

A legend concerning Jayavarman II

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First presented at EFEO Paris in September 2004, since revised; subject to further revision

In his publication of one of the inscriptions which will be studied here, we find one of the late and unwisely neglected opinions of Coedès, written long after his histories had been set in stone, as it were.¹ "For Angkorean epigraphy ... [the reigns] of Jayavarman II and his son ... make up a semi-legendary period, to which the great religious families attached the origins of their religious functions and the land owners the origins of their rights to property"

This was in reference to inscription K956, not published until 1964, and which no doubt surprised Coedès with its claim to a ceremony, different from that of Sdok Kak Thom, to protect Cambodia from Java. Although having recognized the possibility of folk legend creeping into the story of Jayavarman II, Coedès obviously did not want to relegate that entire scenario to legend, and concluded that there must really have been two such events, perhaps even more, and that the ceremony mentioned in K956 would have preceded that described in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription. This last detail must have been because K956 is in the South, and Coedès was assuming that Jayavarman would have reached that area earlier on his return from Java.

This is not the only example of a radical change in Coedès' opinions. Throughout his *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, there is new information which forces modifications of subjects treated in his *États hindouisés*, first written under a different title in 1944, and with only very minor changes in detail thereafter (in 1948, 1964, 1968 (English)). Near the end of his life he even doubted the Sdok Kak Thom story of the establishment of the *kamraten jagat ta rāja*, for him *devarāja*, by Jayavarman II, attributing it rather to Jayavarman IV.² If so, it would mean that much of the early part of Sdok Kak Thom was pure fiction.

1. Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* VII, 129, "Dalle de Vat Samron". Original French: "Pour l'épigraphie angkoriennne... [les regnes] de Jayavarman II et son fils... constituent une époque semi-légendaire, à laquelle les grandes familles religieuses font remonter l'origine de leur sacerdoce, et les propriétaires de biens fonciers l'origine de leurs titres de propriété"

2. G[eorge] Coedès, 1970. "Le véritable fondateur du culte de la royauté divine au Cambodge." In *R.C. Majumdar Felicitation Volume*. Ed. by Himansu Bhusan Sarkar. Calcutta: Firma KL. Mukhopadhyay.

It should come as no surprise that elements of legend have been absorbed into the biography of a founder from whose lifetime no detailed records are extant. Even his posthumous name, *parameśvara*, so different from all Cambodian posthumous names known from subsequent contemporary records, seems suspect, as it is also found as the name of semi-mythical founders in Malacca and Luang Prabang.³

My purpose here will be to argue that Cœdès was more prescient than he himself believed, and that the entire story, that is the stories, now three, of religious acts to protect Cambodia from Java must be considered myths.

The first, and for many years the only, version of the story was that of Sdok Kak Thom (K235), written in 1052 in the reign of Udayādityavarman II, and which says that Jayavarman/*parameśvara* returned from Java to be *kurūṇ* in *nagara* Indrapura. Later, after several moves, he went to Phnom Kulen where he had a ceremony performed to make it impossible for *Kamvujadeśa* to be dependent on Java.

Now there is another inscription, not known to Cœdès, from the same time and not far to the North of the location of Sdok Kak Thom which also speaks of a religious act to protect Cambodia from Java.⁴ This is the inscription of Sab Bak (K1158), dated 1066, also in the reign of Udayādityavarman II. Here, however, there is no mention of Jayavarman II. Instead it says that "nine images of *vraḥ vuddha* Lokeśvara which *kamsteṇ śrī* Satyavarma ... set up in the past on [the mountain] Abhayagiri in order that Java not attack *sruk khmer* had fallen down and *kamrateṇ añ* the *guru* of Dharanindrapura restored them".⁵ This is the first mention of *sruk khmer* in the epigraphy.

The name Satyavarma occurs in one other context, K111, in Sithor, Kompong Cham Province, one hundred years earlier (968), also, like Sab Bak, Buddhist, but because it is in Sanskrit, there are no Khmer rank titles,

³ . 'Bulom/Borom', name of the Lao hero, in some versions written 'bolomensuvan', is *parameśvara*, the posthumous name of Jayavarman II, founder of Angkor, much of whose biography is as vague as that of Khun Bulom. The traditional founder of Malacca was also a foreigner named *parameśvara* who arrived from overseas (Wheatley 1961, pp. 307-08).

⁴ . There is no reason to accept Claude Jacques' s proposal that the inscription of Sab Bak is small enough to have been transported, and that it was probably moved from another location. It is from the same region as Sdok Kak Thom.

⁵ . Chirapat Prapndvidya, "The Sab Bak Inscription Evidence of Early Vajrayana Buddhist Presence in Thailand", *Journal of the Siam Soiciety* Vol. 28, No. 2 (1990), pp. 11-14. In this article 'Dharanindrapura' is treated as a personal name, but I do not think that is correct.

such as *kamsteni*. There too Satyavarma is not a contemporary, but someone of an earlier time. The main figure in K111 is *ācārya* Kīrtipaṇḍita, like Satyavarma (before the discovery of Sab Bak) known only in that inscription, among whose good works (verse XLV), "He set up again the images of Vajrin and Lokeśa, in number more than ten, which had previously been consecrated on a hill by *śrī* Satyavarman, and the thrones of which were broken...".⁶ That is, except for the number of images, he did precisely what the author of Sab Bak claims, although without reference to Java. Satyavarma, already in the 10th century, was a figure of the past, important in the history of Buddhist good works. The only detail in his story similar to that of Jayavarman II is that his act was on a mountain top. The mountain itself, named Abhayagiri in Sab Bak, but unnamed in Sithor, is unknown. The lack of any mention of Java in K111 might indicate that in the 10th century that interpretation of the past had not evolved.

Sab Bak and Sdok Kak Thom together indicate that by late 11th century there were two versions of a story that ceremonies to protect Cambodia from Java had been performed on hilltops--but not the same hilltops, nor by the same persons.

I think a normal scholarly reaction to these two quite different references to protection of Cambodia from Java would be that the story was an 11th-century myth, which the family of Sdok Kak Thom incorporated into their history, but which in Sab Bak, not a family history, was ascribed to an important Buddhist figure of earlier times.

Of course that comparison was never made, because by the time Sab Bak was discovered, interested historians already knew of the third inscription which recorded a ceremony to protect Cambodia from Java, and which attributed its inspiration to Jayavarman II. This is K956, "Dalle de Samrong" in Prey Veng Province which inspired the comments of Cœdès quoted above. Although the ceremony was different from that described in Sdok Kak Thom, the inscription says that Jayavarman ordered Pṛthivīndravarman to perform it to prevent Java from seizing *vrah kamvujadeśa*. Moreover, it was dated provisionally by Cœdès to early 10th century, soon after the reign of Yaśovarman, at a time when there could have been persons who were children or students of the next older generation who might have had direct contact with Jayavarman and his contemporaries. Indeed, this interpretation of K956 complicates and weakens the hypothesis

⁶. Original French: "Il érigea à nouveau les images de Vajrin et de Lokeśa, au nombre de plus de dix, qui avaient été précédemment consacrées sur une colline par *śrī* Satyavarman et dont les trônes étaient brisés...".

presented above that the entire conception of special acts to protect Cambodia from Java was a late (11th century) myth.

Inscription K956, however, is not complete, but is broken at the end and originally continued its story further. There is a fragment numbered K72 which may have been part of the continuation, but it also is not complete, and thus, K956, another family history, could have been longer, extending into later times; and if it really dates from the late 10th-11th centuries, it would fit the hypothesis of a myth about a Javanese threat to Cambodia. An indication that the extant K956 is not the full original text is that beginning with an introductory phrase typical of such texts about 'our ancestor(s)' it does not conclude with a statement about the author(s), but breaks off in the middle of details about relationships among the various *teñ* (female) and *loñ* who claimed descent from Pṛthivīnarendra.

K72 and K956 share a detail, mention of a place named Sandhanipura, found in no other texts, except, written *sāndhanipura*, in the more recently discovered K1238, which, dated 1036 CE, is of the same period as Sdok Kak Thom and Sab Bak, and in which the toponyms seem to indicate an original site in the northwest. There is nothing in it, however, relevant to a legend about Jayavarman II and Java.

K72, as Coedès wrote, is at the earliest from the time of Jayavarman IV because his two predecessors are recorded under their posthumous names.⁷

In the absence of rubbings and clear photos it has not been possible to compare details of script, but at least even poor photos indicate that the script of K956 is consistent with that of Sdok Kak Thom and Sab Bak. Now, through the generosity of the EFEO in Siemreap, in particular Mr. Christophe Pottier, a good rubbing of the stone now in the Angkor Conservation was made on 17 January 2005.

Inscription K956 is also of a type, histories of important families, which was most common, especially when in Khmer, from late 10th to late 11th century (Jayavarman V to Udayadityavarman II), and, as I explained in an earlier study, this type of inscription was probably related to rivalries among the bureaucratic elite which led to the civil war at the beginning of the 11th century.⁸ At that time I counted 17 such inscriptions in both languages, most starting their genealogies with appointment of their ancestors to high office by Jayavarman II or marriage of a female ancestor to

⁷ Coedès, "Inscription de Tûol Pràsât (Romduol), IC VI, p. 114.

⁸ Vickery, "The Reign of Sūryavarman I and Royal Factionalism at Angkor", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, September 1985, 226-244.

him. Interestingly, the most important ancestor in K956, contemporary with Jayavarman II, is Pīthivīnarendra, also important in the family histories recorded in Palhal (K449) and Preah Ngok (K289), both of the 11th century. Concerning style of script Coedès remarked that in K956 there was "unusual amount of incorrection in the orthography of Sanskrit words"; and in K449 "...rather difficult to decipher...The characters have been engraved shallowly in the sandstone without finesse... unbelievable incorrection in the Sanskrit text: the barbarisms are uncountable" Thus, the style of writing in K956 is comparable to that K449.⁹

There are linguistic details in K956 which suggest 10th-11th century. First, the title *kamrateñ kamṭvan añ* is used for a king, presumably in that context Jayavarman II. The title *kamṭvan* otherwise seems to have appeared as a special designation for Sūryavarman I, and it was also used for his son Udayādityavarman in the Sdok Kak Thom text, although, peculiarly, only once (D, line 70) in the six times Udayādityavarman is named. Of over 60 contexts of *kamṭvan* in the Sakamoto index of the Khmer inscriptions published in Coedès' *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, in addition to K956 under discussion, only one is not Sūryavarman, or of his time (K158, dated 1003 in the reign of Jayaviravarman, where it is used retrospectively for Yaśovarman, at the time (1003) when Sūryavarman was also beginning his career). The single exception to this pattern is K958, dated 869/947 where the title *kamṭvan* seems to belong to Rājendravarman, but here too there is some reason to suspect retrospective embellishment. It is therefore possible that its use in K956 was retrospective at a time when the title was common. In order to judge this we must take note of other anomalies in the language of K956 seen as an early 10th-century text.¹⁰

The prominence of a large number of *teñ* and *loñ* is more characteristic of a later time. Although these titles existed from at least the 9th century, they are not so important until well into the 10th century. **NOTE see below**

A more certain indicator of relative date is the high female title *teñ hyaṇi*, given to two women in K956 and to one more in K72. All occurrences

⁹ In K956, "rare incorrection en ce qui concerne l'orthographe des mots sanskrits", "écriture angkorienne cursive, souvent difficile à lire"; K449, "déchiffrement assez pénible. Les caractères ont été gravés peu profondément dans un grès sans finesse ... incroyable incorrection du text sanskrit: les barbarismes ne se comptent pas".

¹⁰ The significance of the title *kamṭvan*, and the reason why it was given special significance by Sūryavarman I, has not been explained. The root of the word is *tvan*, 'grandmother', **understood first of all by Aymonier (???)**, but missed by Coedès until).

of this title in other inscriptions, except one in the reign of Rājendravarman, are of the time of Jayavarman V or later. So is the use of *svāmī* (usually ‘husband’) for ‘wife’, found in both K956 and K72. There are only two other examples of this, in K989 dated 1008, on which Coedès commented (C VII, p. 184, n. 1) and in K521, post-Sūryavarman I.¹¹

Another feature shared by K956 with inscriptions of late 10th century to late 11th century is a tale of Jayavarman III pursuing elephants, found also in three other inscriptions, K175/AD 987, east of Phnom Kulen, K521/post-Sūryavarman I, from Siemreap, and K449/AD 1069.

Although these stories have so far been accepted as factual in the literature, their late date points toward a garbled oral tradition. Even if based ultimately on a true incident, they support a view that K956 belongs to a period when different communities were assimilating the tradition to their own locations, and in the process reworking it. The stories in each case are slightly different. In K956 it says he released a sacred elephant, but with no indication of the purpose; in K449 he released an elephant to choose a new terrain wherever the elephant stopped; in K175 it was explicitly a local tradition among late 10th-century villagers that a certain forest was where Jayavarman III had captured an elephant; and K521 relates another local tradition that after losing an elephant which he had captured Jayavarman III had a dream in which he was told that if he erected a certain image the elephant would be returned—and it was.

I believe there is sufficient evidence to propose that K956 belongs to the period from late Jayavarman V to Udayādityavarman II when two other texts include a story of religious acts to protect Cambodia from Java, one referring it to Jayavarman II and one ignoring him. Moreover, the evidence of the Sithor inscription (K111) which is a precursor of Sab Bak in the same religious tradition of Buddhist images erected on a hill in the past by a certain Satyavarman, but which does not include the tale of protecting Cambodia from Java, is evidence that as late as the beginning of the reign of Jayavarman V that tradition had not yet evolved.

The date AD 802

The date which until recently was been interpreted as the beginning of Jayavarman's reign, *saka* 724/AD 802, is found in six Sanskrit inscriptions, three from the reign of Sūryavarman I (1002-1050), one of Udayādityavarman II (1050-1068), one from the time of Jayavarman V (968-1000), and the oldest set up in the beginning of the 10th century. There

¹¹. Coedès, IC IV, p. 169, note 4

is no date associated with Jayavarman in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription, the standard basis for his biography. These inscriptions, moreover, taken together do not confirm the event which that date is supposed to mark -- Jayavarman's arrival in Angkor from some other place, or his recognition as king of Cambodia, or the year when he moved to Phnom Kulen and there had important ceremonies performed.¹² The inscriptions, in order of date, are K256 (early 10th c.); K339 (Jayavarman V); K598 (928/1006); K278 (929/1007); K382 (969/1047); K289 (988/1066). These inscriptions sometimes just say he was king at that date, not that he had just become king, and in one case that date is associated with his activity on Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kulen).

There are no dates in Sdok Kak Thom, except at the end, the date when it was written. In fact, we do not know what the date 802 means, especially now that we have an inscription (K583) which says *paraméśvara* was king in 790, and there is good evidence to think he was politically active in 770 (K103) and 781 (K134). As Coedès said, "What is not known for certain is whether the inscriptions begin his reign with his activity on Phnom Kulen (Mahendraparvata)".¹³ As Claude Jacques wrote, "many inscriptions speak of him, but only one has both details, his capital on Mahendraparvata and a date, together".¹⁴ That inscription is the 11th-century inscription of Trapan Run (K598), which says, stance XIV, A, 15, *āsīd āvāridher urvvīm vahan vedārdhabhūdharaīḥ rājā śrījayavarmmeti mahendrārikṛtāspadaḥ* ("There was a king named Śrī Jayavarman, who ruled the earth up to the ocean in 724 (*śaka*)/AD 802 and established his capital on Mount Mahendra" (but not that he went to Mount Mahendra in 802). The digraphic inscriptions of Yaśovarman, stance II, say, *rājñō mahendragirimūrdhakarṛtāspadasya* ("the king who established his residence on the summit of Mount Mahendra"), but without any date.¹⁵

12. In a recent paper on Jayavarman's ceremonies on Phnom Kulen, Robert L. Brown has written, "In A.D. 802 King Jayavarman II climbed to the top of a mountain ... and performed a ceremony the purpose of which was to protect his kingdom ... from being dominated by Java" (Brown, "A Magic Pill, The Protection of Cambodia by the Recitation of the Vīṇāśikhatantra in A.D. 802", *Udaya*, Issue Number 4, November 2003, pp. 1-5).

13. The date 790 is in K583, found near the Baphuon; Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II; Coedès, EC 38, *BEFEO* 43, 12-16, p. 13, n. 3

14 C. Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II", p. 206]

15 Jacques, "[Aninditapura](#)", p. 201

As Pierre Dupont indicated, there are two inscriptions which suggest that Jayavarman's ceremonies on Phnom Kulen were much later than had been believed. The inscription of Palhal, K449, dated 11th century, by a family whose ancestors are said to have been military leaders under Jayavarman II, says that in the process of forcing recalcitrant districts to submit, they played a leading role and as a reward were given the land of Garyak in 812. Since the ceremonies on Phnom Kulen imply that Jayavarman II had completed his campaigns to force submission of the whole country, those ceremonies on must have been later.

Then Dupont compared two extracts of an older inscription which had disappeared, and concluded that a family claimed to have received land from Jayavarman II in 822, after which the king went to Phnom Kulen.¹⁶

If Dupont's conclusions are accepted, and if the identification of Jayavarman *Ibis* with Jayavarman II is maintained, it is impossible to give any meaning to the date 802. Was the date 802 another 11th-century invention? Five of the six inscriptions which record it are from that time, but if the date of the relevant passage of K256 (Kok Po) is really early 10th century, that hypothesis is weakened.

Jayavarman II and Java

What then was 'Java' in the Sdok Kak Thom, K956, and Sab Bak inscriptions? Sab Bak, which does not mention Jayavarman II, indicates that 'Java' was a preoccupation of the Khmer in the 11th century, whether or not they related it to Jayavarman II. In the 8th-9th centuries, the time of Jayavarman II, the island of Java was not a great sea power and could not have threatened Cambodia. And the stories concocted by Coedès to explain why some Khmer royalty might have gone to Java on their own must be treated as historical fiction. In the 11th century, however, Java was becoming an important sea power, although no writing on Java I have seen indicates that it could, even then, have endangered Cambodia. So it is still something of a mystery. More attention to Angkorean foreign relations might give some clues.

Because the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom was the only one known for so long; and because its statement about Jayavarman returning from Java was accepted as literal fact, and the evidence of K956 never integrated into

¹⁶. K534 (Ta Kev at Angkor) a family received land from Jayavarman II in 822, apparently before he went to Mahendraparvata (See Pierre Dupont, "Études sur l'Indochine ancienne, Les débuts de la royauté angkoriennne", *BEFEO* 46 (1952-54), pp. 119-176, see pp. 133, 159-161.

the general synthesis of Angkorean history, a number of hypotheses were developed to account for the Java-Cambodia connection which must now be rejected.

The presence of some Cambodian royalty in Java was once based on a speculation that when Funan was defeated by Chenla some of the Funan royalty escaped to Java, and began a new 'mountain king' (Śailendra) dynasty there. Then in the 8th century the Śailendra attacked Cambodia because it was their old kingdom. Coedès wrote that Jayavarman II may have gone to Java with his family at the time of anarchy early in the eighth century when Chenla broke up, or he and other royalty may have been captured when Javanese attacked Cambodia. Indirect evidence used by Coedès to support the possibility of Javanese attacks was the Vietnamese and Champa records of attacks on the coast of those countries by ships which in one case were called Javanese. The dates of these attacks were 767 in Vietnam, and 774 and 787 in Champa.¹⁷ However, these attacks were quick raids from the sea which were quickly chased away by the Vietnamese and Chams; and at those dates Cambodia was being unified by its own royalty.

There was no situation of anarchy which would have forced part of a Cambodian royal family to emigrate to Java. There was one group of royalty in the Angkor region personified by Queen Jayadevī, whose royal title was more impressive than that of any previous king, and in fact which made her', as anthropologists would say, a 'classificatory' king **NOTE**; and in Śambhupura on the Mekong inscription K124 shows another family who in 803 had ruled for four generations. And at the time of the attacks on Champa and Vietnam a third royal faction was dominating the Mekong valley from southern Kompong Cham province to Śambhupura and had apparently formed an alliance with the Śambhupura queens. The leader was the prince long known as Jayavarman *Ibis*, perhaps really the future Jayavarman II. **Note for all.** Cambodia, in terms of its modern borders, was not unified in the 8th century, but those three known ruling groups had solid bases and were too far inland to be threatened by attacks from the sea.

If Jayavarman *Ibis* was really Jayavarman II, as Claude Jacques has proposed, and as I agree, he was already becoming powerful, and was not at that time threatened by attacks from the sea which would have to go far up the rivers of Cambodia. Or, if Jayavarman *Ibis* was not Jayavarman II, the former was consolidating the Mekong valley between Thbaung Khum and Sambor, along with the local royal family of Śambhupura (K124), and by

¹⁷. Coedès, Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 100; and "On the Origin of the Śailendras of Indonesia", *Journal of the Greater India Society* 1, 1934).

790 Jayavarman II was ruling somewhere as king. That was not a situation in which an Indonesian raiding party would have had success.

Coedès 1948, p. 154, wondered if the Śailendras ('mountain king') of Java "were not trying to revive the title of the ancient sovereigns of Funan"; and the adoption by the Śailendras of the alleged old Funanese title 'mountain king' "helps explain the way Jayavarman II, returning from Java, established his authority over Cambodia", that is, with elaborate ceremonies, made necessary by the Śailendras of Java posing as heirs of the ancient owners of the soil [i.e., the Funan kings].¹⁸ In Coedès 1964, p. 168, this was reinforced "since J.G. de Casparis recognized the name *naravarānagara*, the last capital of Funan in the South of the Indochinese peninsula, in the form *varanara* in a 9th-century inscription" in Java, which thus hints that the Funanese royalty emigrated to Java and were somehow involved in the rise of the Śailendras.

Not only is this a heaping of one dubious speculation upon another, but if it is also true that "the name in Chinese characters of a 5th-century king of Kan-T'o-Li [probably in Sumatra] may be restored as Śrī Varanarendra", 'King (Indra) of Varanara', then there is no connection possible between an alleged Indonesian *varanara* and a 7th-century Funanese *naravarānagara*, assuming that the restorations from Chinese characters are accurate. Of course the clear attestation of the name *naravarānagara* in the Cambodian inscription K49 (A.D. 664) gives some support to that particular restoration, although not indicating its location, nor its relevance for the Funan period.¹⁹

Besides, it now appears that the title 'mountain king' (*kurūṅ bnaṃ*) was not part of Cambodian regalia. Coedès gave too much importance to the same literal meaning of the name *śailendra*, because of mistaken ideas about Funan. The name Śailendra is Sanskrit and means 'mountain king' (*śaila*=mountain; *indra*=king). Coedès believed that the kings of Funan were called 'mountain king' (*kurūṅ vnaṃ*), and that when Funan was defeated by Chenla some of the Funan royalty escaped to Java, and began a new 'mountain king' (Śailendra) dynasty there. Then in the 8th century they attacked Cambodia because it was their old kingdom.²⁰

18. Coedès 1964, pp. 188-9.

19. Coedès 1964, p. 108; Vickery 1998, pp. 40, 45, 110, 352-3. For Kan-T'o-Li see Wolters 1967, pp. 210-12, 220-21, *passim*.

20. Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 100; and "On the Origin of the Śailendras of Indonesia", *Journal of the Greater India Society* 1, 1934.

Now, however, it is clear that no evidence shows that the kings of Funan were called *kurui bnam/vnam*. This was a fiction invented in 1911 by Louis Finot, and therefore that theory of Coedès must be rejected. Research in Indonesia also shows that the name *śailendra* developed from an Indonesian word *selendra*, perhaps a place name, because it is found in an inscription with a chief's title, *dapunta selendra*, 'the *dapunta* [chief of] *selendra*', which the Indonesians must have changed to *śailendra* after they learned Sanskrit and wanted to imitate Indian culture.²¹ That is, the Śailendra kings did not come from outside Indonesia, but had a local origin.

Coedès 1962, p. 95, continued this line of speculation in explaining that a Javanese invasion of Cambodia, which he recognized in that context as clearly mythical, might be attributed to the Śailendras, "‘kings of the mountain’, whose title recalls that of the sovereign of Funan". The Śailendras, "Buddhists like the last kings of Funan... had perhaps better reasons ... to intervene in Cambodia, among others to claim over this country the rights of its ancient masters, the ‘mountain kings’ of Funan". In fact, there is no evidence of the title ‘mountain king’ for the Funan rulers, nor were the last ones more Buddhist than Hindu. That idea may have been developed from a less than careful reading of inscription K40 naming the two last-known kings of Funan, Jayavarman and his son Rudravarman. When Coedès published it he wrote that "the first two stanzas are in honor of the Buddha... the next two are to the glory of King Rudravarman", whose name is one of the names of Śiva; and "the fifth says that ... King Jayavarman appointed the son of a **brahman** [emphasis added] as inspector of royal property". As a general conclusion Coedès said that this inscription showed "the favor enjoyed by Hinduism **and** [emphasis added] Buddhism".²²

In his discussion of Java and Cambodia Coedès gave great importance to the Śailendra dynasty of Java, which, according to him was strong in the early 8th century and invaded Cambodia, but then became weaker in the late 8th century. Thus, Coedès, *Etats*, p. 184, "the return of Jayavarman from

²¹. For the evidence on *selendra* see [Boechari](#)

²². Coedès 1931, pp. 8, 12. One should note other inconsistencies in Coedès' treatment of Funan religion. Although the Chinese seemed to emphasize the importance of Buddhism in early Funan, Coedès 1964, p. 119, wrote, "the two Kaundinyas who hinduized the country were brahmins; they must have implanted Śivaite rites, which were certainly flourishing in the 5th century". This ignores two of the three 5th-century inscriptions, K5 and K875, both Viṣṇuīte, and K40 in which Coedès saw Buddhism as important.

Java, which was perhaps motivated by the weakening of the Śailendras in the island, took place around 800, because we know from numerous pieces of evidence that the effective beginning of his reign was in 802".²³

Coedès exaggerated the importance of the Śailendras. They were one group of royalty in the interior of Central Java in the 8th-9th century, but there are records of other royalty who did not claim to be Śailendra. The first record of this central Javanese royalty in the interior of the island is an inscription of 732 naming a king Sanjaya, but which does not call him a *śailendra*. Later inscriptions show central Java developing throughout the 8th century, and beginning near the end of that century and in the 9th century many great temples, both Hindu and Buddhist were built. They developed an inland state with much Indian religious and artistic influence during the 8th - 9th centuries. But their region was in south central Java, far from the sea. They were not a seaport state; and they could not possibly have invaded Cambodia.

The area of central Java where this development occurred was far from the coast, and did not have good rivers leading to the coast. It was not a society based on sea trade. It was agricultural. Of course, Java had ports which the Chinese had known from the 6th century, and which continued to trade with China. We do not know if any of these ports were under control of the royalty in central Java. In fact we cannot identify the Chinese names of these ports with any Javanese place name. They were probably not large states, but only ports interested in trade with China. They did not have any interest in invading Cambodia, nor would they have had enough military force to invade Cambodia. The Cambodian capitals in the early 8th century, the Angkor region at the time of Queen Jayadevī, and Śambhupura on the Mekong, were far inland, out of reach of a conquering maritime invasion.

Some writers have suggested that 'Java' at the time might have meant Śrivijaya, which was a seapower. Śrivijaya, however, was interested in developing its trade relations with China, and would have had no interest in sending a fleet far into the Cambodian interior, which is what would have been required to take some of the Cambodian royalty to Java or to Sumatra in the 8th century.²⁴ If so, however, this forces a change in the other

²³. Original French: le retour de Jayavarman de Java, "qui fut peut-être motivé par l'affaiblissement des Çailendras dans l'île", took place around 800, "car nous savons par de nombreux témoignages que le début effectif du règne se place en 802".

²⁴. Including Coedès "Le royaume de Çrīvijaya", *BEFEO* XVIII, 1918, pp. 1-28, p.26, n. 9, Java in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription was Çrīvijaya, "qui occupait alors une partie de la péninsule".

arguments, such as Jayavarman's alleged absorption of Javanese culture and the question of religious and artistic influence. David Snellgrove saw this clearly when he felt forced to repeat, '*for the record*' as it were, the standard interpretation, translating from Groslier, "As a result of circumstances ill defined--prisoner or docile student—[Jayavarman II] resided at the court of the Śailendras. He returned to Cambodia towards 790, imbued with Javanese culture and doubtless anxious to imitate it". At least Snellgrove realized that the aggressive polity required by the standard interpretation could not have been Central Java, where the Śailendra were one of the competing dynasties, in the 8th-9th centuries, "open to the sea only on the northern coast", but more reasonably Śrivijaya. Snellgrove added unnecessarily, however, that "Jayavarman arrived in Cambodia as a confirmed Śaivite ... seemingly antagonistic to the Buddhism of Śrivijaya and Central Java". There is no reason to accept the old-fashioned European idea that different religions necessarily meant hostility, least of all in ancient Java.²⁵ The current consensus on Srivijaya now is that the political center did not try even to dominate by force its own interior within Sumatra, and its overseas expansion—to the peninsula and the island of Java was related to the maritime trade with China. **NOTE**

Coedès' opinion that Jayavarman only returned in 800, two years before becoming king in 802, is also impossible. Whenever Jayavarman began to rule over Cambodia, it would have required many years--10 or 20--to unite all the local chiefs under his control. He must have begun his political activity in mid-8th century at the time of the inscriptions which Coedès attributed to Jayavarman *Ibis*, but which Claude Jacques has convincingly argued were really the work of Jayavarman II.²⁶

The strength of Java in the 11th century may be why the family of officials who were responsible for the Sdok Kak Thom inscription gave importance to Java. In their time, middle of the 11th century, Java was an important international power centered on its east coast, in contact, according to its inscriptions, with several foreign groups, including Khmer, the central government was involved in sea trade, and there was trading

²⁵. Groslier, *Indochine carrefour des arts*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1961, p. 88, "À la suite de circonstances mal définies-- prisonnier ou élève docile?—il séjourna à la cour des Śailendras. Il revient au Cambodge vers 790, imprégné de culture javanaise et sans doute soucieux de l'imiter"; David Snellgrove, *Angkor Before and After A Cultural History of the Khmers*, Bangkok, Orchard Press, 2004, p. 46. Snellgrove did not continue discussion of the inconsistencies in the story, nor indicate what his conclusion, if any, would be.

²⁶. Claude Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II" ,,,,,,

contact with Cambodia. If 'Java' in that inscription did not mean one part of Champa, which was threatening Cambodia in the time of Jayavarman II, it was a fiction created because of the importance of Java at the time Sdok Kak Thom was written, saying that Cambodia could not fall under the power of Java because the founder of the dynasty, Jayavarman II, had performed ceremonies to prevent it.

Another bit of relevant evidence has now appeared in Robert Brown's paper, **noted above**. Brown comments that a manuscript with the title of one of the texts which the Sdok Kak Thom inscription says were recited during the ceremony on Phnom Kulen has been discovered in Nepal, and it mentions the names of the other three texts recorded in Sdok Kak Thom. This document from Nepal is a Tantric text of the 12th-13th centuries, and in Brown's opinion, "it is almost impossible to believe that such a text could have been used to found the Angkorian dynasty", "such full-blown Tantric practices seem totally out of character for ninth-century Cambodia".

Although Brown does not agree, I suggest that this is further evidence for the entire story of Jayavarman's ceremonies on Phnom Kulen is as late myth, and the 11th-century officials inserted these powerful Tantric ceremonies, known to them in the 11th century, into their story of Jayavarman.