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► **To cite this version:**

Dominic Goodall. TWO INSCRIPTIONS FROM LINGAPARVATA (VAT PHU), ONE DATING TO JAYAVARMAN I'S REIGN (K. 1059) AND THE OTHER TO JAYAVARMAN II'S (K. 1060), ALONG WITH A RE-EDITION OF K. 762. *Udaya: Journal of Khmer Studies*, 2021, 15, pp.3-38. hal-03267456

HAL Id: hal-03267456

<https://hal.science/hal-03267456>

Submitted on 12 Jul 2021

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TWO INSCRIPTIONS FROM LIŅGAPARVATA (VAT PHU),
 ONE DATING TO JAYAVARMAN I'S REIGN (K. 1059)
 AND THE OTHER TO JAYAVARMAN II'S (K. 1060),
 ALONG WITH A RE-EDITION OF K. 762.

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This article is primarily devoted to a short and unusual Vaiṣṇava inscription (K. 1059) found further up the mountain of Vat Phu than the famous shrine of Śiva Bhadreśa, a key site in the Khmer religious landscape all through the ancient period,¹ as innumerable inscriptions attest, beginning with K. 365, K. 477 (engraved in similar fifth-century characters, but so eroded that not even a line of it has yet been read and published) and K. 367, an undated inscription of a Jayavarman, usually held to be the seventh-century Khmer sovereign Jayavarman I (and not his eighth-century namesake Jayavarman I *bis*). For the centrality of the LiŅgaparvata in the Khmer Śaiva landscape, see Sanderson, “The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers (Part I),” 409–421, and for an overview of the site, emphasising its extraordinarily long-maintained activity (among Khmer religious sites) and tracing the history of its study through archeological (and particularly epigraphical) discoveries, see Lorillard, “Introduction. Du centre à la marge : Vat Phu dans les études sur l’espace khmer ancien,” 195.

More recently than 2010, evidence of early tenth-century royal involvement has come to light in the form of the remarkable four-sided tenth-century stela K. 1320, whose discovery was documented by Hawixbrock 2012 (appeared 2014) and whose text was published by Goodall & Jacques 2014 (appeared 2017).² Moreover, to supplement the archeological evidence that Lorillard cites to demonstrate religious activities at the site into the late twelfth century,³ further epigraphic

¹ This work falls under the aegis of the DHARMA project (“The Domestication of “Hindu” Asceticism and the Religious Making of South and Southeast Asia”), funded from 2019 through 2025 by the European Research Council (ERC) as part of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no 809994). I began editions of several inscriptions of the Khmer corpus years ago as part of the long-running EFEO CIK project (“Corpus des inscriptions khmères”), and my participation in DHARMA, with its focus on the history of religious foundations, has happily given a new impetus to these undertakings.

² Confusingly, the discovery of the stela K. 1320, announced in the *Vientiane Times* in January 2013, is actually already mentioned by Lorillard (2010: 196), since the issue of the *BEFEO* in which his article was published in fact appeared in 2013.

³ *Ibid.*, 195.

allusions have come to light in distant inscriptions of the reign of Tribhuvanāditya.⁴ And there are of course several other still unpublished inscriptions from various periods from the environs of the Bhadrēśvara shrine that would help to flesh out the picture we have of its religious history (notably K. 1040, K. 1060, K. 1200, K. 1201, K. 1226, and K. 1432). But, encouraged by Claude Jacques, I had first fixed upon accompanying K. 1059 with the much more fragmentary doorjamb inscription K. 1060. The existence of K. 1059 and K. 1060 had been reported together in an article of 1974 by Lintingre, and both have remained unpublished until today. K. 1059 is undated and K. 1060's date is not decipherable, but both mention a Jayavarman as reigning, and I was for years firmly persuaded, on palaeographical grounds, that both belonged to the seventh-century reign of Jayavarman I. True, Lintingre's article⁵ reported Claude Jacques as having proclaimed K. 1060 to be of the reign of the early ninth-century king Jayavarman II, who, according to K. 598 (st. XIV) and K. 382 (st. IV), took power in *śaka* 724, in other words in 802 or 802 CE. But there was no justification or argumentation to show why this assumption was made, and the lettering looked unmistakably pre-Angkorian. Furthermore, no other document mentioning Jayavarman II and dating from his reign has hitherto come to light, as far as I am aware, and so it seemed doubly improbable that K. 1060 should be of his time. I therefore mooted an edition of K. 1059, indisputably produced in the reign of Jayavarman I, to which I would append a short note on what little could be read of K. 1060, which seemed to belong to the same reign. During the course of the article's preparation, this plan changed, as is reflected in the title.

Work on any given inscription never feels entirely finished, for one can go on poring over photographs of damaged patches, keep endlessly pursuing textual parallels for passages that seem hard to interpret, and continue puzzling over provenance, or the complexities of the site or over what predecessors did or did not bring to light. But there comes a point when enough must be enough or nothing would ever see the light of day. *ars longa vita brevis*. So here at long last is the first published edition and translation of an inscription that I had to climb part of a mountain to read, finally, on 18th November 2016, after long chasing it through photographs of old photographs (Figure 1), xerox copies of a lost estampage, conversations with Claude Jacques and the observations of Pierre Lintingre.

The old photographs are presumably those of Lintingre, transmitted to me by Claude Jacques, whom I would like to thank for his help and good company at many stages along the way. I finally saw the inscription thanks to the kindness of my colleague Christine Hawixbrock, who had arranged for me to be invited to a UNESCO heritage meeting in Champassak in November 2016, in order to report on the edition and translation (already in press by then) of K. 1320. It was she who then, at my request, made arrangements with the authorities to permit my colleague Brice Vincent and myself to walk up the mountain and see K. 1059 *in situ* immediately after the UNESCO meeting had finished.

⁴ Preparation of a collaboration publication of K. 1297 and K. 1222, two long inscriptions of the twelfth-century reign of Tribhuvanādityavarman, who presents himself as successor to Sūryavarman II, are well underway.

⁵ See Lintingre, "A la recherche du sanctuaire préangkorien de Vat Phou," 516–517.

Two Inscriptions from Lingaparvata (Vat Phu)...

Figure 1. One of Claude Jacques' photographs of Pierre Lintings's 1973 photographs of K. 1059.

We set off at dawn, accompanied by David Bazin, who knows the topography well and who took many invaluable photographs, as well as by two employees from the Vat Phu Museum at the foot of the mountain,⁶ and two knife-wielding villagers,⁷ who showed us the way, cutting away the undergrowth in front of us, and who helped remove the vegetation that had engulfed the inscribed rock so that we were able to view it plainly. Along the way, we took in a visit to the site of a ruined temple of Jayavarman II (known now as the site of Vat Oup Mong), marked by the unpublished doorjamb inscription K. 1060, then the rock-cut ascetic's cave, known as Tam Lek, where K. 723 is inscribed⁸ and then at last the rocky ravine, see Figure 2, which is swept with torrents of water in heavy rainstorms, where K. 1059 is to be found (the site now known as Phou Phae Waterfall). For the route we took, see Figure 3, and for a three-dimensional map showing the location of the sites, see Figure 4. Finally, chased by the threat of just such an impending storm, we returned exhausted

⁶ Bountham PANKHAM and Chanphenh POMMAVANDY.

⁷ Sing and Chieng VORLALATH, from the village of Ban Nong Sa.

⁸ Recently republished in Goodall, "Les influences littéraires indiennes dans les inscriptions du Cambodge : l'exemple d'un chef-d'œuvre inédit du VIII^e siècle (K. 1236)."



Figure 2. Group photograph taken by David Bazin (far left) with delayed shutter release in the ravine beside K. 1059 in November 2018.

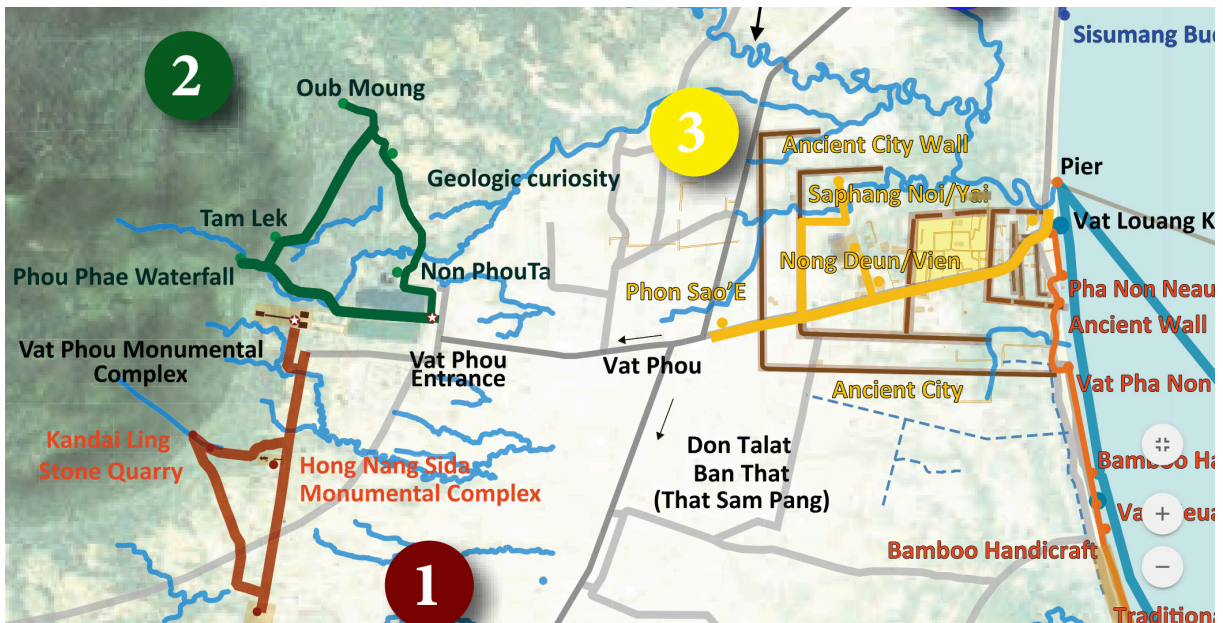


Figure 3. Detail of the map of archeological trails published online as part of a brochure for tourists interested in archeology <http://www.vatphou-champassak.com/pdfs/bro-vatphou-eng-2018-v1.pdf> (consulted 18.viii.2020). Trail 2 is labelled “Trek Oub Mung - Tam Lek - Phou Phae From 4 to 5 hours - Difficult trek - Seasonal” and it shows the route that we took in November 2018, described in this way: “Start from Vat Phou North big Baray, trek along rice fields and a small forest to reach a particular geological area. Then, climb a small hill to arrive to Oub Mung pre-Angkorian Temple and see its small brick tower and sandstone entrance. Continue until Tham Lek small cave to see Khmer inscriptions before going to Phou Phae waterfall following a small river to see more inscriptions.” Here “Oub Mung” refers to the site of K. 1060, “Tham Lek” is the cave in which K. 723 (and its appendix K. 724) are engraved, and “Phou Phae Waterfall” is where K. 1059 may be found.

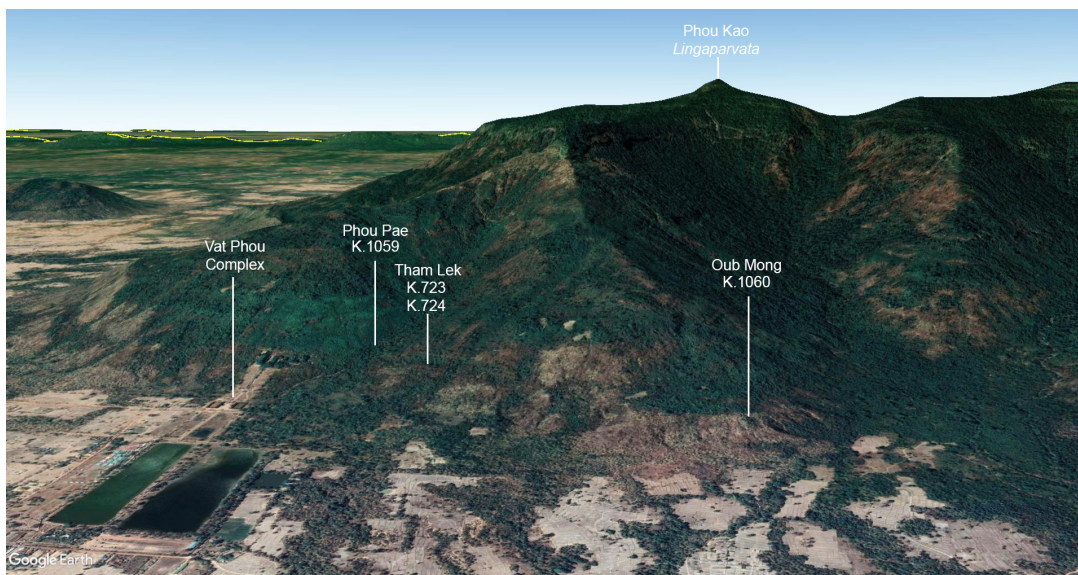
Two Inscriptions from Lingaparvata (Vat Phu)...

Figure 4. Map prepared using Google Earth by David Bazin showing the site of K. 1059 and surrounding sites on Vat Phu mountain.

(speaking for myself) to the foot of the mountain at about 4pm, with some bumps and scratches and with our clothes (more suitable for a UNESCO conference than for such a trek) somewhat torn and muddied. We had set off with appropriate equipment for making an estampage and had taken considerable trouble to photograph the rock as we found it, then to clear it of vegetation and to brush it clean of a layer of mossy grime, then photograph it again, and then apply paper. But our estampage became blotchy with rain and suffered during our descent.

This anecdote is not entirely without a point here, for it underlines how very awkward of access K. 1059 is, and has perhaps always been. For an ancient inscription composed in chaste Sanskrit verse, it is in a place that really is unusually hard to reach. This goes some way to explain why it has not been fully published before, and it might also explain an expression in the sixth and final stanza (st. VIa).

At the moment when I finally got to see the inscription, I had already prepared a provisional transcription and a partial translation on the basis of photographs shown to me by Claude Jacques, and of photographs (taken by Michel Lorillard, Dominique Soutif and myself at the EFEO reunion in Paris in September 2016) of a patched together set of photocopies made of the inked EFEO estampage n. 1494, which had unaccountably disappeared and yet had been xeroxed before disappearing (Figure 5). Furthermore, Claude Jacques had passed me his transcription and provisional translation, in a Word file dated 5th November 2016. His transcription is missing almost all of the first half of stanza II, but otherwise, even though he apparently saw only poorly legible photographs (see Figure 1), it differs from mine only in a handful of places, notably in the disposition of round and square brackets. He furnished this paragraph of introduction:

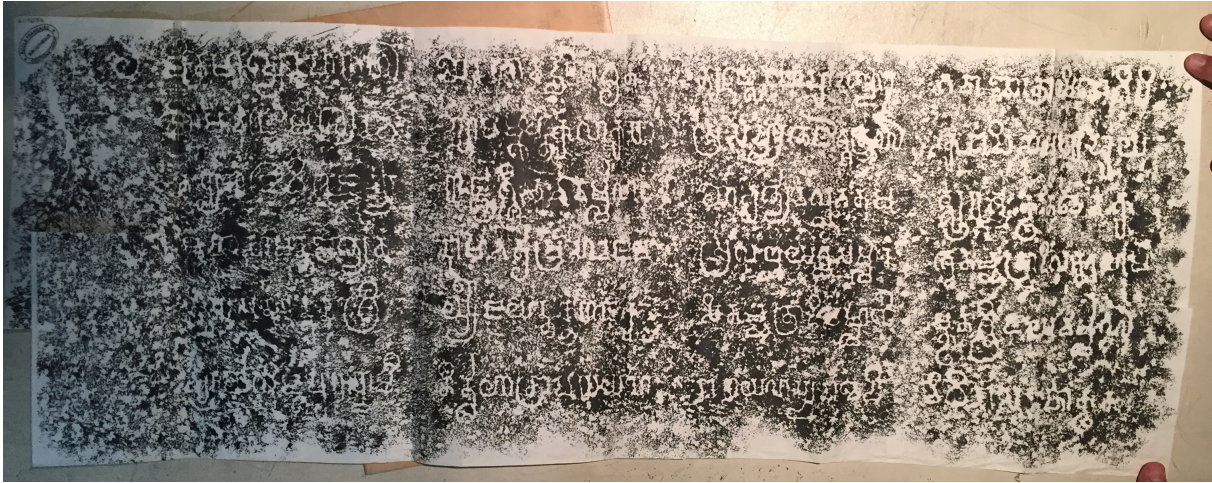


Figure 5. Photograph of photocopy of mislaid EFEO estampage of K. 1059.

The inscription K. 1059 was discovered on the site of Vat Ph’u by Mr. Pierre Lintingre, then a professor at Paksé, who was particularly interested in this site. A rock slide brought to light a rock on one side of which was prepared an inscribed surface of 6 lines, forming as many *anustubb* stanzas. The inscription is unpublished and I have even lost the translation I made in 1973. P. Lintingre did not produce an estampage, since he was not even aware of this kind of reproduction; he had the wisdom to take many photos, but nonetheless, reading them is very difficult and I cannot guarantee the reading I offer in every particular; but the interpretation should not be very far from the real meaning; in any case it is an interesting text.⁹

As soon as I had seen the inscription itself and satisfied myself that I could no longer reasonably expect to improve upon the reading in any way, it seemed imperative to publish it. And yet there was a lingering unsatisfactoriness in the name of the founder, which I could not quite believe or explain. I still cannot fully “explain” the name, but a clue worth mentioning “fell into place” in 2019 when I happened to notice that the same individual might actually be mentioned in K. 762, which I take the opportunity to republish and retranslate below, this time into English, in the same article. A few details of transcription of K. 762 can thus be corrected and some comments on the interpretation, modified in several places, can usefully be added. Further, the short and damaged text of K. 1060 is added, for reasons explained above.

⁹ “L’inscription K 1059 a été découverte sur le site de Vat Ph’u par M. Pierre Lintingre, alors professeur à Paksé, qui s’intéressait particulièrement à ce site. Un éboulement de pierres a permis de dégager un rocher, sur un des côtés duquel était préparé une surface inscrite de 6 lignes, formant autant de *sloka anustubb*. L’inscription est inédite et j’en ai même égaré la traduction que j’avais faite en 1973. P. Lintingre n’a pas fait d’estampage, ignorant même ce genre de reproduction ; il a eu la sagesse de prendre de nombreuses photos, mais malgré tout la lecture en est très difficile et je ne peux pas garantir partout celle que je propose ; mais l’interprétation ne doit pas être très éloignée du sens réel ; c’est en tout cas un texte intéressant.”

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

In the editions that follow, I have basically followed the transcription conventions outlined in the “DHARMA Transliteration Guide” prepared by Dániel Balogh and Arlo Griffiths (2020), but I have also indicated with small bullet-marks (•) the gaps deliberately left to demarcate metrical units from one another. For the stanzas in *āryā* metre (in K. 762), these divisions within the line come after the first six morae. For clarity, since *āryā* metre can be confusing to scan, I have preceded each *āryā* stanza with an indication of its metrical schema. Because of difficulties obtaining here the character recommended in the “Transliteration Guide,” instances of *jīhvāmūliya* (in K. 1059 and K. 762 only) have been transcribed with x, and instances of vocalic ɾ have been written with the now deprecated underdot, rather than with the approved ring beneath.

In cases where a syllable is not legible but the metre determines its metrical weight, a missing heavy syllable is marked with a hyphen (-), a light syllable is marked with an up-turned cup (∪), and a syllable that may be either heavy or light is marked with an “equals” sign (=). Where only a vowel cannot be read, it is replaced by ∪ when it must be prosodically light, with a hyphen (-) when it must be prosodically heavy, and with an anceps symbol (≐) when it could be either. An illegible consonant is replaced by hash (#). (I earlier used C[onsonant] and V[owel], but found this convention confusing when trying to imagine the sounds of the verses in my head.)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF K. 1059

A shallow cartouche (Figures 6 and 7) measuring 105cm x 60cm was cut into the side of a large sandstone rock, more than amply sufficient for six lines of text to be carved, each line forming an *anustubh* stanza. The text occupies only the top 34cm of the cartouche, so most of the bottom half is in fact left blank, suggesting that the space required had not been very precisely calculated when the cartouche was made. The body of each letter (excluding ascenders and descenders) is about 2cm in height. The larger letters, including both ascenders and descenders, are



Figure 6. Museum staff from the Vat Phu museum brushing K. 1059 in preparation for making an estampage. We see from this and the following figure that the inscription, cut into a recessed cartouche, is on one very large block of stone not far separated from another of similar dimensions that is now directly in front of it. Other than the cartouche, we observed no other traces of the stones having been specially shaped, but either block of stone might once have formed the altar (*vedi*), or both together, or some other stone or conjunction of stones nearby (cf. Lintre, “A la recherche...,” 517)

about 5cm in height. The gap left between the body of the letters of one line and the body of the letters in the next is of about 4cm. The lettering is pre-Angkorian, consistent with its having been produced in the second half of the seventh-century.



Figure 7. Making an estampage of K. 1059. The photographer was standing on the flat-sided rock that is now in front of the inscribed side of K. 1059. (Photo: David Bazin.)

SUMMARY OF K. 1059

In six *anuṣṭubh* stanzas, the inscription praises Viṣṇu as the lifter of the Govardhana mountain (st. I), mentions a servant described as “most favourite” of king Bhavavarman [II] (st. II–III), who received considerable honour from his services to the king (st. IV). That servant’s son, Jayantakurāja, was similarly honoured by Jayavarman I (st. V). Being governor of Liṅgapura and devoted to pilgrimage, Jayantakurāja placed here an “altar” (*vedī*) [perhaps the inscribed rock itself?] for Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu).

EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF K. 1059

I.

(1) 𑀓 jitam ā(dy)ena har(i)ṇā • (yena) gova(r)ddha(no) dhṛta(h)
(tu)ṅgena [v](āhu)daṇdena • gavā(ñ ca) trāyino giriḥ

Victorious is primordial Hari, who lifted the mountain that protects cows [Govardhana] with the lofty bolt of his arm and also [this] mountain of the one who protects cattle (*gavāṃ trāyinaḥ*).

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

There are several elements to be unpacked here. First of all, it is assumed that any reader who has toiled this far up the mountain must know it to be famously a sacred Śaiva site, which means that when it is described as a mountain of the “protector of cows” (*gavām trāyīn*), which is not a familiar kenning for Śiva, the reader must make an effort to connect this to Śiva’s famous name Paśupati, “Lord of cattle/bound beasts.” Why choose this odd name? Presumably it is meant to create a resonance with the name Govardhana, which means “nourisher/protector of cows,” and which is the name of the mountain which Kṛṣṇa raised up above the cow-herding inhabitants of Vraja in order to protect them from the storm that Indra hurled down upon them. This invocation clearly celebrates the “victory” of Hari/Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, who, in legend, once raised the cow-protecting (Govardhana) mountain. But in what sense can he be said also to have raised up the mountain of the Cow-protector who is Śiva (Paśupati)?

My guess is that his altar or shrine (or perhaps a lost image of him) here on the flank of the Vat Phu mountain is also somehow considered to be “propping up” the mountain of Śiva. It is conceivable that a now lost image of Viṣṇu raising Govardhana (like those of Phnom Da and of the Bangkok Museum) could have been placed against the mountain-side. If not, the altar mentioned in the last verse (which might be the inscribed rock itself) could have been positioned so that it looked as if it were propping up the mountain’s flank. The original position of the inscribed rock is of course unknown: its situation now, in a ravine that fills with sudden torrents of water capable of dislodging and rearranging all the rocks along it (see Figures 2 and 8), make this difficult to guess at.



Figure 8. K. 1059 and surrounding rocks in amongst the vegetation. The inscribed cartouche is visible on the side of the rock behind the man in the green shirt. (Photo: David Bazin.)

II.

(2) (so)ma(va)(ñś)[ā]malanabha•ssomax k(ān)takalākarah
Asahyatejās śātrūṇām • kenāpi samareṣu yah

[There was] a certain (*yah*) moon in the spotless sky that was the lunar dynasty, a mine of pleasing skills(/lunar digits), [and yet] somehow (*kenāpi*) [nonetheless] of unbearable fieriness for his enemies in battles.

We are reminded here that Khmer kings of this lineage already claimed descent from the moon. The moon is held to be beautiful and a cooling giver of delight, and so in describing Bhavavarman II as a veritable moon in the sky that was the lunar dynasty, he is declared to be especially beautiful and coolingly delightful, but nonetheless hot and fiery in battle.

III.

(3) tasya rājādhirājasya • rājñās śrībhavavarmmaṇah
yo bhṛtyo vallabhatama•ś śūrah kṛtavedakah

Of that [moon,] overlord of kings, the illustrious King Bhavavarman, there was a servant most dear to him (*vallabhatamaḥ*), a hero (*śūrah*), grateful for what was done [for him] (*kṛtavedakah*), ...

The attribute *śūra* implies that this “unnamed” servant was a warrior rewarded for services in battle. I say “unnamed”, but the distinction between a name and a title is not a rigid one, perhaps particularly so in this courtly context, and it is possible that the label *vallabhatama*, “most dear to him,” was felt to be a sort of “name.” In some contexts, it seems that *vallabha/rajavallabha* is a sort of rank. Furthermore, as we shall see in the next verse, the man’s son seems to claim for him the “name” Mahāsāmanta.

For the ubiquity of the qualifier *kṛtavedaka/kṛtavedin/kṛtajña*, “grateful for what was done [for him],” in descriptions of dignitaries in the service of the kings of the lineage of Īśānavarman I, see Goodall 2019:36 and 76.

Claude Jacques, at the end of his unpublished transcription, remarks that it is curious to see Bhavavarman II described as *rājādhirāja*, “overlord of kings,” in view of the fact that he may have been in command of a smaller region than either his predecessor or his successor. But the size of the region of control is somewhat speculative. And perhaps such a reaction in any case gives too much weight to one word in a rather terse royal eulogy.

IV.

(4) ma[hā]sāmanta ity eta•n nāma bhartṛprasādajam•

Alabdha yaś ca sammānam • śvetacchatrādilakṣaṇam·

... who attained the name(/title) Mahāsāmanta, bestowed by the grace of his master, and honour in the form of a white parasol and such like [insignia of royalty].

Here *alabdha* is taken as a third singular aorist. The use of a b (instead of using v nearly everywhere without distinction for both v and b, which is the usually writing habit among the Khmers and in, for instance, Nepal) is somewhat unusual, but the occasional *b* is found in a pre-Angkorian document. Most pre-Angkorian inscriptions that refer to the notion of *sāmanta*, often rendered as “vassal king,” belong to the reign of Īśānavarman: see Goodall “Nobles, Bureaucrats or Strongmen?...” 76, including fn. 65.

V.

(5) [ta]sya sūnur anūnaśrī•r yyo jayanta(ku)rāja(ka)[h]
 śitacchatrādisammānai•x kṛtaś śrījayavarmanā

His son, not inferior to him in glory (*anūnaśrīh*), was appointed [to be honoured with the title] Jayantakurājaka by Śrī Jayavarman [I], along with marks of honour such as a white parasol.

Like *acārya*-Kavicaandra in K. 1239, this sequence of vassal kings served under both Bhavavarman II and his successor Jayavarman I.

The word Jayantakurājaka has proved problematic, both to decipher and to interpret. Like *mahāsāmanta*, I assume it to be treated as both a name and a title (thus making sense of the verb *kṛtaḥ*). Jayanta is famously the name of Indra’s son, and is thus a suitable title for a successor to a powerful man. The element *ku* could simply mean “earth” and *rajaka* (with the diminutive suffix) could mean “princeling;” neither the *ku* nor the *kaḥ* could be read with absolute certainty, indeed Claude Jacques read *ka* instead of *ku*, but *ku* seemed the most probable to me when in front of the stone. Furthermore, as we shall see below, it now seems to me conceivable that this may refer to the same individual who created the foundation commemorated by K. 762, who seemed not to be named when that inscription was first published, but may actually have been named, as Kurāja (K. 762, st. IX). Cœdès there, without commenting on the oddity of the compound, simply took it to mean “king,” which suggests that he indeed understood *ku* to mean “earth” and thus to be a sort of otiose metrical filler.¹⁰

But if *kurāja* is after all not an odd kenning for “king,” but rather a name or title, then the problem disappears, for names often simply are arbitrary and unidiomatic, or become so. Of course we do not have strong evidence in K. 762 to

¹⁰ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I, 15.

show that Kurāja was a name/title, but we do now have the evidence to show that Jayanta-Kurāja was. Now if the person is the same, why has the name changed? There are a few conceivable (and possibly overlapping) explanations that might account for this. First of all, Kurāja could have been regarded anyway as a comprehensible short form of Jayanta-Kurāja. Secondly, or additionally, its use may have been encouraged by the need to fit the name into the somewhat tricky *aryā* metre. Thirdly, Jayanta, being the name of the son of Indra, suggests a youthful figure, and it is conceivable therefore that this part of the name was dropped when the man advanced in age. Of course we do not actually know that our inscription, K. 1059, was produced before K. 762, but it seems not improbable, for K. 1059 mentions the founder's father's rôle in the court of Bhavavarman II before his own in the court of Jayavarman I, whereas K. 762 is dated to 673 CE, the last hitherto attested date for an inscription in the reign of Jayavarman I.

VI.

(6) (bh)ū(yo) Liṅgapurasvāmī • tīrthayātrāparāyaṇaḥ
nārāyaṇasya tām vedim • vidhi(nā) sa Ihākṛta

Further, [once he had been made] Governor of Liṅgapura, [being] a devotee of pilgrimage to sacred places, he made, according to the rules, this altar(?) of Viṣṇu here.

The use of the pronoun *tām* seems to indicate that the “altar” (*vedi*) in question should be in the immediate area of the inscription or that it is the rock itself on which the inscription is inscribed. We do not, as far as I am aware, have other epigraphs from the region that identify a surviving rock or other object as a *vedi*. While we do not know what such an altar might look like, the large inscribed block seems a not impossible candidate. Also conceivable is that the “altar” was the large flat-sided block of stone that is now in front of the inscribed face (see Figure 8), having been reportedly caused to fall there at some point in recent decades, presumably by a rush of water. A third possibility is that the altar was a composite construction made of several rocks, including the one inscribed, that has been disturbed and broken up by the cataracts of repeated monsoons. A fourth candidate, mentioned and described by Lintingre,¹¹ is a modified rock closer to Vat Oup Mong.

It is in any case strikingly odd that this handsome seventh-century inscription in chaste Sanskrit should record the existence of a shrine, or at least of an altar, in this inaccessible place. Even if the path to it was not so encumbered with vegetation in the seventh century, it would still have required strenuous exertion to climb up to it. And it is perhaps this markedly unusual inaccessibility that accounts for the

¹¹ Lintingre, “A la recherche du sanctuaire préangkorien de Vat Phou,” 517.

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

expression “a devotee of pilgrimage to sacred places.” For to describe the founder in these terms obliquely provides a sort of apology or explanation for making his foundation where he did: Jayantakurājaka was, we learn, a fanatic of vigorous forms of pilgrimage and so might have chosen to place his altar in an out-of-the-way location for like-minded pilgrims.

A defence of the translation “Governor of Liṅgapura” for *Liṅgapurasvāmi* might have required pages of annotation, but I have now gathered much of the relevant evidence and written a lengthy article on the subject.¹² To sum up very briefly, Claude Jacques¹³ had supposed that *svāmin* here indicated a hieratic function, but this can be excluded when one considers the seventh-century Cambodian parallels. For although the term *svāmin* may in general be troublingly polyvalent, it is less so when appended to a toponym.

What we learn from the above is that a warrior and his son received honours from two generations of seventh-century Khmer kings, Bhavavarman II and Jayavarman I. The son, titled Jayantakurāja by Jayavarman I, was further appointed as governor of Liṅgapura (the exact location of which is not clear, but which was presumably on or near the Vat Phu mountain, known then as liṅgaparvata). During his mandate as governor, he conceived the notion of building some sort of shrine for the worship of Viṣṇu at a relatively inaccessible place on this famously Śaiva mountain, apparently in order to encourage pilgrimage.

If we may identify Jayantakurāja with the Kurāja who commissioned K. 762, from Tūol Práḥ Thāt (Prey Veng province, towards the delta of the Mekong) and the foundation it records, then we may further flesh out the picture.

SUMMARY OF K. 762 OF 673 CE

A *liṅga* of Śiva was installed in this place in 595 (st. I). Invocation to Śiva (st. II). Praise of king Jayavarman [I] in terms that also apply to Viṣṇu (st. III–IV). There was an honoured servant of that king who was appointed head of the king’s assembly (st. V–VI). He installed a Śiva called Kedāreśvara (st. VII). For the worship of Kedāreśvara, Kurāja [the servant of Jayavarman I] endowed the god with various kinds of material wealth: a golden sheath, a crown, other vessels, land and cattle (st. VIII–IX). He entrusted the foundation to his sororal nephews Uttara and Udaya (st. X). Whoever damages or steals from it, should go to the 21 hells (st. XI).

¹² Goodall, “Nobles, Bureaucrats or Strongmen? on the ‘Vassal Kings’ or ‘Hereditary Overlords’ of Pre-Angkorian City-states: Two Sanskrit Inscriptions of Vidyāviśeṣa, Seventh-century Governor of Tamandarapura (K. 1235 and K. 604), and an Inscription of Śivadatta (K. 1150), Previously Considered a Son of Īśānavarman I.”

¹³ As reported in Lintingre, “A la recherche du sanctuaire prèangkorien de Vat Phou,” 516.

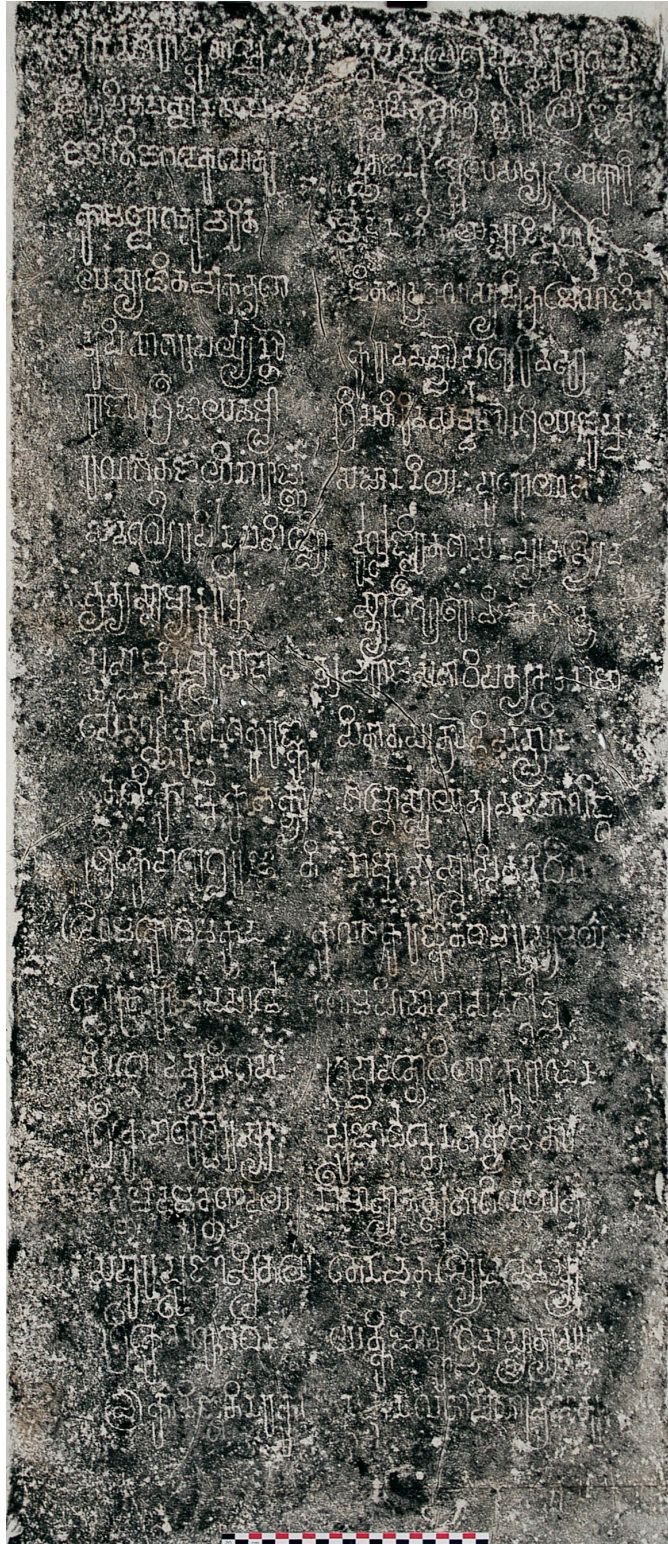


Figure 9. Photograph of EFEO estampage n. 963 of K. 762.

EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF K. 762 OF 673 CE

The re-edition given below is essentially that of Gerdi Gerschheimer, who kindly passed me his text in 2011, based on the *edito princeps* published by Cœdès on pp. 12–15 of the first volume of his *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, but also on the examination of photos of the EFEO estampage n. 963 (Figure 9). He had given me his edition with the suggestion that I read this inscription in the seminar on Cambodian inscriptions that he and Claude Jacques were jointly conducting at the École pratique des hautes études in Paris at that time. This explains how I came to write up a few observations about its interpretation in my report of lectures in the *Annuaire* of the École pratique des hautes études.¹⁴ Since that very brief report covers only a couple of points of interest and is anyway unlikely to be read widely, and since there is furthermore now the possible link with K. 1059 to be considered, it seems worth giving a complete new text and, for the first time, an English translation. However, since some introduction, for instance about the archeological context, has already been furnished by Cœdès, the annotation will be brief.

I. [˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / -- // ˘ ˘ / -- / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ - / - ;
 - ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ - // - ˘ ˘ / -- / ˘ / -- / -]

- (1) śaranavaśārāṅkitāpde • vṛṣendralagne punarvvasuyutendau
 (2) caitrasitapakṣanavame • sthāpitam atraśvaram liṅgam

a. °apde : Understand °abde.

In the year marked [5] arrows, nine, [5] arrows, the horoscope being in Taurus, the moon in conjunction with Punarvasu, on the ninth [lunar day] of the bright fortnight of the month of Caitra, a liṅga of Īśvara was installed here.

This follows the translation of Cœdès, who identifies the date, 595 *śaka*, as 673 CE. What he does not comment upon is how extremely rare it is to find an inscription in Sanskrit that begins with a date. Inscriptions in Khmer, of course, quite frequently begin with a date, either written in numeral digits, or written out in words, as in the case of the earliest dated Khmer inscription, K. 600. One or two cases may be found where the date occurs “at the beginning” of a Sanskrit text because the inscription only consists in one or two stanzas anyway. But a longer Sanskrit inscription that begins with a date may not find a parallel. Is this simply an unexplainable idiosyncrasy? I do not think so. To many Indian eyes, this date is immediately striking as a powerful moment, for it is the date of Rāma’s birthday, *rāmanavamī*, the ninth lunar day of the bright fortnight of Caitra, the first of the

¹⁴ See Goodall, “Conférences de M. Dominic Goodall, Directeur d’études de l’EFEO. 1. Textes sanskrits indiens et inscriptions du Cambodge.”

two months of spring. One may wonder about the astrological cogitations that led to the selection of certain particular moments for some other foundations, but in this case there can surely be no doubt. Although this is a Śaiva foundation, Rāma's birthday was chosen for its inauguration.¹⁵ Of course this day is not everywhere exclusively a festival for Rāma, for it is also the culminating day of the Vasanta-Navarātri (the vernal nine-nights festival), which may be variously inflected to suit different devotions in different regions today.

II. [~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ - ~ / - - // ~ ~ ~ ~ / - - / ~ - ~ / ~ ~ - / - ;
 - - / ~ - ~ / ~ ~ - // - ~ ~ / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ / - ~ ~ / -]

(3) jayati jagadekahetu•r nnatajananiśśreyasābhyudayakārī

(4) kāmañ jagatsucarita•cchedanam iti yas sa nirddahati

b. nnata°] To me, this looks instead like *ñata°*, with an initial retroflex. Even if that is what was written, one would still understand *nata°*.

He is victorious, that one creator of the universe, who brings about liberation and heaven for people who bow before him, and who burns Kāma, the destroyer of good deeds in creatures.

Unlike Cœdès,¹⁶ I understand there to be two goals, not one, that Śiva helps people to attain. They are the ultimate good, literally “that than which nothing is superior” (*niśśreyasa*), in other words “liberation,” and heaven (*abhyudaya*), a lower goal, because it does not preclude recidivism. Exactly the same pair is found in K. 834, st. V, where Cœdès renders them appropriately with “béatitude finale” and “bonheur”¹⁷ and also in K. 268, North Tower, st. XXVII, also correctly rendered by Cœdès¹⁸ and Mertens.¹⁹ He slips up again in st. LI of K. 111, however, where they appear in the compound *mokṣābhyudayasiddhaye*, which he mistakenly translates with “en vue de provoquer l’aurore de la délivrance.” They are more usually put

¹⁵ Here is Rāma's birth as recounted in the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 3:13c–15:

daśame māsi kausalyā suśuve putram adbhutam
 madhumāse site pakṣe navamyām karkaṭe śubhe
 punarvasvṛkṣasahite uccasthe grahapañcake
 meṣam pūṣaṇi samprāpte puṣpavṛṣṭisamākule
 āvir āśī jagannāthaḥ paramātmā sanātanah.

“In her tenth month [of pregnancy] Kausalyā gave birth to an astonishing son. In the month of Madhu [Caitra], in the brightening fortnight on the ninth [lunar day], under the auspicious [zodiac sign of] Cancer, along with the asterisms Punarvasu and Rkṣa, while the five planets [of Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus and the sun] were in the ascendant, with the sun having reached [the sign of] the Ram, [at a moment] busy with the showers of flowers [cast by celestials], there appeared the Lord of the universe, the eternal Supreme Soul.”

¹⁶ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I, 14.

¹⁷ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* V, 258.

¹⁸ Cœdès, “Les inscriptions de Bat Cum (Cambodge),” 250.

¹⁹ Mertens, *Die Sanskrit-Inschriften von Bat Chum (Kambodscha). Text mit Übersetzung und Kommentar und stilistischer Analyse*, 103.

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

in the reverse order, with heaven first, and often expressed instead with the terms *svarga* and *apavarga* (numerous instances could be cited from later inscriptions, such as K. 528, st. CCVI, and K. 806, st. CCXCVII). There is perhaps an allusion here to the definition of Dharma of *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 1.1.2 *yato 'bhyudāyāniḥśreyasasiddhiḥ, sa dharmah*. “That from which one attains heaven and liberation is Dharma.” Thus, according to this inscription, the source of merit (*dharmā*) is worship of Śiva. For an allusion to another Vaiśeṣika definition of *dharmā*, that of Praśastapāda, in an earlier seventh-century Khmer inscription, see K. 604, st. X.²⁰

III. [- - / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - // ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / - ~ ~ / - ;
~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / - - // ~ ~ - / - - / ~ ~ - / - / ~ ~ -]

(5) yasyājītacakrabhṛto • jītaśatrugaṇasya vikrameṇa jītā

(6) Api sāgaraparyantā • karāvavaddhā harer iva bhūḥ

a. yasyājīta ° : yasya jīta ° *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I.

d. bhūḥ : bhū *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I. The visarga, aligned vertically with the visarga that finishes line 7, is separated from the graph for bhū.

By the valour (*vikrameṇa*) of him who maintains an invincible army (*ajītacakrabhṛtaḥ*) and who has conquered the [internal and external] groups of his enemies (*jītaśatrugaṇasya*), the earth (*bhūḥ*) was conquered, even up to the limits of the oceans (*api sāgaraparyantā*), and constrained with taxes (*karāvabaddhā*), just as she was conquered by the large [triple] stride (*vikrameṇa*) of Viṣṇu (*hareḥ*) — *who has conquered his enemies* (*jītaśatrugaṇasya*) *and who wields an invincible discus* (*ajītacakrabhṛtaḥ*) — *and she was held in his hand* (*karāvabaddhā*).

The final portion in italics retranslates the pun here, for, as so often in royal epigraphy, the king is compared to Viṣṇu using expressions that can be applied to both of them, often by assuming two different senses (*śleṣa*). In the case of the king, his enemies are both the regular external variety and also the internal enemies that are the passions (cf., e.g., *Raghuvamśa* 17: 45). In the case of Viṣṇu, they are of course various demons. The word *cakra*, when describing the king, refers to an army, whereas when describing Viṣṇu it is of course his famous discus. As for *kara*, “hand,” it may also refer to taxes, a sense perhaps often neglected in Cambodian contexts, for little is known about taxes, and still less was known before the discovery of K. 1320.²¹ As for the earth resting in Viṣṇu’s hand, this is a constant in the early sculptures of mitred Viṣṇus, whose broad spread across the region has been

²⁰ Goodall, “Nobles, Bureaucrats or Strongmen? on the ‘Vassal Kings’ or ‘Hereditary Governors’ of Pre-Angkorian City-states: Two Sanskrit Inscriptions of Vidyāviśeṣa, Seventh-century Governor of Tamandarapura (K. 1235 and K. 604), and an Inscription of Śivadatta (K. 1150), Previously Considered a Son of Īśānavarman I,” 50–51.

²¹ See Goodall and Jacques, “Stèle inscrite d’Īśānavarman II à Vat Phu: K. 1320.”

discussed, for instance, by Dalsheimer and Manguin.²² Viṣṇu's four hands, when preserved, are shown holding a conch, discus, mace and a round ball that represents the earth. The convention appears to have disappeared relatively quickly across the Indian subcontinent. As Adalbert Gail remarks at the beginning of the summary of his article of 2009, "A globular object held by Viṣṇu in his lower right hand has troubled scholars for decades. No text, neither a narrative nor an iconographic one, provides any information about that attribute." As remarked by Gerschheimer and Goodall,²³ K. 762 appears to be the earliest inscription to mention it, and it may actually be the earliest so far spotted textual allusion to this iconographic theme. Later, earth is mentioned as being held by Viṣṇu in an eighth-century inscription, K. 1254, in st. XVII, and it is possible that all four attributes are obliquely alluded to in st. XX, but clear and explicit mention of all four of Viṣṇu's attributes may be found in st. V of K. 165 and st. VIII of K. 275, both of the tenth century.

Cœdès appears not to have suspected the use of *śleṣa* here, and this is understandable, since such elaborate punning was generally eschewed by Kālidāsa, the principal literary model of the age, and so tended to be little favoured by Khmer poets for a further century.²⁴

IV. [- - / - ~ ~ / - - // - ~ ~ / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - ~ / - - / - ;
~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ ~ - / - - // ~ ~ - ~ / - - / ~ ~ / - - / -]

(7) rājā śrījayavarmā • śrīpatir iva sarvādā śrīyā juṣṭaḥ

(8) raṇāśatajayinām rājñām • sa mānanīyaḥ puroyātaḥ

d. sa mānanīyaḥ : samānanīyaḥ *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I.

That (*sa*) King Śrī-Jayavarman, like the spouse of Śrī [Viṣṇu] in that he was constantly enjoyed by [Royal] Glory (*śrīyā*), was worthy of the respect (*mānanīyaḥ*), of other kings who were victorious in hundreds of battles, as one who went out in front [in the van of battle].

Viṣṇu is constantly "enjoyed" by Śrī because, other than being his wife, she takes the form of the *śrīvatsa*, a whorl of hair or jewel or homuncule fixed to the centre of his chest. Jayavarman is said to be similarly constantly "enjoyed" by Śrī, since the goddess Śrī may be equated with *raṇyāśrī*, "Royal Glory" or "Majesty," with whom the king is constantly united, in a manner that is sometimes characterised as sexual (e.g. in K. 528, st. CLV).

²² Dalsheimer and Manguin, "Viṣṇu mitrés et réseaux marchands en Asie du Sud-Est : nouvelles données archéologiques sur le Ier millénaire apr. J.-C."

²³ Gerschheimer and Goodall, "« Que cette demeure de Śrīpati dure sur terre... ». L'inscription préangkorienne K. 1254 du musée d'Angkor Borei," 129, quoting Goodall "Conférences de M. Dominic Goodall, Directeur d'études de l'EFEO. 1. Textes sanskrits indiens et inscriptions du Cambodge."

²⁴ Goodall, "Les influences littéraires indiennes dans les inscriptions du Cambodge : l'exemple d'un chef-d'œuvre inédit du VIIIe siècle (K. 1236)," 78–80.

Two Inscriptions from *Liṅgaparvata* (Vat Phu)...

V. [~ ~ - / ~ ~ ~ ~ / -- // -- / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / -- / - ;
 -- / - ~ ~ / -- // -- / -- / ~ / ~ ~ - / -]

(9) savalair api nrpsaiṅhai•r durllaṅghitaśāsanasya tasyaiva

(10) bhrtyas svāmyanurakta•s tyāgī śūro vijitaśatru(h)

d. °śatru(h) : °śatru[h] *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I. As in line 6, the visarga is apparently separated from the letter that precedes it and aligned with the final letter in line 9.

Of that same [king] (*tasyaiva*), whose commands were impossible to transgress, even for lions among kings possessed of armies, there was a servant devoted to his master, generous, a warrior (*śūrah*) who vanquished his enemies.

VI. [- - / ~ ~ - / -- // ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ - / - ;
 -- / ~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ ~ // ~ ~ - / -- / ~ / -- / -]

(11) svasvāminaf prasādā•t sa ca rājasabhādhīpatyakṛtanāmā

(12) sauvarṇṇakalaśakaraṅka•sitātapatrādisanmāṅḥ

And that [servant], by the grace of his master, was named head of the king's assembly, [and] was distinguished by such marks of honour as golden pots and cups and a white parasol.

Note that this stanza echoes st. V of K. 1059, which could be taken as further faint support of the hypothesis that the same individual commissioned both inscriptions. It is of course not clear what would have been understood by “head of the king's assembly” (*rājasabhāpati*) in this period. The *sabhā* could perhaps have been a court of justice. The qualification *śūrah*, in the previous stanza, which was also applied to Jayantakurājaka's unnamed father in st. III of K. 1059, implies that Kurāja had served as a soldier to the king, and this stanza might be telling us that he was appointed as a judge.

VII. [- - / - ~ ~ / -- // -- / -- / ~ ~ - / -- / - ;
 -- / -- / ~ ~ ~ ~ // -- / -- / ~ / - ~ ~ / -]

(13) tenaikāntikabhaktyā • śambhos svāyaṁbhavaṁ mahāliṅgaṁ

(14) śrīkedāreśvara Iti • nāmnā sa[m]sthāpitam vidhinā

That man, with single-focussed devotion to Śiva installed in accordance with the rules a great self-born *liṅga* called Śrī-Kedāreśvara.

Jayantakurājaka installed a *vedī* to Nārāyaṇa, whereas Kurāja is described as having single-focussed devotion to Śiva. He could have switched affiliation, or this could be a well-worn cliché not actually intended to imply that he had absolutely no

time for other gods, or intended only to mean that he had single-focussed devotion to Śiva at the moment of establishing this *liṅga*. The choice of the day famous as Rāma’s birthday suggests that he may not have regarded focussed devotion to Śiva as necessarily excluding the possibility of paying deference also to Viṣṇu.

A “self-born” *liṅga* is typically a naturally formed *liṅga* of rock or sand or, in some cases, an anthill.²⁵ Even though such formations are natural, that does not necessarily mean that it was impossible that there should have been a rite of *pratiṣṭhā* (“installation”) to inaugurate them.²⁶

As for the name Kedāreśvara, it is a Śaiva theonym found in several pre-Angkorian sites, as Cœdès remarks²⁷ apropos of K. 451 (see also Bhattacharya,²⁸ and the lengthy discussion of sacred Indian topography transposed to Khmer territory of Sanderson.²⁹ The name is taken from the sacred site of Kedāra³⁰.

VIII. [- - / - - / ~ ~ - // ~ ~ ~ ~ / - - / ~ - ~ / - ~ ~ / - ;
- - / - - / ~ ~ - // - ~ ~ / - - / ~ / - - / -]

(15) haimaṃ kośaṃ makutaṃ • kalaśakaraṅkaṃ tathā ca rūpyamayāṃ

(16) kṣetrārāmā vahavo • gomahiṣā dāsavarggās ca

A golden sheath [for the *liṅga*] (*kośam*); a crown; and pots and cups made of silver; fields and gardens; many cows and buffaloes and groups of slaves ...

On early literary references to the metal sheaths known variously as *liṅgakośa*, *mukhakośa*, *kośa* and so forth, see Kafle commenting on *Niśvāsamukhatattvasambhita* 1: 116c–117b.³¹ In *dāsavarggāḥ*, the element ^o*varggāḥ* could simply be taken as a plural-marker, yielding the meaning “slaves,” but it is possible that it means that the slaves were divided into “teams” according to their various functions (as we find in a very large number of inscriptions, for instance in K. 600), and perhaps also according to their working shifts, as we find in the ninth-century lists of personnel for the four shrines at Lolei (for K. 324, K. 327, K. 330 and K. 331, the different teams of different types of workers, grouped according to whether they worked in the dark

²⁵ For a discussion of Khmer instances, see Bhattacharya, *Les Religions brahmaniques dans l’ancien Cambodge d’après l’épigraphie et l’iconographie: Thèse principale présentée à la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l’Université de Paris pour le Doctorat ès Lettres*, 77.

²⁶ See, for example, Brunner, *Le rituel quotidien dans la tradition sivaïte de l’Inde de Sud selon Somasambhu*. 4, fn. 7, which alludes to a later ritual manual that explains one particular type of rite to be suitable for the “installation” of self-born *liṅgas*.

²⁷ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* V, 49.

²⁸ See Bhattacharya, *Les Religions Brahmaniques Dans l’ancien Cambodge d’après l’épigraphie et l’iconographie: Thèse Principale Présentée à La Faculté Des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l’université de Paris Pour Le Doctorat Ès Lettres*, 50–51.

²⁹ Sanderson, “The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers (Part I),” 403–409.

³⁰ See Bisschop, *Early Śaivism and the Skandapurāna: Sects and Centres*, 180–181.

³¹ Kafle, *A Preface to the Earliest Surviving Śaiva Tantra (on Non-Tantric Śaivism at the Dawn of the Mantramārga)*, 263–266.

or the bright fortnight, are tabulated by Soutif).³²

IX. [~ ~ - / - ~ ~ / - - // - - / - - / ~ ~ - ~ / - - / - ;
- - / - - / ~ ~ - // - - / - - / ~ ~ / - ~ ~ / -]

(17) vividho dravyaviśeṣaḥ • śraddhādatto dhiyā kurājena

(18) śrīkedāreśvarasya • pūjārthan tena bhaktimatā

— various particular forms of wealth were given with faith and forethought by that (*tena*) Kurāja, who was full of devotion, for the sake of the worship of Śrī-Kedāreśvara.

As we have now already revealed, we assume that Kurāja is a title or proper name of the founder, possibly a shortened form of Jayantakurāja, and that it cannot simply refer here to the king Jayavarman I, for several reasons: 1) the immediately preceding context speaks of the founder, whom we know to have been a servant of the king; 2) the immediately following verse speaks of two sororal nephews who seem to belong to the founder; 3) the expression *kurāja*, used to refer to the king, seems not idiomatic and is not paralleled, as far as we can discover.

We should perhaps emphasise that this change of interpretation means that Jayavarman I is thus no longer a direct sponsor of the foundation recorded in K. 762. It is of course not impossible that he should have been, but the number of truly “royal” foundations, made directly by a seventh-century king himself, is in fact rather rare in the pre-Angkorian corpus.³³

X. [- ~ ~ / ~ ~ - / - ~ ~ // - - / - - / ~ ~ - ~ / - - / - ;
~ ~ - / - - / ~ ~ - // - ~ ~ / - - / ~ ~ / - - / -]

(19) dattam idam uttarodaya•nāmābhyām tatsvabhāgineyābhyām

(20) sapuram pūjāsthītaye • tena ca tasyaiva devasya

c. sapuram *Inscriptions du Cambodge* II, p. 213 : sa puram *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I.

He entrusted this [foundation] to his two sororal nephews Uttara and Udaya, along with the temple [that housed it] (*sapuram*) for the sake of the continuity of the worship (*pūjāsthītaye*) of that same god.

On the prevalence among the Khmers of the *mātula-bhāgineya* succession pattern (from maternal uncle to sororal nephew), see, for instance, Vickery.³⁴

XI. [- - / - - / ~ ~ - // - - / - - / ~ ~ - ~ ~ / - ;
- - / - ~ ~ / ~ ~ - // - - / ~ ~ - / ~ ~ / - ~ ~ / -]

³² Soutif, “Organisation religieuse et profane du temple khmer du VIIème au XIIIème siècle,” 467ff.

³³ See Goodall forthcoming, “Kālidāsa’s Kingship among the Khmers.”

³⁴ Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th-8th Centuries*, 372–373.

- (21) śrīkedāreśadhanam • yat kiñ cit kaś cid āhr̥tya sarat[i]
(22) Ekāviñśatīnarakā•n duxkhānalatāpito vrajatu

b. sarat[i] : sara[tī] *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I. There is a metrical problem in the cadence of the first half-line that Coedès did not mention. No conjectural repair has been proposed. I doubt the reading *sarat[z]*, but cannot improve on it. It would have been simpler (and metrical) to write: yat kiñ cit kaś cid āharatī, “whoever takes anything”.

c. °narakān duḥkhānala° : °narakānta+khānala° *Inscriptions du Cambodge* I.

If anybody should take away anything at all of the wealth of Śrī-Kedāreśvara and run off (*sarati* ?), may he go to the twenty-one hells, [and be] tormented by fires of misery.

Twenty-one is the number of hells in the *Manusmṛiti* (4: 87–90). For other numbers common in Śaiva and other traditions, see Goodall, *The Parākhyatantra: A Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta*, 282ff, fn. 490.

THE INSCRIPTION OF VAT OUP MONG (K. 1060)

The last inscription in this article, K. 1060 of Vat Oup Mong, is presented with the most doubts and misgivings. So little can be read with real certainty that it might not seem worthy of being presented at all. As explained above, however, I long assumed K. 1060 to be K. 1059’s partner, in as much as both come from the same immediate area, and each seemed to record the pious foundations of seventh-century “governors” of Liṅgapura (for seventh-century governors, see Goodall, “Nobles, Bureaucrats or Strongmen? on the ‘Vassal Kings’ or ‘Hereditary Governors’”) appointed in the reign of the same king, Jayavarman I.

Now that I am after all persuaded that K. 1060 is probably an inscription of the reign of Jayavarman II, as Claude Jacques had suggested,³⁵ I could have dropped K. 1060 from this article, particularly since it is broken and badly worn in patches, which means that every glance at photographs is liable to lure one into further hours of inspection in the belief that further letters can surely be read. However, after months of poring over photographs of an estampage before visiting Laos, I was able to decipher nothing new when I was at last able to examine the stone itself, nor subsequently after receiving, late in 2017, a magnificent RTI composite photograph that enables one to direct the angle of light and perform a virtual examination of each anfractuosity in the surface of the stone. And so it now seems worth publishing the few lines that can be read, for there seems to be no reasonable hope of bettering the transcription in the future. Furthermore, it is the only known document that mentions Jayavarman II that seems actually to belong to his reign, and so worthy of publishing for that circumstance, alone, even if little else can be drawn from it.

³⁵ Lintingre, “A la recherche du sanctuaire prèangkorien de Vat Phou,” 517, fn. 61.

PALEOGRAPHY OF K. 1060

At first blush, the writing of K. 1060 might look like that of a seventh-century Khmer document, of which so many hundreds have been preserved, which is what at first convinced me that an early ninth-century date was implausible (Figure 10). Among the relatively archaic features, pointing to a seventh-century date, we may note the long descendants on the instances of the letter *r*, the still pre-Angkorian shape of the *bha* (which seems already to have been replaced by the dropped-shoulder Angkorian type of *bha* in the inscriptions of the reign of Jayavarman II's next but one successor Indravarman),³⁶ and also of the *va* (whose belly protrudes further to the left than to the right). We may note also the volutes appended to the bottoms of the elongated vowel-markers for long *ā* (for instance for the word *vakpatih* at the end of line 4), a feature which is shared in K. 367, also from Vat Phu, which is ascribed to the reign of Jayavarman I.

Against this, however, we may note first of all that idiosyncratic volutes added to decorate some letters might crop up in different periods, and that we find a fine range, albeit of different

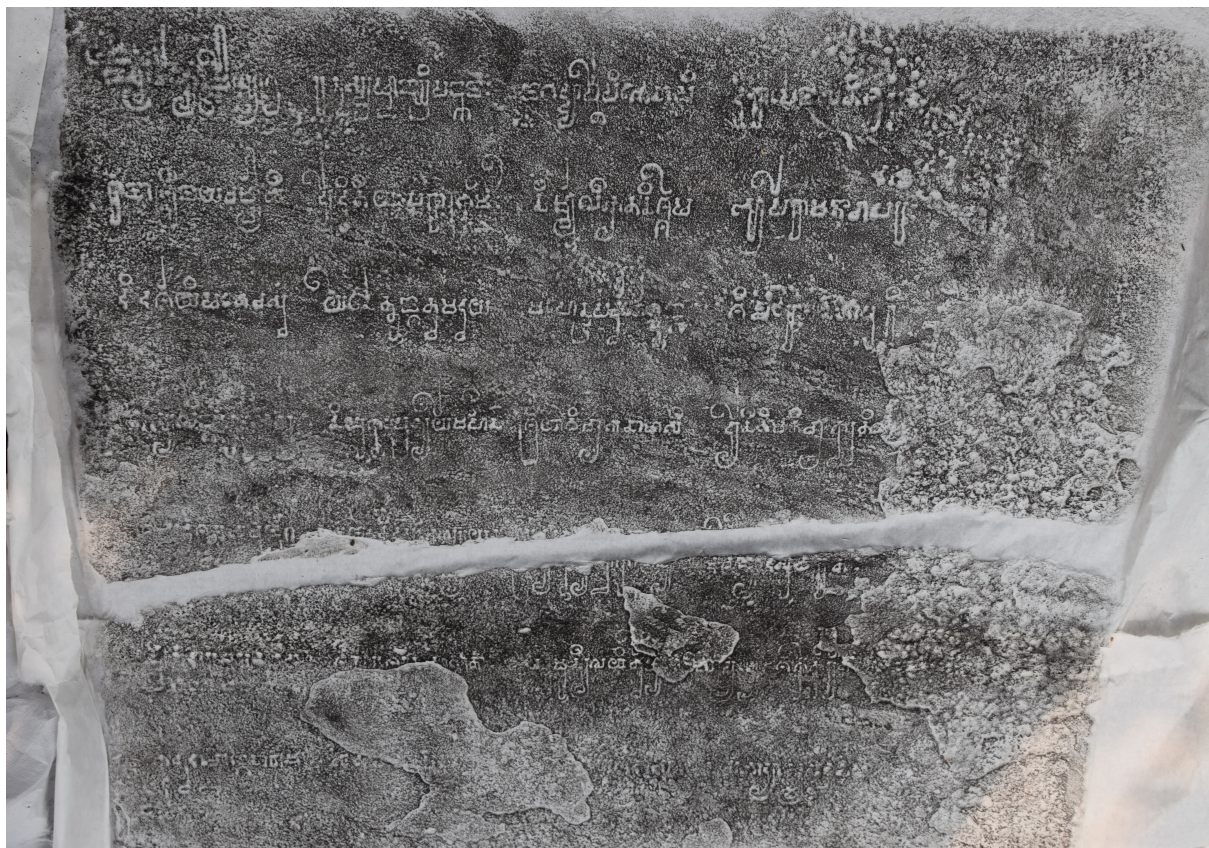


Figure 10. Photograph of the estampage of K. 1060 made by a team consisting of the Stone Restoration Workshop of the National Museum (Phnom Penh) and of staff of the Museum of Vat Phu in 2015. (Photo: David Bazin.)

³⁶ If Jayavarman III was indeed succeeded by Indravarman, as Vickery (2001) has plausibly reasserted.

flourishes, a century later than K. 367 in K. 1254 of 763 CE.³⁷

Secondly, we may note that there are some features that are not archaic in K. 1060. Thus we find no instances of *jihvāmūṭṭya* (replacing a *visarga* before a guttural) or *upādhmāṇṭṭya* (replacing a *visarga* before a labial). Admittedly, this is not a very significant omission: the text sample is small, the symbols for *jihvāmūṭṭya* and *upādhmāṇṭṭya* are often only sporadically used in seventh-century inscriptions, not consistently, and furthermore they begin to be gradually less common in the Khmer epigraphical record in the second half of the seventh century. But it is worth recording that *jihvāmūṭṭya* has been used in K. 1059 and K. 762 in all the places where it was possible, and that there are no places in those two inscriptions where an *upādhmāṇṭṭya* would have been possible; in K. 1060, by contrast, there are two places where an *upādhmāṇṭṭya* could have been used, but there is instead a regular *visarga* in each case, and there is no place where a *jihvāmūṭṭya* could have been used.

Also arguably less archaic is the alternation of the old form of the *ka*, characterised by a long descendant loop (lines 5 and 6), with the more modern form, which has no descendant (lines 1 and 4). But this more modern form of *ka*, without descendant, is found twice in line 8 of K. 367, the beautiful stela attributed to Jayavarman I³⁸ that declares the *liṅgaparvata* to be a place of sanctuary. Should that stela after all be considered later and reassigned, for instance, to the reign of Jayavarman I *bis*?

The big problem here, in deciding whether this inscription could belong to the very beginning of the ninth century, is that we have almost no firmly dated material for comparison. Moreover, even though I have mentioned that script practices had changed considerably by the reign of Indravarman, there is an important, and now missing, piece of evidence calling this into question that should be mentioned, namely K. 415 of śaka 799 (877 CE), the first year of Indravarman's reign. About that inscription, which Cœdès records as being in the Museum of Brest, Cœdès reports "... son écriture présente toutes les caractéristiques de l'époque préangkorienne et ne comporte encore aucun de ces fleurons qui prirent peu à peu un grand développement à l'époque angkorienne."³⁹ Alas, there is no inked estampage at the EFEO and in Claude Jacques' annotated copy of *Inscriptions du Cambodge VIII*, he has marked the word "disparue" (disappeared) above the mention of this inscription.

As far as I can see, the only dated inscription of exactly the right period appears to be K. 124, dated to 725 śaka (803 CE), just a year or two after the supposed accession of Jayavarman II, to which event, however, it makes no allusion.⁴⁰ Cœdès does not discuss the lettering, other than to observe that it is "très soignée" (very neat), but it is arguably comparable with that of K. 1060: it seems in every respect like pre-Angkorian writing (Figure 11), preserving still, for instance, the high-shouldered pre-Angkorian *bha*, and it too contains a mixture of instances of *ka* with and without

³⁷ See the script charts in Goodall and Gerschheimer "« Que cette demeure de Śrīpati dure sur terre... ». L'inscription préangkorienne K. 1254 du musée d'Angkor Borei," 142–146.

³⁸ Barth, "Stèle de Vat Phou près de Bassac (Laos)," 235.

³⁹ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge V*, 86.

⁴⁰ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge III*, 170–174.



Figure 11. Detail of EFEO estampage n. 531, showing just the last four lines of K. 124 for palaeographical consideration. Those lines read as follows:

- (22) *tasmai śivāya gurave • jyeṣṭhāryākyā namaskṛtvā*
 (23) *bhaktyanumānārtham idaṃ • sarvaṃ prādād iyaṃ rājñi //*
 (24) *ebhiḥ puṇyaphalair devī • nava = t[e]ba bhaktaye*
 (25) *śambhave tu phalatyāgād aiśaṃ padam avāpnuyāt_ //*

a descending loop. There is not much Sanskrit, and there is only one place where an *upādhmāniya* could have been used in the Sanskrit text, but there is instead a *visarga* there. Like K. 1060, it looks as though it could have been produced at any time in the eighth or late seventh century, but in this case we know from its explicit date that it in fact belongs to the beginning of the ninth.

To summarise, palaeographical arguments seem especially feeble here, given the extreme paucity of late-eighth-century and early-ninth-century material. Initially, I was convinced, on palaeographical grounds, that this inscription belonged to the reign of Jayavarman I, but it now seems to me that palaeographical considerations alone cannot exclude the possibility that it might have belonged to the reign of Jayavarman I *bis* or Jayavarman II.

In any case, I strongly suspect that Claude Jacques concluded that this inscription belonged to the reign of Jayavarman II not on palaeographical grounds, but because of the allusion to the Mahendraparvata in st. III, since the Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kulen) was the site of one of Jayavarman II's cities and is also famed to have been the place where he was consecrated king. Unfortunately, the way in which the Mahendraparvata is mentioned in st. III in this inscription is anything but clear, as we shall see below.

K. 1060 is a broken slab now lying on the ground but that appears to have been the doorjamb of a ruined temple that has now mostly disappeared, some of its masonry having apparently been used in the twentieth century in the fabric of the now abandoned and ruined small Buddhist monastery of Oup Mong. Nonetheless, part of the ground plan seems detectable, and there is a matching block of standstone laid beside it on the other side of the approach, which appears not to have been inscribed, but looks as if it was once the other doorjamb of the entrance to the temple (Figures 12 and 13). The inscribed doorjamb is broken across the middle of the fifth inscribed line, which at first led some to suppose that the inscription comprised only four lines, but



Figure 12. The ruined shrine with the two doorjamb slabs lying in front of it, the broken one on the viewer's left being K. 1060. (Photo: David Bazin.)

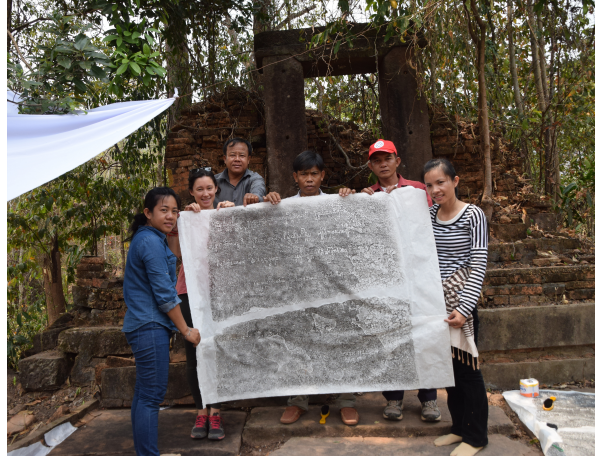


Figure 13. The team of the Stone Restoration Workshop of the National Museum (Phnom Penh) and of the Museum of Vat Phu with the estampage of K. 1060 in front of the ruined shrine in 2015. (Photo: David Bazin.)

it seems in fact to have seven. The last three are so damaged that almost no sense can be made of them. Some other stones still lie around on the surface nearby, including part of a pedestal for a *linga*. According to Lintingre, the *linga* itself was still there in 1973, as well as further elements of the pedestal and a still intact stone portico.⁴¹ The theonym is lost, but the first stanza of the inscription confirms that the lost temple must have been Śaiva.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF K. 1060

Of the two blocks into which the slab of dressed sandstone that appears once to have been a doorjamb has been broken, the top of the upper part is tucked under the first steps that surround the sanctuary, and so we cannot measure up to its upper limit. The other possible doorjamb, the unbroken slab that bears no inscription measures 111cm in breadth by 12cm in depth and 196cm in height, and this is comparable with the probable dimensions of the broken inscribed slab, which is 113cm in breadth by 12cm in depth. Because of the diagonal fracture and the step now covering its top, the height seems to be 101cm + 80cm on the left side, and 111cm + 57cm on the right side (Figure 14).

The body of each letter, without descenders and ascenders, is again (as in the case of K. 1059) about 2cm in height. But some of the descenders and ascenders are more elongated, and so some characters that have both descenders and ascenders are as much as 10cm in height. The

⁴¹ Lintingre, "A la recherche du sanctuaire préangkorien de Vat Phou," 517, fn. 61: "...les vestiges — un portique de pierre intact encore dressé et la partie inférieure des murs en brique, un *linga* avec sa *yoni*, deux fragments de *somasutra*, etc. — se trouvent au sommet de la colline de Vat Oubmong (anciennement Vat Phra Kéo), à l'extrémité d'un contrefort oriental du Phou Kao, qui est la montagne jumelle du Phou Passak"

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

gaps between the body of the letters in one line and the body of the letters in the next are thus also much larger, about 10cm. As explained above, the letters are of a style that one would normally assume to be pre-Angkorian.



Figure 14. Photograph showing the measurements of K. 1060.
(Photo: David Bazin.)

SUMMARY OF K. 1060

Invocation of Śiva (st. I). Mention of the king Jayavarman [II], who is compared to Paraśurāma for having extirpated *keśatriyas* (st. II), and who mounted a city on the Mahendraparvata to display his own loftiness (st. III). When in Liṅgapura, he engaged as trusty subject, called Śryadhivāka(?) (st. IV). Stanzas V, VI and VII are illegible, but st. VI seems to have contained a *śaka* date for the opening of the eyes of the image installed and st. VII seems to have recorded endowments.

EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF K. 1060 OF THE REIGN OF JAYAVARMAN II

What follows below is my transcription of K. 1060, begun some years ago on the basis of photographs by David Bazin of two estampages made on the spot by the Stone restoration workshop of the Phnom Penh National Museum in 2015 and a photograph by Michel Lorillard of an incomplete estampage made some years earlier (2003) by Michel Lorillard, when only the first four lines of the inscription had been noticed. Various colleagues, including Harunaga Isaacson,

Csaba Dezső and R. Sathyanarayanan, made helpful suggestions at early stages. I was then able to check the text in situ on 18.XI.2016, which unfortunately yielded no new certainties. Finally, a team led by Tom McClintock produced a beautiful RTI photograph in 2017 for the CIK project (Corpus des inscriptions khmères) under Dominique Soutif. Several such interactive photographs of other inscriptions produced by Tom McClintock and his team in the same period have proved invaluable for winning extra letters from the stone, but in this case, in spite of many hours of study, even the RTI photograph seemed to yield nothing new.

I.

(1) [yas] tr[ai][l](o)(k)y[en](dram)au(l)ya(g)ra•ratnaspr̥stānghripankajaḥ •
jaga(dvy)āpt(o) 'pi (k)enāpi • du(rā)(po) (ja)(ya)tīśvaraḥ

The Lord (*śvaraḥ*), whose lotus-feet are touched by the jewels from the tips of the diadems of the princes of all the three worlds ..., who pervades the universe and yet is somehow (*kenāpi*) difficult to reach (*durāpaḥ*), is victorious over all (*jayati*).

As can be seen from the thicket of round and square brackets, the reading of the first quarter is particularly tentative. I at first thought that two syllables might have been missing from the beginning and had proposed opening with [*śrīmān*] (agreeing with *śvaraḥ*), for this would work syntactically and would account for the *tr* of *trailokya* being the second member of a ligature. But *śrī* requires a distinctive combination of graphemes that occupy a lot of space both above and below the main body of the letter, and it does not seem likely to have been what was carved. Furthermore, from the point of view of both the spacing on the estampage and also the other letters detected and suspected in the line, it seems that only one syllable is missing from the beginning.

For the syllable *ndra*, only the lower loop is visible, but this element is sufficiently distinctive for identification (cf. the *ndra* of *mabendra* in line 3). In *maullyagra*^o, the doubled *l* in ligature with a semi-vowel is perfectly correct orthography, but it may not be encountered elsewhere in the Khmer epigraphical record.

As for the sense of the verse, it first presents Śiva in the manner of a temporal ruler, his feet being revered by prostrate rivals, but then reminds us of a theological paradox: he is omnipresent but hard to attain.

II.

(2) rājā śrījayavarmmāsī•d yo 'dviṭīyaḥ parākramaiḥ •
nirmūlikṛtaniśeṣa•bhūpo rāma Ivāparaḥ

There was a king Śrī-Jayavarman who was without a second (*advitīyaḥ*) in his acts of valour

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

(*parākramaiḥ*), who, like a second [Paraśu-]Rāma, uprooted all kings without exception, ...

In myth, Paraśurāma conceived a hatred of *ṛṣatriyas* (kings and warriors) and killed them all.

III.

(3) *didarśayiṣateva svamī • yenottuṅgatvam advayam • mahendraparvato(ttu)ṅgaśīkhar(o)[pa](natā) purī*

... who, as though (*iva*) desirous of displaying (*didarśayiṣatā*) his own (*svamī*) incomparable (*advayam*) loftiness [of spirit] (*uttuṅgatvam*), brought to the lofty pinnacles of the Mahendra mountain (*mahendraparvatottuṅgaśīkharopanatā*) a city (*purī*).

OR

... who, as though (*iva*) desirous of displaying (*didarśayiṣatā*) his own (*svamī*) incomparable (*advayam*) loftiness [of spirit] (*uttuṅgatvam*), handed over (*upanatā*) [to a vassal/governor] a city whose pinnacles were as lofty as the Mahendra mountain (*mahendraparvatottuṅgaśīkharā*).

I assume that it is the reference to the Mahendraparvata in this stanza that led Claude Jacques to assign this inscription to the reign of Jayavarman II,⁴² which would make this the only surviving document linked to him produced in his lifetime. For Mahendraparvata typically designates the Phnom Kulen, and it is well known that Jayavarman II is credited with having founded the city there.

The first translation given above reflects the possibility that this stanza praises Jayavarman II. But it is certainly not the interpretation that I began with, for, convinced that the lettering was seventh-century, I first assumed that Mahendraparvata must refer to another great mountain which was being compared with the mountain where the inscription is to be found, a site in or near the city referred to in the next stanza as Liṅgapura. There is, for instance, a well-known Mahendra mountain in eastern India, referred to famously in *Raghuvaṃśa* 4:40, when Raghu conquers the surrounding territory and plants upon the head of the mountain the mark of his fear-inspiring reputation for battle:

sa pratāpaṃ mahendrasya mūrdhni tikṣṇaṃ nyaveśayat
aṅkuśaṃ dviradasyeva yantā gambhīravedinaḥ

He planted his fierce power on the crest of Mount Mahendra, as a mahout brings down his sharp goad on the head of an unresponsive elephant.

⁴² Lintingue, “A la recherche du sanctuaire prèangkorien de Vat Phou,” 517, fn. 61.

One might even imagine that that particular verse of Kālidāsa partly inspired the choice of the name Mahendra for the mountain on which Jayavarman II established his royal credentials. But if our inscription belongs to the seventh century, long before that happened, then one could adopt instead the second translation. Also conceivable, if K. 1060 actually predates K. 1059, is that it could actually refer to the founding of the city known as Liṅgapura by Jayavarman I, in which case we might render the stanza as follows:

... who, as though (*iva*) desirous of displaying (*didarśayihata*) his own (*svamī*) incomparable (*advayam*) loftiness [of spirit] (*uttungatvam*), brought [here] (*upanata*) a city whose pinnacles were as lofty as the Mahendra mountain (*mahendraparvatottuṅgaśikharā*).

Furthermore, we have by no means finished cataloguing the doubtful points here. It should be noticed that the reconstruction of the text itself of the fourth quarter of the stanza is particularly tentative. It seems to me conceivable that *śikharat*^o was engraved (rather than *śikharo*^o), which could lead to a different reconstruction, for instance: ^o*śikhar(a)[r ja](natā) purī[m]*, where *janatā* could be the instrumental of a present participle describing the king: “creating a city with peaks as high as Mount Mahendra,” or “creating a city upon the lofty peaks of Mount Mahendra.” (This would mean that the syntax would continue into the next stanza, with the king being its logical subject expressed here in the instrumental.)

Another option would be to print an incomplete text at this point: *śikhar(ai/o) * * tā purī*.

But perhaps even if we were to decide to leave the text incomplete in this way, it is still most likely that a city on the Phnom Kulen is indeed alluded to here. After all, the Mahendraparvata in eastern India is not particularly renowned for its height, and there is no evidence to suggest that it would have been famous among the Khmers for anything other than its fleeting appearance, without description, in the *Raghuvamśa*, which we have quoted above. So the mention of a city (*purī*) in conjunction with the Mahendraparvata, even if we cannot see exactly how the two words were to be construed together, seems likely to allude to the city on the Phnom Kulen. In other words, it seems most probable that this inscription describes neither Jayavarman I nor Jayavarman I *bis*, but the early ninth-century sovereign who has come to be known as Jayavarman II. And since there is no subsequent king mentioned, it seems that the inscription must indeed date from the reign of Jayavarman II. In later times, his building a capital on the top of the Mahendragiri is a stock element in the eulogy of Jayavarman II (e.g. K. 598, st. XIV, as we have had occasion to mention above, but also K. 95, st. II, K. 190, st. XII; K. 449, st. XIII; K. 136, st. XV, etc.).

IV.

(4) [ta](sya Liṅgapura)[s](tha)(sya) • niyuktaḥ pratyayo mah(ā)n_ •
 śr(iyā)dhivā(ka)nāmāsī•d yo nītimativākpati[h]

Of that [king Jayavarman] when he was residing in Liṅgapura a great (*mahān*) trusty subject/householder (*pratyayab*) was employed (*niyuktab*), whose name was Śryadhivāka, a master of statecraft, intelligence and language.

The word *pratyaya* is polyvalent (“belief, faith, trust, proof, ordeal, etc.”), but is not commonly used of persons. Monier-Williams (following Böhtlingk’s Petersburger Wörterbuch) does however record, among many other senses, that it may mean “a dependant or subject,” “a householder who keeps a sacred fire.” For these meanings, he adduces only unnamed premodern lexicographers (“L.”), but the meanings seem not implausible, having perhaps at their root the notion of “someone in whom one can put trust.”

The word *adhivāka*, “protection,” features in some Vedic passages in the dative followed by *namah*, “veneration,” and so it is perhaps not unnatural that it should have become used in a name. It would be odd, however, for the name to consist of two inflected words: *śrī* in the instrumental followed by *adhivāka*. We should probably therefore understand this to be (for metrical reasons) an analysis (*vigraha*) of the name (“*adhivāka*, together with [the element] *śrī*,”) which could therefore be understood to have been Adhivākaśrī or Śryadhivāka. The latter might be rendered “who has Śrī for protection,” and has therefore been provisionally chosen. For another seventh-century instance of a name split into its constituent parts to fit the metre, see K. 13, st. VIII (as explained by Goodall, “Tying down Fame...,” 207, fn. 2).

Given the change of subject at this juncture, it seems reasonable to assume that Śryadhivāka, and not the king, was the benefactor who created and endowed the foundation.

A few palaeographical comments are in order. Sprouting above the *ha* of *mahān* in pāda b, there is a trace of a volute which we now take to be an ornamental variant form of the vowel *ā*. The two instances of *vā* in the above line both look somewhat like instances of *vr*, except that the vowel attaches to the top of the consonant (whereas *r* would normally attach to the bottom) and so both have been interpreted to be instances of *ā* with a volute as a flourish at the bottom. Note that such vowel-markers descending from the tops of the letters to which they are attached and descending to form volutes beneath those letters are employed several times in K. 367, where they are all clearly instances of long *ā*. The *ka* of Adhivāka is uncertain. It is assumed to be an instance of a *ka* without a long descending loop. Later instances of *ka* in this inscription (line 6) have such a descending loop, but the *k* of *kena* in the first stanza does not.

V.

(5) * * # (ī)śvarasa(r)v(v)e * * * di(?) * * ##yāyah •
 (a | #ra) #y#ū#y#v(a/ā)kā##y# • #i#e(j)yad# (l)uv ∪ ratah

VI.

(6) = = = = = • = = = = ∪ - ∪ tā •
 = = #y# mūn mīlayitv(ai) #y# • = = (d/s)ya #y# śak(e) kar(o)(t)•

This stanza seems to have contained a date of the *śaka* era. Unfortunately, I have not been able to read it. The absolutive form *mīlayitvā* may have referred to the opening of the eyes of the image whose creation and endowment are presumably the focus of this inscription.

VII.

(7) (krtv) ∪ (mvoṅganā(rā)ma•(bh) ∪ = = = ∪ - ∪ = •
 = = = = = • = = (bh)ādyā #ma - ∪ =

This stanza seems to have made reference to the endowment of the foundation with women (*aṅganā*), gardens (*ārāma*), other lands (*bh[ū]*) and no doubt other goods.

CONCLUSION

This is not really the kind of article that strictly requires a conclusion, since there has been no hypothesis developed. But it is perhaps useful to draw out a handful of conclusions that can be derived from the primary material presented.

First of all, it is perhaps worth emphasising that no new evidence of direct royal involvement by a king or his family at the site has been furnished. This seems worth underlining since Jayavarman I and Jayavarman II are both mentioned in the title, and it would be easy to skim through this article and then set the inscriptions aside retaining in one’s mind the unwarranted conclusion that these are edicts of those kings. Instead, these inscriptions furnish further evidence of the pious activities of an administrative class appointed by kings (cf. Goodall 2019 for an exploration of seventh-century governors). In K. 1059, a certain Jayanta-Kurājaka, belonging to an already high-ranking family that had enjoyed king Bhavavarman II’s patronage, was appointed governor of Liṅgapura, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Vat Phu, by Jayavarman I, and then —if K. 762 was indeed commissioned by the same man when later using the related name Kurāja —, after serving the king as a soldier, was assigned another administrative duty, that of *rājasabhādhipati* (perhaps court judge), further south towards the delta of the Mekong, in today’s Prey Veng province. Similarly, K. 1060 records the foundation of a high-ranking servant of Jayavarman II, appointed by the king in some unclear capacity (*pratyaya*), apparently when Jayavarman II made a sojourn in Liṅgapura.

Two Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu)...

About the precise location of Liṅgapura, neither inscription can be said to provide any firm information and so nothing has been said about this. But K. 1059 furnishes perhaps the earliest attestation of the existence of a place known by that name and it associates it with a governorship. Taking this information in conjunction with K. 1201 from Houay Kadian, some fifty kilometres to the south, an unpublished seventh-century inscription produced in *śaka* 576 by the brahmin Ukkhalādityasvāmin, who describes himself as a resident of Kurukṣetra,⁴³ we can perhaps be justified in concluding that Liṅgapura was the administrative capital of the region and that it was not the same town as the Kurukṣetra founded right on the bank of the Mekong by king Devānīka in the fifth century, as recorded in K. 365.⁴⁴

The religious historian may note that the liṅgaparvata was not exclusively sacred for devotees of Śiva. As in many other sacred places, various traditions of worship must have flourished side by side, and K. 1059 provides evidence of the worship of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa, even while its first stanza appears to acknowledge that the site was especially Śaiva. Furthermore, while fresh evidence discovered by the prospections of my colleague Christine Hawixbrock in 2017 awaits publication, pre-Angkorian sculptural artefacts in the site museum have long borne witness to an early presence there of Buddhism,⁴⁵ as does the double *stūpa* of Nong Vienne.⁴⁶ Sacred sites often attract a variety of religious activity, perhaps particularly when they are off the beaten track and thus magnets of pilgrimage. Vat Phu may not seem “off the beaten track” when described as being right next to two seventh-century towns, Kurukṣetra and Liṅgapura, but it is a forested mountain, and some exertion would have been required to visit any of its various temples. Furthermore, Jayavarman I’s edict K. 367 seems to forbid the use of palanquins.⁴⁷ With the expression *tīrthayātra*^o in stanza VI, the inscription K. 1059 further confirms the impression that strenuous exertion was designed to be part of the religious experience that was afforded by visiting the “altar” of Nārāyaṇa. It confirms, not that this is surprising, an awareness of the possibility of pilgrimage.

⁴³ For this information I am indebted to Gerdi Gerschheimer’s unpublished transcription of K. 1201 based on EFEO estampage n. 1489. The inscription is also alluded to as evidence for the maintenance in the seventh century of the name Kurukṣetra by Santoni & Hawixbrock (“Laos. Prospections 1999 au sud de Vat Phou (province de Champassak) : du Houay Khamouane à la frontière cambodgienne,” 396.), whose prospections led to the site’s discovery, and by Lorillard (“Introduction...,” 197).

⁴⁴ This is of course not a certain conclusion. We may note that Santoni & Hawixbrock (“Laos. Prospections 1999...,” 401) rather imply that there may just have been one town that went by both names and they suppose that its lifetime (« durée de vie ») may have been relatively short. Nonetheless, if there is evidence to suggest that the lifetime of Kurukṣetra, along the ghat of the Mekong, was relatively brief, more recent discoveries have shown that Liṅgapura, or at least its name, was still in use in the tenth-century edict K. 1320. And this circumstance tends to support the supposition that these were two different settlements.

⁴⁵ The pre-Angkorian sculptures of the Buddha bearing numbers VLK I 553, VLK I 530 and VP I 74 and described and illustrated by Hawixbrock, Jacques, Santoni, Souksavady, Zaleski (*Collections du musée de Vat Phu, Vat Phu Museum collections*. 58–64), for instance, bear testimony to early Buddhist religious activity in the immediate vicinity.

⁴⁶ Santoni & Hawixbrock, “Laos. Prospections 1999...,” 401.

⁴⁷ Barth (1902) takes the word *yāna*, in st. V, to refer to “chars”, but he had never seen the topography of the region. Driving any sort of cattle-drawn wheeled vehicle up to the temple of Bhadreśvara is surely inconceivable. I therefore assume that *yāna* refers rather to palanquins, which have long been in use at Indian sacred sites for visitors too grand or too infirm to use their own legs (e.g. the hill of Shravanabelagola in Karnataka).

What kind of worship was offered at this “altar”? What did this altar look like? Was it enclosed in a building or open to the sky? We have no conclusive answers to these questions.

Finally, for the student of iconography, we have perhaps the earliest textual confirmation that the ball or lump held in one of Viṣṇu’s four hands is intended to be the earth (K. 762, st. II); and for the astronomer/astrologer curious about the rationale for the selection of auspicious moments for foundations, we have (in st. I of the same inscription) a particularly clear-cut case: the anniversary of Rāma’s birth.

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