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Sectarian Rivalry in Ninth-Century Cambodia: A Posthumous Inscription Narrating the Religious Tergiversations of Jayavarman III (K. 1457)

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This article provides an edition and translation of an inscribed two-sided stela (K. 1457), discovered during the construction of a road in the northwest of Cambodia in 2019, that commemorates the endowment of a Viṣṇu temple during the reign of the ninth-century king Jayavarman III. The inscription, in Sanskrit verse except for a few lines in Khmer prose that give details of the grants made, is undated, but uses the posthumous name of Jayavarman III, namely Viṣṇuloka, whose death cannot have occurred later than 877 CE. »Syncretism« is a label often bandied about in connection with ancient Khmer religious life. In counterpoise, this epigraph alludes to Jayavarman III having attempted to drive out Buddhists and to convert his subjects into Śaivas, before being himself won over to Vaiṣṇava devotion, after his Śaiva chaplain was struck dumb and died during a debate with a priest of the temple of Cāmpesvara, once the most famous Viṣṇu temple in the Khmer religious landscape, whose location can no longer be determined with certainty. A second faith-inspiring drama is also sketched after the first endowment: a wife of the king entered Viṣṇu's temple while menstruating and began to bleed from her breasts. K. 1457 adds nuance to our picture of the interrelations between the classical Indian religions among the Khmers, and confirms the recognition at that time of three principal religionists: Buddhists, Vaiṣṇavas, and Śaivas. Comparison with evidence for religious rivalry specifically between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas in different parts of the Indian sub-continent (particularly Nepal and the Tamil-speaking South) enables us to set the Cambodian evidence in a relevant context.

Keywords: »Hinduism«, religious history, religious nomenclature, Khmer history, religious persecution, religious conversion, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism

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Often it is damaged sculptures and speculations about iconoclastic vandalism that are used as evidence for movements of religious intolerance or allegations in records produced by non-witnesses removed in time or place from the events they document. In the case of the pre-Angkorian Khmer-speaking region, for instance, the seventh-century Chinese monk Yijing speaks of a wicked king who seized power and persecuted Buddhists.¹ As Revire has noted, however, Yijing travelled in maritime Southeast Asia and appears never to have visited the region in question.² But an undated inscription has now come to light that actually provides some near-contemporary written evidence produced »on the spot«, and it pertains to a period that is especially sparsely documented for Cambodia: the first three quarters of the ninth-century, in particular the reign of Jayavarman III.³ We know that this king bore the posthumous name Viṣṇuloka, which is used of him here, but how did he acquire this name? This inscription narrates two sanguinary tales that purport to explain first his »conversion« from being a devotee of Śiva to being a devotee of Viṣṇu, and then the confirmation of his Vaiṣṇava faith. It further records that, even before this conversion, he had somehow conceived a dislike of Buddhists (*jaina*), whom he attempted to drive out (*nirasya*), converting his subjects so that they became »Śaiva«.

The fact that the evidence about intolerance is in this case written, perhaps unsurprisingly, hardly makes any clearer what the extent of the attempts at persecution or conversion may have been, or how long they may have lasted. But it does add some nuance to our picture of the peaceful coexistence (and even intermixture) of rival religious traditions in what might be regarded as either the very beginning of the Angkorian period, or the last gasp of a pre-Angkorian prelude to it.

It raises further unanswerable questions too. Various forms of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism all seem to have been present in the Khmer heartland in both Angkorian and pre-Angkorian times, but there seem to be few surviving epigraphic witnesses to the patronage of Buddhism by persons with direct contact with the royal court from this area in the pre-Angkorian period. This is different, of course, at least according to common consensus, for the Mon territory, where numerous endowments to Buddhist foundations are directly related to figures who claim royal status, such as the king of Canāśa, Face A of K. 400, and a princess of Dvāravatī in K. 1009, according to Skilling's reading, quoted by Revire.⁴ Revire, however, seeks to challenge this consensus, arguing that »Brahmanism« and Buddhism are both equally present across the entire Mon-Khmer region in pre-Angkorian times. This may be so, but evidence of direct royal patronage for Buddhist foundations seems especially thin for the pre-Angkorian Khmer-speaking territory.

Could this be because such Buddhist foundations and endowments closely backed by the court were hardly made there, or could the traces of some such foundations have disappeared because of occasional waves of intolerance, such as that alluded to in this inscription?

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- 1 For a brief account alluding to various scholars' identifications of the »wicked king« that have been proposed, see Dowling, *New light*, 129.
 - 2 See Revire, *Dvāravatī and Zhenla*, 408.
 - 3 Coëdes' list of inscriptions by reign, at the beginning of *Inscriptions du Cambodge* 8, 5, records no inscriptions dating from the reigns of the ninth-century kings Jayavarman II and Jayavarman III.
 - 4 Revire, *Dvāravatī and Zhenla*, 413.

A brief exploration, for comparison, of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava hostility in the Indian subcontinent, to which there are a great many allusions, even if many are not clear and unequivocal, might be instructive. A number of pointers are furnished by S.A.S. Sarma's useful 2012 article bearing the self-explanatory title »Harmony and Conflicts between the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Systems – The South Indian Scenario«. More recently, Sanderson's 2015 article on »Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period« provides a magisterial view of the relations between the various religious traditions in this period, of the political forces that tended to hold them together under the protection of the king, and the manner in which their cohabitation was seen by the theologians of the different traditions. Sanderson also, in a section entitled »Persecution«⁵ refers to a small number of what appear to be instances of persecution or rhetoric suggestive of persecution. For a lively ninth-century emic take on these issues, one can do no better than read Jayantabhaṭṭa's comic drama the *Āgamaḍambara*, translated by Csaba Dezső.⁶

While there are such head-on engagements with the subject, it is clear that mutual rivalry is often instead sublimated into mythological or ritual expression. A neat illustration of both forms of expression may be found in a South Indian form of Śiva known as Śarabheśvara. According to an ancient myth, Viṣṇu took the form of Narasiṃha to rid the world of the fearsome demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, whom none other could vanquish. But Śaiva retellings of this myth tweak it to glorify Śiva instead. For they add that Narasiṃha afterwards ran amok and none could control his destructiveness other than Śiva, who took the form of a golden bird with a lion's body having four downward-turned feet and four upward-turned ones, according to *Uttara-Kāmika* 54,⁷ a chapter of a South Indian Temple Āgama prescribing the rules for the installation of Śarabheśvara. Because of the background story, the worship of Śarabheśvara's idol in the temple is inevitably a ritual reminder of the ultimate supremacy of Śiva. Such sectarian warring through myth has a long history. An older example is the *liṅgodbhava* myth, which purports to see the origin of *liṅga*-worship in a quarrel between Brahmā and Viṣṇu about supremacy, only to be outclassed by the appearance of Śiva as a column of fire of infinite length (for comparisons of various versions of this myth, see the articles of Kafle, Wagner-Hohenberger, and Bisschop).⁸

5 Sanderson, *Tolerance, exclusivity, inclusivity*, 207-214.

6 Dezső, *Much Ado about Religion*.

7 Ed. Svāmināthaśivācārya, *Kāmikāgamaḥ Uttarabhāgaḥ*.

8 Kafle, *Liṅgodbhava* myth; Wagner-Hohenberger, *On the composition of parallel versions*; and Bisschop, *Vyoman: The sky is the limit*.

In many such cases, it may seem to some to be far-fetched to assume that more than mild mutual intolerance lies behind the joshing of such competitive myths, but sculptural representations of Śarabha are perhaps exceptional, since they can be pinned down to a particular moment and context.⁹ As L'Hernault¹⁰ and Smith¹¹ have pointed out, only four Cōla-period images in stone are known, three of them in royal temples (Vikramacōlīśvara at Tukkacchi, Kampahāreśvara at Tribhuvanam, Airāvateśvara at Darasuram) and the fourth in Chidambaram. L'Hernault explains:¹²

L'aspect sectaire de cette représentation est indéniable car son apparition a été plus ou moins contemporaine du moment où il existait de fortes tensions entre les śivaïtes et les viṣṇuïtes à Chidambaram où le roi Vikrama Chola (1118-1135) fit jeter à la mer la statue de Tillai Govindarājapperumāl. Avec l'apaisement des querelles dès les règnes suivants il est normal qu'on ait abandonné une forme d'une agressivité aussi manifeste envers le Sivaïsme et qu'on ne la rencontre pas après le 12e.¹³

David Smith further speculates,

The royal aspect of the cult should also be stressed, and the bizarre form could be seen to reflect the growing political stresses as Cōla power waned – desperate measures calling for desperate means. One might contrast Rājarāja's preference for the calm and stately Tripurāri *mūrti*, which exclusively occupies the niches on the second storey of the *vimāna* of the Great Temple of Tanjavur.¹⁴

Now, while one might dispute this characterisation of Chola politics at the time, or indeed the implicit characterisation of the (arguably bellicose) flavour of representations of Śiva as the Enemy of the Three Citadels (Tripurāri), what seems clear is that an aggressively sectarian image (Śarabha) was royally and expensively favoured at a time when mutual hostility between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas seems to have been expressed by acts of intolerance (the casting of the statue of Viṣṇu from Chidambaram into the sea).

Smith's book, by the way, concerns a poem in praise of the raised foot of Śiva dancing in Chidambaram in which Śarabha is mentioned in a protracted sequence of myths, where Śiva or the goddess must step in to check Viṣṇu's calamitously destructive power:

9 Versions of the tale of Śarabha, however, are, of course, spread widely across time and space, and there has been considerable evolution, some of which has been traced by Granoff, who shows that the earliest accounts of the Śarabha myth are not as aggressively sectarian (Granoff, *Saving the saviour*, 115-125).

10 L'Hernault, *Darasuram*, 88.

11 Smith, *Dance of Śiva*, 193.

12 L'Hernault, *Darasuram*, 88.

13 »The sectarian aspect of this representation is undeniable, for its appearance was more or less contemporaneous with the moment when strong tensions existed between the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas at Chidambaram when the king Vikrama Cōla (1118-1135) had thrown into the sea the statue of Tillai Govindarājapperumāl. With the pacification of the quarrels from the time of the following reigns it is not surprising that a form of such manifest aggression on the part of Śaivism was abandoned and is not found after the 12th century.« (Translation of Smith, *Dance of Śiva*, 193). Sanderson (*Tolerance, exclusivity, inclusivity*, 213, quoting Nilakanta Sastri and referring to the *Divyasūricarita*) also alludes to this episode, but ascribes it instead to Kulottuṅga II.

14 Smith, *Dance of Śiva*, 194.

One of the most striking sections of the *Kuñcitāṅghristava* is from verses 122-133, a section which begins with an irruption of terrible power as Śiva destroys one *avatāra* of Viṣṇu after another: each *avatāra* goes off the rails once it has achieved its intended purpose and has to be terminated.¹⁵

The history of the image of Govindarāja deep inside the Śaiva complex in Chidambaram, is a broad topic, but Sarma offers a brief overview.¹⁶ The Chidambaram case is well known for all sorts of reasons, but perhaps now rather hard to get to grips with factually, because so many sources of all periods (down to the big-budget popular Tamil film *Dasaavathaaram* of 2008, whose spectacular opening sequence reimagines the journey of the statue by boat through the mangrove forest to be cast into the ocean) offer discrepant versions. In fact, temple compounds with two principal shrines, one housing Śiva and one Viṣṇu, are rather common in the Tamil-speaking South. In contemporary Pondicherry, for instance, the so called Chetty Koil (or Kalatheeswar temple) has shrines to Śiva and Viṣṇu side by side within the same enclosure. Much earlier examples of such an arrangement are found at the rock-cut shrines of Malaiyaṭipaṭṭi and Tirumeyyam, both near Pudukkottai. In the case of the latter, a wall now divides the Vaiṣṇava part from the Śaiva one, following a litigious dispute between the two communities of worship in the thirteenth century. Our colleague Valérie Gillet intends to publish an account of the conflict there, which is reflected in dispositions that are recorded in Tamil inscriptions.¹⁷ In this particular case, there is documentary evidence, but such disputes may sometimes have occurred without leaving such explicit traces, so we cannot know how common they were.

For other sorts of evidence of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava intolerance, we may turn to Mahabalipuram under the Pallavas. There is a distinctively Śaiva central shrine in the famous rock-cut shrine at Mahabalipuram that has facing high-relief sculptures of Viṣṇu lying on the serpent Ananta and of the goddess battling Mahiṣāsura, but, as Lockwood et al. have demonstrated,¹⁸ it was clearly a Vaiṣṇava shrine that was repurposed, already in Pallava times, as a Śaiva one. Was this a peaceful transformation? The most recent scholar to discuss Pallava-period iconoclasm is Emmanuel Francis, who draws other cases from the same site into the picture and argues that Śaiva transformations of Vaiṣṇava shrines were made in the late seventh and early eighth centuries with direct royal backing.¹⁹ He treats separately the special and complex case of the so-called Rāmānujamaṇḍapa there, which has long been assumed to be a rock-cut Śaiva shrine that was converted to a Vaiṣṇava one centuries later in the Vijayanagara period, a transformation that involved entirely chiselling away the high-relief sculptures to leave only flat scars on the rock walls. Outside, on either side of the opening of the cave, are relatively crudely scored schematic representations of Viṣṇu's principal emblems, the conch and the discus. What has not been effaced, however, is an inscription in large floridly calligraphic

15 Smith, *Dance of Śiva*, 191-192.

16 See Sarma, *Harmony and conflicts*, 109-111.

17 Valérie Gillet presented some of the evidence in a presentation entitled »Land, revenue, tax: breakdown in 13th-century Tirumeyyam« that was delivered at a conference on »Ruptures and Breakdowns in Temple Life« organised at the EFEO and IFP in Pondicherry in December 2016.

18 Lockwood et al., *Pallava Art*, 7-20.

19 Francis, Śaiva curse inscription, 188-191.

Pallava-period lettering carved into the floor of the entrance that curses all those without devotion in their hearts to Rudra! In fact several scenarios have been proposed as to what may have happened. Francis considers, for instance, the possibility that the vandalisation of the sculptures might have happened in Pallava times, and that before that vandalisation the cave might have been first Vaiṣṇava and then rededicated to Śiva.²⁰ Whatever did happen, it seems clear that mutual intolerance led to iconoclastic violence and that some of this violence had royal backing, as can be seen from the evidence of the virulent curse, beautifully and prominently engraved in the Rāmānujamaṇḍapa and in three other shrines at the site.

The thrones of worship that are visualised for enthroning deities offer examples of more purely ritual expression of religious rivalry, as Goodall has attempted to show in an article in 2011 entitled »The Throne of Worship: An ‘Archaeological Tell’ of Religious Rivalries«. ²¹ By incorporating rival deities (or sometimes the prostrate corpses of rival deities) into lower levels of the throne, a visual (or at least visualised) demonstration of their inferiority to the deity who sits in majesty on top is enshrined in daily ritual, frequent repetition of which then acts as a sort of catechesis. Close to the bottom of Śaiva thrones is Ananta, who may be seen historically as the cosmic serpent or as Viṣṇu.

Explicit references to religious debates with sanguinary conclusions are also to be found, but they tend to be between mutually more distant religious groups and to bear signs of poetic exaggeration. In Cēkkīlar’s *Periyapurāṇam*, for instance, a twelfth-century hagiographical work in Tamil, it is recounted that the (possibly seventh-century) Śaiva singer-saint Jñānasambandha/Ñānacampantar engaged Jains in a debate at Madurai, and when he defeated them, the Pāṇḍya king, who had converted to Śaivism, had all 8000 Jains killed by impalement, a punishment for criminals. The tale is long and sinuous, covering stanzas 2497-2769.²²

Returning for a moment to the role of iconography in Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava relations, it seems worth quoting a stanza of a sixth-century Nepalese epigraph that records the installation of an image of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa (often called Harihara), a form whose left half is half of Viṣṇu and whose right half is half of Śiva, by a certain Svāmivārtta in the reign of Gaṇadeva. The stanza in question (st. 3, out of 5) makes explicit that this deity, in whom Śiva and Viṣṇu are fused together, is one that calms dissensions because it unites the worshippers of both:²³

bhinne puṁsām jagati ca tathā devatābhaktibhāve
 pakṣagrāhabhramitamanasām pakṣavicchittihetoḥ
 ity arddhābhyām samuparacitaṁ yan murārīśvarābhyām
 ekaṁ rūpaṁ śaradijaghanaśyāmagauram tad avyāt//

And since the world of men is divided with respect to the nature of devotion to deities, with the idea it might be a cause of cutting away the bias of those whose minds are confused because of clinging to a side, half of Viṣṇu and half of Śiva formed a single form that is dark and light like a cloud that arises in autumn. May that form help [us]!

20 Francis, Śaiva curse inscription, 204-209.

21 Goodall, Throne of worship.

22 McGlashan, Holy Servants, 216-237. Whether or how this event really took place is unclear, but it has cast a long shadow over religious relations: see, for example, Umamaheshwari, *Reading History*, 18, 110, 209, 213, 288, 301, etc.

23 The inscription is No. 50 in Vajrācārya Dhanavajra’s 1973 edition, *Licchavikālakā Abhilekha*.

In other words, just as some iconographic forms (such as the Śarabheśvara and Liṅgodbhava) were clearly sectarian (in varying degrees across time and space), others were seen to counter sectarianism and favour harmony. In addition to Svāmivārtta's installation of a Śāṅkara-Nārāyaṇa sculpture, another possible insight into Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava relations in the Kathmandu Valley may be gleaned from the *Umāmaheśvarasamvāda*, a work incorporated in Nepalese manuscripts of the Śivadharma corpus. There we find the veneration of Harihara and the inclusion of more Vaiṣṇava orientated themes and practices into a Śaiva textual framework, reflecting a religious environment in which there was a strong presence of Vaiṣṇava devotion (from early on) that had to adjust to competition with Śaiva devotion.²⁴

If, as seems not unlikely, Harihara was regarded as having a similar pacificatory role among the pre-Angkorian Khmers, then perhaps some of the images of Harihara bear witness to moments in which there was a political will to quell sectarian rivalries and promote harmony.²⁵ Unfortunately, the early inscriptional record does not tell us much about Harihara among the Khmers, for although there are a dozen pre-Angkorian epigraphs that mention him, the few clues they contain as to what might have governed the choice of this divine form are shadowy and ambiguous. There is no need to present the evidence here, since Julia Estève usefully sets out at some length all the inscriptions that refer to Harihara, both pre-Angkorian and Angkorian, discussing each case and improving here and there on details of both text and interpretation.²⁶ But she is principally concerned with examining the notions of syncretism versus inclusivism, and does not devote much attention to whether one motive for installing Śāṅkara-Nārāyaṇa images might sometimes have been to foster peaceful relations between rival religious groups. Paul Lavy's article, as its sub-title suggests, »The Politics of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Harihara Images in Preangkorian Khmer Civilisation«, does raise this question, but quickly dismisses it out of hand:

Harihara is commonly interpreted, however, as a syncretic deity that brought about the rapprochement of two allegedly »rival« Hindu sects, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. This explanation is over-simplistic and dubious, particularly if applied to the ancient Khmer; there is no evidence from the Preangkorian period, for example, to indicate hostilities or competition between various »exclusive« sects of Hinduism.²⁷

And yet, with the discovery of K. 1457, there is now such evidence of rivalry, at least for the mid-ninth century, before the well-documented Angkorian period.

24 For a discussion of this evidence bearing on Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava relations in the Kathmandu valley, see Mirnig and De Simini 2017.

25 In addition to Mirnig and De Simini (Umā and Śiva), who make such a case for Nepal, Nayar (Harihara sculptures of Kerala), in a short article on Harihara in Kerala that also mentions a number of early Harihara sculptures from across the subcontinent, seems to make the assumption, without really examining it, that Harihara generally had an anti-sectarian role. For mentions of sculptures of Harihara and of epigraphical allusions to him among the Khmers, including those of later periods, see Bhattacharya, *Religions brahmaniques*, 157-159.

26 Estève, *Étude Critique*, 233-275.

27 Lavy, *As in heaven*, 22.

Of course, any single model purporting to explain the background for all Harihara images is bound to be inadequate. To cite another example, it is often assumed (often no doubt correctly) that the Harihara form subordinates Viṣṇu, who occupies the (supposedly inferior) left body-half, to Śiva.²⁸ In other words, this would be a case of »inclusivism« practised by Śaivas upon Vaiṣṇavas. But it is surely worth noting that, while there is indeed evidence of this, particularly in works that lean towards Śaivism, there are also Vaiṣṇava texts which present Harihara in a Vaiṣṇava light, as a case of Viṣṇu generously giving space to (thus »including« and thereby subordinating) Śiva. Harihara is presented in a manner favourable to Vaiṣṇavism in, for example, the Vaiṣṇava devotional Tamil poems of Pēyālvār (*Mūtal Tiruvantāti* 5, 28, 74 and 98) and Poykaiyālvār (*Mūṇṇām Tiruvantāti* 31 and 63).²⁹

Furthermore, Éric Bourdonneau has suggested an entirely different sort of motivation for the inauguration of Harihara images. Observing that the various deities in a religious complex are often installed by or for the merit of various members of a family and that these social relations often appear to be echoed in the relations between the installed deities, he suggests that the union of Viṣṇu and Śiva in Harihara may transpose onto a divine plane a mundane social or spiritual alliance, for instance when Harihara is installed by a son for the benefit of his two parents in K. 22.³⁰

There is perhaps no need to venture further into this complex debate. If one is prepared to accept that Harihara may sometimes have an anti-sectarian flavour (as Svāmivārta's inscription suggests), then it is perhaps significant that the ninth-century »capital city« of Jayavarman III's successor Indravarman was known as Hariharālaya (today Roluos). Unfortunately, it is not known how or precisely when it got that name. As far as we can tell, the name only appears in records from the tenth century onwards (starting with K. 848 of śaka 891). It is later epigraphs that inform us that Jayavarman II sojourned there and that it was also Jayavarman III's capital,³¹ but the principal constructions there are those of the reign of Indravarman. It is therefore not inconceivable that the name Hariharālaya could have been given after the time of Jayavarman III, perhaps by Indravarman, who now appears to us to have been its main builder (but perhaps later still), and it just might have been chosen with the intention of marking the will to promote Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava amity after a period of sectarianism. Faint support for this hypothesis, perhaps, is the evidence that Indravarman prominently mentioned the installation of a Harihara in his Bakong inscription (K. 826 of 803 śaka), which records, among a handful of installations that he undertook in other sites, the creation of a Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa that he enjoined his sons to install (st. XXXI).³² Against this, however, a quite different hypothesis should be mentioned. There are, in fact, three statues of Harihara that have been discovered at Roluos, and two of them, those discovered on the site of the ruined and inscriptionless shrine known as Prasat Trapeang Phong, have been regarded as

28 See, for example, Estève, *Étude Critique*, 259, quoting Sanderson.

29 See Wilden, *Three Early Tiruvantātis*, 11-12 and 59, fn. 51.

30 See Bourdonneau, *Nouvelles recherches sur Koh Ker*, 116: »...la reunion de Śiva et Viṣṇu transpose au niveau divin une relation d'alliance — alliance spirituelle entre un guru et le lignage de son disciple, alliance matrimoniale entre deux lignages — célébrée par le produit même de cette alliance (enfants et disciples spirituels).«

31 Coèdes, *Capitales de Jayavarman II*, 121-122.

32 Coèdes, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* 1, 31-36.

relatively early on stylistic grounds. This evidence, along with other considerations, has led Pottier and Bolle to suggest that the Prasat Trapeang Phong, which may predate Jayavarman II's arrival there, was an old temple (*ālaya*) of Harihara which may have given its name to the city Hariharālaya.³³

Coming back at last to our inscription after this excursus, the use of the posthumous name Viṣṇuloka tells us that K. 1457, although undated, must have been written after the death of Jayavarman III, which took place in 877 CE at the latest, the date of the accession of Indravarman. It could have taken place several years earlier than this if one assumes that other kings ruled between the reigns of Jayavarman III and Indravarman, but Vickery has convincingly argued that this is improbable.³⁴ It may be observed that posthumous names generally appear to be used in Khmer prose, but not in Sanskrit verse, but Jayavarman III is exceptional in this regard. The only inscriptions that mention him appear to be posthumous, and the use of his posthumous name Viṣṇuloka occurs not only in Khmer passages but also in Sanskrit stanzas (K. 449, st. XX-XXI; K. 1258, st. I; and here in K. 1457), sometimes in a lengthened form that spells out the ellipsis implicit in such posthumous names, for example Viṣṇulokaprayāta, »he who has gone forth to the world of Viṣṇu« (K. 826, st. XXX), and Viṣṇulokasthita, »he who resides in the world of Viṣṇu« (K. 256, st. VI).

Physical Description of the Stela

Measuring 85 cm in height, 34.5 cm in width, and 11.5 cm in depth, the stela, which seems to be of sandstone, bears engraved text on both sides, apparently carved in the same style and so at the same time. There are 22 lines on the first side (Face A), which give 11 stanzas of *anuṣṭubh* verse in Sanskrit. On the second side (Face B), there are 21 lines, of which lines 1-6 and 10-16 give further Sanskrit stanzas in *anuṣṭubh*, clearly distinguishable at a glance because a central margin separates the odd-numbered verse-quarters from the even-numbered ones, and lines 7-8 and 17-21 are in prose in Khmer. The inscribed portions on Face A and Face B measure 49 x 31 cm and 43 x 31 cm, respectively.

The top of the stela culminates in an ornamented form of »accolade«, in other words, it is like a curly brace on its side and opening downwards, but it has an extra decorative downwards indentation in each of its branches.

The lettering flows freely, becoming more cursive from the first portion in Khmer onwards, and looks as if it could be of the eleventh or late tenth century. The *bha* is of the »drop-shouldered« Angkorian type, not the »high-shouldered« pre-Angkorian type; the *ra* consists of a single vertical stroke, not a double one, and does not descend below the level of the bottom of the main body of the other letters; the serif-like curls at the tops of the letters that are typical of most Angkorian-period lettering are pronounced. The lettering is not particularly regular or careful in appearance, but there is a pleasing fluidity that curiously suggests the freedom of rapid writing with a fountain pen or brush. Presumably some considerable engraving skill must have been required to create such an effect.

33 Pottier and Bolle, *Le Prasat Trapeang Phong*, 67-69.

34 Vickery, *Resolving the chronology*.

Summary of the Contents of the Stela

Face A

There is no initial invocatory verse (an oddity we see in another posthumous inscription of Jayavarman III that is clumsier both in literary style and in the quality of its engraving, K. 1258). The text begins straight away with the information that a king, whom we understand from the context to be Jayavarman II, created an endowment for a statue of Viṣṇu (st. 1). A Jayavarman succeeded him as king (st. 2). This successor, Jayavarman III, took a dislike to Buddhists and converted his subjects to Śaivas (st. 3). He had a Śaiva guru called Kulacandra, who believed in Śiva as the only god (st. 4). That guru was challenged in debate by a staunch Vaiṣṇava called Kṛṣṇapāla, who was a priest of Viṣṇu Cāmpēśvara (st. 5-7). In the debate, Kulacandra's tongue split and he died (st. 8). Persuaded of Viṣṇu's greatness, Jayavarman III gave a statue of Viṣṇu (presumably the same one as is mentioned in st. 1) to Kṛṣṇapāla and endowed it with lands, slaves and wealth (st. 9-10). He installed servants [here] in Kusumāstrapura. This is followed by an exhortation to protect the foundation (st. 11).

Face B

He married his two sororal nieces, Vaiṣṇavī and Nārāyaṇī, to two Brahmins called Keśava and Atharvaveda (st. 12-13). To those two men, settled in Kusumāstrapura, he entrusted the worship of this statue of Viṣṇu (st. 14). There follow two lines of endowment details in Khmer.

The wife (*svāminī*) of King Viṣṇuloka stood in the temple of Viṣṇu while she was menstruating (st. 15). Blood flowed from her breasts, she became emaciated and the king gave her to the god (st. 16). The king further offered male and female slaves and lands (st. 17). When Viṣṇu's anger had abated, the king gave his wife to a worshipper/priest [of Viṣṇu?] called Dharmajña, who came from the family of Kṛṣṇapāla (st. 18). There follow five lines of details of endowments entrusted by the king to Dharmajña in Khmer.

Provenance and Current Location of the Stela

On 3rd August 2019, the stela K. 1457 was found in the moat of the ruined shrine known as Prasat Kon Kramom located in Thmei Village, Svay Chek Commune, Svay Chek District, Banteay Mean Chey Province, during the construction of the road connecting road 2582 to Prasat Banteay Preav. Prasat Kon Kramon is about 450 metres southeast of Prasat Banteay Preav. On 4th August, it was moved to the provincial museum of Banteay Mean Chey, where Hun, Chhünteng, was able to make estampages of its two sides. According to the CISARK website,³⁵ the site, also called Kôk Prasat is a brick mound surrounded by a moat where a few blocks of sandstone and laterite were found.³⁶

35 cisark.mcfa.gov.kh/core/showsite.php?id=3527&keyword=, accessed on 11 Sep 2020.

36 Note that this is not the same as the site IK 776 described by Lunet de Lajonquière (*Inventaire descriptif*, 3, 372), which bears a similar name (Lunet de Lajonquière calls it Kuk Prasat) and which used to be in Svay Chek District, but is now in Thma Puok District and is some 16 km distant. The site where K. 1457 was discovered appears not to be described by Lunet de Lajonquière.

The nearby temple known as Prasat Beanteay Preav or Prasat Preav (IK 782) may also contain an echo of the patronage of Jayavarman II (just as the first stanza of K. 1457 does). Five inscriptions from the beginning of the eleventh century have been found there, namely K. 220 (S & N), K. 221 (S & N), K. 222, K. 1433 and an inscription stored in Svay Chek museum with no inventory K. number. Among these, K. 222 is a list of slaves donated to the temple of Parameśvara by Narapatīndravarman. Parameśvara is the name of the Śiva installed in the southern tower of Prasat Banteay Preav, but it may have been chosen because it is also the posthumous name of King Jayavarman II. For we learn from the beginning of the Khmer portion of K. 235 (the celebrated eleventh-century epigraph from Sdok Kak Thom, which is also just a short distance away, on the Thai border), that Jayavarman II designated families of people in Stuk Ransi and Bhadrapaṭṭana to serve the deity Kaṁmraten jagat ta rāja, in his new capital Mahendraparvata on what is now known as the Phnom Kulen.³⁷ Now Banteay Preav is a Śaiva temple at a place known in the Angkorian period as Thpvañ Rmmāñ in the land of Bhadrapaṭṭana of Amoghapura. It is therefore conceivable that the families taken from this place to his capital by Jayavarman II subsequently consecrated a deity in their home territory with the name Parameśvara in memory of Jayavarman II.

Transcription Conventions

In the edition that follows, we have attempted to follow the transcription conventions outlined in the »*DHARMA Transliteration Guide*« prepared by Dániel Balogh and Arlo Griffiths,³⁸ but we have also indicated with small bullet-marks (•) the gaps deliberately left to demarcate metrical units from one another.

Edition and Annotated Translation of K. 1457

A first transcription of a stela inscription of Prasat Kon Kramom was prepared by Dominic Goodall and Hun, Chhunteng, in September 2019 on the basis of photographs (*Figs. 1 and 2*) of estampages taken by Hun, Chhunteng, in August 2019. Shortly before submission, we received photographs taken by Khom, Sreymom, that show part of the substantial tenon and give an idea of the finish and colouring of the stone (*Figs. 3 and 4*). Draft translation of the Sanskrit by Dominic Goodall; draft translation of the Khmer by Hun, Chhunteng.

37 On K. 235, see Coedès and Dupont, *Sdök Kāk Thom*, 87, 103-104; about the urban complex at Mahendraparvata, see Chevance, *Palais royal de Mahendraparvata*.

38 Balogh and Griffiths, *DHARMA Transliteration Guide*.

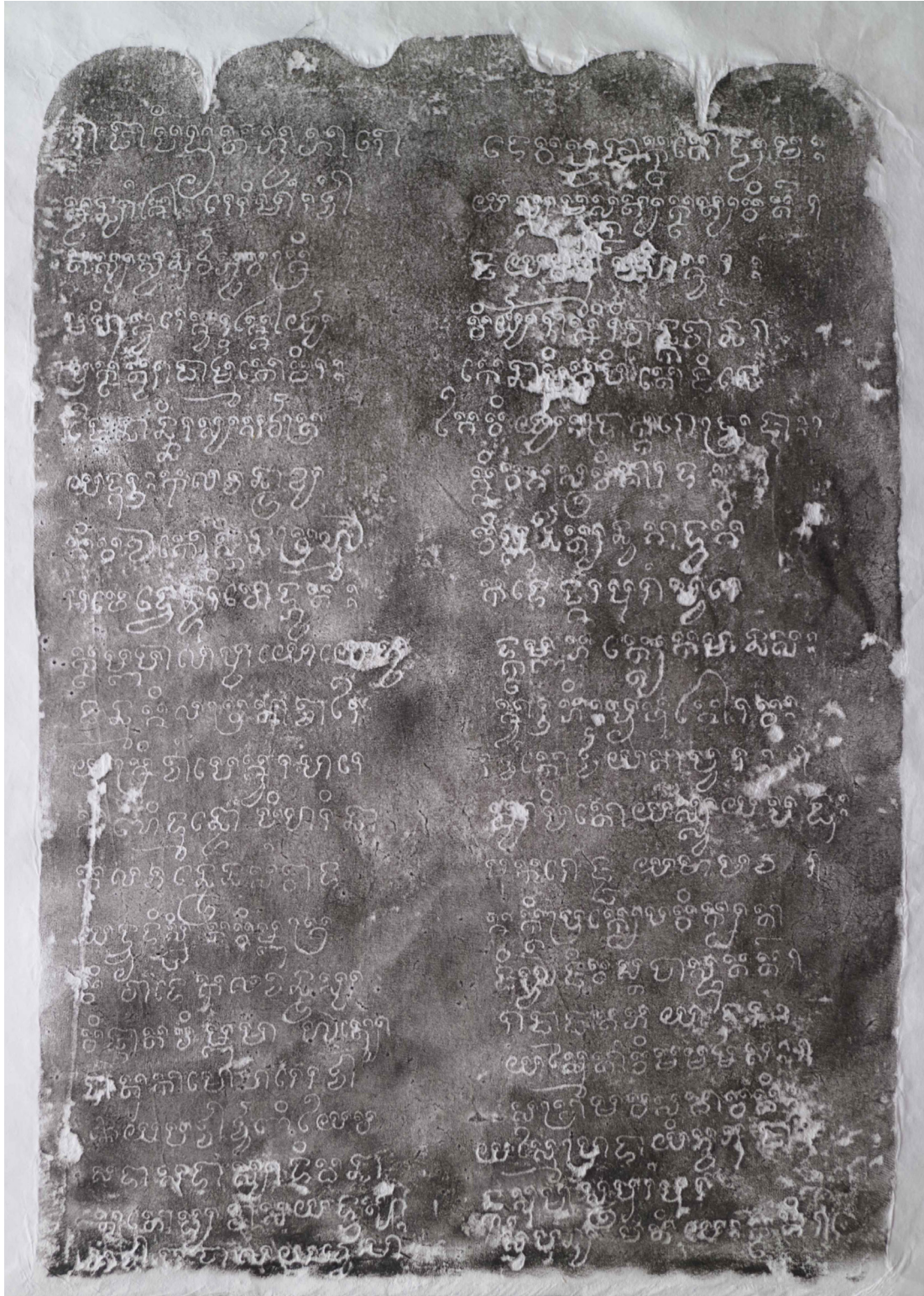


Fig. 1: Estampage of Face A of the stela of Prasat Kon Kramom (photo: Hun Chhunteng, 2019)

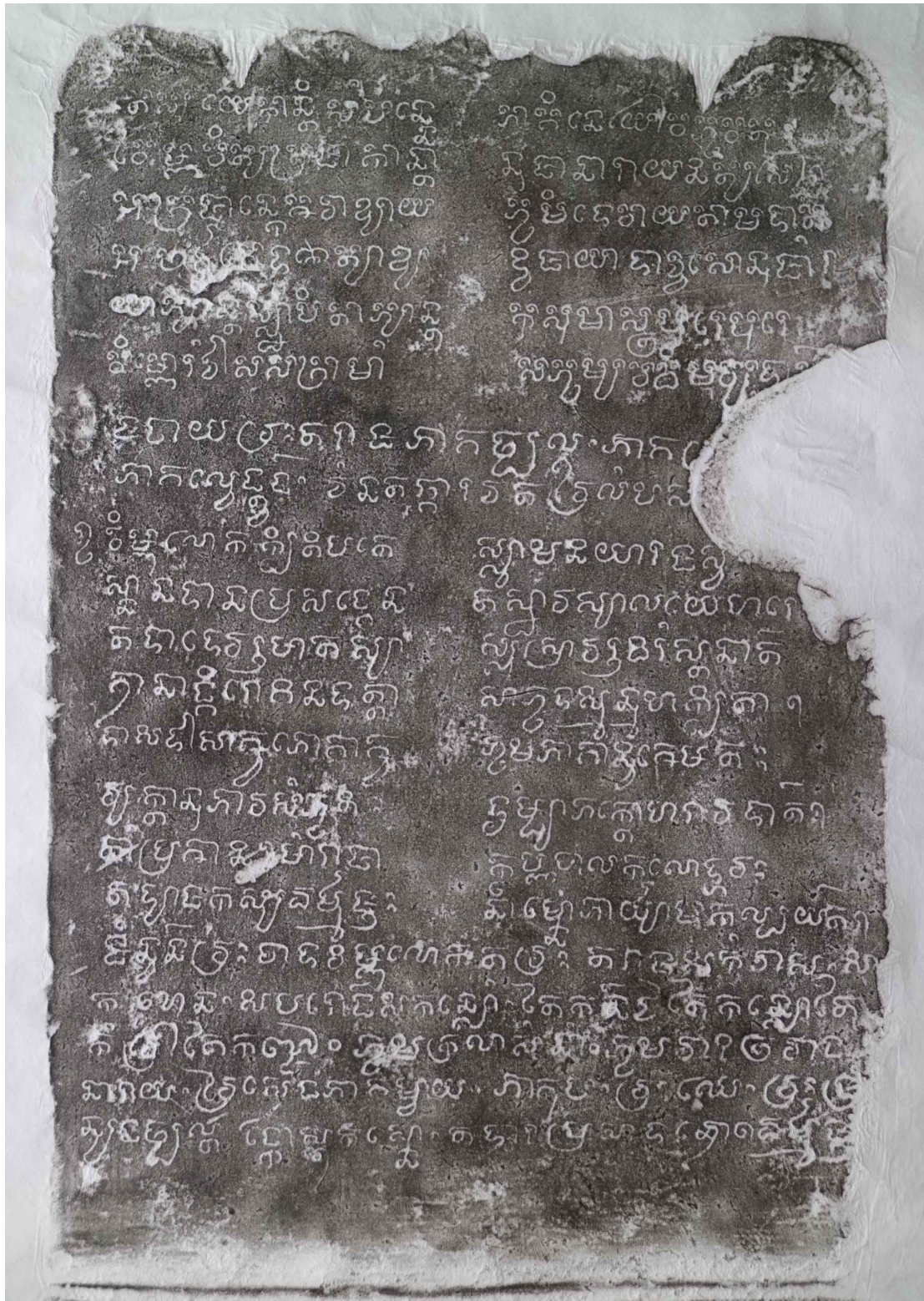


Fig. 2: Estampage of Face B of the stela of Prasat Kon Kramom (photo: Hun Chhuenteng, 2019)

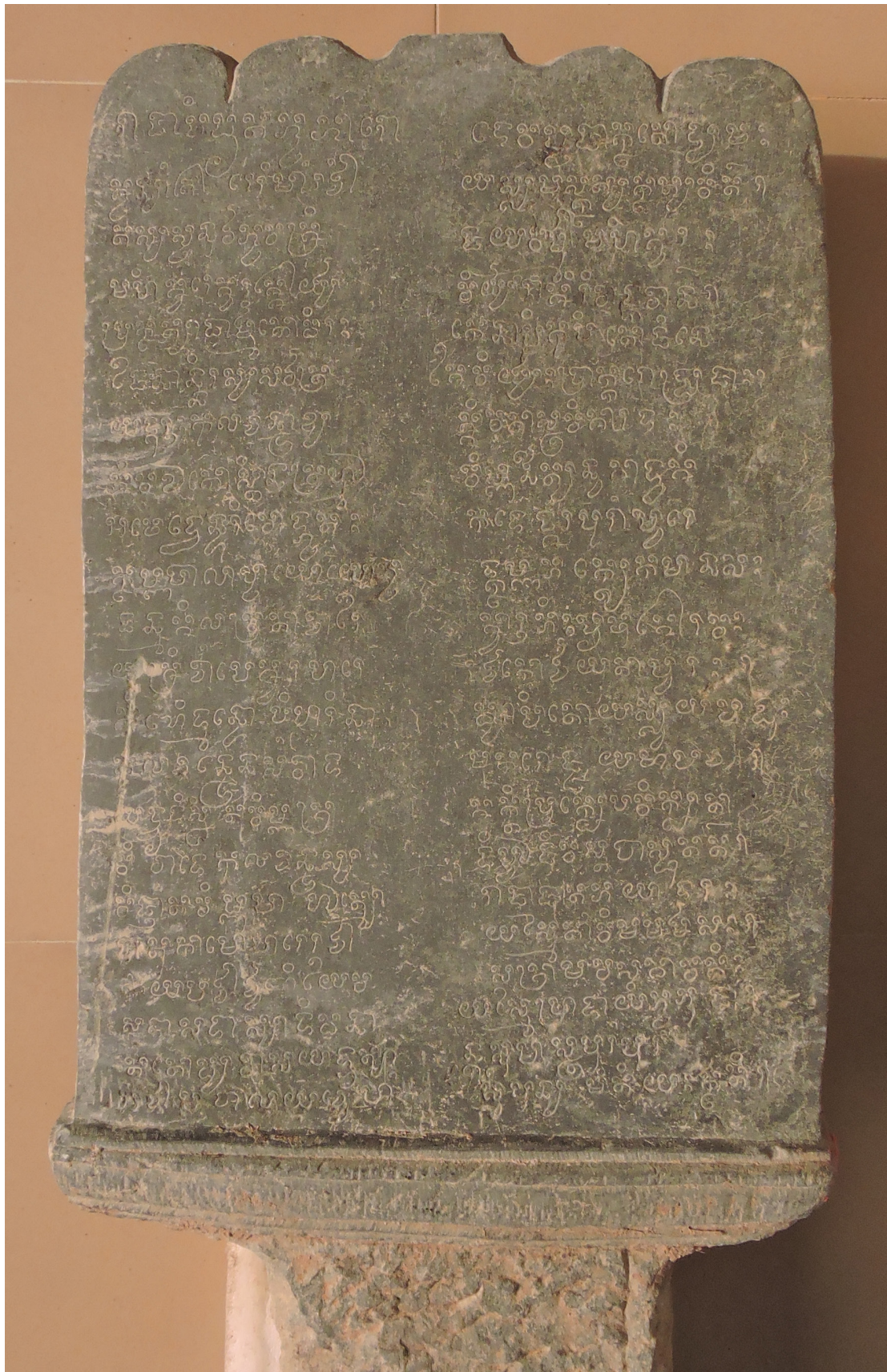


Fig. 3: Face A of the stela of Prasat Kon Kramom (photo: Khom Sreymom, 2020)

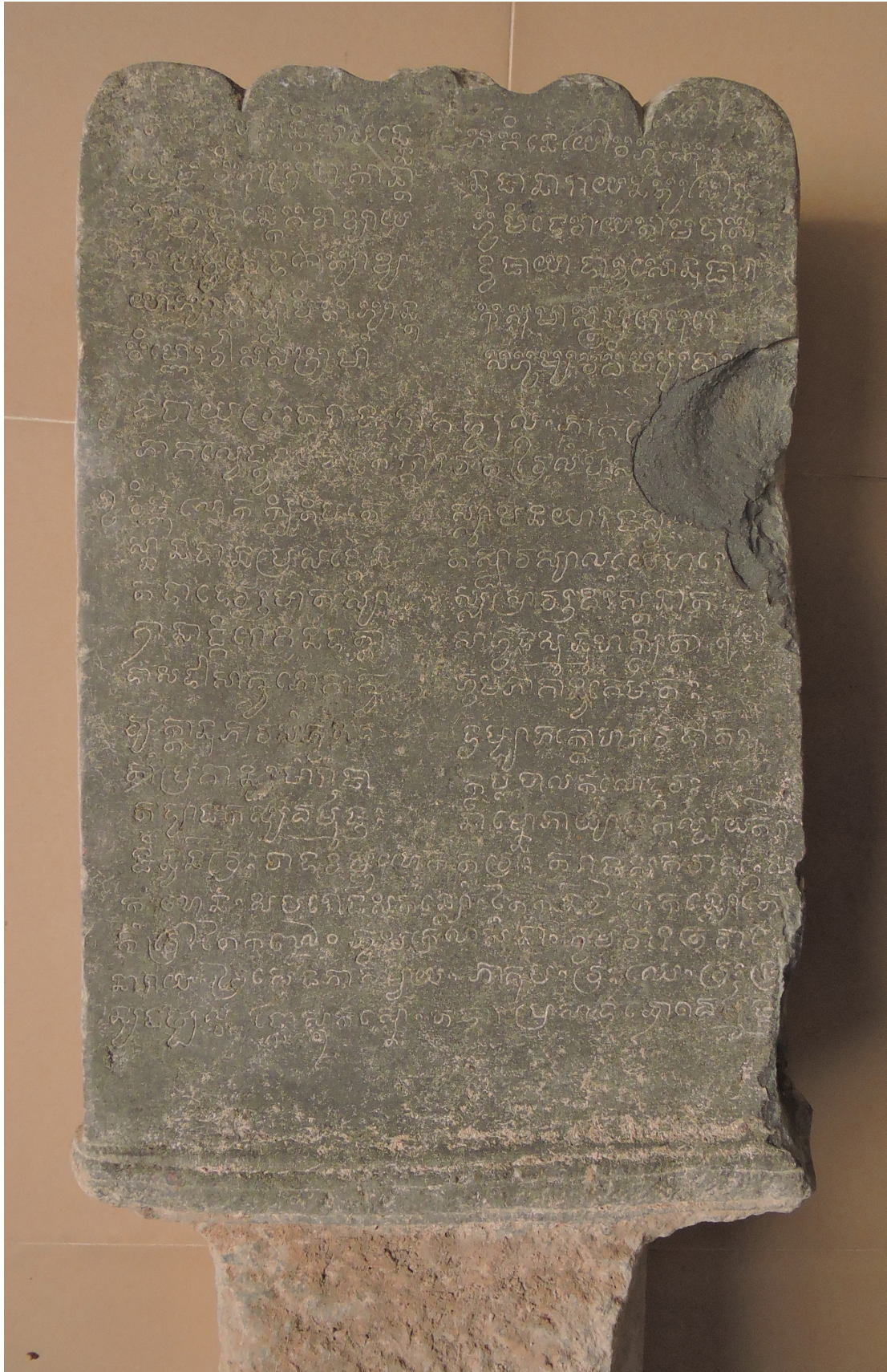


Fig. 4: Face B of the stela of Prasat Kon Kramom (photo: Khom Sreymom, 2020)

Edition**Face A****I.**

(1) rājāp(i dh)ṛtabhūbhāro • devapūjākṛtyodyamaḥ

(2) sūnyām śaurer imām rarcām • yas samaskṛtya kṛtyavitḥ ||

1a. At first sight, the inscription appears to open with *rājā pīpṛta*^o, but we note that *p* and *dh* are palaeographically similar in this inscription: cf. the *dh* of *dhiro* in line 6. Furthermore, we note that the long vowel *ī* tends not to be distinguished from the short vowel *i*, and that the mark inside the loop of the *i* here (which is what would normally be used to make it long) might be the result of damage to the stone.

1c. *imām rarcām*] Understand: *imām arcām*

II.

(3) tasya sūnur vabhūva śrī•jayavarmmā mahīśvaraḥ

(4) mahīśvareśvaraś śauryya•viryyarāśir ivāṅkavānḥ ||

2b. *mahīśvaraḥ*] Understand: *mahīśvaraḥ*. 2d. *viryyarāśir*] Understand: *vīryarāśir*.

III.

(5) prakṛtyā dhārmiko dhiraḥ • kenā(pi kupi)to jine

(6) jainān nirasya sarvatra • śaivi(r) yyaḥ (p)rākka(ro)(d|ñ) prajāḥ |

3a. *dhiraḥ*] Understand: *dhīraḥ*. 3b. *kenā(pi kupi)to*] Although the bracketed letters are not clear in the estampage, they are clear on the stone. 3d.] Understand: *śaivir yyaḥ prākarot prajāḥ*

IV.

(7) yadguruḥ kulacandrākhyā•ś śivaśāstraviśāradaḥ

(8) śiva Eko 'sti na vrahmā • viṣṇur nety anvagād vaśi

4d. *anvagād*] On the stone this looks more like *anvaśād*, which would also fit here, for we could translate »who taught that«. There seems to be no trace of a punctuation mark at the end of this stanza.

V.

(9) Atheddhendur ivodbhūtaḥ • kadeśārapurām(m)vare

(10) kṛṣṇapālāhvayo yo 'bhū•t kṛṣṇabhaktyekamānasah [||]

VI.

(11) janmaśilavratācārai•ś cārubhiḥ pṛthugauravaḥ

(12) ya śrīcāmpesvarahare•r arcako 'rcayatā(m) varaḥ ||

6c *ya*] Understand: *yaḥ*.

VII.

(13) k(i)ñcid mando 'pi harinā•(dh)yāpito yas svaya(m) paṭuḥ

(14) k[u]lacandrena saṁvāda•m akaroj jayam āpa ca ||

7a.] Understand: *kiñcin mando 'pi hariṇā*^o. 7c. *°candrena*] Understand: *°candreṇa*.

VIII.

(15) yaddhṛdisthitaviṣṇugra•śaktiprakṣepavikṣatā

(16) vivāde kulacandrasya • jihvā jīvas tapāsphutatḥ ||

8a.] Understand: *yaddhṛdisthitaviṣṇūgra*^o 8d. *tapāsphutatḥ*] Understand: *tathā 'sphuṭatḥ*. The *p* is assumed to be a copying mistake, perhaps from a badly written *th*, which could look similar.

IX.

(17) vijñātaviṣṇumāhātmyo • rājā jātabhayādarah

(18) dātukāmo harer arcām • yasmai tām vimamar(s)a saḥ ||

X.

(19) Īya(p) arcārccaṇiyaiva • sagrāmavas(u)dhāvadhīḥ

(20) sadāsādāsyādīdhanā • yasmai prādāyi bhūbhujā ||

10a.] Understand: *Iyam arcārccaṇiyaiva*. A small horizontal bar inside the second letter would be enough to transform the *p* into an *m*. As noted above, both instances of initial *ī* in this inscription (for the other, see 4th line of face B) seem to be intended as instances of short *i*. Perhaps, since initial vowels are used less often, the scribe was not perfectly aware of the difference.

XI.

(21) tato '(dhyav)āsaya(d bh)[r]tyā•n kusumāstrapuram purā

(22) (A)rcā(ñ cā)pālayac cemām • svaṁ punyam iti yaḥ kṛtī ||

Face B

XII.

(1) tasya ye kāntisaṁpanne • bhāgineyau vabhūvatu(h)

(2) vaiṣṇavīty agrajā kāntā•nujā nārāyaṇīty asau (||)

12b. *bhāgineyau*] Understand: *bhāgineyyau* (feminine dual). 12cd.]

Understand: *vaiṣṇavīty agrajā kāntā'nujā nārāyaṇīty asau*.

XIII.

(3) Agrajān keśavākhyāya • bhūmidevāya tām adāt•

(4) Atharvvaveda Ītyākhyā•dvijāyādāc ca so 'nujām ||

13a. *Agrajān*] Understand: *agrajām*. 13c. *Ītyākhyā°*] Understand: *ityākhyā°*.

(For another initial long *ī* used in place of short *i*, see above line 19 of face A.)

XIV.

(5) yābhyān tassthāpitābhyān t(u) • kusumāstrapure pure

(6) viṣṇor arcām sa sagrāmām • sabhūmyavadhim avyadā[t]•

14a. *tassthāpitā°*] Understand: *tasthāpitā°*.

(7) Upāya vraḥ ta rāja bhāga thpala ° bhāga Ce [[broken]]

(8) bhāga lveñ tvañ ° caṁnata qgāra cata vraī laṁpasa [[broken]]

XV.

(9) || viṣṇulokakṣitipate•s svāmini yā rajasva[lā]

(10) snānadānaprasaṅgena • tasthāv asyālaye hare[h]

15b. *svāmini*] Understand: *svāmini*.

XVI.

(11) tadā devaruṣā tasyā•s susrāva rudhiraṁ stanāt•

(12) glānāṅgi rogini dattā • sābhūd asmin mahikṣitā ||

16c. *glānāṅgi rogini*] Understand: *glānāṅgi rogiṇī*. 16d. *mahikṣitā*]

Understand: *mahikṣitā*.

XVII.

(13) dāsīr dāsās ca bhogās ca • bhūmibhāgān viśeṣataḥ

(14) vyaktānubhāvasaṁbhūti(h) • dṛṣṭyā bhakto harāv adāt• ||

17a.] Understand: *dāsīr dāsāś ca bhogāś ca*.

XVIII.

(15) tām praśān(t)i(r)[u]ṣām rājā • kṛpṇapālakulodbhavaḥ

(16) tadyājakasya dharmmajñāḥ • nāmno bhāryyām akalpayat· ||

18a. *praśān(t)i*°] Understand: *praśānta*°. 18b. *kṛpṇapālakulodbhavaḥ*] Understand: *kṛpṇapālakulodbhavaḥ* (genitive). 18cd. *dharmmajñāḥ • nāmno*] Understand: *dharmajñānāmno* (genitive).

(17) jaṁnvan· vraḥ pāda viṣṇuloka ta vraḥ ta rāja si kaṁvāsa ° si

(18) kañcana ° si paroṅ· sī kansom ° tai kan· Ū tai kanso tai

(19) kaṁvrau tai kañjā ° O bhūmi kralā samnām ° bhūmi vāri travāna

(20) nārāya ° vraī sleṅa bhāga mvāya ° bhā(gu)pa ° vraḥ jhe ° vraḥ jra

(21) nyaṅa thpal taṅko stuka sno ° ta dāra prasāda chloṅa dharmmajñā³⁹

Translation

- I. Although (*api*) king (*rājā*), [and therefore] bearing the burden of [governing] the earth (*dhṛtabhūbhārah*), he made efforts to venerate the gods (*devapūjākṛtyamaḥ*) by ornamenting (*samaskṛtya*) this bare [viz. devoid of a temple?] (*sūnyām*) statue (*arcām*) of Viṣṇu (*śaureḥ*).
- II. To him (*tasya*) was born (*babhūva*) a son (*sūnuḥ*), King (*mahiśvaraḥ*) Śrī-Jayavarman [III], king among kings (*mahiśvareśvaraḥ*), like (*iva*) a mass of heroism and strength (*śauryavīryarāsiḥ*) endowed with a body (*aṅkavān*).
- III. By nature (*prakṛtyā*), he (*yaḥ*) was righteous (*dhārmikaḥ*) and firm (*dhīraḥ*), [but] being for some reason (*kenāpi*) angry (*kupitaḥ*) towards the Buddha (*jine*), he drove (*nirasya*) Buddhists (*jainān*) out everywhere (*sarvatra*), and made (*prākarot*) his subjects (*prajāḥ*) followers of Śiva (*śaivīḥ*).
- IV. His guru (*yadguruḥ*), learned in the teachings of Śiva (*śivaśāstraviśāradah*), was called Kulacandra: he was self-controlled (*vaśī*) and believed that (*anvagāt*) Śiva alone (*ekaḥ*) exists (*asti*); not Brahmā, nor Viṣṇu.
- V. Now (*atha*) there was a man called Kṛpṇapāla, whose only thoughts were of devotion to Kṛpṇa (*kṛpṇabhaktyekamānasah*), who arose (*udbhūtaḥ*), like (*iva*) a blazing moon (*iddenduḥ*) in the sky that was the city of Kadeśara (?*kadeśarapurāmvare*).
- VI. He (*yaḥ*) was a priest (*arcakaḥ*) of Viṣṇu Śrī-Cāmpesvara (*śricāmpesvarahareḥ*), best (*varaḥ*) among priests (*arcayatām*), of broad authority (*pr̥thugauravaḥ*) because of his noble (*cārubhiḥ*) birth, virtues, religious observances and conduct (*janmaśīlavratācāraiḥ*).
- VII. Although (*api*) somewhat (*kiñcid*) slow-witted (*mandah*), on being taught (*adhyāpitaḥ*) by Hari (*hariṅā*) himself (*svayam*), [he became] sharp-witted (*paṭuḥ*), engaged in (*akarot*) a debate (*samvādam*) with Kulacandra and obtained (*āpa*) victory (*jayam*),

39 There was probably a concluding punctuation mark, now broken off with the edge of the stone.

- VIII. In the [middle of the] debate, the tongue and the life[-force] of Kulacandra split, on being shattered apart (*°vikṣatā*) by the blow of the fierce power of Viṣṇu who resided in the heart of that [Kṛṣṇapāla].
- IX. Realising the greatness of Viṣṇu, the king conceived fear and respect and, being desirous of giving to this [Kṛṣṇapāla] (*yasmai*) a statue of Hari, he deliberated about that [earlier mentioned one].
- X. To this [Kṛṣṇapāla] (*yasmai*) the king gave this statue, which deserves to be worshipped, along with villages and bounded lands, and with wealth consisting in male and female slaves and so forth.
- XI. Thereupon (*tataḥ*), back in those days (*purā*), this (*yaḥ*) meritorious (*kṛtī*) [Kṛṣṇapāla] settled (*adhyavāsayat*) servants in Kusumāstrapura and protected this statue, considering (*iti*) it [as] his own merit[orious foundation].
- XII. As for the two beautiful sororal nieces who were born to him, the lovely elder one was called Vaiṣṇavī and the younger one, she was Nārāyaṇī.
- XIII. He gave the elder to a Brahmin [lit. »god upon earth«] called Keśava. And he gave the younger one to a Brahmin called Atharvaveda.
- XIV. To the two of them (*yābhyām*), established by him [thus] in the city of Kusumāstrapura, he entrusted (*avyadāt*) [the worship of] the statue of Viṣṇu, along with its villages and demarcated lands.

Lines 7-8. The resources (*upāya*) of the god of the king (*vraḥ ta rāja*) [are]: the portion [of land] (*bhāga*) [called] *Thpala [= group of trees or animals]; the portion [of land] (*bhāga*) [called] ...; the portion [of land] (*bhāga*) [called] *Lveñ Tvañ [= row of coconut palms]; the settlement (*caṁnata*) of *agāra*, the established (?*cata*) *Vrai Lampasa [Forest Glade].

- XV. When the queen of King Viṣṇuloka was menstruating, she went and stood (*tasthau*) in the temple of this Viṣṇu on the occasion of ablutions and gifts [for the deity].
- XVI. Thereupon, blood flowed from her breasts because of the anger of the god. When her body became emaciated (*glānāṅgī*) and she was diseased (*rogīṇī*), she was given by the king to this [god] (*asmin*).⁴⁰
- XVII. At the sight [of this illness striking his queen, the king, now] a devotee, revealed the profusion of his wealth/power and gave to Viṣṇu female and male slaves and riches and portions of land.

40 The *asmin* could refer to »this [temple]« rather than »this [god]«.

XVIII. The king made her, once this anger [of Viṣṇu] towards her had been appeased, the wife of the sacrificer to that [Viṣṇu], who was born of the family of Kṛṣṇapāla, and who was called Dharmajña.

Lines 17-21. Royal offering (*jamnvan*) of His Majesty King Viṣṇuloka [Jayavarman III] (*vraḥ pāda viṣṇuloka*) to the god of the king (*ta vraḥ ta rāja*):

Si Kaṁvāsa, Si Kañcana, Si Paroñ, Si Kansoñ, Tai Kan ū, Tai Kanso, Tai ..., Tai Kaṁvrau, and Tai Kañjā;

land of *Kralā Samnāñ, land of *Vāri travāñ Nārāya,⁴¹ one division (*bhāga mvāya*) of *Vrai Sleñ,⁴² *Bhāgupa (?), Sacred *jhe* tree (*vraḥ jhe*) [of] *Jra nyañ,⁴³ *Thpal Tañko,⁴⁴ *Stuk Sno.⁴⁵

The receiver of the royal offering is *chloña* Dharmmajña.⁴⁶

Notes

I. Note that the opening of the inscription seems strangely abrupt, without any verse of *maṅgala* and without an explanation of who the king in question is. We find this same jarring abruptness in another inscription that describes events of the reign of Jayavarman III, namely K. 1258.⁴⁷ The king in the first stanza is revealed in the next stanza to be his father, in other words presumably Jayavarman II. References to this king in documents during his supposed lifetime are rare, the only inscription mentioning him that appears to have been produced in his reign being K. 1060.⁴⁸

The interpretation not only involves emending *imām rarcām* to *imām arcām*, but also requires accepting the questionable form *samaskṛtya*, which might be an error for *samskṛtya*, partly on the analogy of *upaskṛ*, or it might be based (still on the analogy of *upaskṛ*) not on the preverb *sam*, but rather on *sama*^o. Whether or not the use of *sama*^o as a preverb (with the further insertion of an *s* before the root) could be justified by grammarians is unclear. As to its meaning, we assume it to be the same as that of *samskṛtya*, which is used of adorning or completing (and not simply of creating from scratch), since this sense seems to fit.

41 Nārāya is presumably a shortened form of Nārāyaṇa, and vāri might be the Sanskrit word for water, since *travāñ* is a natural pond or a tank. One might therefore translate this with »Water-tank of Nārāyaṇa«.

42 This toponym could be translated »Forest (*vrai*) of *Strychnos nux-vomica* (*sleñ*)«.

43 Although the very ends of these lines in Khmer might seem to be broken, it seems that nothing is actually missing, which means that we should probably read *jranyaña*, which Jenner (*Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*, s.v. *jranyañ*) records as a name for a kind of tree. Here there is a punctuation separator after *vraḥ jhe* and none after, so, although we have taken *vraḥ jhe* ° *vraḥ jra nyaña* as a single unit, we wonder whether *vraḥ jhe* should not instead be understood as a separate item.

44 A group (*thpal*) of *Diospyros chevalieri* (*tañko*).

45 Of *sno*, Jenner (*Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*) records that it is used of *Sesbania javanica*, which he describes as a »small aquatic plant«. For *stuka* Jenner (*Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*, s.v. *stuk*) records several related senses, including thicket, grove, dense growth of underbrush. The element *stuk* is used in innumerable toponyms. The toponym *Stuk Sno* also occurs elsewhere, for instance in K. 22, lines 27-28, in K. 904, B 16, and in K. 1238, A 35 (Griffiths and Soutif, *Autour des terres*, 48).

46 Jenner (*Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*) records numerous attestations of *chloña* used as the »[t]itle of an unidentified rank or function«.

47 Lowman, *Elephant hunt of Jayavarman III*.

48 See Goodall, *Inscriptions from Liṅgaparvata*.

We imagine that an image described as *śūnyā*, »empty«, means an image that is unendowed and perhaps without a temple of durable materials built around it. The word *śūnya* (or *śūnyamūla* in Khmer) is used elsewhere in the corpus, typically of land, but we find it used to describe a piece of abandoned land that had a *liṅga* upon it, which is thus perhaps nearly parallel, in K. 382, st. B4 (*kṣmām... śūnyām saśivaliṅgām*).⁴⁹

There were once many four-armed sculptures of Viṣṇu wearing a mitre that were produced in the pre-Angkorian period,⁵⁰ and it is possible that one such abandoned image was re-endowed by Jayavarman II in the place where this inscription was set up. The pronoun *imām* makes clear that the image must once have been in the immediate vicinity of the stela. Its use here implies that it is the same image of Viṣṇu that Jayavarman III calls to mind (st. IX) and then further endows (st. X) below.

II. This translation assumes that *aṅkavān* means the same as *aṅgavān*, »embodied«, either because it is a »mistake« for *aṅgavān*, or because »body« is a conceivable sense of *aṅka*. But it could refer to the »moon«, since the moon has the »mark« of a hare. Another possibility is that *aṅkavān* might simply mean that the king »has [auspicious] marks«. In that case, this could be an allusion to the auspicious bodily features described in *sānudrikasāstra*, or to auspicious marks traced by the lines on the palms and soles. In *Raghuvamśa* 4.90, for example, Raghu's feet are described as having the marks of a flag-standard, a pot and a parasol traced by their crease-lines (*rekhādhvajakalaśātapatracihnam*).⁵¹

III. One could take *sarvatra* instead with the last quarter: »he made his subjects everywhere Śaiva«. We have assumed that the engraver miscopied what was intended to be the word *prākārot*, a regular augmented imperfect of *prakṛ*, which Monier-Williams records as meaning (among other things) »to make into, render«. ⁵² This sense fits well here. An alternative would be to assume that *prāk karot* was intended, with *karot* taken to be an augmentless imperfect. In that case the end of the stanza could be rendered »formerly (*prāk*) made ([*a*] *karot*) his subjects (*prajāḥ*) followers of Śiva (*śaivīḥ*).« But *prāk* does not fit the context particularly well. We also weighed whether it might be *drāk* (»speedily«), but, although the first grapheme is not particularly clear, we think that reading *drāk* can be ruled out.

Note that the inclusion of *kenāpi* (»for some reason«) implies that the author of the text found the king's religious intolerance odd, and perhaps even reprehensible (see our conclusion).

49 Cf. also K. 736, st. XIX, where the reading is uncertain, for a similar use of *śūnya*. And cf. further K. 215, an inscription in Old Khmer which describes an *āśrama* as *śūnya* (lines 5-6): 871 śaka | man· loṅa Apa vraī taṅvvaṅ· slāp· śūnya Āśrama noḥ dau, »In 871 śaka, when Loṅ Ap of Vrai Taṅvvaṅ died, this āśrama became empty«.

50 See, for example, Dalsheimer and Manguin, Viṣṇu mitres.

51 Thus, Vallabha's text (for which, see Goodall and Isaacson, *Raghupañcikā of Vallabhadeva*). Mallinātha's (see Nandargikar, *Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa*) has a thunderbolt (*kuliśa*) instead of a pot.

52 Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *prakṛ*.

IV. Until now, the only personage known to have been referred to as the guru of Jayavarman III was a certain Śrīnivāsakavi (who received the title Pṛthivīndrapaṇḍita),⁵³ who is so described in st. V-X of K. 256.⁵⁴ Among Śaiva anthroponyms in the Khmer corpus, we can distinguish various distinctive forms that indicate allegiance to the Atimārga or Mantramārga. Names prefixed with Bhā-, for instance, or suffixed with -rāśi are used of Pāśupatas,⁵⁵ whereas names suffixed with -śiva indicate the receipt of initiation into the Mantramārga.⁵⁶ It has been argued that the Mantramārga had reached Cambodia by the time of Jayavarman I bis, in the eighth century,⁵⁷ and so we might reasonably expect to see an initiatory name here. But the name Kulacandra is unfortunately not such a distinctive Śaiva name and so offers no evidence of the presence of any specific Śaiva tradition.

V. We assume that Kadeśapura is a sort of *vairi-samāsa*, »a compound of enemies« to use a South Indian expression, that is to say, a compound made up of elements of two different languages, *pura* being Sanskrit and perhaps also śara, with *kadeñ* being Khmer. Jenner records *kadeñ*, with the variant form *kadyañ*, as being a toponym found in K. 938, K. 956 and K. 989, but as for its meaning, he says only »Analysis unidentified«. ⁵⁸ If it were to refer to a »flower«, then, given that śara may be used interchangeably with *astra* when speaking of Kāma's weapons, then Kadeśapurapura might conceivably be a more nearly Khmer fashion of referring to Kusumāstrapura, the Sanskrit name for the place in which the Viṣṇu image is installed, endowed and worshipped (see st. XIV below). The use of Khmer names within Sanskrit verse is relatively rare in the loftier compositions, but it is common in the small corpus associated with Jayavarman III (cf., e.g., K. 449⁵⁹ and K. 1258).

As for Kṛṣṇapāla, a personage of this name occurs in two other fragmentary inscriptions, namely K. 382 and K. 534, both of which explain that that particular Kṛṣṇapāla further acquired the names Mahendrārimathana and Keśavabhaṭṭa and that he was a Brahmin who became chaplain to the king (*rājapurohita*). The king in question is a Jayavarman, whom Bergaigne (introducing K. 382, which is an inscription in Khmer Nāgarī that records an event dated to 815 śaka) supposes to be Jayavarman II,⁶⁰ whose accession date is indeed given (K. 382, A4) as 724, the same date that we find in K. 598, st. XIV. It is nonetheless conceivable that K. 1457 refers to the same Kṛṣṇapāla as K. 382 and K. 534, a man who had already been *rājapurohita* to Jayavarman II before he would have encountered Jayavarman III's guru Kulacandra. But in that case, we would expect some overlap in the names of the descendants mentioned here with those mentioned as the descendants of Kṛṣṇapāla in K. 382 and K. 534, and we might, furthermore, have expected that the extra names Mahendrārimathana or Keśavabhaṭṭa would be mentioned. So perhaps we should conclude that it is not particularly likely that K. 1457 refers to the same Kṛṣṇapāla as do K. 382 and K. 534.

53 Coédès and Dupont, Pràsàt Kòk Pò (*passim*), refer to him as »Çrī Nivāsakavi«, as though the element Śrī° were an honorific, rather than an integral part of the name. Śrīnivāsa (»residence of Lakṣmī) is of course a commonly used kenning for Viṣṇu.

54 See Coédès and Dupont, Pràsàt Kòk Pò.

55 See Goodall, On K. 1049, and Goodall, Nandirāśi's Pāśupata monastery.

56 See Goodall, On K. 1049.

57 Goodall, Influences littéraires indiennes.

58 Jenner, *Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*.

59 Coédès, Études cambodgiennes XI.

60 Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites*, 528.

VI. The word *arcakaḥ* could conceivably refer not to a »priest«, but just to a »worshipper«. But there are two circumstances that suggest rather that he was a »priest«, one being that he is described as best among those who worship, which arguably sounds less natural if he is simply an ordinary person who worships, and more natural if he belongs to a professional community of priests. The second circumstance is that Kṛṣṇapāla is connected here with Cāmpesvara, which is the name of the Viṣṇu whose shrine (of still unknown location) seems for centuries to have been the principal Viṣṇu temple in the Khmer religious landscape, much in the same way as Bhadreśvara, on the Liṅgaparvata (Vat Phu, in Laos), was for centuries the principal Śiva in the Khmer religious landscape.⁶¹ Such an important temple might well have had a large number of priests. This is not the earliest reference to Viṣṇu Campeśvara/Cāmpesvara, for K. 428, which, exceptionally is in Sanskrit but apparently entirely in prose, appears to commemorate the erection in 683 śaka (761 CE) of a Viṣṇu Campeśvara, who might be the original Campeśvara (or might already be just another Viṣṇu named after him), and an extremely fragmentary pre-Angkorian Khmer inscription found reused in the Western Mebon temple contains the name Śrī Campeśvara (K. 922), but with no meaningful context preserved. Furthermore, there are other references that may be roughly contemporary with ours, for instance that in stanza II of K. 256, which declares that a Viṣṇu installed by Pṛthivīdrapaṇḍita in Śvetadvīpa will share revenue with Śrī Campeśvaraśauri.⁶² We note further that K. 254 (of 1051 śaka) appears to use the terms *yājaka* and *arcaka* (st. 16 and 24) to refer to temple priests.⁶³

VII. We now assume *adhyāpitaḥ*, but had earlier assumed *dhyāpitaḥ*, supposing it to be intended to be a causative from *dhyai*: »caused by Hari to meditate upon Himself«. That solution seems, however, less plausible.

IX. The »deliberation« could be independent (the king alone thought about the statue) or collaborative (with Kṛṣṇapāla). If *vimamarṣa* is indeed what is written (it also looks like *vimamarma*, and perhaps that is what we should read), then it is perhaps to be understood as though it were *vimamarśa*, »he thought of«, »he conceived«; but it is possible that another verb, one meaning »to create«, is intended instead.

To put this in other words, we have assumed in the above translation that Jayavarman III »thought about« the statue of Viṣṇu that was mentioned in the first stanza of the inscription as one that he could bestow upon Kṛṣṇapāla, but we understand that it might seem conceivable that the king instead »conceived of« or »created« a new statue, which he bestowed upon Kṛṣṇapāla. But the configuration of the pronouns *imām* (st. I), *tām* (st. IX) and *iyam* (st. X) suggests rather that there is one old Viṣṇu image that Jayavarman II re-endowed and that Jayavarman III then entrusted to the guardianship (and consequent profit) of Kṛṣṇapāla (and of his heirs through his sororal nieces, as we shall see below on Face B) and which he also endowed with further wealth.

61 See, e.g., Sanderson, Śaiva religion, 409-421.

62 Coëdès and Dupont, Prāsāt Kôk Pô, 394-395.

63 Coëdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge III*, 183, 184, 188.

XIII. Atharvaveda may seem a strange name for a man, but note that K. 382, one of the two inscriptions that speak of the *rājapurohita* to Jayavarman II called Kṛṣṇapāla and his lineage (see our note on st. V above), records a son of a certain Hyañcandrā giving birth to a son called Sāmaveda (K. 382, B 10). There is also a Brahmin called Ṛgveda mentioned in the unpublished inscription K. 1084, in line 4 of Face B (EFEO estampage n. 1353).

XIV. Lines 7-8. We have asterisked the toponyms. As is no doubt common in the toponymy of much of the world, Khmer toponyms often have the names of particular plants, especially trees, integrated into them.

XV. Being ritually impure because of her menses, the queen should, of course, have avoided entering the temple. The impurity caused by menstruation is a large topic in mainstream *Dharmaśāstra*, but it is perhaps less easy to find prescriptions about how it relates to the practices of theistic devotion. One text that does talk about this topic, but in a Śaiva context, is the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*, a compendium of injunctions relating to rites of expiation and reparation compiled by the twelfth-century South Indian writer Trilocanaśiva. Among its many other strictures imposed on menstruating women, the text makes clear that a woman can only perform mental worship (not external worship) while she is impure (verses 531-536), and her impurity is thought to have a powerfully polluting power.⁶⁴

XVIII. The referent of *tad°* in *tadyājakasya* is not certain. It should not really refer to the king (since one would expect *sva°* as a possessive in that case). We are assuming that the compound means »the [priest who was the] worshipper of that [Viṣṇu/ foundation]«. Lines 17–21. As often elsewhere in Khmer epigraphs, the names of male slaves are preceded by *si* and those of female slaves by *tai*. There is, of course, a large literature on the subject, but for recent appraisals of »slavery« in the ancient Khmer world, see Vickery's enlightening presentation of the inscriptions of Roluos,⁶⁵ the remarks of Sanderson in his broad article on Śaivism,⁶⁶ the essay of Jacques,⁶⁷ and the analytical survey of Eileen Lustig and Terry Lustig.⁶⁸ Several of the anthroponyms are attested elsewhere, but Khmer onomasty is a tricky subject and we have no illuminating comments to make about this particular list of names. Note that a circular punctuation mark, a little larger than that between items of the list that belong to the same class, demarcates the slaves from the pieces of land.

We have again asterisked the Khmer toponyms and added individual footnotes in cases where Jenner's *Dictionary of Angkorian Khmer* suggests identifications.

64 Sathyanarayanan and Goodall, Śaiva Rites of Expiation, 290-296.

65 Vickery, Khmer inscriptions of Roluos. See also Soutif, *Organisation religieuse et profane, passim*.

66 Sanderson, Śaiva religion, 395-401.

67 Jacques, *Koh Ker*, 44-70.

68 Lustig and Lustig, *New insights*.

Some Conclusions?

As we have remarked above, it is difficult to deduce hard facts about the impact on anyone but the king and his immediate circle from the glancing allusion in stanza III to the driving out of Buddhists and the conversion of the population to Śaivism, or indeed from the tale of the Śaiva Kulacandra being struck dead during a debate with the Vaiṣṇava Kṛṣṇapāla and Jayavarman III's consequent conversion to Vaiṣṇavism. The narration – which may tell us less about historical events than about Dharmajña's Vaiṣṇava piety and his desire to frame the story of his family's foundation within a tale of high religious drama that confirmed both his faith and his royal connections – has something of the quality of a folk tale and, since it is found in an undated inscription, one might suspect it of being just that: a semi-legendary tale about a long dead king. But while the date of the document is uncertain, it seems unlikely that it was produced more than a few generations later, since Jayavarman III's importance in popular awareness would no doubt have diminished with the passing of each subsequent reign.⁶⁹

Furthermore, regardless of their bearing on historical events, these stanzas do throw light on the categories of religious affiliation that were recognised. Clearly the three principal affiliations, as Sanderson has explained at some length,⁷⁰ were Buddhist and Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava. Of course, this does not mean that there could be no »syncretism« or cases of persons who favoured a mixture of deities.⁷¹ Nonetheless, we can say that these three were recognised as distinguishable affiliations (while, for instance, »Hinduism« was not).

Perhaps a line of speculation is permitted here about the possibility that the mutual intolerance of these traditions that this inscription suggests prevailed in Jayavarman III's time might have ushered in a conscious desire to reintroduce and to institutionalise equitable relations at the end of the ninth century. There is a great deal that is remarkable about Yaśovarman's bold plan of social engineering by decreeing the creation of a hundred *āśramas* across his kingdom when he came to power in 889 CE (we do not know whether they were all created, as Estève and Soutif note),⁷² but one thing that stands out is its conscious »ecumenism«, if we may borrow this Christian term into the realm of classical religions of Indian origin.⁷³ In his capital, four such *āśramas* were constructed⁷⁴ around the huge tank that bears his name, the Yaśodharataṭāka, and their largely identical charter-inscriptions reveal that they were Vaiṣṇava (K. 701, *vaiṣṇavāśrama*), Buddhist (K. 290, *saugatāśrama*) and Śaiva (K. 279, *brāhmaṇāśrama*, and K. 1228, *māheśvarāśrama*).⁷⁵

69 Not very many inscriptions refer to Jayavarman III, and all seem to be posthumous, but perhaps not by a very long period. Most, when dated, seem to date from within a century of his rule: K. 175, K. 256, K. 449, K. 521, K. 826, K. 872, K. 956, K. 989, K. 1073, K. 1258. But there are a couple of outliers: the enormous Sdok Kak Thom inscription K. 235 contains an allusion (line C82) and K. 774, an inscription that records a gift of a palanquin (*śivikā*) by Viṣṇuloka (Jayavarman III) in 782 śaka, but also other donations of 817 and 911 śaka. Also, the Khmer portion of K. 570, a tenth-century inscription at Banteay Srei, refers to an edict (*ājñā*) of Viṣṇuloka in line 29. (We are grateful to Dominique Soutif for having indicated many of these passages to us.)

70 Sanderson, Śaiva religion, 380-402, but see especially *id.*, 389, where he defends the exclusion of »subsidiary Brahminism« from his tally.

71 For an exploration of a case where such a mixture is recorded in a single inscription, see Estève, Inscription K. 237.

72 Estève and Soutif, *Les Yaśodharāśrama*, 332-333.

73 See Estève and Soutif, *Les Yaśodharāśrama*, 340-341.

74 See Estève and Soutif, *Les Yaśodharāśrama*, 331-332.

75 The texts of the first three charters are translated in parallel in Cœdès, *Recherche du Yaśodharaçrama*.

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