily the history of Garyāk, has an important bearing on the political history of greater Cambodia, particularly on the relationship between Angkor and the newly conquered frontier. The inscription relates how two ancestors, Śivakaivalya and Śivavinduka, accompanied Jayavarman II's general Pṛthivinarendra on a successful expedition to pacify the country/province (*viṣaya*) of Malyāṅ.[97] The suggestion that Malyāṅ was somehow "other" from Cambodia is confirmed in several pre-Angkorian inscriptions that mention an ethnic group Maleṅ, which may correspond to the Pearic peoples who until recently were the primary inhabitants of the foothills of the Cardamom Mountains (i.e., precisely where the present inscription was found).[98] In a damaged and obscure verse we

[94] Cœdès notes the "incredible incorrectness" of the Sanskrit of K. 449. The errors are both orthographic and grammatical (no minor sin in a Sanskrit composition), and their preponderance makes an interpretation of the text particularly difficult. Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 27.

[95] Ibid., 29, line 20.

[96] Ibid., 29, line 21.

[97] Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, line 17.

[98] On the connection Maleṅ/Malyāṅ, and the possibility of Pearic ethnicity, see Michael Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 249. The only other inscription that seems to state itself to be in Malyāṅ, K. 693, was found only 20 or so kilometers to the west of Palhal along the upper Moṅ River of southern Battambang Province. See Cœdès, *IC* V, 209. Midway between the two sites is Brai Tralāc, which until recently was still a Pear village.

learn that the people of Malyāṅ were forced to pay tribute while the new Cambodian conquerors moved to settle the land.[99]

See Figure 9. K. 449, side A. Photograph AMPP003179 courtesy of EFEO and the National Museum of Phnom Penh.

An intimate story of family inheritance typical of a property history is then told in the context of this invasion and settlement of Malyāṅ. Having secured the new territory, the general Pṛthivinarendra seizes a large plot of land in Malyāṅ at a place that will eventually be called Garyāk, and then donates it to his companions, Śivakaivalya and Śivavinduka. As in K. 956, these illustrious ancestors hail from a noble pre-Angkorian lineage, in this case Vyādhapura—undoubtedly the homeland and lineage of the inscription's authors.[100] It is

[99] *. . . narā dāntā tadgatyā karadās sadā. . .* Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, verse XV, line 18. "Then the men [of Malyāṅ] who had been subdued by the expedition were made to pay tribute in perpetuity. . ."

[100] The word Vyādhapura is damaged in the context of verse XI (line 13), but it can confidently be restored for two reasons. First, the verse states that Śivakaivalya and Śivavinduka were inhabitants of the villages of . . . pura, one of which is listed as Vrai Krapās, known from another 11th century inscription, K. 222, to be the name of a place in Vyādhapura. Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl, 29, note 1, and Cœdès, *IC* III, 64, note 3. Secondly, the present inscription

implied that the gift of land to the two ancestors was due to Jayavarman II's preferential treatment of Vyādhapura's inhabitants, the king's "favorites [who were], along with their kin, praised in eulogy for the pleasure of the nobility."[101]

At this juncture the text proceeds to add another layer to the etiological tradition surrounding the Vyādhapura family's territory in Malyāṅ. This part of the story features Jayavarman III and two more ancestors of the same privileged Vyādhapura family—the king's "two favorites in that family"—named Kaṇṭhapāśa and Brāhmarāśika (the *nṛpahastigrahadhipo*, "chief of royal elephant catchers")[102] who are said to have accompanied Jayavarman III on a chance journey to Malyāṅ.[103] The setting for this journey is, of course, the elephant hunt. Traveling with the king's entire army (*caturangavalānvitaḥ*),[104] no doubt from the capital at Angkor north of the Tonle Sap Lake, the adventurers head westward to Jāgrāma (*yāto jāgrāma*),[105] a territory or settlement (*sruk*) known from another context to be in the region (*pramān*) of Amoghapura,[106] or roughly in the area of present-day Banteay Mean Chey or northern Battambang Province to the northwest of the Tonle Sap.[107] From there they proceed to catch three elephants with the noble names of Śvetebha (white elephant), Śvetapucchaka (white tail), and Vaiśi.[108] In keeping with a well-known Khmer custom,[109] the king then releases (*mukta*) the elephants and follows them to an auspicious place of their choosing.[110] The

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identifies Vyādhapura as the residence, and by implication lineage, of two maternal relatives of Śivakaivalya and Śivavinduka, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, line 24. As seen in K. 956, ancestral lineages were traced back to original homelands (i.e., Bhavapura) through the maternal line.

[101] *. . . vallabhās tu sanmāde vācane sānvayās stutāḥ*. Ibid., 29, line 13.

[102] Ibid., 29, line 24.

[103] Ibid., 29, lines 23-24. Brāhmarāśika is said to reside in a village of Vyādhapura (*vrāhmarāśika vyādhapuragrāmasaṃstho*); the fact that he is a kinsman of Kaṇṭhapāśa suggests that they are both of the same Vyādhapura lineage.

[104] Literally "accompanied by an army comprising four parts (i.e., elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry)." Ibid., line 24.

[105] Cœdès mistakes Jāgrāma for a reduplicated verb, which he corrects to *jagraha*, "he caught." Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl, 29, line 25 and note 12.

[106] K. 211 in Cœdès, *IC* III, 27, line 3.

[107] The general location of the Amoghapura region is persuasively shown to have been in northwestern Cambodia in George Groslier, "Amarendrapura dans Amoghapura," *BEFEO* 24 (1924), 359-372.

[108] Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl, 29, lines 25-26.

[109] For this custom, see above, 17.

[110] Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, line 26. As Michael Vickery has recognized, this detail about releasing an elephant resonates with several episodes in 19th century Khmer literature, in which a released elephant seeks out, bows before, and hence selects the next king. Michael Vickery, *History of Cambodia: Summary of lectures given at the Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, 2001-2002* (Phnom Penh: Pre-Angkor Studies Society, 2002), 62. See,

released elephants apparently choose to head southward,[111] and having crossed a river Sītānadī,[112] continue on to Malyāṅ south of present-day Battambang.[113] When the king and his two companions arrive at the village of Garyāk (we will learn that this is not yet its name), they are seen by Śivakaivalya and Śivavinduka, who cry: "Are those not our maternal relations?"[114] The text therefore accounts, within the frame narrative of an elephant hunt and royal procession, for the arrival of each of the four main ancestors of the family at the ancestral village.

The significance of this royal visit to the village is not merely that it brings about a family reunion of these four men, but that it bestows a name on the village and "gives" the village again to its already owners. The etiology of the toponym Garyāk found in the record of this event is explicit: "Having caught a noble elephant with reddish tusks, and having led it here, because it was bound (or: "on account of the binding," *bandhināt*) the king named the village 'Garyyāk' (i.e., Garyāk). Then the king gave this land again to the four men."[115] The account of the village's naming suggests that "Garyāk" is connected semantically with Jayavarman III's "binding" of an elephant. In modern Khmer *kriek*, very likely related to Old Khmer *garyāk*, means to tie a domesticated or captured animal with a rope to a stake.[116] Hence,

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for example, the 19th century "verse novel" (*lpaeṅ*) *Kruṅ Subhāmitr* summarized in Judith M. Jacob, *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia: A Preliminary Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 162.

[111] I assume that Jāgrāma in Amoghapura was located in northwestern Cambodia west of the Stung Sreng River, and that any journey proceeding in the direction of Malyāṅ would have been southward. If Jāgrāma was somehow east of the Stung Sreng in Siem Reap Province, north of the Tonle Sap, then obviously the journey would have first taken the king further west.

[112] *sītānnadinadīñ cemām avatīryya*. Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, line 26. Perhaps the river Sītānadī corresponds to the Taṃpaṅ River of Battambang (likely the city's namesake), on which can be found the 11th century temple of Baset, and which was the province's principal watercourse before it was diverted in the 19th century into the present-day Saṅke River. Aymonier, *Le Cambodge* II, 1901, 279.

[113] *malyāṅ gatāḥ*. Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, line 26.

[114] *mātṛto me kulam nv iti*. Ibid., line 28.

[115] (line 28) *gṛhītvā lohitadantaṃ gajaṃ niddvandvadeśajam* (line 29) *nītyātra vandhināḍ grāme garyyāknāmākaron nṛpaḥ* (line 30) *nṛpo nṛbhyaś cathurbhyās tāṃ bhūmīṃ bhuyo pyadāt tadā*. Ibid., 29-30. This sentence actually consists of half of line 28 (Sanskrit verse XXV) and lines 29-30 (verse XXVI). Compared to the rest of the inscription, the elephant hunt story is narrated without much respect for verse and meter. George Cœdès in his translation of this sentence interpreted the ablative *bandhināt* to be *bandhinaṃ*, which he took with *grāme* to mean "in the village *of those who had caught* (the elephant)." See Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 29, note 1, and his translation on page 32. Recognizing the ablative of cause in *bandhināt* ("because of the binding") gives us a more grammatical, if perhaps still awkward, Sanskrit sentence, the correct meaning of which is assured when we recognize the etiological function of both *bandhināt* and *garyyāk* (i.e., *garyāk*) in the sentence.

[116] Pou, *Dictionnaire*, "garyāk," 134. Pou offers the modern *kriek* in a side-note as a possible derivative, but refrains from equating the two words in her actual definition. Connecting *kriek* with **griek*/*garyāk* is problematic, as Michael Vickery has reminded me, given that Old Khmer *g* may have still been voiced in the 11th century. It is

the naming of Garyāk ("The Binding") is remembered to have commemorated the successful completion of the elephant hunt—the moment of the elephant's "tying down."

Just as in the other versions of the myth where an elephant is caught before a forest can be felled or a territory claimed, the binding of an elephant means that the land can be tamed—completing, as it were, the process of colonization begun during the invasion of Malyāṅ by Jayavarman II. The act of domestication symbolized by the elephant hunt seems to echo the earlier invasion, with Jayavarman III on the hunt arriving like a conqueror "accompanied by his whole army" (*caturangavalānvitaḥ*).[117] Though the king's intention is not war, it is "binding" or subjugation. Here then the etiology of the elephant hunt seems to reaffirm an act of political integration on the country's periphery; Malyāṅ was in a sense twice "invaded" from Angkor. For the family of Garyāk who recalls these events in K. 449, the elephant hunt also signifies that Garyāk was twice given. The family's history and territorial identity are worked into and (doubly) substantiated by a memory of Cambodian expansion and consolidation. However, alongside this positive view of the family's place in Cambodian history is a sense of uncertainty over the family's relationship with the Cambodian center. The story, while affirming the family's ties to Cambodia's founders and the royal domestication of the family's territory, contains a note of undesired provinciality, or an anxiety borne by distance from the center. The family in Malyāṅ lives among a conquered foreign people who are forced to pay tribute. The surprise of the two ancestors in Garyāk on meeting their two prestigious relatives in the king's hunting party seems to betray their state of exile, in distant Malyāṅ, from the world of political importance.

This note of provinciality, of being politically sidelined or somewhere else, is implied in a recently discovered and enigmatic Sanskrit inscription from southern Cambodia, K. 1258, which relates the donation of land to one of the king's officials during a journey in "other domains."[118] The "other domain" in which this eight-line account of the elephant hunt takes

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entirely possible, however, that *kriek* (*k* being unvoiced in Old Khmer) is simply a modern misspelling of an original form **griek*. Due to the loss of voice distinction in modern Khmer, the two forms would have developed identical pronunciation and could have been spelled either way. This would have prevented 20th century lexicographers from correctly identifying the original initial. This passage from K. 449 certainly appears to confirm that the meaning of *garyāk* corresponds to modern *kriek*, and that the initial should in fact be a voiced *g*: *griek*.

[117] Cœdès, "La stele de Pàlhàl," 28, line 24.

[118] M. Gerdi Gerschheimer, who kindly introduced me to this unedited inscription, identified the posthumous name of Jayavarman III (Viṣṇuloka) in the inscription and therefore dated the inscription to the Angkorian period (9th-14th centuries). The inscription was subsequently read in M. Gerschheimer's seminar, at which time the transliteration of the text was adopted for *Le Corpus des inscriptions khmères* (CIK) on May 22, 2008. I thank M. Gerdi Gerschheimer for a transliteration of this text, received May 24, 2008, and Dominic Goodall for a translation. Unless otherwise noted, I follow Dominic Goodall's edition, a French-language version of which he sent to me on Oct. 13, 2009. My thanks to Sally Goldman, who read through the inscription with me twice, once from a distance

place appears to be in southern Cambodia, Takeo Province, the presumed site of the inscription—though its provenance has not been positively identified (see fig. 10).[119]

Figure 10. K. 1258. Photograph AMPP000961 courtesy of EFEO and the National Museum of Phnom Penh.

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and once in person, and helped me with overall comprehension. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya also sent me a transliteration. Finally, I thank M. Bertrand Porte who supplied the photograph of the inscription, AMPP00961, on which Gerschheimer's transliteration is based. The text is composed on one side of an unfinished block of schist, which accounts for the slate-like frays at the base of the stone. The stone's dimensions in centimeters are 40 by 44 by 7.

[119] The inscription was found in 1993 by William Aspell at Tuol Daṃbūṅ market in Phnom Penh, after which it was given to the National Museum. A vendor informed Mr. Aspell that the stone had been purchased from another merchant in Takeo Province, although this could not be verified. Personal comm.., June 9, 2010. In any case, a provenance in southern Cambodia is reasonable given that a majority of inscriptions on schist are from that region. In 1994 Michel Tranet recorded the provenance of K. 1258 as "Brai Khcay Ravien" (Brai Khjāy in Ravieṅ district), Takeo Province to the immediate west of the Angkorian ruins of Nāṅ Khmau. See Michel Tranet, "Découvertes récentes d'inscriptions khmères," in *Southeast Asian archaeology 1994: proceedings of the 5th international conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Paris, 24th-28th October 1994*, Vol 2., ed. P.-Y. Manguin (Hull: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull), 105. I have not been able to discover how M. Tranet arrived at this information. In this same document M. Tranet lists K. 1258 as Ka 2, the name by which it was known until recently. The "Ka" number, in place of the usual K. number, is an idiosyncrasy of the 1990s when the Cambodian Ministry of Culture classified its own finds independently.

The date of the inscription is also problematic. The year given in the text, supposedly during the reign of Jayavarman III, is nonsensical: 862 śaka or 940 CE, if we are reading it correctly, which would be about 63 years after Jayavarman III's death. It is possible that the author was simply misinformed. Such a mistake suggests that the inscription is very late, from a time when the facts (if there were any!) of early Angkorian history were not readily accessible, and hence more prone to embellishment. I hypothesize a 12th or even 13th century date, though there may be no paleographic support for this theory.[120]

The inscription, clumsily etched on a small slab of schist, consists of a eulogy to Jayavarman III, a nod to his famous parentage, a journey to distant lands on an elephant hunt, and a gift of land to an accompanying official who we can perhaps assume was the ancestor or the local political forebear of the inscription's author. The opening verse of K. 1258, in *vasantatilaka* meter,[121] recalls the reign of Jayavarman III as a kind of golden age:

I. (1) tad viṣṇulokanṛpatir nṛpatīndravaṅśa- | [122]
dhātaḥ[123] kṣitau kṣitipater anu sevyamānaḥ
(2) tasyāṃ vabhūva vata madhyadine rkkabhāsa- | s
saṅghair dadhad[124] vigatameghakaras sute[jaḥ] [125]

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[120] According to M. Gerdi Gerschheimer, in a letter dated May 24, 2008, "la date de rédaction de K. 1258 reste un mystère, que des études paléographiques ne permettront peut-être pas de résoudre." As far as I know, there has been no study of the paleography of these "cursive" inscriptions in the corpus from the 10th to the 13th centuries.

[121] This stanza is not exactly polished or easily understood. If it is for the most part a grammatically "correct" vasantatilaka, it is not, in Dominic Goodall's words, "smoothly idiomatic." Dominic Goodall, personal communication, May 3, 2010. The Sanskrit consists of four stanzas in the following meters: I. vasantatilaka, II. upajāti; III. upajāti; IV. śloka.

[122] This vertical line or daṇḍa incised between the two pāda of each line appears instead of the expected space. Perhaps the scribe abandoned the space, indicating its absence with a daṇḍa, because of the small dimensions of the stone. I thank M. Gerdi Gerschheimer for iterating the importance of preserving this idiosyncrasy in the transcription. Personal comm., May 24, 2008.

[123] We would expect *dhātuḥ*, which would seem to indicate that the form *dhātaḥ* is a scribal error. For another possible reading, which I now find highly unlikely, see the following note.

[124] My original reading of the words *saṅghair dadhad* was quite different: *saṅghe rhaṇād*. I took the upper portion of the vowel ai as the u of *dhātuḥ* in line 1 (which, as noted above, appears to be absent), leaving me with *saṅghe* rather than *saṅghair*. I then considered the possibility that the da of *dadhad* was actually ha, though after comparing it to ha in other contexts in the inscription, I was far from certain. However, I believed ṇā to be preferable to the dha of *dadhad*, as with dha one would expect a shape like a "w" with a horizontal line on top and two "arches" extending outwards to either side of the "w"; this is at least the form taken by the dha of line 1. What I thought to be a ṇā in line 2 also resembles a "w," though less distinct and without the horizontal line on top, and it seems to be characterized by a backwards-curving line extending from the top-right of the "w"; this is a common

I. Formerly[126] King Viṣṇuloka [i.e., Jayavarman III], venerated on the earth after the lord of the earth and founder of the lineage of the king of kings [i.e., Jayavarman II], was born on this [earth]—how wondrous! (*vata*)—shining with the light of the sun at midday, whose rays dispelled the clouds,[127] carrying a beautiful splendor, with his companies (*sanghaiḥ*).

The image of the midday sun scattering the clouds perhaps implies a new day after stormy weather. We are reminded that Jayavarman III's glorious reign follows after (*anu*) and prolongs the time of light occasioned by the reign of the dynastic founder Jayavarman II. The text transitions from this panegyric of son and father to a fairly terse narrative of hunting and giving that one has come to expect in a Jayavarman III story:

II. (3) atha dvijair mmantrisahasrasa(ṃ)khyai- | ś
cacāra rājā viṣayāntareṣu
(4) surebhasitagrahaṇe[128] varāma[129] |
bharttā mṛgendragrahaṇe samarthaḥ

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shape of ṇā in the more "cursive" inscriptions of the Angkorian period. Unfortunately, besides the form ṇā, the other forms necessary for this proposal to work are very tenuous. Moreover, the resulting phrase *saṅghe rhaṇād*, which I took to mean something like "out of respect (?) for the saṇgha," is even more contrived. The easiest solution is to follow M. Gerschheimer's transcription of *saṅghair dadhad*, the meaning of which is less awkward. As for the dha of *dadhad*, if it is found to be irremediably different in shape from the dha of *dhātuḥ* in line 1, it may merely indicate an error on the part of the scribe. In fact, there are irregularities in the shape of the letters throughout the inscription (for example, the lack of a "hook" on the top-left of the letter s, resulting in what looks like the letter l).

[125] The first two lines are the most difficult to read as the letters are smaller and pressed together.

[126] This is my tentative reading of *tad*, which would typically be translated as a temporal adverb "at that time." In this context, however, the *tad* at the beginning of the text would seem to be anomalous as it implies a succession of events ("after. . . then. . .") with the first event missing. Dominic Goodall kindly brought this unresolved problem to my attention in a personal communication on May 3, 2010. The tentative translation of *tad* as "formerly" is my own. Goodall also notes the "weird anaphora" of similar temporal adverbs in each stanza of the inscription (*atha*, *tadā*), all of which translate awkwardly. I wonder if the poet intended with these temporal adverbs to emphasize, without much subtlety, that each stanza represents a distinct event in chronological sequence.

[127] Literally: "whose rays were ones from which the clouds had departed." I am grateful to Dominic Goodall for explaning this bahuvrīhi, and to Sally Goldman for helping me with the analysis: *vigatāḥ meghāḥ yebhyaḥ karāḥ yasya saḥ*. The participle *vigata* requires an ablative of separation.

[128] Dominic Goodall notes that the meter would have us read *surebhasīta*, while in context we would expect *sitasurebha*.

[129] The text shows *varāma*, which M. Gerschheimer interprets to be a scribal error for *rarāma*. Alternatively, Dominic Goodall suggests *varāma* could be a contracted form of avararāma, in which case the form would be an authorial anomaly, and would give us the following meaning: "he stopped to capture some divine white elephants."

III. (5) anintanlaugrāmabhavaṃ hi daṣṭuṃ |
daṣṭvindram eva prathitaṃ pṛthivyām
(6) śuklebham iti tvam asi samarthaḥ[130] |
tadācacakṣe grahabhūpatīndraḥ

IV. (7) deś(aṃ) śivanivāsañ ca | ānandanapurair yuktam[131]
(8) tadā dadau nṛpo daṣṭu | hināmne ṣṭarasadvayaiḥ

II. One day (*atha*), the king was traveling in other domains (*viṣayāntareṣu*) with brahmins, with a thousand counselors.[132] The lord, who was capable of capturing lions, (*mṛgendragrahaṇe*) took pleasure (*rarāma*) in capturing divine white elephants (*surebhasitagrahaṇe*).[133]

III. Then the king of the land and of the hunt addressed Hi Daṣṭu,[134] a native of the village of Tanlau in Anin[ditapura] (*anintanlaugrāmabhavaṃ*),[135] even the lord of the Daṣṭus (*daṣṭvindram eva*),[136] famous on the earth, a [veritable] white elephant (*śuklebham*), as follows: "You are able."

IV. Then [in the year marked] by eight, flavors, and two [862],[137] the king gave to him whose name was Daṣṭu Hi (*daṣṭuhināmne*) a territory (*deśaṃ*) and a Śiva-temple,[138] as well as the cities of Ānandana[139] (*ānandanapurair yutam*).

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[130] Goodall indicates that the upajāti meter here should be - - ˘ - - ˘ ˘ -˘ - -, rather than - - ˘ ˘ - ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ - -.

[131] The form should perhaps be *yutam*, rather than *yuktam*, as the meter requires a heavy syllable. According to Goodall, it is unclear whether the form *yuktam* represents a scribal or an authorial error.

[132] Goodall's translation presupposes that that the compound *mantrisahasrasaṃkhyaiḥ* should be taken as *mantribhiḥ sahasrasaṅkhyaiḥ*, and that the irregular compound was perhaps inspired by the latter form.

[133] The meaning of the compound *surebhasita* is clearly "divine (*sura*) white (*sita*) elephant (*ibha*)," though the compound is in the wrong order. Is this perhaps an example of the invasion of Khmer syntax, the adjective (*sita*) following the noun (*surebha*)?

[134] In my initial translation, I took *hi* as the indeclinable Sanskrit particle. Dominic Goodall is likely correct in identifying *hi* as part of a name: Hi Daṣṭu. This would seem to be confirmed by its reappearance alongside *daṣṭu* in verse IV, though inexplicably in reverse sequence.

[135] Goodall translates *anintanlaugrāmabhavaṃ*: "native of the village of Anintanlau." I would suggest that *anin* and *tanlau* be understood as two parts of a Tatpuruṣa compound meaning "Tanlau of/in Anin(ditapura)." The abbreviated form *anin*, or *'nin*, for Aninditapura is also found in K. 521 (see above) designating the homeland of Jayavarman II's lineage; see Cœdès' translation of K. 521, *IC* IV, 169. The correspondence *anin*/*aninditapura* was first suggested by Louis Finot in his edition of K. 598, "La stele du Pràsàt Trapan Run," *BEFEO* 28 (1928), 77.

[136] Or: "lord of Daṣṭu?"

[137] I originally failed to identify this compound number as a date due to the order in which it is written. In Sanskrit compound numbers are typically written in reverse order; hence, *aṣṭarasadvayaiḥ* would normally read 2-6-8,

This elephant hunt of Jayavarman III and his traveling companion Daṣṭu Hi conforms to the standard elephant hunt narrative featuring the king's gift of land to one of his noble subjects. Unlike the previous elephant hunt inscriptions, however, K. 1258 lacks an extensive property history and an example of folk etymology, unless the seemingly meaningless "Daṣṭu Hi/Hi Daṣṭu" is meant to furnish one.[140] The inscription also has very little to say in terms of pure documentary information apart from that Jayavarman III gave some lands and a temple to this Daṣṭu Hi. Nonetheless, on a close reading the text reveals a number of subtle parallels with the other elephant hunt stories. There is, for example, a genealogical connection to K. 521 implied in verse III. Daṣṭu Hi is said to have come from Aninditapura, which, as we saw in K. 521, was the homeland and lineage of Jayavarman II and his son. We are told with some poetic flourish in K. 1258 that Daṣṭu Hi was a favorite of the king, but it is the specified lineage that would likely have convinced the Cambodian reader that Daṣṭu Hi's reputation and his participation in the elephant hunt were deserved. Recall that K. 956 also details genealogical linkages to justify a family's participation, in that case involving several individuals, in the king's traveling retinue.

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which as a śaka date (268, or 346 CE) would be nonsense. M. Gerdi Gerschheimer proposes instead that we take the number as 8-6-2, equivalent to 940 CE. Gerschheimer cites the 12th century K. 692 of Jayavarman VII (Cœdès, *IC* I, p. 238, verse LXI), in which the date 1117 śaka (1195 CE) is exceptionally not written, as in all other compound numbers in the Cambodian inscriptions, in reverse order. Gerschheimer, in a letter dated May 24, 2008. Of course the date 862 śaka, or 940 CE, presents a chronological problem for which I have no solution but to assume that the author of the inscription was misinformed.

[138] Or Śivanivāsa, "a temple to/of Śiva." It may be that the text should read *deśaśivanivāsañ ca* (rather than *deśaṃ* with anusvāra), an awkward compound perhaps meaning "the country/village Śivanivāsa." There is one mention of a sruk (i.e., *deśa*) Śivanivāsa in the pramān Chpar Ransi (region of the Bamboo Grove) in a 10th century inscription from Koh Ker, K. 682. See Cœdès, "La date de Kòḥ Ker," *BEFEO* 31 (1931): 15. I follow Goodall's translation, "a territory and a Śiva-temple," as the alternative cannot account for the conjunction *ca*—unless *ca* is to be understood with *tadā* to mean something like "and then," which would be unlikely.

[139] Goodall interprets Ānandana as a toponym, in which there was apparently a plurality of "cities" (*pura*).

[140] The word *daṣṭu* has no known meaning in either Sanskrit or Khmer, though from context it appears to indicate the name of a people or place. The word *hi*, taken nominally, may relate to a *hi* found in Old Khmer personal names in the inscriptions, though the contexts in which this word appears do not hint at any meaning. In the present inscription *hi daṣṭu* seems to be associated with the title *daṣṭvindra*, "lord of the Daṣṭus/of Daṣṭu," which may be a clue to the meaning of *hi daṣṭu*, perhaps even a translation. If this is the case, *daṣṭvindra* could be an explanation of a local place-name: the site of the inscription could have been enigmatically named Hi Daṣṭu or Daṣṭu Hi, and hence was thought to mean something like "lord of the Daṣṭus." However, nothing in Khmer or in the neighboring Mon-Khmer languages suggests that *hi* could mean "lord." In the south Bahnaric languages of eastern Cambodian /hi:/ is the first-person plural pronoun "we," and sometimes the first-person singular "I," equivalent to the Khmer *añ*. See Harry Shorto, *A Mon-Khmer Comparative Dictionary* (Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 2006), 69.

The nature of the royal journey is given special attention in K. 1258, above even the proprietary and genealogical particulars. As in K. 449, the king's entourage in K. 1258 is said to consist not of a few adventurers but of a massive army of retainers. This is a literal army in K. 449, but in K. 1258 it is the entire structure of the court, consisting of "a thousand officials" (*mantrisahasrasaṃkhyaiḥ*). It is as if the capital itself were on the move. That this detail could be interpreted as an act of real political consequence is suggested by the king's destination. Jayavarman III is not taking a pleasure trip inside his kingdom; he is actually traveling with his "thousand officials" "in other domains" (*viṣayāntareṣu*), beyond the bounds, it would seem, of his own immediate realm. How do we explain this incredible image of the royal parade "in other domains?" Do we acknowledge that the site of K. 1258 that was eventually given to Daṣṭu Hi was once part of a political outer space?

If these *viṣaya* do in fact represent other dominions beyond the king's direct sway, they should not be understood as "foreign countries" which Jayavarman III on his elephant hunt progressively subdued. In the Old Khmer inscriptions after the 9th century the word *viṣaya* takes on the distinct meaning of an administrative unit or "province," overseen by royally sanctioned officials called *khloñ viṣaya*, or "provincial governors."[141] It is likely that *viṣaya* has the specific sense of "province" in this context. This suggests that the "other provinces" should be understood as semi-autonomous territories outside the core capital region, and that the elephant hunt took the king to the more lightly administered periphery of his realm. Unlike Jayavarman III's journey to the "foreign" and recently conquered Malyāṅ in K. 449, the king's elephant hunt in K. 1258 merely reestablishes his claim over distant lands that are already rightfully his and are therefore legitimately free for him to give away.

We might expect that people on the periphery would have been somewhat averse to this implicit lack of real autonomy. But if provincial Cambodians valued autonomy in the sense of independent ownership of property as verified in historical claims, autonomy from the kingdom and from the prestige history surrounding the kings was much less universally desirable. My analysis of K. 449, with its story of the conquered Malyāṅ, seems to support this point. Both K. 449 and K. 1258 feature recipients of land who are remembered by their descendants as having come as new settlers to the outer provinces. The four ancestors of K. 449 who settled in Malyāṅ during the time of Jayavarman III and his father were not original inhabitants—the indigenes were the conquered people of Malyāṅ—but they were the first residents with the approval and mandate of the country's founding kings after the

[141] Sachchidanand Sahai gives several reasons why *viṣaya* should be understood primarily as administrative sub-units of the Cambodian state, while the seemingly similar term *pramān* probably had the more vague sense of "territory." See Sahai, "Territorial Administration in Ancient Cambodia," *The South East Asian Review* 2, no. 1 (Aug. 1977): 36-37.

consolidation of the Angkorian polity. If we assume that the author of K. 1258 was a descendant of Daṣṭu Hi seeking higher approval of his claims to local land, we may sense the author's similar inclination to align his family with the authoritative Cambodian past rather than with a purely local history of little consequence. Daṣṭu Hi, like the ancestors in K. 449, is presented as a latecomer to the local scene in the far south of Cambodia. Indeed, Daṣṭu Hi was from a more prestigious elsewhere, in the dynastic homeland of Aninditapura; his descendants in southern Cambodia may have valued the idea that, as self-identified strangers in their own land, their connections to the royal center at Angkor, and hence the security of their claims, were genealogically assured.

Of course, it is unlikely that provincial Cambodians with such royal connections would have identified themselves exclusively as "Cambodian," "Angkorian," or "Aninditapurian." The family identities of the authors of both K. 449 and K. 1258 were probably more variegated and, above all, local than their public inscriptions admit. What is important is that they felt the compulsion to position themselves from their peripheral places towards the political center of things. We find in the elephant hunt myth and in the related property/family histories a homogeneous identity that privileges the periphery as provincial, as official part of a Cambodian whole, rather than as—and this was likely the political reality as often as not—a semi-autonomous space of multiple origins and contested political attachments.

The Historical Imagination

The image of a royal Cambodian space overwhelmed provincial perspectives, overriding all expressions of internal autonomy and difference. It was a space ideally defined by what the polity had subsumed: the rimland, the provincial family, and the wilderness of wild elephants. It was, above all, a space permeated by a single political culture. Those who chose to act on the political stage, at whatever level and however limited in scope, were caught up in that culture's promise of belonging and collective prestige. The elephant hunt myth spoke powerfully to this polity-wide culture of significance.

How the myth went out from the Cambodian center, in the form of officially disseminated chronicles or by way of elite migration and pilgrimage, unfortunately remains elusive. No royal inscriptions allude to the "official" version of the elephant hunt. Nonetheless, despite its varied manifestations, the elephant hunt myth suggests that by the late 10th century a unified, politically sanctioned historical tradition of Cambodian origins was beginning to take shape. As James Scott has observed, such standardization is typical of written rather than oral traditions, and is often related to an attempt by some central figure or political family to "stablilize a claim to power that eluded such stabilization when it was asserted only orally."[142]

[142] James Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed,* 233-234.

The 10th century probably witnessed the rise of official written histories, coincident with the increasing dominance of Angkor over political affairs in the provinces, which were designed to legitimize the dynasty of Jayavarman III's father, Jayavarman II, and to establish the cultural power of the center.

Even though the dominant narratives of the center likely came to overwhelm local traditions, the elephant hunt stories took independent shape within the cultural context, perhaps primarily oral, of the semi-autonomous provinces in which they proliferated. In that context the elephant hunt myth was believed to ennoble local genealogical fictions, fueling the politics of local family inheritance and being constantly reshaped in the process. Therefore, the myth as it appears in the inscriptions is, though thematically unitary, practically de-centered. It has been the purpose of this chapter to understand the elephant hunt myth as a popular tradition in this sense: a polity-wide myth, connected to an otherwise little known king, that was in practice beyond anyone's control and was, for that very reason, the property of everyone whose stories it could dignify.

This narrative dispersal was not a sign of the myth's attenuation, but rather of its outward intensification, a process in which we can detect something of the myth's core content and general appeal. Fundamental to its appeal was the idea of a king who, in pursuit of an elephant, journeyed throughout the country and by so doing domesticated and blessed his peripheral subjects. Jayavarman III, by virtue of his wandering hunts, was remembered to have integrated various provincial regions into a country whose king was, literally, omnipresent. This etiology of the omnipresent king established a shared conception of Cambodia as a territorial "collectivity of temporal depth."[143]

It may be said that early Cambodian perceptions of the past were unique in this regard—distinct, in other words, from those of other early Southeast Asian polities whose cultures may not have featured the same dynamic relationship between the polity, its past, and its identity. In the shifting political world of Śrīvijaya in post-6th century coastal Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, for example, appeals to lineage and to the collective past may have had less currency than a local ruler's spontaneous show of charisma or his claim to supernatural power.[144] And yet from the fifteenth century onward, even in that world of loosely confederated maritime ports and hinterlands, the half-forgotten fame of Śrīvijaya, and

[143] I borrow the phrase from Steven Grosby's characterization of ancient Israel as a "nation," or rather, a territorial relation of shared memories and perceived common descent. See Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas*, 46.

[144] See, for example, the Kedukan Bukit inscription of Śrīvijaya, which speaks of the king's *siddhayātra*, or pilgrimage in search of magical prowess, through which he was able to raise a massive army. George Cœdès, "Les inscriptions malaises de Śrīvijaya," *BEFEO* 30 (1930): 32.

especially the name of Malayu, offered a legacy of memories on which political up-starts and ethnic groups chose to build their own histories and identities.[145]

It is perhaps best to concede that every Southeast Asian polity of reasonable extent and duration has created from the traces of its past its own historical imagination. If some of the historical content of local epigraphy or literature was patterned after trans-cultural tropes—in the greater Sanskrit ecumene, for instance, the fiction of royal descent from the coupling of the sun and the moon—we cannot simply explain away all references to the past as part of a derivative formula for the praise of kings.[146] The genealogical myth of Kambu and Mera may have been borrowed from this formula, but the myth's broader implication of Khmer ethnic origins was certainly not formulaic. Likewise, even if the myth of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt was an echo of royal hunting fables found throughout the region, it was nonetheless a "Cambodian" fiction, conveying messages about family, territory, and belonging particular to the country's post-9th-century political imagination.

[145] For Malayu identity in the early modern period, see Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree*. For the legacy of Śrīvijaya in later Malay memory, see O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970).

[146] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 476. Pollock cites the common lineage myth of the solar and lunar lines as the exception to what he believes to be an overall lack of country-specifc mythologies in South and Southeast Asian inscriptions, though he rightly indicates that the myth was more about proclaiming a king's divine inheritance and favor than about establishing political identity.

Chapter Five: The Myth of Independence from Javā

The previous chapter explored how a certain elephant hunt myth helped define a territorially extensive community of elites who willingly conformed to an "official" royal past. This community was believed to have formed partly through the subjection of certain figurative or real political others (e.g., the settled forest and the conquered people of Malyāṅ). This chapter will examine a memory of Cambodia's own past subjugation or threat of subjugation by a political other. In the 11th century, the political other which was said to have threatened Cambodian sovereignty in the 8th century was not Champa as we might expect in that period but a certain "Javā."

While the three Javā episodes in the inscriptons appear to follow a common narrative in which a famous historical figure conducts a ceremony to free Cambodia from Javā, their surrounding content varies significantly. In Michael Vickery's view, these disparities suggest that the independence story was more legendary than real,[1] and the fictive nature of the story may explain why, as I will demonstrate below, the identity of Cambodia's "Javā" remains so elusive. Whatever its true origins were, the story of independence from Javā was, like the elephant hunt, a historical tradition that was used to dignify local histories and celebrate the familial or political ascendants of elite factions in the 11th century. It was, more importantly, a political foundation myth, memorializing a time in the distant past when the country's sovereignty had been contested and then miraculously preserved. In effect, the memory of Javā was a "chosen trauma" that was used to promote an ideal of Cambodian autonomy.[2]

This is not to suggest that the stories of Cambodia's independence had no historical basis or that a polity and/or people called Javā never existed in reality. Recognizing some kind of "Javā" moment in the late 8th century does not require us to accept all retrospective memories of that event as historical fact, nor does questioning if such an event happened at all mean that Javā was beyond the limits of Cambodia's consciousness or was politically irrelevant before the 11th century. I believe that the presence of Javā in the early Cambodian memory may reflect a complicated blend of fact and fiction. It suggests an 8th century relationship with a certain polity, place, or people called Javā, but it also points to a novel 10th or 11th century Cambodian understanding of autonomy and the sacred that gave this past relationship greater significance than it may have originally deserved.

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[1] Michael Vickery, "A Legend concerning Jayavarman II," paper presented at EFEO Paris, September 2004, unpublished.

[2] Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism*, 89.

The Javā Inscriptions

Cambodia's independence from Javā is mentioned in passing in three Old Khmer inscriptions discovered in disparate parts of the former Cambodian realm (see fig. 11). Though few in number and extremely concise, the independence stories are so similar in form and purpose to each other and to the five elephant hunt accounts (the property history of K. 956 actually features both myths) that they can be confidently understood to represent a single historical tradition of early Cambodian beginnings. Two of the inscriptions, featuring different protagonists, suggest that independence was brought about by ancestors who were in the service of the dynastic founder Jayavarman II, Jayavarman III's father, while the third inscription is writen from the perspective of an 11th century community of Buddhists who claimed that one of their legendary heroes was the central figure in the famous event.

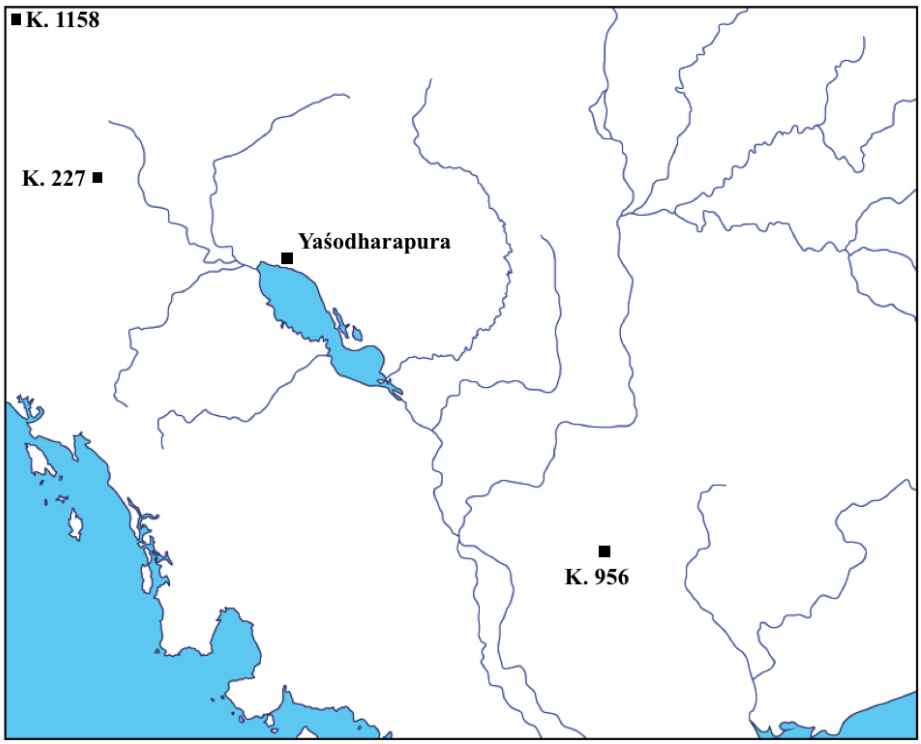

Figure 11. The Javā inscriptions. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=cambodia_map&num_car=136&l ag=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

Judging from two of the three episodes, the liberation of Cambodia from Javā was believed to have occurred in the 8th century during the early reign of Jayavarman II, who was remembered as the founder of the dynasty that governed Cambodia until the late 11th century. Elites throughout the country in the Angkorian period jockeyed to link their families genealogically and otherwise to this famous king's reign in their lineage/property histories.

Though there is no definite contemporary verification of Jayavarman II's existence, two inscriptions of an 8th century Jayavarman have been discovered, one dated 770 CE from central Cambodia and another dated 781 CE in the north along the Mekong.[3] Retrospective accounts describe a king who gathered various regional clans to his banner and united fragmented polities in the greater ethnic Khmer zone. In the process he resided in a series of capitals—Indrapura in southeastern Cambodia, Hariharalaya just southeast of Angkor, and Amarendrapura (location unknown)—before establishing himself and his kingdom at Mahendraparvata (the Kulen mountain range to the northeast of Angkor) in the year 724 *śaka* or 802 CE. According to the property history of the Sdok Kak Thom inscription, K. 235, it was in that year that Jayavarman II presided over a ceremonial break with Javā. Hence, the inscription suggests a period of Javā preeminence in the region in the late 8th century.[4]

The Khmer section of K. 235 places a local family's ancestor, Śivakaivalya, at the heart of this story of Cambodia's independence. After Jayavarman II "came from Javā," Śivakaivalya accompanied the king to Mahendraparvata (Kulen) where, in 802 CE, a man wise in magical science named Hiranyadama performed a special rite which "made it impossible for this [country of] Kambujadeśa (Cambodia) to be dependent on Javā, and made it so that there would be only one king who was *cakravartin* ('universal ruler')."[5] Ang Choulean notes that the king's accession was therefore "tied to the liberation of the country" in Cambodian memory,[6] and that independence from Javā was necessary to Cambodia's unity, or its ability to have "only one king." At that time, Hiranyadama instructed Śivakaivalya on four ritual texts and consecrated a deity called Devarāja or Kamrateṅ Jagat ta Rāja ("God who is King"). The text emphasizes that Śivakaivalya's descendants, all the way down to a certain Sadāśiva in the 11th century, continued to officiate for the god who came into being at the moment of the country's independence. By using the independence story as a frame narrative for the origin of Sadāśiva's cult, the text is a potent argument for the original and lasting legitimacy of Sadāśiva's religious position and of his family's inheritance in Cambodian history.

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[3] These are K. 103 and K. 134. George Cœdès tentatively labeled this Jayavarman "Ibis." Claude Jacques has argued for identifying this Jayavarman with Jayavarman II in Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II," 205-220.

[4] On K. 235 as an example of the property history, see Chapter Four.

[5] *leṅ kaṃpi kamvujadeśa neḥ āyatta ta javā ley*. K.235, side C, lines 72-73. See Cœdès and Dupont, "Les steles de Sdok Kak Thom. . .," 220.

[6] See Ang Choulean, "Collective memory in ancient Cambodia with reference to Jayavarman II," in *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1996: Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Leiden, 2-6 September 1996*, ed. Marijke J. Klokke and Thomas de Brujin (Hull: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull, 1998), 119-120.

A similar family episode is found in an inscription addressed in the previous chapter, K. 956 from Prei Veng Province (see fig. 11).[7] K. 956, like K. 235, is a history of a certain family's land inheritance going back to the time of Jayavarman II. At that time the king brought the ancestors of this family from Bhavapura to a place called Ṛdvāl in southeastern Cambodia.[8] A female ancestor was married to Jayavarman II and their children are said to have been direct ancestors of the inscription's authors.[9] At Ṛdvāl, Jayavarman II ordered his chief minister Pṛthivīnarendra (*śrī prathivinarendra*) "to perform a beneficial rite (*kālyanasiddhi*) to make it impossible for Vraḥ Kambujadeśa (Great or Holy Cambodia) to be seized by Javā."[10] The king then gave the lands of Ṛdvāl and Sratāc, the site of the inscription, to his chief minister, who gave them in turn to two of Jayavarman II's daughters.

The two stories of independence from Javā in K. 235 and K. 956 were originally read as straightforward 9th century history. Though he recognized that Jayavarman II was in many ways a "semi-legendary" figure, George Cœdès compared the content of the two episodes and concluded that Jayavarman II had two separate rites performed in order to free Cambodia from Javā, one at Mahendraparvata (Kulen) near Angkor and another in southeastern Cambodia.[11] There is good reason to believe, however, that the ceremony at Ṛdvāl remembered in K. 956 was simply local folklore.[12] Recall that K. 956 features one of the accounts of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt to explain the origins of a certain family's property, a story grounded in local tradition.[13] Interestingly, the officiant of the independence ritual, Pṛthivīnarendra, is unrelated to the one in K. 235, Śivakaivalya, yet Pṛthivīnarendra happens to be featured in K. 449 as the leader of Jayavarman II's army that conquered Malyāṅ just before that inscription's telling of the elephant hunt myth. Following Michael Vickery, I think it best to read the two accounts of rituals affirming Cambodia's independence not as objective history but as versions of a common body of myth featuring an assortment of famous events and historical figures.[14]

The third inscription that cites the independence story adds another layer to this mythology, and it suggests that Cambodian historical traditions did not always revolve around

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[7] For a more thorough description of K. 956 and its elephant hunt episode, see Chapter Four.

[8] Interestingly, there is a district called Romduol immediately to the east in Svay Rieng province.

[9] The inscription places far more emphasis on the identity of their mother than on their royal father, and throughout the rest of the text powerful men are appended to the genealogy but are not central to the overall narrative—this of course suggests the priority given to matrilineal inheritance in the Angkorian period.

[10] *thve kālyanasiddhi leṅ vvaṃ aṃpān vraḥ kambujadeśa pi javā cāp ley*. K. 956, lines 15-17. Cœdès, *IC*, VII, 133.

[11] Cœdès, *IC* VII, 129.

[12] Vickery, "The Reign of Suryavarman I," 234-235.

[13] See Chapter Four.

[14] Vickery remarks that the historical accuracy of these events is "suspect." Vickery, "The Reign of Suryavarman I," 234-235.

Jayavarman II and his son. This is the mid-11th century Sab Bak inscription or K. 1158 from Northeast Thailand, discovered a few kilometers south of Nakhon Ratchasima and located on early Cambodia's northwestern periphery (see fig. 11).[15] The Khmer portion of this Buddhist inscription reads: "The images of Vraḥ Buddhalokeśvara were installed by the powerful Kaṃsteṅ Śrī Satyavarman who in times past established images on the mountain Abhayagiri to prevent Javā from attacking Khmer Country (*sruk khmer*)."[16] This Śrī Satyavarman is also mentioned in a 10th century Buddhist inscription, K. 111, as having set up Buddhist statues in the past.[17] It is likely that he had a legendary status in the Buddhist community, just as Jayavarman II did in the Cambodian community at large. Both Śrī Satyavarman and Jayavarman II are said to have established images on a mountain to protect Cambodia from Javā. Unlike the other versions of the myth featuring Jayavarman II, however, the Sab Bak stela does not showcase the ritual declaration of independence in order to assert historical rights to familial land. Rather, the inscription is concerned with broadcasting the prominent role of a Buddhist in defending Cambodia's historical integrity. This last example of the myth of independence from Javā places the Buddhist community at the center of Cambodia's historical experience. Thus, it is a unique example of sectarian, rather than familial, propoganda. Like the two inscriptions featuring Jayavarman II, the Sab Bak inscription suggests that the independence myth was a common frame story for various groups looking to raise their political profile.[18]

While the three accounts of independence have broad similarities, they also contain certain contradictory details that cast doubt on the story's overall authenticity. In effect, there are two competing positions on the historicity of the Javā story. The first position holds that Cambodia achieved a victory over a polity and/or people called Javā in the 8th century that was later remembered as a pivotal event in the country's history. In Michael Vickery's recent appraisal, however, independence from Javā had no bearing on Cambodian history until the 10th-11th centuries, by which time it came to feature anachronistically in a popular legend of Cambodian political origins. Michael Vickery has suggested that, because independence from Javā was a malleable myth, it has no real basis in the 8th century at all, and that the interest in Javā in 11th century inscriptions reflects a new relationship with a polity of this name that did not previously exist.[19] Of course, Vickery's perspective forces us to ask further questions, such

[15] Chirapat Prapandvidya, 11-14.

[16] *ri vraḥ vuddhalokeśvara ta praṃ pvānn ti kaṃsteṅ śrī satyavarma ta mān siddhi sthāpana vreṅ le abhayagiri teṃ kaṃ pi javā ākrānta sruk khmer. . .* Ibid., 13, lines 31-32.

[17] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 199, verse XLIV, lines 37-38.

[18] Chapter Six examines the close connection and tension between Buddhist and Cambodian identity throughout the Angkorian period.

[19] Vickery, "A Legend concerning Jayavarman II."

as why "Javā" held such a prominent place in 11th century Cambodian memory, particularly at a time when no rival power, except perhaps Champa, posed an immediate threat to Cambodian autonomy.

Cambodia's Javā

Much of the problem of *when* Javā became politically salient in Cambodian memory would be resolved if we could ascertain *where* this Javā was. If Javā was merely a name for southern Champa, to take one proposed solution, then we could easily imagine a late 8th century incident of some kind occurring between the two neighboring countries. If, on the other hand, we accept that Javā can be nothing other than the island of Java, we are faced with a far more intriguing scenario. Compelling arguments have also been made for the Malay Peninsula, Northeast Thailand, and the middle Mekong in central Laos. Though Javā was clearly more than an 11th century fantasy, the name has proved to be sufficiently vague in the historical record to accommodate these various identifications. Unless more evidence becomes available in the future, doubts concerning Javā's whereabouts and its very existence will remain. Though the case for a peninsular polity of Javā may illuminate the shadowing 8th century period in a way that is most consistent with the present sources, we should not exclude the possibility that a polity on the island of Java had some role in the affairs of the peninsula and Cambodia in the 8th or 9th centuries. We should also bear in mind that the Javā of Cambodia's imagination may have comprised, in an alternative sense that was not strictly political, the peninsular and island world in an extensive maritime space of perceived ethnic (Malay) homogeneity.

An interpretation of the Old Khmer references to "Javā" must first confront the meaning of the modern Khmer term *jvā* (pronounced *chvea*) and its modern Thai equivalent, *javā* (pronounced *chawa*). There can be little doubt that these ethnonyms have an etymological root in the Old Khmer term. The problem lies in this word's unstable territorial and political inflections. Modern *jvā* may be used to mean the island of Java, but in its most common usage it refers to Cambodia's Malay minority, a community more associated with a profession (trade) and way of life than with a particular homeland or territory. In the past the idea of Javā space may have been territorially ambivalent, perhaps corresponding to the whole peninsular and archipelagic maritime world to Cambodia's south. Emergent political identities in the 20th century, particularly "Malaysian" and "Indonesian," have likely obscured this Javā space even further.

However, we cannot discount the possibility that for Cambodians in the Angkorian period Javā was more territorially and politically specific. This was the conclusion of George Cœdès, who believed that Javā in the Cambodian inscriptions referred exclusively to the island

of Java, and more particularly to the advanced polity that developed in the island's central Kedu plain in the 8th century. The two 11th century inscriptions that attribute Cambodia's independence from a polity called Javā to the reign of Jayavarman II would seem to place the supposed period of Javā supremacy in the late 8th century, at the very moment of central Java's architectural flowering under the so-called Śailendra kings. Two late 8th century sources appear to corroborate Cœdès' proposed identity of Javā with the island. Chinese records state that a band of people from She-po (Java) attacked Tongking in 767.[20] We also read in a late 8th century inscription from Phan Rang that a temple to Śiva in this southern Cham polity was burned by "armies from Java (*javavalasaṃghaiḥ*) coming on ships" in 787 CE.[21] For Vickery this attack by "Java" may have been nothing more than a typical pirate raid.[22] However, considering the corresponding 8th century dates, it is not unreasonable to accept the possibility that this event in Phan Rang had some relationship to the two stories about Cambodia's independence from "Javā" during the early reign of Jayavarman II and to the 8th century Śailendra kings.

The reach of Java's Śailendra kings as far as north the Bandon Bay region of southern Thailand in this period is suggested in the so-called Ligor inscription originally said to be found in Wieng Sa south of Surat Thani but perhaps from Chaiya,[23] which alludes to the "chief of the Śailendra lineage," named Viṣṇu and carrying the title of Śrī Mahārāja.[24] This unfinished and undated inscription is composed on the back of a stele inscribed with a eulogy of the king of Śrīvijaya and dated 775 CE. The two texts share a fairly similar script, which appears transitional between Cambodia's 7th century and late 9th century script. Hence, the inscription of the Śrī Mahārāja is possibly a late 8th or early 9th century text. Since the title Mahārāja and the lineage (*vaṃśa*) of Śailendra were characteristics of central Javanese royalty in the late 8th

[20] Edward H. Shafer, *The Vermilion Bird: T'ang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 64.
[21] Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 33, lines 6-7.
[22] Another Sanskrit inscription from Po Nagar says that in 774 a group of "men born in other countries" came in ships and burned a temple, but were eventually driven away." It has been assumed that these are the same "armies of Java" cited in the above inscription. However, the identity of these marauders is not made explicit. Unlike the inscription referring to "armies from Java," there is no indication that this raid had any perceived political ramifications. Ibid., 71, verse II (lines 5-8). Michael Vickery considers these two events to be "ephemeral coastal assaults, without conquest, and apparently without political effect." Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics, in Pre-Angkor Cambodia*, p. 387. However, this begs the question why two different kings in the late 8th century would record the details surrounding these events, including dates, if the events were politically insignificant.
[23] Hiram Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 82. There is considerable confusion about where the three southern Thailand inscriptions originated. See Michel Jacq-Heroualc'h, *The Malay Peninsula: Crossroads of the Maritime Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill 2002), 242 and 421. The Ligor inscription could have come from Ligor, Wiang Sa, or Chaiya.
[24] Cœdès, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, II*, 39.

century, there was likely some connection between the peninsular Śrī Mahārāja and the kings of the island of Java. However, this connection may have been due to shared political culture or to a loose marriage alliance with Javanese kings rather than to real Javanese hegemony on the Malay Peninsula. As Michael Vickery has observed, the polity of the Śailendra kings was located in the interior of Java nearer to the south coast, oriented away from the maritime world that would preoccupy the eastern Javanese polity of Majapahit in the 14th century. If the Śailendra kings did send out invading forces to the mainland in the late 8th century (and we cannot rule out this possibility), they left behind very little evidence of their venture. The Ligor inscription fails to provide this evidence, as there is no king named Viṣṇu in the epigraphy of the island of Java. We cannot assume that a king who claimed origins in the lineage of Śailendra and who used the title of Mahārāja was necessarily a Javanese king. An early 11th century Cola inscription in Sanskrit and Tamil says that a Buddhist temple at Negapatam was completed by a certain Māravijayottuṅgavarman, who was king of Kaṭāha (on the western Malay peninsula) and of Śrīviṣaya (i.e., Śrīvijaya), and who was of the Śailendra lineage (*śailendravaṃśa*).[25] Apparently this lineage, though originating in Java, was by the 11th century esteemed throughout the maritime realm and was applied to various local royal lines. The title Mahārāja was no less limited to the island of Java. According to Arab travelers, this was the title of a king who ruled "the isles of the eastern sea" as well as the king of "Zâbaj," an Arab geographical designation for the island realm in general and not for the island of Java specifically.[26] It seems reasonable to suppose that the Mahārāja king named Viṣṇu on side B of the Ligor inscription was nothing more than a local king reusing a stone inscribed previously by the king of Śrīvijaya to declare his family's origins in the prestigious and region-wide Śailendra lineage.

If in fact there was a moment of "Javā" expansion from the islands to the mainland in the late 8th century, or at least nominal recognition of its sovereignty in mainland regions oriented towards the sea, another candidate for this polity would be Śrīvijaya (see fig. 12). Śrīvijaya's position as the predominant Malay polity in the region during this period certainly supports the possibility. This polity was probably based in Palembang in coastal Sumatra during the 7th century, and its king is known to have made claims, mentioned above, in the peninsula as far north as the Bandon Bay region in 775 CE. As *java* signified the Malay language and Malay ethnicity in early modern (post-16th century) Cham,[27] the pillaging "armies of Java

[25] Cœdès, "Le royaume de Śrīvijaya," *BEFEO* 18 (1918): 4.

[26] Michael Laffan, "Finding Java: Muslim Nomenclature of Insular Southeast Asia from Śrīvijaya to Snouk Hurgronje," in *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement, and the Longue Durée*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 26-27.

[27] Po Dharma, *Quatre lexiques malais-cam anciens, rédigés au Campâ* (Paris: EFEO, 1999).

coming on ships" cited in the 8th century Phan Rang inscription could have been Malays from areas within Śrīvijaya's greater orbit. In Angkorian Cambodia Javā may have been the name for the entire collection of polities of Malay ethnicity on the peninsula and on the island of Sumatra, in which case it would stand to reason that 8th century Śrīvijaya would be known as Javā. Perhaps in that hazy time period Khmer polities were briefly dependent on Malay chiefs who governed the important ports and lanes of commerce in a loose subsidiary relationship with Śrīvijaya.

Figure 12. Proposed locations for Javā. *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=southeast_asia_map &num_car=66&lang=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

Vickery deems this scenario unlikely and has proposed, among other options, to identify the 8th century Javā with one of the several coastal polities of Champa that may have attacked Cambodia in the early 9th century (see fig. 12).[28] Vickery's only support for this theory is that Chams in modern Cambodia are often associated with the *jvā* or Malays, who have

[28] Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 387.

played an important role in Cambodian trade for centuries because of their shared Muslim identity in the period after Angkor. Vickery's objections to a Śailendra or Śrīvijaya identity for Javā, and his tentative Cham alternative, come from a perception that this Javā was relatively close to Cambodia, which for him would seem to discount a polity based in what is now the Indonesian archipelago.

Another intriguing option has been put forward by those who insist on locating Cambodia's Javā on the mainland: the shadowy polity of "Javā" in central Laos that was believed to precede the rise of Luang Prabang in its historical tradition (see fig. 12). This option has usually been dismissed out of hand. However, it deserves a careful examination, if only because the name (Muang Sua in Lao, Chawa in Thai) corresponds phonetically to the subject of our inquiry. This ancestral polity of Luang Prabang is known to us largely from later myth.[29] Hence, when this Javā came to exist in reality is unknown. Aside from one mention in the Ramkhamhaeng inscription whose 13th century date and authenticity have been questioned,[30] this Javā only appears in the 16th-17th century chronicles of Laos and Lanna (northern Thailand). On the other hand, Javā in the records of post-Angkorian Cambodia and Ayutthaya (Siam) has always signified the Malay World. Moreover, there is no evidence of a significant political culture on par with Champa and Vietnam in central Laos at the time of the 12th century Preah Khan inscription, or of any Cambodian presence that far north.[31] There may, however, be some indication that this region played a role in mainland affairs in the late 8th and early 9th centuries, which would possibly make it a candidate for the Javā of Jayavarman II's reign cited in the three 11th century Cambodian inscriptions. The 9th century Chinese *Man Shu* (Book of the Southern Barbarians), composed in the Chinese province in northern Vietnam, says that the armies of Nanchao (the text calls them simply *man*, or southern barbarians) once invaded Cambodia with cavalry and penetrated "as far as the seashore" before turning back in disappointment.[32] If this invasion ever occurred, it may have included peoples from the region of central Laos where a Javā supposedly once existed. Of course, the

[29] Martin Stuart-Fox, *The Lao Kingdom of Lan Xang: Rise and Decline* (Bangkok: White Lotus, Press, 1998), 19-20.

[30] A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "Epigraphic and Historical Studies No. 9: The Inscription of Ramkamhaeng of Sukhothai (1292 A.D.), *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, no. 2 (July 1971): 220, see note 132. For both sides of the debate on the inscription's authenticity, see James R. Chamberlain, ed., *The Ramkhamhaeng Controversy: Collected Papers* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1991).

[31] Hiram Woodward believes that Javā may have been the Khmer name for the 8th century polity in present-day Northeast Thailand which the Chinese called "Wen-tan," in which case it would have been much closer to Cambodian/Khmer territory. Woodward, *Art and Architecture of Thailand*, 146. This opinion appears to be based on an assumption that the discovery of K. 1158 (which references independence from Javā) in Pak Thong Chai, Nakhon Ratchasima province indicates a Javā in that region.

[32] Gordon Luce, tr., *Man Shu (Book of the Southern Barbarians)* (Ithaca: Southeast Asian Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies, 1961), 93.

story of barbarian armies charging south through Cambodia to the sea sounds more like hearsay than history, and in any event, it never mentions a polity named Javā. The only Angkorian-period text that has been assumed to mention this Javā in Laos is an 11th century Mon inscription from Tavoy (coastal southern Burma) which lists in a damaged context the ethnonyms *lwa*, *krom*, and *jaba*.[33] The first two names have been identified as the Mon-Khmer speaking Lawa of northwestern Thailand and the Khmers of central Thailand and Cambodia, respectively to the northeast and east of Tavoy, while the name *jaba* has been identified with the Javā of distant Laos. However, this seems unlikely given that the other two ethnic groups mentioned in the text can be found in the immediate region of southern Burma. The alternative and, I believe, more credible identity of *jaba* would be the Malays to the south and southeast of Tavoy on the Malay Peninsula.

Claude Jacques believes that the Javā of the inscriptions was relatively close to Cambodia and that it likely represented a Malay polity or confederation of polities in what is today southern Thailand on the peninsula.[34] This area was certainly in striking distance of Angkorian Cambodia and its garrison town of Lopburi in the Menam Basin. Jacques sees evidence of a Javā within Cambodia's territorial reach in the 12th century Preah Khan inscription, which states that Jayavarman VII received tribute from two kings of Champa, the king of Yavana (northern Vietnam), and the king of Javā (*javendra*).[35] George Cœdès was convinced that this claim to four tributary kingdoms was merely royal hyperbole.[36] In contrast, Jacques suggests that the passage reflects a certain political reality. We know from Cham inscriptions that Jayavarman VII meddled in the affairs of two separate Cham kingdoms, one in Vijaya and one in Phan Rang to the south, in the 1190s,[37] so there can be no objection to the claim that both these kings paid tribute to Cambodia. Jacques has proposed that the Yavana of this text refers to another neighboring polity, in this case a fledgling tributary polity in what is today northern Thailand.[38] I believe this proposal unnecessarily neglects the common belief and overwhelming evidence from contemporary Cham inscriptions that Yavana signified the Red River Delta region of Dai-Viet/Vietnam. Jayavarman VII was certainly capable of putting pressure on the southern borders of this region, as Jayavarman VII's subjugation of Champa

[33] Shorto, *Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions*, 117.

[34] Jacques, "Deux problèmes posés par l'inscription de la stele de Praḥ Khan K. 908," *Aséanie* 15 (June 2005): 24.

[35] K. 908, Cœdès, "La stele du Práḥ Khan d'Aṅkor," 282, verse CLXVI, line 46. The compound *javendra* could stand for *java-indra*, "king of Java [short –a]," which could possibly indicate something other than the "Javā" of the 11th century inscriptions.

[36] Ibid., 268.

[37] Schweyer, "The Confrontation of the Khmers and Chams," 68.

[38] Jacques, "Deux problèmes," 28.

and the record of Khmer invasions of Vietnam earlier in the century attest.[39] The state of civil war in Vietnam in the early 13th century when Jayavarman VII's power was at its height and the proclamation of the new Tran dynasty in 1225 after Jayavarman VII's death suggest that at least some parts of Vietnam were impacted by Cambodia's eastern aggrandizement.[40] It is entirely feasible that a Vietnamese ruler would have offered tribute to Jayavarman VII during these years if only to keep Cambodian armies off his doorstep. With this evidence for Cambodian sovereignty in Champa and encroachment on Vietnam's frontier, we should expect to find similar proof of Cambodian claims or influence over the so-called Javā polity in the late 12th century. This would support the idea of a Javā on the Malay Pensinula while precluding the distant islands of Java and Sumatra from consideration, as there is no evidence that Cambodia was ever a naval power.

I believe that we can test the plausibility of a Javā on the Malay Peninsula if we examine the two key countries excluded from the above passage of the Preah Khan inscription. China (Cīna) should likely have been included as a subjected polity if the political statement had been purely bombastic. At the very least the passage should have mentioned the king of Pagan Burma (Pukāṃ) as one of the tribute-bearing kings. That Pagan is not mentioned is undoubtedly significant. Jayavarman VII maintained a large shrine, Muang Singh, on the far western frontier of his empire along the Kwae Noi River, guarding the Three Pagodas Pass into Burma. The Preah Khan inscription lists slaves brought not only from Champa and Vietnam but also from Pagan, which suggests that Cambodia was in the habit of raiding Pagan lands.[41] In spite of these signs of frontier conflict, Pagan was apparently not considered a subservient kingdom in the same mold as Champa, Vietnam, and Javā. This may have been because Pagan, unlike Cambodia's other neighboring polities, was in its own position of strength in the late 12th and early 13th century under the reign of King Narapatisithu (1173-1210).[42] As Victor Lieberman has observed, Pagan's impressive empire "faced no credible external enemy" until the Shan and Mongol invasions of the late 13th century.[43] Pagan's exclusion from the short tributary list of the Preah Khan inscription may be explained by its relative power and autonomy during Jayavarman VII's reign. In contrast, a tributary kingdom on the Malay Peninsula may have been more vulnerable to Cambodian attack or influence from the Menam Basin.

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[39] Keith Taylor, "The Early Kingdoms," in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume One, Part One: From early times to c. 1500*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 147.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 301, verse CLXXVII, line 67.

[42] Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés*, 322-324.

[43] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, *Vol. I*, 119.

Evidence from the Malay Peninsula does in fact suggest that the region was in a tributary relationship of sorts with Cambodia in the late Angkorian period. We know that Old Khmer was used as far south as Chaiya where an inscribed Buddha image from the 12th or 13th century was found.[44] The statue's Khmer inscription mentions the name of a petty king Trailokyarājamaulibhūṣanavarmadeva with the Khmer title *kamrateṅ añ*, a title typically reserved for princes or persons of similar rank. The title also includes the word Mahārāja, which we have seen was characteristic of Malay and Javanese royalty. The statue was erected by order of a certain Mahāsenāpati (general) Galānai who is said to have governed the country of Grahi (*cāṃ sruk grahi*). Cœdès identified Grahi with Chaiya at the site of the inscription, though the text itself does not specify the location of Grahi. Cœdès was likely correct in connecting Grahi to the "Kia-lo-hi" named as the country on Cambodia's southern frontier in the Song annals (perhaps 12th century).[45] The same country is said to have been a tributary of *San-fo-ts'i*, Śrīvijaya or one of its Malay successor states, at the time of Tchao-Jou-koua in 1225 CE immediately after Jayavarman VII's reign.[46] The mixed Khmer and Malay content of the Grahi inscription (the language is Khmer but the script seems to be Malay/Javanese) suggests that it comes from the frontier region between the Khmer and Malay cultures in present-day southern Thailand, and the inscription's discovery in Chaiya may imply that Grahi was located in that vicinity. Because Grahi was ruled by a general and not by a king, it cannot be directly associated with the king of Javā who paid tribute to Jayavarman VII in the late 12th century. If a Javā was located on the Malay Peninsula, it must be found elsewhere. A Sanskrit inscription discovered in precisely the same location as the previous inscription (Chaiya) and featuring a nearly identical script resembling Javanese Kawi speaks of a King Candrabhānu with the title Śrī Dharmarājā who was lord of Tāmbraliṅga in 1230 CE.[47] This Candrabhānu of Tāmbraliṅga, or at the very least his immediate successor bearing the same title, is known from Sri Lankan history as the "Jāvaka" (a general name for ethnic Malays) who invaded port cities along the island's coast in search of a tooth-relic in 1247 CE[48] This Tāmbraliṅga could have been situated at Chaiya, but it is far more likely that Tāmbraliṅga was the original name of Nakhon Si Thammarat to the immediate south (see fig. 12). This identification is implied in

[44] There has been no satisfactory explanation of the given date, which appears to read 11006 śaka in a rabbit year. Cœdès proposed 1105 *śaka*, or 1183 CE, i.e., at the beginning of Jayavarman VII's reign. See Cœdès, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, II*, 47, note 1. It could also be dated in the 13th century. The script resembles that of another inscription found at the same site in Chaiya and dated 1230 CE. I discuss this inscription below.

[45] Cœdès, "Le royaume de Śrīvijaya," 35.

[46] Ibid., 33.

[47] Cœdès, *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, II*, 41-43.

[48] W.M. Sirisena, *Sri Lanka and South-East Asia* (Leidin: Brill, 1978), 42. The Jāvaka named Candrabhānu is connected to the city of Tāmbraliṅga (or: Tambaliṅga) in Sri Lankan histories.

Candrabhānu's title Śrī Dharmarājā (i.e., Si Thammarat), and it is further supported by Nakhon Si Thammarat's Sri Lankan-inspired temple architecture[49] and its garbled historical tradition, which features a legendary king "Candabhānu."[50] If this Tāmbraliṅga was indeed located at Nakhon Si Thammarat, then its influence stretched northward to Chaiya in 1230 and across the Bay of Bengal to Sri Lanka in the 1240s. Significantly, this show of strength on the peninsula coincided with a period of Cambodian weakness after the death of Jayavarman VII. It is therefore entirely possible that the king of Javā in the Preah Khan inscription was a predecessor of the king of Tāmbraliṅga/Nakhon Si Thammarat, the so-called king of the "Jāvaka" in Sri Lankan tradition who was able to take advantage of the contraction of Cambodia's empire on the peninsula in the mid-13th century.

Unfortunately, even assuming that Cambodia's Javā in the late 12th century was on the Malay Peninsula, it cannot be taken for granted that Javā meant the same thing in the 8th century when Cambodia's independence supposedly took place. From all we know about Southeast Asian politics in the 8th century, invading or pillaging forces called "Javā" by the Khmers could have come from anywhere in the Malay world to the south. By the 11th century when the three independence stories were recorded it is possible that Cambodia's Javā had taken on new meaning altogether. Michael Vickery, who doubts the reality of any foreign incursion in the 8th century, has suggested that the memory of independence from Javā was a reaction to the expanding political influence of the island of Java throughout Southeast Asia in the 11th century.[51] Another possibility is that the 10th or 11th century westward expansion of Cambodia into the Menam Basin may have created the conditions for a border conflict with a Javā on the upper Malay Peninsula—not necessarily with Tāmbraliṅga (which may have not yet existed) but with one or several port cities on the eastern coast. A conflict between Cambodia and a peninsular Javā at this time may have been backdated to the 8th century, providing the context to justify Cambodia's military ventures far afield.

In a less positivist interpretation of the independence myth, the location of Javā in the 11th or 12th centuries may simply be irrelevant. Javā in the 11th century Cambodian imagination may have signified not a present rival but an absence—the lack of an enduring opposition. The Javā of myth was perhaps no longer "there" in reality, being either too weak or too far away, but it took on surplus meaning in Cambodia's vision of its once vulnerable self. What might have merely been a memory of a series of 8th century raids was transformed into a myth of an

[49] Namely Wat Phra Mahathat, the foundation of which is the subject of several of the city's historical traditions. For a description of this "great reliquary" and its associated legends, see Stuart Munro-Hay, *Nakhon Sri Thammarat: The Archaeology, History and Legends of a Southern Thai Town* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001), 279-292.

[50] David K. Wyatt, *The Crystal Sands: The Chronicles of Nagara Śrī Dharrmarāja* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asian Program, Department of Asian Studies, 1975), 87n10.

[51] Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics*, 388n193.

early existential threat. Trying to identify this 8th century foreign aggressor may be futile if it was imagined in 11th century ways, i.e., in the light of Cambodia's new imperial experience on its western frontier. The mythical empire of Javā was not necessarily what the Cambodian polity still feared, but it stood for what Cambodia desired to become.

From the above discussion we can conclude that Cambodia's Javā was probably both a reality and a myth. While a polity of this name existed from Cambodia's perspective in the 12th century and likely in the 8th, its history in relation to Cambodian may have been imperfectly remembered and its perceived setting may have changed over time. Nonetheless, a place does not become a myth simply because its existence cannot be definitely confirmed. It becomes a myth when, real or not, it is used to convey intentional meaning, to justify a cause, or to affirm an identity in the present. In this sense Cambodia's Javā was the most potent kind of myth, as it represented a political other against which Cambodia's integrity could be imagined. As Ariel Roshwald has observed, "what lends focus and meaning to the idea of self-determination is an archetypal image of violation."[52] The story of Moses' liberation of Israel from slavery in Pharaonic Egypt is one such archetype that encouraged the solidarity of the Judean ethno-political community in the face of various foreign incursions. Similarly, the Carolingian Franks, while fighting Iberian Muslims in the 8th century, saw themselves as a people "who [had overthrown] by force the heavy yoke imposed by the Romans."[53] Like the myth of independence from Javā, these perennial myths of violation and subsequent independence communicated a political ideal of uncontested sovereignty.

A Sacred Independence

Curiously, unlike the Carolingian memory of liberation from the Roman Empire, the three accounts of Cambodia's independence say nothing about military engagements between two irreconcilable foes. Instead, all three stories available to us are told within the context of rituals or acts of consecration. Therefore, independence in Cambodian memory may have had an expressly sacred dimension beyond its mere "secular" implications. I assume that the religious content of the three stories was not accidental; it underlines a belief that Cambodia's independence was a divinely auspicious event and that Cambodia's imagined sovereignty rested on an impression of sacred power.

A word which clearly illuminates the sacred signifiance of the independence stories is *siddhi*, "success," "auspiciousness," or "supernatural power." It so happens that this word appears prominently in all three texts, which suggests that the concept of *siddhi*, signifying the

[52] Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism*, 89.

[53] Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 16. This is from the prologue to the Salic law composed in 763/764 CE by order of King Pepin.

charismatic quality of a person or an act, lent an air of wonder and legimitacy to local stories set in the remote past. According to the Sanskrit portion of K. 235, when the brahmin Hiraṇyadāma came to Jayavarman II's capital at Mahendraparvata, he "revealed to the king a *siddhi* [in Dupont's translation, "a magical power"] which no other had attained."[54] The Khmer equivalent of this sentence states simply that the brahmin was "learned in the science of *siddhi* (*prājña siddhividyā*)." After revealing to Śivakaivalya (the family ancestor in the inscription) the esoteric teachings behind this *siddhi*, Hiraṇyadāma consecrated the image of the *devarāja*, called in Khmer the *kamrateṅ jagat ta rāja*, and then gave Śivakaivalya the authority to officiate for the deity's cult. The establishment of this cult with the aid of the brahmin's accumulated *siddhi* is the central focus of the Khmer account and the sole focus of the Sanskrit. To drive home the point of this brahmin's "magical power," however, the Khmer text inserts, almost parenthetically, the brahmin's role in Cambodia's independence: "His Majesty Parameśvara (Jayavarman II) invited [Hiraṇyadāma] to perform a ritual (*vidhi*) so that this land of Cambodia (*kamvujadeśa*) would not be dependent on Javā, and to make it so that there would be only king who is the universal ruler."[55] The account of the ritual freeing Cambodia from Javā has no other purpose in the context of the passage than to highlight the auspicious beginnings of the cult of Śivakaivalya's descendants. Hence, its use in K. 235 suggests that the myth of independence was something like a template in the early Cambodian imagination for what *siddhi* was and what it could do for a polity.

This notion of *siddhi* as a kind of sacred political leverage is also found in the two other independence myths. In K. 956, Jayavarman II commands his official Pṛthivīnarendra to "perform an auspicious rite for prosperity (*pre thve kālyanasiddhi*)" at the land of Ṛdvāl,[56] which is subsequently given to the author's matrilineal ancestors. This text is explicit about the greater political purpose of *siddhi*: "to prevent the great country of Cambodia (*vraḥ kamvujadeśa*) from being seized by Javā."[57] The accomplishment of *siddhi*, magnified as a magical act of liberation, confirms the auspiciousness of the people and events surrounding the family's original acquisition of land in southeastern Cambodia. Likewise in K.1158 the narrative, which primarily serves to inhance the reputation of a Buddhist scholar named Vraḥ Dhanus who set up images at the site of the inscription, alludes only tangentially to the independence myth. A reference to *siddhi*, which is found in the account of the legendary Śrī Satyavarman, is a likely reason for the citation of the myth. The Buddhist hero Śrī

[54] I follow Alexis Sanderson's translation of the Sanskrit in "The Śaiva Religion," 356. See also Dupont and Cœdès, "Les stèles de Sdok Kak Thoṃ. . .," 96, verse XXVI.

[55] *pi vraḥ pāda parameśvara añjeñ thve vidhi leha leṅ kaṃpi kamvujadeśa neḥ āyatta ta javā ley*. Ibid., 87, lines 71-72.

[56] Cœdès, *IC* VII, 130, line 15.

[57] *leṅ vvaṃ aṃpān vraḥ kaṃvujadeśa pi javā cāp ley*. Ibid., line 16.

Satyavarman, who "had *siddhi*," set up nine images of Lokeśvara in the distant past "to prevent Javā from attacking the land of the Khmers (*sruk khmer*)." In a later period, the teacher of Vraḥ Dhanus, a certain "Kamrateṅ Añ who is the Guru of Dharaṇīndarapura," restored those nine images, in effect inheriting Śrī Satyavarman's prowess or *siddhi* through this meritorious act and thus passing it on to Vraḥ Dhanus. While the independence myth is never the focus of this legitimating narrative, its appearance enhances the narrative's effect, no doubt because it was commonly known to evoke the idea of *siddhi*—auspiciousness or charismatic authority.

Why did early Cambodians remember their independence from Javā as a quintessentially magical or divinely auspicious event in their country's history? I would suggest that the reason lies in a close conceptual relationship between the ideal of poltical integrity and the value placed on sacrality in the early Cambodian imagination. By sacrality I do not mean the transcendence of the local and of the self, which is the principle through which the mimetic polity assumed by the cosmological model establishes its boundless universality. Rather, sacrality implies a set of boundaries between what is holy and worthy and what is not, a transcendence of otherness that affirms, rather than denies, the self. The territorial integrity of a polity and a polity's sacredness are therefore interchangeable and mutually reinforcing ideas constituting the identity of a political community. Steven Grosby calls the formation of this kind of political identity "the territorial dispersion of the sacred."[58] For Grosby an example of this process can be seen in the worship of Yahweh, according to pre-exilic Judahite tradition, as the "god of the land" in ancient Israel; the perceived dominion of this god over a restricted territory meant that sacrality was "dispersed" or extensive rather than merely centered, and that it was limited rather than universal.[59] The sacred in Cambodia's independence myth, represented not as a "god of the land" but as a formless legitimating power (*siddhi*), was likewise extended throughout the realm, as can be seen in the spread of the tradition of independence to the region of northeastern Thailand (K. 1158) and to southeastern Cambodia (K. 956) in the 11th century. This sacred power was also understood to be limited to a specific territory: a circumscribed land of Cambodia which was believed to have become, thanks to the dissemination of this self-defining power, independent of Javā and hence fully sovereign.

The "dispersion of the sacred" in early Cambodia's tradition of independence should cause us to reconsider the relationship between sacrality and political sovereignty in the pre-modern world. Benedict Anderson's reflection on the origins of modern nationalism represents a standard view on the subject, which is that the vision of a limited and sovereign

[58] Grosby, *Biblical Ideas*, 78.
[59] Ibid.

polity—Anderson's nation or "imagined community"—is a wholly modern innovation informed by a secular worldview. Modern nations in Anderson's analysis are "imagined as limited" because they repudiate the pre-modern religious view of communities as ideally universal, and they are "imagined as sovereign" because they have liberated themselves from pre-modernity's "divinely-ordained" cosmocratic empires.[60] This contrast between the pre-modern boundless sacred community (religion and/or religious empire) and the modern bounded secular community (nation) may have some explanatory power for the history of post-Absolutist Europe where the notion of popular sovereignty and linguistic nationalism combined to undermine the authority of semi-divine kingdoms of territorial ambiguity, but it fails to account for pre-secular, hierarchical polities like Hasmonean Judea, early medieval Armenia, and Angkorian Cambodia which were believed to be more sacred than implied or specified others because they had become, through divine favor, territorially delimited and autonomous.

[60] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

Chapter Six: The Buddhist Community

Cambodia's sacred space, whether it happened to promote an ideal of independence or to mirror the perfection of the cosmos, was the most effective representation of political unity. Though this dissertation has argued for a serious consideration of the "national" ideas behind the ideal of Cambodian integrity, it has never claimed that nationality was the only lens through which Cambodians viewed their collective political world. It is important to keep this point in mind when trying to understand early Cambodian conceptions of its political space. The previous chapter examined how the myth of independence from Javā reflected the role of sacred authority in the Cambodian political imagination, which was to establish a sovereign territory and an autonomous Khmer identity. However, the relationship between political space and the sacred was understood in other ways that had little to do with boundedness or ethnicity.

In this chapter I will examine the role of the kingdom's network of provincial deites in realizing an integrated Cambodian space and a sense of community. I will focus on how Cambodia's Buddhist community attempted to position itself within this largely Brahmanical space by advocating its own provincial deity, the Kamrateṅ Jagat (K.J.) Chpār Ransi ("God of the Bamboo Grove"). I believe that the worship and patronage of this Buddhist cult raised the Buddhist community's profile in the eyes of Cambodia's elite. Hence, a study of this Buddhist community and its principal deity before the 13th century may help illuminate the religious underpinnings of Cambodian power and identity. Just as savvy local elites adopted a myth of a famous king's elephant hunt myth into their own lineage/property histories, sectarian groups who wished to politically belong conformed their own traditions to the official royal vision of Cambodian sacred space.

Cambodia's pantheon of provincial gods was in many respects the purest symbol of royal power. In the late 9th century Yaśovarman I established one hundred hermitages around the country corresponding to preexisting provincial cults in an effort to advertise the new vigor of the Cambodian center. These cults may find an echo in the fiercely local *neak ta* spirit cults of modern Cambodia.[1] For Cambodia's religious pilgrims after the 9th century, however, the cultic landscape of Angkorian Cambodia came to represent not the independent power of the provinces but the dispersion of royal power to the provinces. Religious pilgrims experienced this royal space in person, traveling from one end of the country to the other to make donations. In effect, pilgrimage likely undermined the strictly local character of

[1] Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers*, 107-118.

provincial cults as Khmer elites targeted the most prestigious deities for their gift giving, i.e., the gods patronized by Cambodia's kings.

The deity most often worshipped in provincial royal shrines was Śiva, and the most important Śaivite cult in Angkorian Cambodia was the cult of Bhadreśvara, otherwise known as Kamrateṅ Jagat Liṅgapura ("God of Liṅgapura"). From the 7th to 14th centuries, beginning with an inscription from the capital of Īśānavarman at Sambor Prei Kuk and ending with the very last Cambodian Sanskrit inscription,[2] Liṅgapura was the focus of the Khmer pilgrimage experience, and its principal shrine claimed by far the largest share of royal and elite patronage throughout the Angkorian period. The site's peripheral location at Wat Phu on the bank of Mekong in what is today southern Laos appears not to have diminished its reputation, and it may have even enhanced the site's appeal. The distance between the capital and Liṅgapura was likely a testament to the polity's reach, and the pilgrim's journey between the two may have actualized in the pilgrim's mind the vastness of Cambodia's sacred space. For those in authority in the Angkorian period, patronage of and control over distant sacred sites like Liṅgapura was an expression of commitment to an ideal of royal power and political integrity.

The vision of an integrated pilgrimage network coextensive with Cambodian space may begin to explain the Buddhist adoption of a syncretistic deity modeled on the Śiva of Liṅgapura, the Kamrateṅ Jagat (K.J.) Chpār Ransi. As we have seen in the cases of the elephant hunt and independence myths, local communities valued the idea that they were active in and contributors to a greater (Cambodian) political community, as this was the most effective way of standing out from the crowd. In much the same way, the Buddhist community appears to have sought political acceptance and prestige by situating its main shrine among the greater community of shrines. Ironically, the desire for recognition and patronage may have brought Buddhists into even more conflict with the polity's dominant Śaivite practitioners. By becoming more religiously mainstream, Buddhists in effect increased their ability to assert a separate sectarian identity; hence, they were more visibly threatening to the politico-religious status quo.

Sectarian Antagonism

The syncretistic tendencies of Cambodian religion did not preclude the existence of sectarian antagonism.[3] Religion did not always have the "total systemic character" that exists,

[2] For mention of Liṅgapura in the 7th century, see K. 441 (Cœdès, *IC* IV, p. 16, verse I); for the 14th century, see K. 300 (Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 394, verse LXII).

[3] On syncretism in early Cambodian history, see Julia Estève, "Étude critique des phénomènes de syncrétisme religieux dans le Cambodge Angkorien" (PhD diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2009), 17-62.

for example, in the Theravada Buddhism of Thailand or post-Angkorian Cambodia, where brahmins and Buddhist monks have retained mutually exclusive though complementary roles in both court ritual and village religious practice.[4] Perhaps a better point of comparison would be the syncretistic religion of Java as described by Clifford Geertz. In Geertz's view of Javanese religion, nominal Muslims separated themselves into two communities, *santri* (orthodox Muslim) and *abangan* (local animist), the former advocating innovation from abroad and doctrinal purity and the latter holding to a latent Hindu-Buddhist tradition.[5] The co-existence of the two strains, with considerable practical overlap within the society at large, was as much a sign of contained dissonance as it was an indication of religious tolerance. No doubt similar religious strains existed in early Cambodia, particularly within the minority Buddhist sect where the community's integrity and its necessary subservience to state Śaivism were a potential source of conflict.

While sectarianism clearly existed in the Angkorian period, its existence cannot be everywhere assumed. It would be wrong to suggest, for instance, that a king's posthumous name necessarily indicates that king's sectarian identity. In one opinion, Suryavarman I, posthumously named Nirvāṇapāda, must have been a Buddhist and a committed patron of Buddhism, and the long early 12th century reign of Suryavarman II, whose posthumous name was probably Paramaviṣṇuloka, must have been a "Vaiṣṇavite" period in which Buddhism was "dormant."[6] In fact, there is evidence that Suryavarman I was actually hostile towards Buddhism,[7] and the art of the reign of Suryavarman II suggests that Buddhism was alive and well.[8] Aside from the reign of Jayavarman VII, when the king favored (an admittedly syncretistic) Buddhism, there is no easy correlation between regnal and sectarian chapters in Cambodian history.

Evidence of a large-scale iconoclasm of Buddhist images and their replacement with Saivite images after Jayavarman VII has been the primary basis for assuming sectarian conflict in the Angkorian period. The most common explanation for this particular attack on the sect is the rise of a Śaivite king—such as the late 13th century king Jayavarman VIII, with the Śaivite

[4] S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 255-256.

[5] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), 5.

[6] Briggs, "The Syncretism of Religions in Southeast Asian, Particularly in the Khmer Empire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71.4 (1951): 243-244.

[7] See discussion of K. 1198 below.

[8] This is assuming that the temples of Thomannon and Chau Say Tevoda in the Angkor Wat style are from this king's reign or thereabouts. For Buddhist elements in the art of these two temples, see Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 368-371.

posthumous name of Parameśvarapada.[9] Unfortunately, the epigraphic record of Jayavarman VII's successors is so weak that any hypothesis about anti-Buddhist kings must be extremely tentative. We may not be able to fully understand the political implications of the iconoclasm, as it may have involved a more complicated power struggle of which the seeming conflict between two rival sects was merely a surface expression. T. S. Maxwell has argued that, given the prevalent syncretism of Hinduism and Buddhism both prior to and during the reign of Jayavarman VII, it is unlikely that the iconoclasm was anti-Buddhist as such, but was more likely a violent reaction to the images of Jayavarman VII's deified political allies, which were only by chance primarily Buddhist in identity.[10] This theory fails to consider the nature of the iconoclasm, which was clearly aimed at images of the historical Buddha and did not discriminate between temples of Jayavarman VII and Angkor Wat-style monuments.[11] It does, however, recognize that kings like Jayavarman VII and those before him were typically ecumenical in their support of various sects, whose differences were mitigated by a common substratum of popular religion prioritizing the worship of ancestors and the supernatural management of a mercurial nature. A 13th century "holy war" between two diametrically opposed and politicized religious communities seems out of place in this animistic context.

The way in which Śaivism and Buddhism co-existed in Angkorian Cambodia underscores the interoperability of the two sects, but it also points to their relative inequality. In the late 9th century King Yaśovarman dedicated a Buddhist monastery, Saugatāśrama, at Tep Pranam near the royal palace at Angkor, as well as two other monasteries, one each for the Śaivites (Brahmaṇāśrama) and for the Viṣṇuites (Vaiṣṇavāśrama) alongside the king's newly built reservoir the Yaśodharataṭāka (the East Baray).[12] The three Sanskrit inscriptions detailing the respective rules and procedures of these monastic communities confirm that Buddhists were allowed to follow their own textual and ritual tradition, and that each sect received by royal decree an equal portion of their means of subsistence. Nonetheless, if the state had a stake in Buddhism, it was probably to keep it in check. There is no indication, after all, that the Buddhist community had any real autonomy vis-à-vis the state in this period. The foundation stela of Saugatāśrama ("the monastery of the Buddhists") begins with a eulogy to Śiva, echoing

[9] See Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture," 48.

[10] Maxwell, 121.

[11] For the defacement of Angkor Wat-style Buddha images, see Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 392 (this is especially evident at the temples of Beng Mealea and Banteay Samre). See also the defaced Buddhist lintel in Angkor Wat style in Henri Marchal, *Le décor et la sculpture khmers* (Paris: G. van Oest: les editions d'art et d'histoire, 1951), pl. XXV, image 89.

[12] See Cœdès, "À la recherche du Yaśodharāśrama," *BEFEO* 32 (1932): 71-112.

the two opening verses of the other sectarian foundaton stelae, before praising the Buddha.[13] Kamaleswar Bhattacharya calls this a "a syncretism of Śivaism and of Buddhism,"[14] but it may also reflect a subordination of Buddhism to state Śivaism. After all, it doesn't follow that the more two sects like Buddhism and Śaivism were worshipped alike, the less chance conflicts would arise. The opposite may have been more typical, as seen today in the "official" state toleration of Christianity and the state-enforced persecution of Ahmadiyya Muslims in majority-Muslim Indonesia. Buddhists may have come into conflict with Śaivites for the very reason that they proposed to accomplish the same ends but under a different name. Tensions would have been exacerbated when the Buddhist community neglected to show its due allegiance to the state cult on which it sought to model itself.

This privileging of state Śaivism in the early Angkorian period can be seen in the 10th century stela of Vat Kdei Car from Kampong Thom province which commemorates the king's gift of a bronze Lokeśvara to a relative of his minister, Kavīndrārimathana,[15] the architect responsible for constructing the shrine of Rājendravarman (944-968) the East Mebon, a non-Buddhist shrine, at the center of the East Baray. Kavīndrārimathana himself constructed a Buddhist shrine at Bat Chum, to the immediate south of the East Baray, consisting of three brick towers and dedicated to the Buddha, Vajrapāṇi, and this bodhisattva's consort (Devī). This minister's sectarian preference suggests that one could be both a devout Buddhist and a servant of the Brahmanical state, and that the king himself may have had Buddhist inclinations. As a royal servant, however, it was essential to prioritize one's loyalties. In the Bat Chum inscription we read of Kavīndrārimathana's foremost loyalty: "Having a mind only for the Dharma of the Buddhists, he was the foremost among the Buddhists; nonetheless, he attached his devotion to that king Parameśvara [or: to the king, that supreme lord]."[16] Even as this inscription confirms the existence of a self-conscious community of Buddhists (*bauddha*) with implicit royal approval, it relegates this sectarian identity to secondary status under the cult of Śiva Parameśvara. The verse implies that devotion to Śiva was equivalent to loyalty to

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[13] These two verses are identical to the opening verses of the stela of Lolei, K. 323. Barth and Bergaigne, *ISCC*, 213-214.

[14] Bhattacharya, 30.

[15] Ibid., 31. See K. 157, Cœdès, IC VI, 125, verse XIII.

[16] See K. 268, right doorjamb, lines 25-26 (verse XXXIII) in Cœdès, "Les inscriptions de Bat Cum (Cambodge)," *Journal Asiatique* 10, n. 13 (1908): 236.

(27) *vauddhadharmmaikatāno yo vauddhānām agraṇīr api*

(28) *kenāpi bhūpatau bhaktir nnaddhāsmin parameśvare*

Cœdès' translation is on page 251: "N'ayant d'autre souci que le Dharma du Buddha, il était le premier d'entre les Buddhistes: néanmoins il attacha en quelque sorte sa dévotion à ce roi qui était un maître supreme [ou: un Parameśvara = Śiva]."

the king, "that supreme lord," which is to say that kingship and Śaivism were conceptually inseparable. The authority of Śaivism as the state cult is acknowledged in Alexis Sanderson's observation that "even when royal support for Buddhism was at its most fervent, it seems to have been unable or unwilling to oust Śaivism completely from the circle of royal and state ritual."[17] Hence, religious coexistence or "syncretism" in the Angkorian period was hardly the same thing as sectarian equality.

The tension between Buddhism and Śaivism is implied in the 10th century Buddhist inscription of Vat Sithor (K. 111).[18] This stela, from the reign of Jayavarman V, records in lengthy Sanskrit the occasion of a Buddhist foundation and the rules and ritual expectations of its Buddhist monastic community. Noticeably absent in the inscription is any nod towards royal Śaivism. After several verses in praise of King Jayavarman V, the inscription introduces a certain Kīrtipaṇḍita who is said to have come (or perhaps returned) to Cambodia from a "foreign kingdom" (*pararāṣṭra*) where he had studied texts in the contemporary Buddhist tradition.[19] These included the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, an 8th century tantric text and a source of the esoteric visualization practice of the Vajradhātu maṇḍala consisting of five principal Buddhas.[20] Kīrtipaṇḍita is also said to have erected and restored Buddhist statues throughout the kingdom. The text is therefore primarily a eulogy of the community's founder, Kīrtipaṇḍita, who is presented as a Buddhist, a brahmin, and a person of political influence, being a servant of Jayavarman V and an advisor to several kings.[21] We learn that he advocated the king on behalf of the condemned and the poor ascetic,[22] and that he was rewarded "for protecting the circle of the kingdom" with the honor of conducting various royal (Brahmanical) ceremonies in the palace.[23] The performance of these ceremonies by a Buddhist or even within a Buddhist context should not surprise us, given what we have observed of the syncretistic nature of Tantric Buddhism. This ritual syncretism, though not necessarily Saivite, is confirmed in the description of the community's required observances, presumably overseen by this Kīrtipaṇḍita, as described in the inscription. We learn that the *saṅgha* (the monastic community) was involved in the typically Buddhist practices of bathing Buddha images and conducting ceremonies for the opening of the eyes of Buddha images, and there is

[17] See Sanderson, 103.

[18] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 195-211.

[19] Ibid., 198, verse XXIX, line 7.

[20] Ibid., line 8. For the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, see Paul Williams and Anthony Tribe, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000), 209.

[21] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 198, verse XXXIII.

[22] Ibid., 199, verses XXXIV-XXXV.

[23] *rāṣṭramaṇḍalarakṣārthaṃ*. Ibid., verse XXXVI, line 21.

mention of "the secrets of the Thunderbolt and Bell (*vajraghanta*),"[24] the symbol of the tantric deity Vajrasattva. However, the *saṅgha* was also responsible for Brahmanical sacrifices (*yajña*),[25] and among their number were priests (*purohita*) in charge of Brahmanical fire offerings.

More significant than the evidence of this official's service to the king or the seeming eclecticism of his Buddhism is his role in relation to the Buddhist community. He appears to have served the king specifically as an advocate for the Buddhists. This is implied in the account of one of his foundations: "For the protection of the Buddhists (*bauddhatrāṇārthaṃ*) from calamity (*āpadaḥ*), he erected again a Muni, whose image had been fashioned with fervor and whose throne had been broken."[26] In his erection and restoration of Buddha images we can sense an effort not merely to advocate for his own religion of choice but to shore up a Buddha community apparently at risk of danger or persecution. If these were human rather than natural calamities, as seems to be the implication, they point to unnamed persecutors. If so, were they Saivite? Or were they simply traditionalists wary of the sect's own ambitions to alter the political-religious status quo?

A recently discovered 11th century inscription suggests that Buddhism was itself considered a threat outside of the capital region, and that Śaivism, or more specifically the cult of the śivaliṅga, had certain political advantages at both the state and local levels. Of course, sectarian conflict nearly always occurs in a context involving complex loyalties and economic motives and not merely religious disagreement, and the event related in this inscription is probably no different. In the Khmer portion of the stela K. 1198 dated to early in the reign of Suryavarman I (1014 CE), one of king's officials by the name of Vraḥ Kamrateṅ Añ Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman records the placement of several *śivalinga* in lands in his possession. In 1011, this official was given a certain parcel of land and temple for a *śivalinga* after it had been confiscated from the king's enemies:

> In 933 saka, Trakval Vo conspired with Tā Pāṅ in revolt against His Majesty [Suryavarman I]. The king had them convicted and seized the land and temple of Sukhavāsa of Tāñ Tritati, whom Trakval Vo called his ancestor, and gave [the land and temple] to VKA Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman. The king ordered him to reestablish a *śivaliṅga* in the temple in place of the image of the Buddha.[27]

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[24] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 200, verse LXIX, line 38. See also 209n1.

[25] Ibid., 200, verse LXVIII.

[26] Ibid., 199, verse XXXVII.

[27] K. 1198, side B, lines 23-24. *933 śaka man trakval vo saṃ nu tā pāṅa pi khmi khmāṅ ni kaṃmrateṅ kaṃtvan 'añ pre nirṇnaya yok bhūmi nu vraḥ sukhāvāsa nai tāñ tritat(i) trakval vo hau 'ji oy prasāda ta vraḥ kaṃsteṅ 'añ śrī*

This passage provides a justification for the transference of the land of Sukhavāsa into Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman's possession. Whether or not the reason given is true, the implied comparison between treason and religious perversion should probably be considered an accurate reflection of sentiments towards Buddhism at that time. The inscription suggests that the two rebels were imposters in the first place, as the temple had originally contained a *śivaliṅga*, was implicitly desecrated by the erection of a Buddha, and was finally returned to its rightful Śaivite affiliation by Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman. This same inscription states that Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman participated in Suryavarman I's far-ranging campaigns against the Mons in the so-called "western provinces,"[28] so it seems likely that his political-religious persuasion was considered legitimate by the king himself. Even more remarkable is that the inscription suggests that Suryavarman I, who has long been labeled a Buddhist due to his Buddhist-sounding posthumous name Nirvāṇapāda, was the person responsible for removing the Buddha image and erecting the *śivaliṅga* in its stead. This may be an invented claim on the author's part, of course; Suryavarman I may have approved the confiscation of his enemy's land without actually knowing about the local conflict's religious dimension. In any case, it is clear that Śrī Lakṣmīpativarman as a favorite of the king was able to politically exploit an ostensibly religious conflict for personal ends because Buddhism was generally believed to be illegimiate.

The event recorded in K. 1198 may prefigure a growing tendency among Cambodian elites to cast local conflicts in a religious light. This would not be a surprising practice given the strong attachments that religious communities generally inspire. Though we must show some restraint in how we read passages like this, we can nevertheless assume that religious communities were real, that their boundaries were well established, that sectarian conflict was common, and that religious loyalties could be effectively called upon in times of crisis and for personal gain.

Perhaps surprisingly, in the continuous effort to maintain the integrity of their community in the face of powerful sectarian detractors, Buddhists sought political legitimacy and a measure of security from the state which effectively persecuted them. Undoubtedly the ultimate end for Buddhists was state Buddhism, or the eclipse of state Śaivism, which when it was achieved in the late 12th century involved an unprecedented renewal of the capital and

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lakṣmipativarmma vraḥ pre vraḥ kaṃsteṅ 'añ sthāpanā śivaliṅga viṅ ta gi prāsāda noḥ nā tel vraḥ vuddha. I follow the revised transcription of Gerdi Gerschheimer, Arlo Griffiths, and Dominique Soutif on the SEAlang website, "SEAclassics," http://sealang.net/oldkhmer/corpus.htm (accessed August 1, 2011). See also Saveros Pou, *Nouvelles Inscriptions*, 243, lines 23-24; Pou has *tritakī* for *tritati*.

[28] See Chapter Three.

restructuring of the country's religious landscape under Jayavarman VII. Before that time, the politicization of Buddhism for the community's protection was a gradual process that demanded subtle answers to the question of what it meant to be a Buddhist in a possibly Buddhist-averse Cambodia.

It appears that one response to the problem of maintaining Buddhist identity and security was to assert the essentially Cambodian character of local Buddhism. This was of course problematic, as the Buddhist schools were inextricably tied to the ebb and flow of ideas from beyond Cambodia's borders. Hence Buddhists, like the elite families who adopted the elephant hunt myth into their local genealogical fictions (see Chapter Four), sought to advertise their community's local history and physical arrival. One obvious strategy for highlighting a Cambodian Buddhist sense of place was the renovation of Buddhist monuments. We read in the 10th century K. 111 that Kīrtipaṇḍita restored Buddhist statues throughout the country.[29] The first place Kirtipandita chose to visit and renovate was a certain Mountain of the East (*prāggiri*) known from another context to be an important regional shrine, as yet unidentified.[30] The inscription identifies this site as a monument to the Buddhism of Cambodia's past: "[Kīrtipaṇḍita] erected again the images of [the bodhisattvas] Vajrin and Lokeśa, established on the Mountain of the East (*prāggiri*) by Śrī Satyavarman, numbering more than ten, whose thrones had been broken."[31] This Śrī Satyavarman is only briefly mentioned, but from the context we can deduce that he was a Buddhist of some historical importance. Inscription K. 1158 clarifies the role of this Śrī Satyavarman in the Cambodian Buddhist imagination by claiming that he was responsible for setting up Buddhist images on "Abhayagiri" to "prevent Javā from attacking Khmer Country."[32] Therefore, Śrī Satyavarman was more than a legendary Buddhist; he was, for at least some Buddhists, a Cambodian/Khmer hero. As I argued in the previous chapter, the citation of the Javā myth in the context of a local Buddhist legend suggests that the Buddhist community was trying to insert its own story into the greater Cambodian narrative.

The Kamrateṅ Jagat Chpār Ransi

I believe that a primary reason for this "Cambodianization" of local Buddhist identity was to justify a degree of state protection and support for the Buddhist community. It appears

[29] See Cœdès, *IC* VI, 199, verses XLVI-XLVII.

[30] The "Mountain of the East" is probably mentioned as Vnaṃ Pūrva ("Eastern Mountain") in K. 276 of Prasat Ta Kev (Cœdès, IC IV, 154, line 19). The inscription says that a god called Śrī Tribhuvanañjaya was erected there.

[31] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 199, verse XLV, lines 39-40:

(39) śrīsatyavarmmaṇā bajri- lokeśārccā daśādhikāḥ

(40) sthāpitāḥ prāggirau bhagnā- sanā yo tiṣṭhipat punaḥ

[32] Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 12, line 32.

that a Buddhist deity named Śrī Samantaprabheśvara or the Kamrateṅ Jagat (K.J.) Chpār Ransi ("God of the Bamboo Grove") became for Buddhists the symbol of this state protection. While there were other regional Buddhist deities in Angkorian Cambodia, most notably the god of Vimāya (Phimai) in present-day Northeast Thailand, Julia Estève has observed that K.J. Chpār Ransi was in some ways the Buddhist answer to Cambodia's dominant Śaivite cult, the Kamrateṅ Jagat Liṅgapura (the god of Wat Phu).[33] I will assess the significance of this preeminent Buddhist deity in Cambodian religion and politics before proposing a plausible location for its principal shrine.[34]

The name Chpār Ransi, "Bamboo Grove," clearly evokes the famous Veṇuvana (or: Veḷuvana) in Rājagṛha, the garden given to the Buddha by King Bimbisāra for the site of the first Buddhist monastery. The association of the place-name with Buddhist monasticism and royal patronage likely inspired the name's adoption in various local Southeast Asian contexts. For example, a Veṇuvana was located near Borobudur in 9th century central Java.[35] In Angkorian Cambodia the Bamboo Grove was rendered Chpār Ransi in the vernacular, and Vaṃśārāma in Sanskrit. Judging from the name alone, we might expect that Chpār Ransi was a royally-endowed monastic complex of some kind.

Though the inscriptions do in fact confirm that Chpār Ransi was a center for Buddhist learning in early Cambodia, the place-name is primarily associated with its Buddhist deity, K.J. Chpār Ransi. Two inscriptions refer to this deity by the name or title of Śrī Samantaprabheśa (or: Samantaprabheśvara), "Lord of the Universal Light."[36] The significance of this title is uncertain. Samantaprabhā is the name of a minor bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in the Lotus Sutra Samantaprabhāsa is the deified name given to each of the 500 arhats who studied with the Buddha at Rājagṛha.[37] However, it may be that Śrī Samantaprabheśa refers not to a canonical bodhisattva, but to a local Khmer Buddhist deity for which "Lord of the Universal Light" was a descriptive epithet, perhaps indicating K.J. Chpār Ransi's polity-wide transcendence over other local Buddhist gods.

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[33] Etève, 452-460.

[34] After writing this chapter I was made aware of Julia Etève's thesis on early Cambodian syncretism, in which she has written a far more comprehensive, subtle, and linguistically informed history of the Kamrateṅ Jagat Chpār Ransi than what I have written below. Ibid., 432-460. I thank her for giving me a copy of her thesis. I have tried to incorporate some of her important insights.

[35] J.G. de Casparis identifies Veṇuvana with Candi Mendut, three kilometers to the east of Borobudur. See de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, I [(Bandung: A.C. Nix and Co., 1950), 185.

[36] In K. 158, the title is Śrī Samantaprabheśa, or Vuddha Prabheśa, "the Buddha Lord of Light." See Cœdès, *IC* II, 138, verse XXXIV; and 109, verses XXXVII and XXXVIII. For the title "Samantaprabheśvara," see K. 1158, Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 12.

[37] H. Stern, *Saddharma-Pundarîka, or The Lotus of the True Law* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 194.

Being the country's foremost Buddhist shrine, Chpār Ransi was part of an extensive network of royally privileged sacred places. Major shrines for the other two sects—the Śaivite temple to Bhadreśvara of Liṅgapura, now known as Wat Phu in southern Laos, and the Vaiṣṇavite shrine to Cāmpeśvara whose location remains unknown—may have resembled Chpār Ransi in scale and purpose. Elites made pilgrimages to these and other regional shrines and set aside vast portions of their own estates to support their upkeep. Evidence of the veneration of these deities can be seen throughout the country in the Angkorian period and not just in the immediate vicinity of their shrines. Hence, if K.J. Chpār Ransi was a Buddhist deity tied to a specific place, it was far from circumscribed in its influence, a fact that is borne out in the epigraphy from the 10th century onward.

The first dated reference to the god of Chpār Ransi is found in K. 178 from Phnom Mrec, a hill located in southern Preah Vihear province between Koh Ker and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay.[38] The inscription, dated to 994 CE in the reign of Jayavarman V lists the boundaries of the rice fields of a certain territory called Gaṃryāṅ, perhaps located in the vicinity of Phnom Mrec, in which a hermitage (*tapovana*) was built and dedicated to Śiva. The rice fields that made up the southeastern boundary of this Gaṃryāṅ are said to have been dedicated to the upkeep (*caṃnāṃ*) of Chpār Ransi.[39] This setting apart of rice fields to benefit an important regional deity and shrine outside of a land's immediate vicinity was common practice in the period, the most favored recipient of this kind of donation being the Bhadreśvara of Liṅgapura or Kamrateṅ Jagat (K.J.) Liṅgapura (i.e., the god of Wat Phu in southern Laos).

Subsequent references to K.J. Chpār Ransi reveal that donations to this god typically accompanied donations to K.J. Liṅgapura, with gifts to the latter taking precedence. The relative importance of the Śaivite K.J. Liṅgapura likely reflects the religious subjugation of the Buddha to Śiva in most of the Angkorian period. The second dated occurrence of K.J. Chpār Ransi in the inscriptions makes this relationship between Liṅgapura and Chpār Ransi, and by extension Śiva and the Buddha, explicit. This is the stela of Tuol Prasat, K. 158, dated 1003 CE during the brief reign of Jayavīravarman and composed in both Sanskrit and Khmer;[40] like K. 178 it was also found southern Preah Vihear province, but to the southeast of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay. It begins in Sanskrit with a eulogy to Śiva as the all-encompassing deity, made manifest in the form of Dharmakāya, "the Dharma body," i.e., the Buddha.[41] The Sanskrit portion of the text explains how a certain Vāp Sah (Sanskrit: Sahadeva) came to receive by royal injunction some lands which had been wrongfully seized from Vāp Sah's family after his

[38] Cœdès, *IC* VI, 192-194.

[39] Ibid., 192, line 4.

[40] Cœdès, *IC* II, pp. 97-114.

[41] Ibid., 99, side A, lines 6-7, verses I and II.

ancestor's death, after which Vāp Sah, perhaps in part as a goodwill gesture to the king, set aside some of those lands—the boundaries of which are detailed in a section in Khmer—for the upkeep of several regional deities, most of which are Buddhist. According to the Sanskrit, the principal recipient of Vāp Sah's gifts is Liṅgapureśvara or Bhadreśvara, which is named Vraḥ K.J. Liṅgapura in the Khmer;[42] this deity, the K.J. Liṅgapura of Wat Phu, was given a yearly sum of rice. The rest of Vāp Sah's donations were reserved for two images of an enigmatic Buddhist deity and an image of Lokeśvara or Lokapati.[43] The first Buddhist image is named in the Sanskrit Śrī Ghaṇa Śrī Samantaprabheśa,[44] while in the Khmer the same deity is named Vraḥ K.J. Chpār Ransi. The second image, another Śrī Samantaprabheśa, is said to be "of [Vap Sah's] own country"[45]—perhaps being a local reproduction of the original K.J. Chpār Ransi—and is called simply in the Khmer *vraḥ rūpa kaṃmrateṅ jagatt*, or "the statue of the holy god," no doubt referring to the god of Vāp Sah's shrine at Tuol Prasat.[46]

K. 158's reference to K.J. Chpār Ransi may allow us to clarify the deity's identity and purpose, particularly as it relates to K.J. Liṅgapura. We learn that K.J. Chpār Ransi is definitely a Buddhist deity, as evidenced by the epithet "Śrī Ghaṇa" in the Sanskrit.[47] Like K.J. Liṅgapura/Bhadreśvara, it has two principal names: the enigmatic Śrī Samantaprabheśa, or "lord of the universal light," which like Bhadreśvara may or may not indicate a deity in the greater Indic pantheon, perhaps Mahāyāna Buddhist in origin; and K.J. Chpār Ransi, a name specifying, like K.J. Liṅgapura, the geographic location of the god's shrine. The inscription implies that the two deities share the same title, *vraḥ kamrateṅ jagat*, which would seem to suggest a similar religious function. In fact, the text's preamble, mentioned above, characterizes all Buddhist deities ("Vajrin, Jina, etc.") as manifestations of Śiva,[48] which may lead us to understand K.J. Chpār Ransi as a syncretistic version of Buddha as Śiva or vice versa,

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[42] For "Liṅgapureśvara" and "Bhadreśvara," Ibid., 102, side B, lines 6-7, verses XXXIV and XXXV; for Vraḥ K.J. Liṅgapura, see 103-104, side B line 34 through side C line 1.

[43] The Sanskrit tells us that the image of Lokeśvara is "[Vap Sah's] own image," or a statue representation of himself as Lokeśvara; likewise, the Khmer calls this statue *vraḥ kaṃmrateṅ añ lokeśvara praśasta*, or "the god Lokeśvara which is inscribed," apparently alluding to an inscription on the statue which identifies Vāp Sah with this bodhisattva. Ibid., 104, side C, lines 3-4.

[44] Cœdès, *IC* II, 102, side A, line 9, verse XXXVII.

[45] Ibid., 102, side A, line 10, verse XXXVIII.

[46] Ibid., 104, side C, lines 1-2.

[47] Cœdès calls it simply "epithète du Buddha," ibid., 109n5. Every occurrence of this title in the epigraphy suggests the Buddha or a Buddhist deity. Claude Jacques, however, believes that Śrī Ghaṇa was not merely an epithet but the designation of an as yet unknown Buddhist sect. See Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Śrīghana in Ancient Khmer Lands," in *Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia: Mentalities, Interpretations, and Practices*, ed. François Lagirarde and Paritta Chalermpow Koanantakook (Paris: EFEO, 2006), 71-79.

[48] Ibid., 99, side A, lines 6-7, verses I and II.

its Śaivite identity qualifying it to belong to the predominantly Śaivite pantheon of gods which served as the regional protective and/or fertility deities of Angkorian Cambodia. In other words, K.J. Chpār Ransi may have been perceived to be a Buddhist version of the Śaivite K.J. Liṅgapura.

K.J. Chpār Ransi's place in a polity-wide pantheon is confirmed in several 11th and 12th century inscriptions, suggesting that K.J. Chpār Ransi was on par with several major Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite deities, and was an object of worship for a larger sector of elites than a strict sectarian Buddhist minority. A mid-11th century inscription from Prasat Ta Kev at Angkor, K. 276, relates a series of gifts made by a certain Śrī Yogīśvarapaṇḍita, an official under Suryavarman I, to various shrines throughout the country beginning with K.J. Liṅgapura.[49] K.J. Chpār Ransi is included further down his list,[50] along with such regional deities as K.J. Vak Ek (Basak in southeastern Cambodia), K.J. Śrī Jayakṣetra (Baset in Battambang province), and the deity K.J. Cāmpeśvara. This pattern of donating to K.J. Chpār Ransi alongside other prominent regional deities, particularly K.J. Liṅgapura, continues into the 12th century. K. 249, from Prasat Trau in Siem Reap province, relates how in 1109 CE a Khloñ Vala Dharmaśila allocated the production of his land at Stuk Vryaṅ primarily to K.J. Liṅgapura and to this god's feminine complement the Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Añ, as well as to the *āśrama* at Stuk Vryaṅ and to K.J. Chpār Ransi.[51] K. 254 from Neam Rup to the west of Angkor documents an official's donations to four major shrines during the early part of Suryavarman II's reign until 1129 CE, first to K.J. Liṅgapura, and then to K.J. Vnaṃ Ruṅ (Phnom Ruṅ), Cāmpeśvara, and K.J. "Chpā Ransi," also called in the Sanskrit *vaṃśārāmajina*, "Buddha of the Bamboo Grove."[52] Interestingly, the Sanskrit clarifies that the gift to this Buddhist deity was intended "to produce the fruit which is the perception of [the god's] identity with Śiva,"[53] a particularly explicit demonstration of K.J. Chpār Ransi's perceived syncretistic, Śiva-like character. George Cœdès suggests that this identification with Śiva reads almost like cautious justification for including a Buddhist deity among a list of important Brahmanical deities.[54] In any case, it seems reasonable to suppose that for many 11th and 12th century Cambodians, the importance of K.J. Chpār Ransi could be attributed to its functional similarity to Śiva and to its membership in a diverse pantheon, and not only to its specifically Buddhist identity.

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[49] Cœdès, *IC* IV, 153- 155.

[50] Ibid., 154, line 21.

[51] Cœdès, *IC* III, 98.

[52] For K. 254, see Cœdès, *IC* III, pp. 180-192; the reference to "K.J. Chpā Ransi" is on p. 186, lines 28-29; for *vaṃśārāmajina*, see 184, face C, lines 7, verse XXX.

[53] Ibid., 184, lines 7-12, verse XXX.

[54] "Le donateur śivaite chercherait à justifier son offrande à un sanctuaire bouddhique." Ibid., 189n2.

For Buddhists in Cambodia, on the other hand, the Śaivite character of K.J. Chpār Ransi may not have been considered a necessary compromise with Brahmanism, but rather a sign of the Buddhist community's growing stature vis-à-vis non-Buddhists. Possessing their own god of place, endowed with the procreative and protective aspect of Śiva and a long history of royal favor as the preeminent Buddhist deity in Cambodia, Buddhists seem to have have positioned K.J. Chpār Ransi as their own Cambodian sacred center. That K.J. Chpār Ransi was believed to safeguard the country's Buddhist community is evident in the 11th century inscription K. 1158 from the village of Sap Bak in the area of Prakhon Chai in Northeast Thailand.[55] This is the same inscription that features the semi-legendary Satyavarman who, seemingly in the stead of Jayavarman II, set up Buddhist images on a mountain to protect Cambodia from Javā. In the Sanskrit portion of the text (lines 1-30), after paying homage to the five Dhyāni Buddhas of the Tantric school of Buddhism, the author Vraḥ Dhanu praises K.J. Chpār Ransi, called Śrī Samantaprabheśvara ("Lord of the Universal Light"), for his apotropaic role, as seen in its epithet "Protector" (*tāyī*):[56]

> V. The land that was first named Jayantapura and later Chpār Ransi: there resides the Protector (*tāyī*) Śrī Samantaprabheśvara.[57]
>
> VI. Having destroyed the threat to the Buddhists, he strengthened the religion of the Buddha in Cambodia even to the present day. I worship him continually.[58]

How K.J. Chpār Ransi was perceived to "strengthen" Buddhism in Cambodia is implied in the following verses identifying Vraḥ Dhanu's three venerable teachers. One of these was a "teacher of the country of Chpār Ransi" who later "went [to serve] the lord of the place called Sthalā Svāy."[59] Chpār Ransi, being a center for Buddhist learning as well as for worship in Cambodia, seems to have been the base camp of an evangelical mission, generating new teachers and sending them out to places like Sthalā Svāy ("Mango Hill," location unknown) to help stabilize isolated Buddhist cults and communities.

Therefore, in the same way that Liṅgapura was the most sacred place of pilgrimage for Cambodians generally, Chpār Ransi seems to have been something like the "mother church"

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[55] Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 11-14.

[56] Claude Jacques takes *tāyī* with *deśas* to mean "protective country"; however, it is clear that *tāyī* should be understood as the epithet of Śrī Samantaprabheśvara. Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Śrīghana," 73. "Jayantrapura" in line 9, which is meaningless, can only be "Jayantapura."

[57] I follow Julia Estève's translation. Estève, "Étude critique des phénomènes de syncrétisme," 444; see note 54.

[58] [V] *jayantrapuranāmādau chpārransīti tataḥ param / deśas tatra sthitas tāyī śrīsamantraprabheśvaraḥ //* [VI] *saiva vauddhabhayaṃ hatvā kamvuje buddhaśāsanam / cakāra dṛḍham adyāpi tan namāni punaḥ punaḥ //*. Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 12, line 9-12.

[59] Ibid., 12, line 16, verse VIII.

for Buddhists.[60] K. 1158 presents a strictly Buddhist perspective of K.J. Chpār Ransi's religious role, in which the god is not compared to K.J. Liṅgapura, associated with Śiva, or placed in any position that would diminish it relative to other gods. For Buddhists, K.J. Chpār Ransi was *their* Cambodian god—their most prominent god of place. K. 1158 gives us further proof of the eminence of this deity's shrine in its alternative or prior name: Jayantapura. It is very possible that this place-name appears in the 10th century inscription K. 266 from Bat Chum, which states that Rajendravarman's minister Sri Kavīndrārimathana erected a statue of the Buddha in Jayantadeśa ("the country of Jayanta") in 946 CE.[61] George Cœdès suggests that this Buddhist "country" of Jayanta also appears in the late 12th century Preah Khan inscription during the reign of Jayavarman VII. "Śrī Jayantapura" is one of three locations in which Jayavarman VII established "the Three Jewels"—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha—probably a monastic community dedicated to comprehensive Buddhist worship.[62] Cœdès suggests that this Jayantapura and the Buddhist 10th century Jayantadeśa are one and the same.[63] The king also erected one of 23 replica forms of a Buddhist deity Jayabuddhamahānātha in "Śrī Jayantanagarī," which Cœdès also identifies with Jayantapura and Jayantadeśa.[64] If, as Cœdès believed, these place-names beginning with Jayanta- all indicate the same Buddhist city or shrine, if that city also corresponds to Chpār Ransi, it would suggest that Chpār Ransi/Jayantapura/Jayantadeśa was Cambodia's main Buddhist center from at least the mid-10th century until the early 13th century, and that the site was explicitly patronized and perhaps significantly expanded during the reign of Jayavarman VII.

In spite of the consistent importance of the Buddhists' patron deity, and however they might have believed in the superiority of their community, there is little indication that Buddhists were major political players until the mid-12th century—or at least the intact inscriptions fail to provide evidence of any early 12th century shift in Buddhists' favor. Nevertheless, it is likely that by this time the community was growing quickly, setting the stage for the remarkable pattern of Buddhist patronage that would characterize the Cambodian polity from the late 12th century onward. A possible sign of this transition is seen in an inscribed bronze vessel, unfortunately of unknown provenance, that was offered by the enigmatic king Tribhuvanādityavarman to "K.J. Chpar Ransi" in 1168 CE.[65] Not enough is known about this king to ascertain the significance of his donation to the Buddhist deity. However, we know that the name "Tribhuvanāditya" is a title characteristic of the

[60] Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Śrīghana," 73.

[61] Cœdès, "Les inscriptions de Bat Cum," 240, verse XX.

[62] Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," *BEFEO* XLI (1941), 279, lines 66-67, verses CXIV and CXV;

[63] Ibid., 295, n. 6.

[64] Ibid., 295, n. 10.

[65] See Estève, 435, following the edition of Dominique Soutif.

contemporary kings of the Theravada Buddhist dynasty of Pagan Burma,[66] and there is now evidence that this so-called usurper came from Lavapura (or: Lavodāya),[67] a polity on Cambodia's western frontier with a local history of (Mon) Buddhism. In any event, when the transition towards polity-wide Buddhist kingship occurred in the late 12th century, K.J. Chpār Ransi seems to have taken on a more central role in the religion of the state.

There is no question that the reign of Jayavarman VII, beginning in the year 1182 CE, signaled a novel phase in Buddhist patronage, and it seems likely that the cult of K.J. Chpār Ransi would have contributed to this development. I have cited evidence that Chpār Ransi was also known as Jayantapura, and that Jayavarman VII, according to the Preah Khan inscription, established a Buddhist foundation (or expanded a preexisting one) at a place of this same name. Curiously, the Preah Khan inscription never explicitly mentions K.J Chpār Ransi. It states that in the month of Phālguna several prominent deities were brought to the temple of Preah Khan, including the Buddhist deities Śrī Vīraśakti (Wat Nokor in Kampong Cham) and Vimāya (Phimai in Northeast Thailand), as well as the famous Hindu gods Bhadreśvara (Wat Phu), Cāmpeśvara, and Pṛthuśaileśvara (Phnom Rung in Northeast Thailand).[68] Considering that Chpār Ransi was for the Buddhist community apparently more important than the impressive temple of Phimai for much of the Angkorian period, and that Chpār Ransi was sometimes listed alongside Bhadreśvara and Cāmpeśvara in something like a Hindu-Buddhist triad, its omission in a passage of an emphatically Buddhist inscription seems peculiar.[69]

Though K.J. Chpār Ransi is noticeably absent in George Cœdès' early translations of Jayavarman VII's inscriptions, a retranslation of one key passage in the Ta Prohm inscription

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[66] The title was borne by the Pagan king Kyanzittha (c. 1086-c. 1112) and his dynastic successors. Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés*, 286.

[67] For a full discussion of the relevant passage in one of the Prasat Chrung inscriptions, with its modified transcription, see chapter 3.

[68] Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 281-282 and 298-299, face D, lines 38-40, verses CLVIII-CLX.

[69] One possibility is that K.J. Chpār Ransi is identified in the Preah Khan inscription but with another name, Prācyamunīndra or "Lord Buddha of the East," which is the first god featured in the inscription's list of visiting deities. Ibid., 281, line 38. This same "Buddha of the East" (Pūrvatathāgata) is also the first deity mentioned among a similar list of prominent deities in the Phimeanakas inscription (K. 485) of the same time period; see Cœdès, *IC* II, pages 171 and 178, face D, line 6, verse LXXXI. If the "Buddha of the East" was an alternative title of K.J. Chpār Ransi, its name may simply indicate the god's location in relation to Angkor, i.e., on the eastern frontier. However, as Cœdès suggests, "Buddha of the East" may be the name of Jayavarman VII's temple of Banteay Kdei to the immediate southeast of Ta Prohm. Cœdès points to the fact that the "Buddha of the East" is mentioned alongside Śrī Jayarājacūḍāmani, the principal deity of Ta Prohm, in both the Preah Khan and Phimeanakas inscriptions. This suggests that the "Buddha of the East" was closely associated with and perhaps in the immediate vicinity of Ta Prohm, which would point to Banteay Kdei—a temple that gives no indication that it was the shrine of K.J. Chpār Ransi—as the most obvious candidate. Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 298, n. 2.

confirms that K.J. Chpār Ransi held a prominent place in Jayavarman VII's religious regime.[70] The inscription suggests that K.J. Chpār Ransi was uniquely featured in the celebration at Ta Prohm, the royal monastery (*rājavihāra*) at Angkor, of the vernal equinox or the "spring festival" (*suvasantotsavavidhi*). If contemporary Cambodian religious practice is an appropriate measure, this festival, ushering in the solar New Year, was perhaps the most important in Cambodia's religious calendar. Though the week-long celebration was supposedly Buddhist, its timing and purpose, and the role it reserved for K.J. Chpār Ransi, were implicitly Śaivite:

> From the 8th day of Caitra until the full moon [on the 15th day] of the same month, at the coming of the Buddha of the Bamboo Grove (i.e., K.J. Chpār Ransi),[71] the rite of the spring festival is performed every year following the tradition (*yathāgamaṃ*) of the consort (*bhagavatī*).[72] Therefore, two pavilions are prepared,[73] full of all the necessary furnishings. On the 14th day, the god (*bhagavān*) should make a *pradakṣina* [i.e., a clockwise circumambulation] three times [around the temple] with the consort, and at the full moon [on the 15th day] with the gods Vīraśakti, etc.[74]

It is immediately apparent that, apart from the name of the deity, nothing in this passage is especially Buddhist. It seems that K.J. Chpār Ransi (i.e., the "Buddha of the Bamboo Grove") was to come to Ta Prohm every year along with his consort (*bhagavatī*), where each was provided with a separate, temporary pavilion in preparation for their joint parade around the temple. This uniting of the male god with his consort for the spring festival suggests a fertility function that may have typically been reserved for the divine coupling of Śiva and his *śakti* of feminine complement Parvati/Durga; this is what seems to be implied by the phrase

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[70] Cœdès, "La stèle de Ta Prohm," *BEFEO* XIII (1913): 44-85.

[71] In Cœdès' original translation, 77, he took this compound to mean "selon la tradition du Jina qui fait la joie des familles." The term *vaṃśārāmajina* has since been identified with the "Jina/Buddha of the Bamboo grove"; see Bhattacharya, *Les Religions Brahmaniques*, 39, n. 8. The locative *āgame* in *vaṃśārāmajināgame* could mean "according to the tradition," as does the compound *yathāgamam* in line 23: "according to the tradition [of the consort]." However, the repetition of this phrase in the same clause reads awkwardly. I suggest that *āgame* means "at the coming" in this context. In any case, if this translation is technically false, the meaning is at least implied: the "Buddha of the Bamboo Grove" (i.e., K.J. Chpār Ransi) came or was brought, along his his consort, to Ta Prohm for the spring festival in the month of Caitra—hence the need to build two temporary pavilions (*yāga*) every year.

[72] In this context, *āgama* probably signifies the *tantra* or ritual manuals describing the procedures for the worship of a god, usually Śiva, and his *śakti*.

[73] For *yāga* as "pavilion," short for *yāgamaṇḍapa*, see Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 296n8.

[74] *caitrāṣṭamyās samārabhya yāvat tatpūrṇamītithiḥ / suvasantotsavavidhir vaṃśārāmajināgame / varṣe varṣe kṛtas tasyā bhagavatyā yathāgamam / pūrṇāṃ sarvopakaraṇais tatra yāgadvayaṃ kṛtaṃ / bhagavān bhagavatyāsau caturddhaśyāṃ pradakṣiṇam / triḥ kuryyāt paurṇamāsyañ ca vīraśaktyādibhis suraiḥ /*. Cœdès, "La stèle de Ta Prohm," 62, lines 21-26, verses LXXXIII-LXXXV. Compare the above translation to Cœdès' translation on 77-78.

"tradition of the goddess/*bhagavatī*." Such local *śakti* goddesses are attested in other contexts in Cambodian epigraphy. Durga, the consort of Śiva, was made manifest in a uniquely Cambodian form, the Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Añ Aṅve Danle.[75] The Śaivite male complement of this goddess was K.J. Liṅgapura, as the two are consistently listed as a pair in the inscriptions. The bringing together of these two deities appears to have constituted one of the seminal ritual occasions in Cambodian religion. At the temple of K.J. Liṅgapura at Wat Phu, a special "seat" was established for the god's consort "K.J. Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Añ when she visited every year."[76] In the 12th century, this "sacred *śakti*" (*vraḥ śakti*) was endowed with various provisions during certain times of year, presumably at times when she was expected to join with her consort at Liṅgapura, including during the new year or equinox (*saṅkrānta*) and throughout the rainy season.[77] There is no record in the inscriptions of K.J. Liṅgapura and K.J. Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Añ traveling to the capital for the vernal equinox. However, there is no more likely divine pair to have been featured in the fertility rites of the Cambodian state before the 12th century.

The appropriation of this ritual fertility function by K.J. Chpār Ransi may partly be attributed to its syncretistic Buddhist and Śaivite character, already implied in the 11th century inscriptions. Nonetheless, the prioritized worship of K.J. Chpār Ransi over K.J. Liṅgapura at the king's central monastery in the late 12th century was certainly unprecedented. It seems unlikely that K.J. Chpār Ransi could have assumed such a position during the reign of a non-Buddhist king. In fact, one wonders if this ritual innovation was not merely novel but alarming to certain Brahmanical families in Cambodia, particularly to those whose property had been set aside for the perennial upkeep of K.J. Liṅgapura over multiple generations. If sectarian tensions between Buddhists and Śaivites had existed previously, the worship of K.J. Chpār Ransi at Angkor and the diminished prestige of K.J. Liṅgapura would have only intensified these tensions.

Locating K.J. Chpār Ransi

Judging solely from the inscriptions, there is good indication that K.J. Chpār Ransi was being aggressively promoted before and during the 12th century. Knowing the location of its shrine would probably confirm the growing stature of this deity and of the Buddhist community during this period. Unfortunately, a location for Chpār Ransi has yet to be

[75] See K. 257S from Prasat Car, Cœdès, *IC* IV, 143, line 30. A statue of Bhagavatī Mahiṣāsura, i.e., Durga, was erected at a certain Gamryāṅ to serve as the "seat" (*āsana*) or proxy representation of Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Añ at (*āy*) Aṅve Danle. Ibid., 147n4.

[76] Cœdès, *IC* V, 290, line 17. For a possible meaning of "seat" (*āsana*) in this context, see the previous note.

[77] Ibid., 290, line 19.

proposed. Until an inscription is found that confirms the location of Chpār Ransi, any identification with a current archaeological site is only hypothetical.

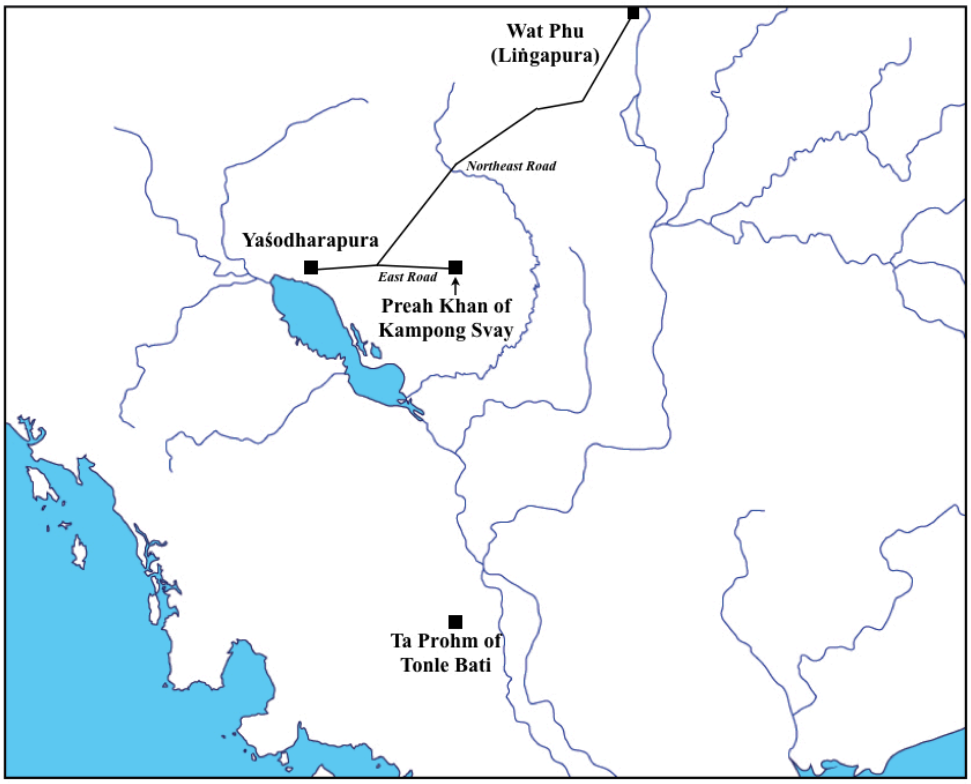

Figure 13. Preah Khan of Kampong Svay, Ta Prohm of Tonle Bati, and Wat Phu (Liṅgapura). *Source:* Map adapted from Daniel Dalet, "d-maps.com," http://dmaps.com/carte.php?lib=cambodia_map&num_car=136&l ag=en (accessed Aug. 10, 2011).

Fortunately, the inscriptions give us enough information about K.J. Chpār Ransi to isolate some basic criteria for a location. I would suggest four basic criteria. First, the temple of K.J. Chpār Ransi should reveal evidence of Tantric Buddhism. This could come in the form of Buddhist inscriptions, which may or may not refer to K.J. Chpār Ransi by name, or by way of statuary or lintels. Secondly, the site should have chronological depth, providing architectural and epigraphic evidence as early as the 10th century (when we know K.J. Chpār Ransi was in existence), if not much earlier, followed by several centuries of use and expansion perhaps extending into the post-Angkorian period.[78] This layered history is precisely what we find at some of the more prominent Angkorian shrines, including K.J. Liṅgapura (Wat Phu, see fig. 13),

[78] The latest reference to Chpār Ransi is probably found in K. 943 from Kampong Cham province. As Julia Estève notes, the form *chpar ranase* in the inscription suggests a Middle Khmer (post-Angkorian) vowel shift. Estève, 440. Otherwise, the date of the inscription is unknown.

Vnaṃ Ruṅ (Phnom Rung), Vimāya (Phimai), Vak Ek (Basak), among others.[79] Thirdly, as a shrine that may have come to rival K.J. Liṅgapura in importance in the 12th century, the temple of K.J. Chpār Ransi should be a major shrine. Perhaps the second most important Buddhist shrine in Cambodia during the 11th-12 centuries was the temple of Phimai, which is now the most impressive Khmer shrine in Northeast Thailand; considering that the inscriptions treat Chpār Ransi as the foremost Buddhist shrine in Cambodia, one imagines that Chpār Ransi should be similarly if not more impressive. Finally, we might expect to find some presence of Jayavarman VII's art, commonly known as the Bayon style, especially if we consider that this king is said to have founded a Buddhist shrine and/or community (the "Three Jewels") at Jayantapura/Chpār Ransi. At Buddhist Phimai we find the famous "statue-portrait" of Jayavarman VII as well as one of this king's hospitals; it seems reasonable to assume that Jayavarman VII also left the mark of his artistic or architectural legacy at Chpār Ransi.

I can think of only two sites that meet the four criteria that I've proposed: Buddhist, chronologically layered, relatively extensive, and with some evidence of Jayavarman VII's Bayon style. The first site is Ta Prohm of Tonle Bati in Takeo Province, southern Cambodia, primarily known for its temple in the Bayon style (see fig. 13).[80] The temple's main shrine is one of the largest in southern Cambodia, with a significant *baray* to the east, but such size is simply relative in a region where Angkorian temples are so few in number; compared to Phimai, Phnom Rung, or Jayavarman VII's major shrines, it is indeed fairly modest. The site's Buddhist identity and its long history are evidenced in an extant 6th century Buddhist inscription and in the Buddhist "tower" of Yeay Peau to the northwest of the main shrine. This solitary tower features a dancing deity, perhaps identifiable as a dancing Viṣṇu,[81] in its western pediment, though images of the seated Buddha found above this deity in the pediment's frame and in the lintel below prove that the tower was Buddhist.[82] There is considerable disagreement as to the tower's date; Claude Jacques points to the seemingly Bapuon style of one of its lintels to suggest the late 11th century,[83] Mireille Bénisti assumes the second half of 12th century (presumably before the Bayon style from which the tower's style diverges considerably),[84] and Olivier Cunin suggests that it was a later (13th century?) addition to the

[79] The inscriptions of Phimai (Vimāya), for example, date from the 8th, 11th, and 12th centuries, and judging from several early lintels now preserved at Phimai's museum, its art history is fairly complex.

[80] For an architectural summary of Ta Prohm of Tonle Bati, see Olivier Cunin, "De Ta Prohm au Bayon (Tome I): Analyse comparative de l'histoire architecturale des principaux monuments du style du Bayon" (PhD diss., l'Institut National Polytechnique de Lorraine, 2004), 174-176.

[81] Mireille Bénisti, "Le fronton de Yeai Pu," *BEFEO* 60 (1973): 79-84.

[82] Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 420.

[83] Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 257.

[84] Bénisti, 79.

Tonle Bati complex.[85] It should be noted that there is little indication of early Angkorian (i.e., 10th and 11th century) construction or worship at the site. A possible exception is a lintel depicting the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, which may be in the Bapuon style, lying on the ground outside the first enclosure of the main shrine.[86] Nonetheless, the relative lack of earlier constructions and the complete absence of Angkorian inscriptions at Ta Prohm of Tonle Bati would seem to undermine its identification with Chpār Ransi, in which we might expect to find considerably more artifacts from the 10th-12th centuries when K.J. Chpār Ransi was the recipient of considerable patronage.

The other and perhaps more promising candidate for Chpār Ransi is the extensive urban complex and temple at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay in southern Preah Vihear Province (see fig. 13). This site has attracted recent attention for its iron slag heaps, perhaps evidence of a local iron industry dependent on the site's relative proximity to the iron-rich mountain of Phnom Dek to the east.[87] Preah Khan of Kampong Svay is also known for its vast outer enclosure measuring 4.5 km^2, its significant main shrine usually identified with the Angkor Wat style, and several shrines and a *baray* in the Bayon style.[88] The Buddhist character of the majority of its art has been recognized since the early 20th century.[89] The collection of Buddhist statuary from Preah Khan of Kampong Svay kept at the Guimet Museum in Paris appears to encompass the Bapuon style,[90] the Angkor Wat style,[91] and the Bayon style.[92] This alone would appear to be evidence that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was a major Buddhist shrine from the 11th century onwards, although it is always possible that Buddhist statues in earlier styles were brought to the site at a later time. Perhaps one could make an argument, based on the art history of the site, that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was originally non-Buddhist, and that it was only converted to Buddhism in the late 12th century. Nonetheless, the early Buddhist identity of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay is almost certainly confirmed by the

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[85] Cunin, 174.

[86] Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 419.

[87] See Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 177-179.

[88] Cunin, 180.

[89] In 1874, Louis Delaporte transported a considerable quantity of sculpture, much of it Buddhist, from Preah Khan of Kampong Svay to Paris, where much of it is now displayed in the Guimet Museum. Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, *L'Art khmer dans les collections du musée Guimet* (Paris: Éditions du la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008), 348.

[90] See Baptiste and Zéphir, 426, item 158 in the catalogue. This is a damaged image of a seated Buddha under a naga. The Buddha's head is clearly in the Bapuon style.

[91] See, for example, item 71 in the catalogue, a remarkably intact Buddha seated under the nāga, ibid., p. 242-245; and item 74, a Buddhist *caitya*, 252-253 .

[92] Item 83 in the Guimet catalogue, the "radiating Lokeśvara," ibid., 282-285. One of the famous "statue-portraits" of Jayavarman VII was also found at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay.

11th century inscription discovered in the shrine to the east of the main shrine, featuring a eulogy of Śiva and the Buddha in a distinctly Tantric context.[93]

A relevant piece of evidence that has not been emphasized until recently is the main shrine's complex architectural history. It is now believed that the original central shrine and perhaps its eastern entry pavilion are in an 11th century style;[94] a damaged inscription probably dating to this general time period was also discovered within the first enclosure.[95] The first enclosure once featured a Bapuon style lintel (perhaps late 11th century) depicting the disrobing of Draupadi,[96] and three of this enclosure's pavilions and the shrines of the outer enclosures are in a style seemingly transitional between the style of Angkor Wat and that of the Bayon. Interestingly, much of the Buddhist iconography of the latter style was at one time deliberately destroyed.[97] Various surrounding monuments, including a shrine with face towers (Prasat Preah Stung) and the vast *baray*, were constructed in the late 12th century or early 13th century Bayon style. Numerous examples of post-Angkorian art have been discovered at the site.[98] In short, few Cambodian temple complexes feature such a richly layered architectural history—a history we would expect in a shrine as prominent as Chpār Ransi. It seems a good possibility that the extensive and historically complex main shrine of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was the site of Chpār Ransi.

One intriguing clue to this identity is found in K. 1158 of Sab Bak, where we learn that the worshippers of K.J. Chpār Ransi were also worshippers of the five Buddhas of Tantric Buddhism.[99] Recently Claude Jacques has proposed that the multiple lintels of five Buddhas in three Angkor Wat style pavilions of the first enclosure at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay reflect this Tantric orientation.[100] In truth, the five-Buddha lintels represent a thorny problem, as several of these lintels appear to have been defaced or carved over at some point in time, and

[93] See K. 161, Louis Finot, "Note d'épigraphie: 7. L'inscription de Preah Khan," *BEFEO* 4 (1904): 673, verses II-III. See also the revision in Estève, 355-357.

[94] Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 181.

[95] K. 970 in Cœdès, *IC* VII, 153.

[96] Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 397; see also Jacques Dumaçay and Pascal Royère, *Cambodian Architecture, Eighth to Thirteenth Centuries*, tr. Michael Smithies (Leiden: Brill, 2001), photograph 44.

[97] See, for example, Baptiste and Zéphir, catalogue item 106 from the second enclosure of the main shrine, 348-350—a fascinating pediment whose image of the Buddha was chiseled out and replaced by a mortise in which another image with a tenon, perhaps made of wood and now deteriorated, was secured.

[98] These include four 15-meter-high standing Buddhas, which have all since collapsed. Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 196.

[99] Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 12.

[100] Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Śrīghana," 75; Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 92.

the original identity of the deities has been questioned.[101] Nonetheless, the row of five deities is a uniquely Buddhist theme seen in other Angkorian Buddhist temples such as Phimai and Preah Khan at Angkor.[102] If it were concluded that these 12th century pavilions originally featured lintels of the five Buddhas, it would support the proposition that the main shrine of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was a Tantric Buddhist monument before the reign of Jayavarman VII. Considering that Jacques holds that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was "entirely Buddhist,"[103] it is surprising that Jacques refrains from identifying Preah Khan of Kampong Svay with Chpār Ransi.

Jacques has instead made a tentative case that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was Jayādityapura, homeland of Jayavarman VII's mother, Jayarājacūḍāmaṇi. Jacques' argument for this identification is based on an assumption that Jayarājacūḍāmaṇi's father, a certain "king" Harṣavarman, was the king of Jayādityapura.[104] For Jacques Jayādityapura should reveal evidence that it was the center of a separate kingdom before the late 12th century, by which time it was incorporated into greater Cambodia and became something like a secondary capital of Jayavarman VII's empire. The stela of Prasat Tor (K. 692) relates that a certain Sūryasūri was chief of the Jayavarman VII's magistrates in Jayādityapura, which implies that the city was an important administrative center by the late 12th century.[105] Moreover, recent archaeological surveys of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay has revealed large heaps of iron slag,[106] suggesting that the city, positioned near Cambodia's major iron source at Phnom Dek, was perhaps at one time a smelting center capable of asserting a measure of economic, and perhaps political, autonomy from the Angkorian center. Because the Kuoy, an ethnic minority in Preah Vihear province, have traditionally been Cambodia's iron workers, Jacques hypothesizes that before the 12th century Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was a semi-autonomous Kuoy polity called Jayādityapura, sustained by a Kuoy monopoly on the region's iron production.[107]

Though Jacques' hypothesis on the identity of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay is intriguing, it remains far from convincing. There is no evidence, for example, that Jayādityapura was an autonomous polity governed by an otherwise unknown King Harṣavarman in the early 12th century. In the first place, Jayavarman VII's genealogy never states that Harṣavarman was "king of Jayādityapura"; it only gives him the title of "king"

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[101] In the early 20th century, Aymonier believed that these Buddhas had been carved over previously existing Brahmanical deities. Aymonier, *Le Cambodge* I, 437.

[102] Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Śrīghana," 75.

[103] Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture," 32.

[104] Ibid., 31.

[105] K. 692, in Cœdès, *IC* I, 238, lines 31-32, verse LXI.

[106] Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 179.

[107] Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture," 32-33.

(*śrīharṣavarmmanṛpatir*), which may simply be an example of the posthumous upgrading of the title of a living king's ancestor.[108] Moreover, if Jayādityapura was a powerful independent polity and the site of the major Buddhist shrine at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay, it is curious that we find no mention of the city or its relationship to Buddhism in the epigraphy before the reign of Jayavarman VII. The connection between a politicized Kuoy community and an autonomous Jayādityapura is especially doubtful. Though it is possible that the Kuoy have lived in the vicinity of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay since the Angkorian period, it is quite another matter to assert that the Kuoy were the unique masters of their political fortune at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay. All the lintels from the main shrine of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay from the 11th century onward suggest the influence of the royal court at Angkor. The inscription of the small shrine to the immediate east of the main shrine eulogizes the early 11th century king Suryavarman I. Jacques himself admits that there is no epigraphic evidence for an autonomous Kuoy polity governed by a non-Khmer elite.[109] Imagining the pre-modern Kuoy as independent political rivals with the Khmers of Angkor is to suggest that Angkorian Cambodia had little real exploitative capacity during its prime, an assumption that is contradicted by the epigraphic evidence of rapid state outreach and centralization throughout Cambodia after the 9th century.[110] Finally, evidence of slag heaps does not prove that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was a major industrial center populated by ethnic Kuoys during the Angkorian period. Archaeologists have yet to date a slag heap there to Angkorian times, and even if they did, the slag heaps are less impressive than those found to the east near Phnom Dek, the source of the region's iron ore and likely the real center of early Kuoy iron working.[111]

Of course, Jacques may be right that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was an urban site of some economic importance, and not just the site of a major temple, in the Angkorian period. Mitch Hendrickson has observed that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay lacks a "natural religious resource" such as a distinctive mountain or water source.[112] Preah Khan of Kampong Svay does, however, have the advantage of being positioned between the iron source at Phnom Dek and

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[108] Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 272, line 20, verse X.

[109] "Unfortunately, the Kuay themselves have left no inscriptions. . ." Jacques, "The Historical Development of Khmer Culture," 32.

[110] On evidence of royal involvement in the settlement of Cambodia's frontier regions in the 10th-11th centuries, see Eileen Lustig, Damian Evans, and Ngaire Richards, "Words across Space and Time: An Analysis of Lexical Items in Khmer Inscriptions, Sixth-Fourteenth Centuries C.E.," *JSEAS* 38, no. 1 (Feb 2007): 25-26.

[111] Mitch Hendrickson, pers. comm., Sept. 28, 2010.

[112] Hendrickson notes that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay is practically situated on this river to facilitate the transportation of ores; Phnom Dek to the east, on the other hand, lacks immediate access to a water route. Hendrickson, "Arteries of Empire: An operational study of transport and communication in Angkorian Southeast Asia, 9th to 15th centuries CE" (PhD diss., 2007), 248.

Angkor, and it may have originally facilitated the transportation of ore either overland or down the Stung Stoung River towards the Tonle Sap Lake.[113] Nevertheless, even if an economically strategic city at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay preceded the religious sanctuary, the city's resources could have eventually become both economic and religious. The city could have also become a destination for reasons other than trade—particularly if its shrine housed the prestigious Buddhist deity K.J. Chpār Ransi, named after the famous monastery "Bamboo Grove" (Veṇuvana) in India. If the identification of Preah Khan of Kampong Svay with Chpār Ransi is correct, the city would have attracted religious pilgrims regardless of the city's otherwise economic role in the region.

In any case, there is little question that Preah Khan of Kampong Svay was, especially after the 12th century, a major pilgrimage destination. The road to the temple from Angkor was graced with impressive laterite bridges, artificial water features, and a number of shrines (see fig. 13). It is likely, as Hendickson has indicated, that the shrines along this route, like the road itself, served multiple purposes, the accommodation of pilgrims being one of them.[114] The fairly evenly spaced shrines along the highway between Angkor and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay have been called *temples d'étape* or "staging-post shrines." Groslier included in his list of *temples d'étape* a majority of the shrines along the route, including Chau Say Tevoda and Thommonon to the immediate east of the palace and Chau Srei Vibol between Angkor and Beng Mealea, but excluding Jayavarman VII's distinctive "fire shrines" between Beng Mealea and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay.[115] A certain type of *temple d'étape*, usually associated with the Angkor Wat style but not yet definitely dated,[116] has also been identified, having a plan shared by five temples located, like Jayavarman VII's fire shrines, between Beng Mealea and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay.[117] Taking the *temples d'étape* in their broadest sense as any shrine along this route, it is clear that they were constructed over the course of at least two centuries.[118] Of course, this is not only an indication of a long-established practical artery of exchange, with staged villages serving a mobile population and a rigorous commerce, but of a pilgrimage route. Jacques has argued convincingly that the five *gîtes d'étape* or "houses for fire" between Beng Mealea and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay were not practical rest stops for travelers, though these likely existed in perishable material nearby, but were rather shelters

[113] Hendrickson, 247.

[114] Ibid., 144.

[115] B. P. Groslier, "Inscriptions du Bayon," in *Le Bayon, histoire architectural du temple & Inscriptions du Bayon*, Jacques Dumarçay and B. P. Groslier (Memoires archéologiques de l'EFEO 3 (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1973), 118.

[116] Hendrickson, 205.

[117] These temples are, from west to east, Prasat Chrei, Prasat Teap Chey II, Prasat Pram, Prasat Sup Tiep B, and Prasat Chambok. Ibid., 145. For the common plan of these shrines, see Cunin, 444.

[118] Cunin, 444.

for the king's sacred fire when the king progressed between his capital and the outer cities in his empire.[119] As these stone "houses for fire" were called "pavilions" (Old Khmer: *vanlā*), they were probably also stone versions of the royal tent or traveling pavilion designed in this case to house, like all stone temples, not a person (i.e., the king) but a god.[120] It seems reasonable to assume that one purpose of these staged shrines was to accommodate traveling deities being carried to and from the capital during major religious festivals. This may have been the way that K.J. Chpār Ransi traveled to Ta Prohm for the spring festival, and it may have also been the path taken by pilgrims visiting K.J. Chpār Ransi at other times during the year.

We can conclude that a major Buddhist shrine existed at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay before the reign of the Buddhist king Jayavarman VII, and pilgrims frequenting this shrine traveled along a planned pilgrimage route between the city and the royal capital. As there are few if any alternative candidates for major Buddhist temples in Angkorian Cambodia before the late 12th century, I tentatively propose that we identity Preah Khan of Kampong Svay with the Buddhist city of Jayantapura and its monastery or shrine called Chpār Ransi. If this were the case, the shrine and city of Chpār Ransi may have rivaled the largest shrines, Brahmanical or otherwise, in late Angkorian Cambodia.

The Quest to Belong

The gradual rise of K.J. Chpār Ransi at the relative expense of the traditional Brahmanical and local pantheon likely anticipated the success of Buddhist politics in the late 12th century reign of Jayavarman VII. Considering that Jayavarman VII's religious projects were primarily Buddhist in nature, and that other Buddhist deities like Vīraśakti and K.J. Vimāya seem to crowd out K.J. Liṅgapura in the king's inscriptions,[121] the rise of the Buddhist K.J. Chpār Ransi may not have been deemed a politically innocent development. It may have even contributed to the conditions that provoked the large-scale backlash against Buddhism, as evidenced by the iconoclasm of Buddhist images after Jayavarman VII's reign. What this suggests is that Buddhists in Angkorian Cambodia were not content to merely be tokens of the kingdom's diversity or of the king's magnanimity. The rise of an explicitly Buddhist kingship during Jayavarman VII's reign is evidence enough that a politicized Buddhism eventually won its day. However, what is typically not acknowledged is that this politicization, resulting in real sectarian conflict, had a centuries-long history.

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[119] Jacques and Lafond, *The Khmer Empire*, 263.

[120] K. 974, Cœdès, *IC* VII, 155. In this Jayavarman VII inscription (dated 1192 CE) written on a vase, which was intended as a gift to one of these "houses of fire" in Surin province, the shrine is called "the sacred fire of the holy pavilion at Thmo Yol" (*vraḥ vleṅ vraḥ vanlā nā thmo yol*).

[121] See Cœdès, "La stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor," 281-282 and 298-299, face D, lines 38-40, verses CLVIII-CLX.

It would appear that by the 10th century Buddhists were fully aware of the potential for sectarian antagonism, and the effort to normalize Buddhism in Cambodia may have been a response to this ever-present threat. This effort did little to discourage the opposition, however; it fact, it was likely intended to do the opposite. The localization or "Cambodianization" of Buddhism was not a process through which Buddhists became less Buddhist but was, in the words of K. 1158, a way of "strengthening Buddhism" and marginalizing its protractors.[122] The Buddhist community's self-promotion in the Angkorian period underlines the dependence of all religious sects on sustained royal patronage of their deities and on royal protection of territorial assets from local antagonists and regional competitors. Ironically, those opposed to the Buddhist community may have felt more insecure about the aggressively syncretistic character of Buddhism, which created competition for royal patronage, than about the Buddhist community's perceived otherness or insularity.

Buddhism in the Angkorian period (and before the wholesale adoption of Theravada Buddhism after the 14th century) was therefore the focus of a long-term domestic conflict that underscores the tension between autonomy and belonging in the early Cambodian imagination. The Cambodian Buddhist community was concerned with becoming more religiously and politically mainstream as a means to protect its own interests. Rather than positioning their religion as a marginal sect outside Cambodia's religious experience and defined by a constant inflow of "foreign" Mahayana and Tantric ideas, Buddhists drew on a preexisting complex of ideas about power and space—what I have called the political imagination—to write themselves into the Cambodian experience.

[122] Chirapat Prapapandvidya, 12, line 12.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In this dissertation I have argued that subjects of the early Cambodian polity embraced the ideal of an autonomous, horizontal political community. The culture of this community was in many ways inconsistent with a certain cosmological model that is generally believed to have shaped the political world of Sanskritized South and Southeast Asia before the age of ideological nationalism. This cosmological model assumes that polities sought to imitate the divine by embracing a style of transcendent, universalistic kingship. While this model is widely applicable to the political cultures of early Southeast Asia and is accurate to a point for Angkorian Cambodia, it also tends to obscure several unique indices of early Cambodian political belonging such as territoriality, an idea of extended kinship or ethnicity, and a domestic mythos or local historical imagination. I have suggested that much of what the cosmological model fails to predict in the Cambodian context can be explained with reference to an alternative heuristic framework, that of the "nation." As an extensive "territorial community of nativity,"[1] Angkorian Cambodia was united as much by its people's imagined primordial attachments to the land and to each other as by a common allegiance to a king. I have attempted to demonstrate that Cambodian politics as it played out in various local contexts cannot be accurately assessed without coming to terms with the political community's underlying "national" identity.

The central claim of this dissertation is that Cambodia or Kambujadeśa, "the land of the descendants of Kambu," was at its conceptual core an ethnic polity. In Chapter Two, I explained how the ideal of a politicized ethnic community appeared in the 8th or 9th century, replacing a pre-Angkorian vision of multiple rival royal centers. At this time the idea of a territorial Cambodia became linked by way of popular etymology to a notion of descent from the royal line of Kambu and Mera. This form of identity was subsequently projected onto Cambodia's main regional rival, the political constellation to the east called Champa (*campāpura*), in expressly ethnic terms: the Chams (*cāmpa*, literally "those belonging to Campā) or the *bhṛguja* ("the descendants of Bhṛgu"). In Chapter Three, I argued that ethnic differentiation was less politically relevant on Cambodia's western frontier because of the successful subjugation of the Mon (*rāmaṇya*) polities in that region after the 10th century and the establishment of a long-term imperial presence in Lopburi. Nonetheless, Cambodia's vision of its imperial role in the west never supplanted the polity's core ethnic identity; in fact, the eventual politicization of the "Siamese" (*syāṃ*) in this zone after the 12th century may have recreated the conditions of ethnic antagonism that existed on Cambodia's eastern frontier

[1] Grosby, *Nationalism*, 7.

with the Chams. The presence of a perceived ethnic threat on the frontier likely affirmed Cambodia's ideal of bounded sovereignty, an ideal that was inextricably tied to the understanding of Cambodia as a space of common nativity—a "national" territory.

The image of Cambodia as a united and bounded space was preserved and publicized in myths that narrated the polity's illustrious beginnings. Unfortunately, the nature of the epigraphic corpus prevents us from recovering anything more than a few fragments of the country's homegrown mythology. Nonetheless, I have attempted to reconstruct two political foundation myths that appear to have been prevalent in the 11th century. In Chapter Four, I discussed the implications of the polity-wide myth of Jayavarman III's elephant hunt, an event which I believe symbolized in Cambodian memory the process of integrating and civilizing the country's outer provinces early in the Angkorian period. Chapter Five addresses the ideal of Cambodian autonomy as expressed in the myth of independence from Javā. The three accounts of this myth suggest that Cambodian autonomy was achieved through a series of acts of consecration and worship at sacred sites around the country. The link between autonomy and sacrality lends support to Ian Mabbett's opinion that "for the Khmers themselves it was the powerful spiritual energies of the great gods that made them, in any practical sense, one.[2] Khmers apparently believed that these same "energies," or *siddhi*, also enabled their united Khmer Country (*sruk khmer*) to be territorially distinct.

My use of the term "territory" to describe a conceptually integrated and differentiated early Cambodian space may elicit certain objections. The potential for disagreement lies in how "territory" is to be defined. If a territory can only mean the sovereign space of the modern nation-state, outlined with clear-cut, fortified boundaries between the state's interior and its nation-state neighbors and incorporating a people who are completely subject to the state's legal jurisdiction, then Angkorian Cambodia was not in this sense territorial. However, I define territory simply as a limited space of ownership or belonging. As it was explicitly understood in the 10th century that the authority of Cambodia's kings was limited in space by Champa and China, Cambodia can be said to have had a distinct territorial identity regardless of whether its borders with these polities were clearly drawn or consistently defended. To some, the word territory may lack utility not because Cambodia was unbounded but because the term privileges a minor and anachronistically secular kind of spatial perception over a supposedly more applicable religious alternative—one which envisions a diagram of sacred pilgrimage sites encircling a royal center. This notion of cosmological space clearly shaped perceptions of Cambodian belonging in the Angkorian period, and in Chapter Six I suggested that Buddhists, in seeking to affirm their place in the Cambodian community, positioned their primary deity within this kind of sacred space. However, the authority of royal capitals and the

[2] Mabbett and Chandler, *The Khmers*, 93.

power of religious pilgrimage sites to shape local notion of space did not preclude the importance of political territoriality, just as the boundedness of modern Cambodia does not trump the significance of such sacred sites as Wat Phnom or Angkor Wat in modern national consciousness. Territoriality is a perennial feature of human culture and especially of political culture;[3] in Angkorian Cambodia, it was but one unifying element of the country's political worldview.

The term ethnicity when applied to an early Cambodian context faces a similar critique. How can Cambodia be called an "ethnic polity" when its authority in the 11th century extended to the Menam Basin, a region of likely Mon ethnicity? Are not ethnic polities ethnically homogenous? Would it not be more accurate to speak of a "polyethnic" Cambodian Empire? Certainly, in practical terms 11th and 12th century Cambodia governed, as did Song China, a regional empire of diverse ethnicity, particularly on its western frontier but also within its core region where hill tribes and other minorities lived in immediate proximity to Khmers. However, there is no indication that Cambodia's empire undermined the perceived centrality of the Khmer ethnic core, even in situations where Khmerness constituted a thin elite social stratum. After all, Angkorian Cambodia was not modeled after the "Middle Kingdom," a name that signified in pre-modern China not an ethnic community but a tradition of imperial rule. China was not even in its own terms "Chinese," nor was it essentially Han in ethnicity.[4] Angkorian Cambodia, on the other hand, was "the land of the descendants of Kambu." It was by its own definition a territory belonging to an extended ethnic family.

The idea of a Khmer ethnic community that was native to a named political territory—in my opinion a distinctly "national" idea—was largely a local innovation rather than the result of cultural or ideological dissemination. This is not to suggest that Cambodian political culture was hermetic. On the one hand, we cannot underestimate the influence of Indic civilization which furnished most of the vocabulary of Cambodian statecraft (including the individual elements of the name Kambujadeśa). On the other hand, Sheldon Pollock claims to find in the other major political and literary traditions influenced by Sanskrit "no explicit discourses whatever" on ethnicity or nationality.[5] Cambodia as a "national" concept seems to have come into existence independently and without any regional precedent in the late 8th century, perhaps two centuries after the first pre-Angkorian Sanskrit inscriptions appeared. That this innovation occurred at around the same time as the unification of the regions to the

[3] Grosby, *Biblical Ideas*, 191-192.

[4] Prasenjit Duara suggests that a sense of ethnic Han community was cultivated during the 12th century Jin invasion of the northern Song. Duara, 786. Patterns of ethnic coherence did not, however, translate into a named ethnic polity.

[5] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 476.

north and south of the Dangrek Range, and contemporary with the establishment of powerful capitals at or near Angkor, is hardly coincidence. Victor Lieberman has argued that the politicization of Burman ethnicity in the early 19th century occurred during a period of administrative expansion and centralization.[6] Though Lieberman opines that it was relatively "minimal," a similarly simultaneous standardization of administration, culture, and ethnicity occurred in early Angkorian Cambodia.[7] Cambodian identity was in large part the product of this process of integration.

Just as integration in the Angkorian period shaped and preserved a particular Cambodian identity, the polity's post-Angkorian disintegration likely coincided with the loss or forgetting of this identity. When the fundamental shift in Cambodia's political imagination actually occurred is debatable. While it would be convenient if we could prove that the political identity that I have described ceased to exist at the moment of Angkor's fall to Ayutthaya in the early 15th century, source material for that period is almost entirely lacking. No doubt aspects of the Angkorian period political imagination survived. Ashley Thompson argues for a basic continuity in the conception of Cambodia's sacred space between the Brahmanical Angkorian period and the Theravada Buddhist middle (i.e, post-Angkorian) period.[8] David Chandler has suggested that Cambodia's memory of its Angkorian period kings, and by implication its founding myths and early territorial visions, may have survived into the late 16th century when the Siamese destruction of Longvek effectively ended most narrative traditions continuous with Angkor.[9] Nonetheless, it is reasonably safe to say that Cambodian memory and identity after Angkor and especially after the 16th century were distinct from their Angkorian antecedents. Though the name of the country, Kambujā, remained the same, its basic meaning ("descended from Kambu"), and hence its explicitly ethnic connotations, was eventually forgotten. The myth of independence from Javā and any other historical traditions of Cambodian beginnings were likewise lost. The country's territorial identity, which was already in flux in the Angkorian period, was almost unrecognizable after the 16th century as

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[6] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels, Vol. I*, 38.

[7] Ibid.

[8] See Ashley Thompson, "The Ancestral Cult in Transition: Reflections on Spatial Organization in Cambodia's early Theravāda Complex," in *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1996: Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Leiden, 2-6 September 1996*, ed. Marijke J. Klokke and Thomas de Brujin (Hull: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull, 1998), 273-274.

[9] David Chandler, "Explanations for Angkor's Demise: Collapse or Transmutation?," a paper presented at the University of California, Berkeley, Nov. 2008, unpublished. A version of this paper was published as David Chandler, "Erklärungen für Angkors Niedergang: Zusammenbruch oder Wandel?" in *Die Ursprünge der modernen Welt — Geschichte im wissenschaftlichen Vergleich*, ed. James A. Robinson and Klaus Wiegandt (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2009), 327-374.

Champa succumbed to Vietnam, Siam took hold of the western frontier, and Lao polities appeared to the north.

Most importantly, post-Angkorian Cambodia, like Siam and other Tai polities, embraced a (Theravada) Buddhist identity that made "religion" (*sāsana)*, rather than ethnicity, the standard of allegiance. This *sāsana* identity, having developed in the Siṅhala Buddhist context before being transplanted to the post-Angkorian mainland, may have superficially resembled an ethnic identity as it cast "hunters" (*vaddha*) or those who were not lowland agriculturalists—whether the "aborigines" of Sri Lanka or the hill peoples of Cambodia—as the essential other.[10] The *sāsana* identity also shaped Cambodian political identity, as can be seen in the word's unique permutations in post-Angkorian Khmer where, for example, the phrase *leṅ sāsn* ("released from the *sāsana*") was used in a 19th century chronicle to mean "politically exiled."[11] The political other of Siṅhala historical consciousness—the Tamils—likewise entered into the political imagination of post-Angkorian Cambodia and other Southeast Asian kingdoms where the *damila/dmil/thmil* (Tamils) came to represent anyone who opposed the legitimate Buddhist king (*dhammika* or *dhmik)*.[12] In none of these conceptions of difference, however, was ethnicity in the sense of fictive kinship a pronounced feature. I do not claim that Khmerness itself was insignificant in Theravada Buddhist Cambodia; after all, the Angkorian political term *sruk khmer*, "Khmer Country," has survived to the present. However, it is possible that words like *khmer* and *kambujā* came to denote for many Khmers in the post-Angkorian period a particular Buddhist political community rather than a political community of primordial descent.

Therefore, if certain Cambodian political traditions (e.g., Brahmanical court culture) continued after the post-Angkorian transition, the same cannot be said with any certainty of Angkorian Cambodia's identity as a "territorial community of nativity." Even while arguing on behalf of the nation as a relevant analytic tool for a certain pre-modern political context, this dissertation has refrained from speaking of a millennium-long Cambodian "national" tradition.

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[10] Garanath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity: The Premodern and Pre-Colonial Formations* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2002), 32.

[11] The term is used in the context of a legend to describe the banishment of a prince who, because he was disloyal to his father the king, was captured, had his hair cut off, and was chased "into the forest" with his family where he found refuge in Champa. See *Baṅsāvatār Ekasār Sitpur* (Phnom Penh: Samāgaṃ Samṭec Juon Nāth, 1975), 6. This chronicle, otherwise called Vatt Sitpur or P48 in the EFEO inventory, was composed in 1878 by prince Nupparot, son of king Ang Duong. See Khin Sok, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge* (de Bana Yat à la prise de Lanvaek) (Paris: EFEO, 1988), 11-13.

[12] The idea of the *thmil* was evoked during General Lon Nol's mystical Buddhist Khmer "Republic" in the early 1970s to stigmatize the Vietnamese, Catholics, and communists. Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 165.

The only clear bridge between modern Cambodian national identity, which is a combined product of the country's late pre-colonial imagination and its confrontation with ideological nationalism in the French colonial context, and its Angkorian counterpart, which reflects the early Cambodian elites' novel sensation of their primordial kinship and territorial communion, is the name Cambodia (Kambujadeśa or Kambujā) itself. Though similar in their "national" form, the two Cambodian identities represent different historical moments, and thus they each require a separate historical interpretation.

In the final analysis every historical polity, modern or otherwise, was a "felt community" of some kind.[13] It is the task of the cultural historian to describe the variety of feelings or attachments experienced by the members of a given political community. Before the era of ideological nationalism, those attachments may have been extremely attenuated in situations where the kingdom was largely symbolic—as in Clifford Geertz's "theatre state"—or divested of practical authority. Perhaps in some cases religion conveyed the only salient vision of community beyond the immediate family. In places like Angkorian Cambodia, however, being subject to a king and being part of a religious community were not the only sources of political attachment. Like the home or the ancestral village, the extensive polity in the pre-modern world could become a place of generation, inheritance, and belonging.

[13] Smith, *Cultural Foundations*, 23.

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