Kālidāsa's Kingship among the Khmers

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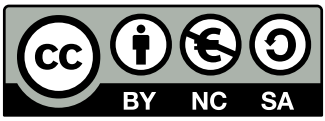

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A few years ago, I was asked to write a short account of kingship in Cambodia, and I came up with a scheme that I hoped would 'cut to the chase' while combining two of my favourite areas of study. This is the result.[1] Rather than addressing the enormous theme of Khmer kingship by first conducting a long trawl through the turbid waters of secondary literature, whose oldest levels are often especially clouded because only small parts of the evidence had come to light, and which have been subsequently muddied by such obsessions as the quiddity of the '*devarāja* cult', I have tried to tackle the cultural complexity of Khmer notions about kingship by comparing and contrasting its representation in inscriptions with its treatment in an epic poem that we know to have been a major vector of ideals about kingship throughout the realm of Sanskritic influence: Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*, 'The

1 This article was initially begun at the instigation of Damian Evans, who asked me to produce a chapter about Khmer kingship for a collective volume reflecting the 'state of the art' on Angkorian studies. Unfortunately, I tripled the word-limit and could not then trim and tame the article into a shape acceptable for the publisher, who allowed no more than brief references in footnotes. Although the contribution ultimately could not be included, I am grateful to the editors of that volume (Damian Evans, Mitch Hendrickson and Miriam Stark) for their numerous remarks and suggestions. Fortunately, an invitation from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences to deliver the 29th Gonda Lecture in Amsterdam in 2022 came just at the right moment to enable me to rework the piece in something close to its original length. The article is a contribution both to the EFEO's long-running project on the 'Corpus des inscriptions khmères' (CIK), currently helmed by Dominique Soutif, and to the ERC-funded DHARMA project (EU grant agreement n° 809994), in which the author is a participant. I thank Csaba dezső (Budapest) for his numerous suggestions.

Dynasty of the Sun' (see Fig. 1).[2]

By juxtaposing quotations from Kālidāsa's poem, which can be read as a skein of loosely connected moral tales illustrating the values and ideals that kings should embody, on the one hand, with evidence from Cambodian epigraphy on the other, I am attempting to show that many values were adopted by Khmer poets, but also that some ideals were transmuted in the process, and that borrowed topoi often only very hazily reflect 'historical facts'. No doubt this is true for kingdoms across the whole Sanskrit cosmopolis, but in ways that vary across time and place. Here, I shall consider just what is usually regarded as the Khmer epigraphic corpus, the roughly 1500 inscriptions produced between the sixth and fourteenth centuries assigned a 'K.' number in the 1966 inventory of George Cœdès, since extended by Claude Jacques and Gerdi Gerschheimer, and currently still growing under the stewardship of Dominique Soutif (see: cik.efeo.fr).

This approach explains the structure of this piece: I have divided the topic into seven titled sections, each headed by a quotation from the *Raghuvaṃśa* that is invoked to throw light upon Cambodian epigraphs, from which I also quote, sometimes taking the opportunity to improve upon hitherto published readings and interpretations.[3]

2 There is a vast literature about this epoch-making work, and much debate about the date and provenance of its mysterious author. To date, the most practical edition, containing the whole text and an annotated translation, is that of Nandargikar (4th edition, 1971). An article of Ingalls (1976) provides an engaging introduction to some of the riddles of scholarship about the author, whom he places in the fifth century CE.

3 I have not consistently flagged what I believe to be improvements upon earlier published interpretations in the case of the Mebon inscription, K. 528. For that inscription, I have just published a fresh edition and annotated translation (Goodall 2022) based on better readings (mostly those of Claude Jacques) than were possible when Finot first published it in 1925. Quotations from the first 6 chapters of the *Raghuvaṃśa* follow the text of Goodall and Isaacson 2003, since that edition gives the text that was known to the tenth-century Kashmirian commentator Vallabhadeva, whose commentary is the earliest to survive; quotations from the subsequent chapters follow the text of the next volume of that edition, now being prepared by Csaba Dezső, Dominic Goodall, Harunaga Isaacson, and Csaba Kiss. Translations of the poem are mostly drawn from a

Fig. 1 Folio of Bodleian Library, MS Stein Or d 74 ii, a birch-bark Sanskrit manuscript in Śāradā script from Kashmir transmitting Vallabhadeva's tenth-century Raghupañcikā, the earliest known commentary on Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśa. Photo: Csaba Dezső.

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2. Moon & Sun: Planetary Genealogy
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7. Sexual Allure, Sexual Prowess, Sexual Restraint

From the above, it should be clear that those eagerly expecting illuminating reflections about the '*devarāja* cult' may stop reading here and turn instead to other works, in particular, of course, the crucial article of Cœdès and Dupont (1943), in which they published the Sdok Kak Thom inscription (K. 235), the note of caution sounded by Kulke (1978), the remarks on

translation being prepared by Csaba Dezső, Dominic Goodall, and Harunaga Isaacson. They may differ, however, from what will eventually be published, since that volume has been undergoing multiple rounds of copy-editing.

the involvement of scriptures of the Vāmasrotas by Sanderson (2004:355–358) and recent reflections in the articles of Bourdonneau (e.g. that of 2016).

1. Symbiosis of kṣatriyas and brahmins

As King Dilīpa and his wife journey to the *āśrama* of Vasiṣṭha, they pass through villages that they have given to communities of brahmins (*Raghuvaṃśa* 1.45):

grāmeṣv ātmanisṛṣṭeṣu yūpacihneṣu yajvanām
amoghāḥ pratigṛhṇantāv arghyānupadam āśiṣaḥ

'In the villages they themselves had gifted, which were marked by the sacrificial posts of those engaged in Vedic sacrifices, the couple received offerings of guest-water, followed by unfailing blessings.'

Aja is consecrated as king by his family's ancestral *guru* Vasiṣṭha (8.4):

sa babhūva durāsadaḥ parair guruṇātharvavidā kṛtakriyaḥ
pavanāgnisamāgamo hy ayaṃ sahitaṃ brahma yad astratejasā

'Consecrated by his *guru*, who knew the Atharvan spells, he became unassailable to his enemies: to yoke *brahman* with the might of arms is to join the forces of wind and fire.'

Integral to the stability of Kālidāsa's ideal realm — which he centres upon the city of Ayodhyā, 'The Unconquerable', situated in mythical time on the Sarayu river, in the middle of the vast Indo-Gangetic plain — is the fruitful symbiosis between brahmins and *kṣatriya*s. Brahmins, on the one hand, are those in whom Vedic knowledge — and therefore all manner of wisdom — is vested: they are irreplaceable performers of the diverse body of sacrifices required to sustain the cosmos. *Kṣatriya*s, on the other hand, are the noble

warriors who protect the brahmins' needs and special status and who patronise their learning and their sacrificial activity. Paradigmatic is of course the symbiosis between the king, the chief *kṣatriya* of the realm, and his family priest-*cum* counsellor (*purohita*), the most illustrious brahmin. This comes to expression in numerous ways throughout the *Raghuvaṃśa*. The first chapter itself sets out this mutual dependence: king Dilīpa must set forth with his wife to the *āśrama* of the great brahmin sage Vasiṣṭha, in order to consult him about his protracted childlessness, incurred, as Vasiṣṭha reveals, as a result of an involuntary discourtesy that Dilīpa showed to the sacred mother of all cows when returning from a battle to protect the cosmic order. Vasiṣṭha, living in the meditative seclusion of his perfect *āśrama*, where Vedic rites are conducted and harmony reigns even among wild beasts, is able not only to diagnose the cause of Dilīpa's problem, but also the remedy: a religious observance involving waiting upon the milch cow who provides the dairy produce for Vasiṣṭha's sacrifices. While the first chapter showcases the king's dependence on brahmins, conversely, other parts of the story emphasise the brahmins' need for the king's protection, for instance chapter 11, in which Vasiṣṭha visits king Daśaratha in order to tell him that violent demons have taken control of the forest, making sacrificial activity impossible. This is the cue for Daśaratha to send two of his sons, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, still very young, but mighty *kṣatriya*s nonetheless, to protect the brahmin community.

Now in the Cambodian case, it seems clear that brahmins are similarly held in exceptionally high regard and that the traditional mode of interaction between king and brahmins is very much the ideal. We see, for example, in the very earliest inscriptions of the corpus evidence of their mutual support: in K. 875, Kulaprabhāvatī, probably already the widow of a pre-Jayavarman-I king called Jayavarman, appears to create a dwelling for brahmins; and in K. 5 (st. 9), we see that king Guṇavarman calls upon multiple brahmins to officiate at the installation and consecration of his Viṣṇu-image:

Asyāṣṭame hni vicitair upavedaveda-
vedāṅgavidbhir amarapratimair dvijendraiḥ
saṃskāritasya kathitaṃ bhuvi cakratīrttha-
svāmīti nāma vidadhuś śrutiṣu pravīṇāḥ

On the eighth day,[4] those skilled (*pravīṇāḥ*) in the Vedas (*śrutiṣu*) pronounced the name Cakratīrthasvāmin, famous on earth, for this [image of Viṣṇu] (*asya*), which was consecrated (*saṃskāritasya*) by select (*vicitaiḥ*) noble brahmins (*dvijendraiḥ*) similar to the gods (*amarapratimaiḥ*), who know the [four] *upavedas*, the [six] Vedas and the [six] *vedāṅgas*.

Here, incidentally, Cœdès (1931:6–7) has read and translated *vicitrair*, which suggests that the brahmins were 'various', and therefore perhaps belonging to several Vedic schools (*śākhā*). But this reading, implying a profusion of brahmins such as must have been typical in many areas on the Indian subcontinent, would be unmetrical, and what seems to be visible instead (EFEO estampage n. 15) is *vicitair*, which could mean 'select' or 'gathered together'.

Leaf through any volume of *Epigraphia Indica*, and you will see that across most of the Indian subcontinent a rich early layer of inscriptions is found in which kings make over clusters of villages to brahmin communities. In the Cambodian corpus, by contrast, there appear to be no pre-Angkorian cases of the creation of such brahmin settlements (*agrahāra*, *brahmadeya*) by land-grants. Of course one could posit that this is simply because such grants were typically engraved on copper-plates and no such copper-plates happen to survive in Khmer territory. But there is little to suggest that the Khmer-speaking countryside might ever have been densely dotted with communities of landed brahmins, as in the Kālidāsan ideal.

4 We might expect this to refer to the eighth day of a particular month, but no month is mentioned. Could it refer to the eighth day of Guṇavarman's reign?

Indeed, Éric Bourdonneau (2016:123–136) has been troubled by the surprisingly widespread uncritical assumption in secondary literature that all figures of learning and religious authority mentioned in Khmer epigraphy must be brahmins. He points out that figures who are explicitly said to be brahmins are much less numerous than might be supposed and that we never find a genealogy containing a series of generations of brahmins. In other words, although many figures in the epigraphical record are presented as brahmin, we never seem to find two consecutive generations of which it is explicitly said that both are brahmin. Instead, we find many instances in which a particular learned brahmin is mentioned, sometimes with an indication of some place of origin that could be interpreted as being somewhere in India, and his offspring is then pointedly not stated to be brahmin. In the seventh-century, for example, we learn from K. 725 of a certain Dharmasvāmin, a Brahmin who knew the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, but whose sons had martial appointments in the reign of Jayavarman I: we do not know whom he married, and it is not said of his sons that they were brahmin. In other cases, brahmins are mentioned whose offspring were explicitly not brahmin. The most famous case is probably that of the founder of the tenth-century temple of Banteay Srei, namely Yajñavarāha, the guru of Rājendravarman and then of Jayavarman V, who was the son of a brahmin called Dāmodara but was not himself a brahmin. Dāmodara is described (K. 842) as a *Ṛgveda*-knowing brahmin who married the daughter of Harṣavarman I, and fathered Yajñavarāha. Yajñavarāha accordingly describes himself (st. 27of K. 619–620 and st. 19 of K. 662) as *vrahmakṣatra*, a blend of brahmin and *kṣatriya*. (This description may be seen in the sixth fully visible line of Fig. 2, which shows part of an estampage of K. 620.)

What must have been a relative paucity of brahmins, combined with the acquired idealisation of a model of power-sharing between the cerebral brahmin and the martial *kṣatriya*, appears to have given rise to a strong tendency for brahmins and Khmer royalty to intermarry. There may be sporadic evidence of this in the Indian subcontinent, and there have been several royal lineages there that considered themselves to be in some sense

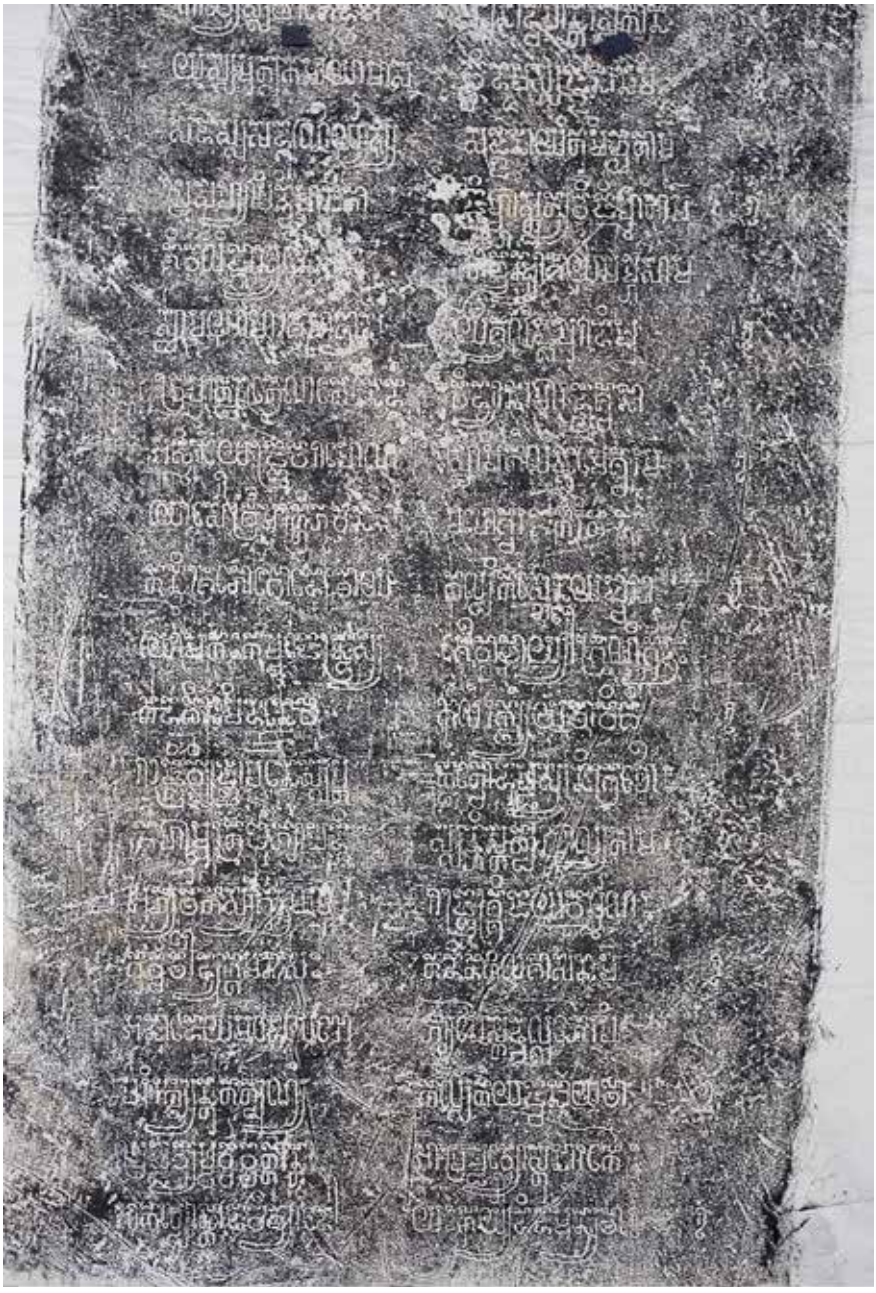

Fig. 2 Image of lower portion of EFEO estampage n. 525 of K. 620.

brahmakṣatra, but the Khmer records seem particularly rich in such claims in every period for which they give testimony, and the claims appear always to be based on intermarriage rather than just on a blurring of rôles in which a brahmin by birth becomes king and so takes on also the prerogatives also of a *kṣatriya*.[5]

Thus we learn, for instance, that Ākṛtisvāmin (K. 359, of c. 600 AD, as re-edited in Goodall 2017:13–134), a Sāmavedin, married the sister of king Bhavavarman I, and gave birth to a son who had the distinctively *kṣatriya* (and therefore non-brahmin) name of Hiraṇyavarman. Similarly, Durgasvāmin (K. 438), was a Taittirīya Brahmin from the Deccan (*dakṣiṇāpatha*) whom Īśānavarman I (616–639) married to his daughter. Another seventh-century instance, in this case of another Sāmavedin brahmin marrying a sister of a different king, a Jayavarman, and giving birth to another king, is recorded in stanzas 3–4 of K. 1142, which we shall have occasion to quote below.[6] And a certain Śakrasvāmin (K. 904 / 713 AD), a Taittirīya brahmin from Madhyadeśa, married Śobhājayā, daughter of Jayavarman I. Then there is Agastya, knower of the Vedas and *vedāṅga*s, from Āryadeśa, whom we know from the ninth-century digraphic stelae of Yaśovarman (e.g. K. 1228, st. 6–7) to have married a queen Yaśomatī, fathering another child with a

5 Chattopadhyaya has suggested (2012:74) that *brahmakṣatra* was often a transitional status enabling Indian kings of brahmin descent 'to legitimize their new kṣatriya role'. For a detailed discussion of such claims, which appear sometimes to be based on what Francis (2017:270) calls *dharmasaṃkara* (a mixing of the rôles of brahmin and *kṣatriya*) rather than on *varṇasaṃkara* (miscegenation), see chapter 8, 'Les aïeux mythiques', of Francis 2017 (pp. 331–356).

6 The opening of K. 1142 is evidently the same as that of K. 483, which was too damaged for Cœdès to interpret, but which can now be much improved upon. But, as Éric Bourdonneau has pointed out to me, part of the interpretation that Claude Jacques has offered when publishing the first seven stanzas of K. 1142 (2007:47–53), seems impossible. Jacques uses K. 1142 to shore up the hypothesis of a Bhavavarman III, which seems to Bourdonneau (and now also myself) unwarranted. A detailed exposition of how the genealogical statements and their implications should instead be understood would, however, require space, particularly since it will require also treatment of K. 438. We therefore leave this for another occasion. I have, however, quoted the first four stanzas of K. 1142 below.

kṣatriya name: Narendravarman. A generation later than Yajñavarāha, we learn (from K. 669, st. 41–57) that the brahmin Divākarabhaṭṭa was the son-in-law of Rājendravarman because he had married the king's daughter Indralakṣmī. It is thus clear that Yajñavarāha fits into a well-documented pattern: in spite of what we might expect given his status as a learned guru, he is the non-brahmin son of a brahmin who married a close female relative of the king.[7]

Exactly contemporary to Yajñavarāha, king Rājendravarman also lays claim to being *vrahma-kṣatra*, a blend of both brahmin and *kṣatriya*, but in this case the basis for his claim (K. 528, st. 10, and K. 806, st. 7–8) is apparently the distant ancestry of his mother, one of whose forebears, a certain Sarasvatī, married the brahmin Viśvarūpa (the claim that the ultimate source of this mythical lineage was Somā, who married the brahmin Kauṇḍinya, seems not to have been pointed up as relevant in this regard).

And there is also an earlier royal figure who makes the claim, namely Jayavarman I *bis*, the eighth-century monarch whose rule intervened at some time between that of the late seventh-century Jayavarman I and that of the ninth-century Jayavarman II. The inscriptions where this claim is made are K. 134 (st. 1), the text that first led Cœdès to suppose the existence of Jayavarman I *bis* (*IC* II, p. 92); K. 1417 (side B, st. 3 and side A, st. 6, using the expressions *dvijakṣatra* and *viprakṣatra*), which is an unpublished pre-Angkorian stela engraved on two sides in Sanskrit and on one in Khmer, issued by a Jayavarman, and which seems, on paleographic grounds, to belong to the eighth century; and K. 1294, an inscription on a silver ewer, published by Dominique Soutif and Julia Estève (2023) that also seems likely to belong to the eighth century and that describes the king, again a

7 There is some evidence also of other sorts of relations by marriage between kings and brahmins: from K. 272, st. 2, for instance, we learn that a king bearing the posthumous name Parameśvara, who may have been Jayavarman II, married Bhāssvāminī, the daughter of a brahmin called Viṣṇu.

Jayavarman, with the expression *vrahmakṣitīśa*.[8]

We quote one of the stanzas of the unpublished three-sided stela K. 1417 (st. 3 of Face B), since it is of some interest as furnishing what may be the only instance in Khmer documents of the usage, alongside *gotra*, of *pravara* in the sense of a distinguished brahmin sage as ancestor:

(9) prasiddhagotrapravaradvija[n](m)[ā]
(10) kṣatrāgra[va](ṅś)āmva[[ra]]ti(gma)(te)j[ā](ḥ)
(11) (di)ganta(r)[[ā]]jy(ān)i yaś(o)ṅśuśubhro
(12) vyajeṣṭa sa śrī[ja]yavarmmadevaḥ

That Śrī Jayavarmmadeva, a twice-born [brahmin] of famed *gotra* and *pravara*, [and at the same time] a sun (°*tigmatejaḥ*) in the sky that was his excellent Kṣatriya lineage, conquered (*vyajeṣṭa*) [other] kingdoms up to the horizons in every direction, being bright with the rays of [his own] fame.

There appear, naturally enough, to be many corollaries that follow from the relative paucity of brahmins among the Khmers. We may mention, for instance, the apparent spread (although of course it cannot really be more than sporadically documented, because of the vagaries of what has been recorded and what has survived) of literacy and literariness among non-brahmins: many of the gurus, dignitaries and men highly regarded for their learning who are mentioned in the inscriptions seem not to have been brahmin. No doubt also connected is the relatively small importance accorded to Mīmāṃsā, the discipline centred upon the exegesis of Vedic

8 Other royal inscriptions that belong to the same reign include K. 103 (dated to 770 CE), K. 1236 (dated to 763 CE: see Goodall 2015), K. 1254 (see Gerschheimer & Goodall 2016:114), and perhaps K. 1241, for although the king is not named, this damaged inscription begins with a date at which Jayavarman I *bis* might already have been ruling, and follows on with a formula announcing a royal edict (ājñā *dhuli jeṅ kamratāṅ añ oy*). The date is given in digits, which Saveros Pou has read as 69[8], but which Dominique Soutif, in his unpublished e-text of the inscription, has corrected to 678, in other words corresponding to 756 CE.

literature. Whereas being *padavākyapramāṇajña* — literally 'knowing words, sentences and means of knowledge', but commonly used to mean rather 'trained in grammar(/Vyākaraṇa), exegesis(/Mīmāṃsā) and logic(/Nyāya)' — is a widespread cliché in Indian descriptions of learned persons, we never find it in Cambodia, where the lists of domains of learning mastered frequently contain Śaivism and astronomy (*jyotiṣa*, *gaṇita*), and not one of those known to us mentions Mīmāṃsā. It is true that detailed knowledge of Mīmāṃsā is reflected in a richly allusive stanza in K. 806, where this knowledge is ascribed to the king Rājendravarman himself (st. 107),[9] whose teacher of Mīmāṃsā, a certain Someśvarabhaṭṭa, is mentioned later in the same inscription (st. 237); but the very isolation of this case (among the very many allusions to ideas from the intellectual traditions of Arthaśāstra, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, the Sāṅkhyas, Buddhists and Śaivism) points up how insignificant Mīmāṃsā seems to have been, generally, among the Khmers.[10] Similarly, there is almost no evidence of knowledge and practice of large Vedic rituals. Sanderson has drawn attention to this in the section of his enormous article on 'The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers' that is tellingly entitled 'Khmer Subsidiary Brahmanism' (2004:308ff). He points out that the boast, once again in an inscription of the reign of Rājendravarman (K. 958, st. 6), that the king repeatedly caused the gods to drink Soma, if it is not 'empty praise, entails the existence of a community of orthodox brahmins versed in the Vedas and Śrauta ritual, since no Soma sacrifice can be performed with less than sixteen such persons as officiants (*ṛtvik*)'. It

9 Here is not the place to unpack the complexity of stanza 107 of K. 806. Gerdi Gerschheimer has prepared extensive notes on the subject that we plan to build out into a full exposition as part of a fresh edition and translation of all 298 stanzas of that enormous inscription recently undertaken by S.L.P. Anjaneya Sarma, Harunaga Isaacson and myself.

10 Lists of intellectual traditions in which figures of the court were trained are not uncommon. Those in st. 8 of K. 604 (7th c.) and 3.18 of K. 364 are briefly discussed by Goodall 2019, pp. 49–50. Others include st. 47 of K. 692 (which describes the same twelfth-century figure as K. 364, a certain Mūrdhaśiva, but giving a different list of disciplines), st. 9 of K. 853, st. 4 of K. 431, and st. 39–42 of K. 809 (all three of the 9th century); st. 4 of K. 733 (7th century); st. 20 of K. 842 and st. 3 of K. 953 (both of the 10th century).

seems to me that, while the praise may not be entirely without foundation and so wholly 'empty', it is likely to be exaggerated.

This leads us to chalk up another discrepancy between Indian ideals regarding kings and brahmins and the reality on the ground reflected by Khmer inscriptions: in spite of what is suggested about Rājendravarman's *soma*-sacrifices in K. 958, the Khmer kings do not appear to have been prolific śrauta sacrificers.[11] They may have filled their kingdom with religious foundations such as temples and *āśrama*s, but they seem not to have filled it with villages of landed brahmins conducting Vedic sacrifices. We may contrast them with the kings of Ayodhyā, as presented by Kālidāsa, whose capital was surrounded by a countryside full of settlements that they had themselves bestowed upon brahmin communities (see the first epigraph at the head of this section).

Furthermore, whereas dynastic clans of *kṣatriya*s and Veda-knowing brahmin families form two discrete but mutually supportive groups in the Indian ideal, they seem constantly to have intermarried and blended among the Khmers. In other words, 'yoking *brahman* with the might of arms' (see the second epigraph at the head of this section) appears to have been primarily achieved through intermarriage.

2. Moon & Sun: Planetary Genealogy

vaivasvato manur nāma mānanīyo manīṣiṇām
āsīn mahīkṣitām ādyaḥ praṇavaś chandasām iva
tadanvaye śuddhimati prasūtaḥ śuddhimattaraḥ

11 Allusions to ceremonies in which ten million oblations are offered into the fire (*koṭihoma*) are found from the ninth-century reign of Yaśovarman (e.g. K. 309, st. 28) up into the late twelfth century (e.g. K. 692, st. 54). But such sacrifices involving thousands of oblations are not strictly speaking śrauta rites, being rather a development of the phase of textual production of the *pariśiṣṭa*s to the *Gṛhyasūtra*s (Einoo 2005:47) that was continued into the traditions of the Mantramārga (see Goodall & Isaacson 2016:24).

dilīpa iti rājendur induḥ kṣīranidhāv iva
(Raghuvaṃśa 1.11–12)

There was a king called Manu, born of the Sun, deserving respect from the wise. He was the first of kings, as the Om is the first of the Vedic mantras. (1.11)
is pure lineage was born, even purer, a very moon of kings called Dilīpa, as the moon was born in the Ocean of Milk. (1.12)

The *Raghuvaṃśa* traces the lineage of kings descended from the sun. The first human in the lineage is the mythical solar (*vaivasvata*) Manu. After him, uncounted generations are allowed to pass before Kālidāsa begins his narration with the king Dilīpa. His is emphatically a patriline in which inheritance is by right of primogeniture. Superficially, Khmer genealogies resemble this, again claiming descent from a celestial luminary, in this case the moon (although both sun and moon become forebears in the tenth century), and again often emphasising patrilineal descent. But it is clear from the first that this is not a smooth fit. One of the first such planetary genealogies (K. 1142, K. 483) begins in this fashion (for K. 1142, see Fig. 3):[12]

I. [pāda a & c: na-vipulā: - - - - ˘ ˘ ˘ -]
(1) āsīt somasya duhitā somā nāma yaśasvinī
śrīkauṇḍinyasya mahiṣī yā dakṣasyeva vīraṇī

There was once a daughter of the Moon called Somā, renowned, who became the chief wife of Śrī-Kauṇḍinya, as Vīraṇī [was the chief wife] of Dakṣa.

II.
(2) tatkulīnasya yo naptā rājñaś śrīcandravarmmaṇaḥ

12 As explained in a note above, Claude Jacques's interpretation of the sequence of this lineage is problematic, particularly from stanza 5 onwards. Goodall and Bourdonneau plan a new edition in which these issues will be explored.

Fig. 3 Upper portion of EFEO estampage n. 1461 of K. 1141. The handsome calligraphy and beautiful lay-out — in which the metrical structure is visible at a glance (cf. Fig. 4), since the verse-quarters are separated by horizontal spaces, giving the impression of four columns of text — is not untypical of Khmer epigraphy.

kṣaṇaṃ pādāvagāhena svādūkṛtapayonidheḥ

Of king Śrī-Candravarman, who belonged to her lineage, [and] who caused the ocean to become sweet merely by plunging his feet(/rays) into it,[13] the grandson,

III.

(3) svasrīyaḥ khyāta(ś)akte(r) yy(o) rājñaś śrījayavarmmaṇaḥ
āvirbhūtacaturbbāhor bbahu(ś)o raṇamūrddhasu

13 Claude Jacques (2007:53, n. 3) here suspects an allusion to some real event or legendary exploit, but this seems unnecessary, for this is simply a poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*): Candravarman's name is lunar, he is of lunar descent, indeed he is so moon-like that when his feet (*pāda*) touch the sea, the brackish water seems sweetened, just as when the nectareous moon touches the sea with its rays (*pāda*), the water seems turned to nectar.

who was [at the same time] the sister's son of the king Śrī-Jayavarman, of celebrated fame, who manifested four arms (/made Viṣṇu manifest) in the van of many battles,… [14]

IV.
sūnur yyas trisahasrasya chandogasya dvijanmanaḥ
sarvvādbhutapratīkāranadīṣṇātasya dh[ī]nidheḥ

[and] who was [also] the son of a brahmin singer of *chandas* [*scil*. Sāmavedin] (*chandogasya*) of [a recension of] the [*Sāmaveda* corpus consisting in] 3000 [text-divisions],[15] skilled in obviating [through rituals] all manner of [adverse] surprises, a treasury of intelligence, …

14 This trope incidentally recalls the description of Kārttavīrya in *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.38 as *saṅgrāmanirvṛttasahasrabāhuḥ*, 'on whom a thousand arms appeared in battle'.

15 Claude Jacques instead takes *trisahasraya* to refer to a group of 3000 brahmins, pointing out that the only references we have to such a group of 3000 are to the 3000 *dīkṣitar* priests of Chidambaram. He appears to be twice ridiculed in print (although not actually mentioned by name) for this position by Bhattacharya (2001:130 and 2004:688, both of which publications refer to another still-to-appear article in which the point is presumably discussed in more detail and with some supporting evidence, but to which I do not have access). Bhattacharya instead (2004:688) renders *trisahasrasya chandogasya* with 'adepte du *Sāmaveda* (*chandoga*), instruit des trois « sciences » (*vidyā*) de ce Veda divisé en 1000 branches (śākhā)'. Various pieces of epigraphical evidence could be cited in support of the interpretation offered here. Two seventh-century Eastern Cālukya inscriptions published by Somasekhara Sarma (1956) contain parallel expressions that confirm that *trisahasra* relates indeed to a textual corpus, and indeed probably to a śākhā of the *Sāmaveda*. In one, we read of a certain Kumāraśarman who knew the Kauthuma śākhā of the *Sāmaveda*, of whom two grandsons are described as 'having reached the further shore of the [corpus of] three thousand' (Sarma 1956:132, lines 12–13, and p. 135, lines 14–17): […] *kauthuma-chandoga-sabrahmacāriṇaḥ kumāraśarmmaṇaḥ pautrābhyāṃ* [...] *trisahasra-pāragābhyām*. The other speaks of two sons of a certain Viṣṇuyaśas who are again Sāmavedins and who are described as 'having the lotusses of their mouths adorned by the scripture of the three thousand' (Sarma 1956:135, lines 14–17): [...] *viṣṇuyaśasaḥ putrābhyāṃ* [...] *chandoga-sabrahmacāribhyām trisahasra-vidyālaṅkṛtamukhāravindābhyām*. About this *trisahasra-vidyā*, Sarma (1956:134, fn. 1) writes 'I am informed that Brāhmaṇas well-versed in this lore belong to the Mādhyandina śākhā of the Kāṇva sect.' Another group of brahmins described as °*trisahasravidya*° (the word prefixes a compounded list of anthroponyms) appears in the sixth-century 'Sarangarh Plates of Sudevarāja', edited by Ajay Mitra Shastri (1995, vol.2, p. 51, line 9).

The first point on which we shall comment here is that the 'human' starting point of the line is not a man, but Somā, the daughter of the moon, and she marries a brahmin, Kauṇḍinya. It is possible that a first woman is required in this origin-myth in order to introduce brahmin blood, since hypergamy is generally frowned on in Sanskritic thought unless it is the male who is from a superior background. Vīraṇī, also called Asiknī, Asikrī and Vairaṇī, is no doubt compared with Somā because she is famous almost exclusively because she gave birth to thousands of children by Dakṣa. But there is another intriguing detail in the story: Dakṣa first engendered in Vīraṇī 1000 sons, who got lost looking for the ends of creation, and then another 1000, who also got lost, and finally, sixty daughters, whom he gave to various semi-divine beings, and it was through these daughters that the propagation of Dakṣa's line was finally assured (the story is narrated, for instance, in *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* part 2, chapter 2, ed. Shastri 1973).

The second point to note, after the prominence given to women, is the emphasis upon continuity from grandfather to grandson. We suspect that this may in part be because, while there is an awareness that the brahminical norm (and in many places elsewhere also the *kṣatriya* norm) is patrilineal primogeniture, among the Khmers the most important succession pattern seems rather to be one of maternal uncle (*mātula*) to sister's son (*bhāgineya/svasrīya*). This can be made to seem more nearly patrilineal by emphasizing the step from grandfather to grandson. We have seen above instances of the king marrying his sister off to a brahmin, and it is possible that this was in order to have a prestigious heir. Of course one could also suspect that the marrying of sisters to brahmins was itself a contributory cause to the strengthening of the notion that the relation between maternal uncle and sister's son was a privileged one. But there seem to be many instances among the nobility and families of high prestige that suggest the relation was in any case already privileged.[16] Here, the person being

16 To cite just two early instances, the lineage of Brahmadatta and Brahmasiṃha continues through two sons of their sister (or sisters) in K. 53 (see Fig. 4), st. 4 ff; and K. 762, st. 9 records a *liṅga*-foundation made by a patron who was aided by two sons

< Figure 4: EFEO estampage n. 1161 of K. 53. The second, third and fourth stanzas, in lines 2–4, may be read and translated as follows:

2 rājā śrīrudravarmmāsīt trivikramaparākramaḥ / yasya saurājyam adyāpi dilīpasyeva viśrutam

3 tasyābhūtāṃ bhiṣaṅmukhyau bhrātarāv aśvināv iva / brahmadattas sa yo jyeṣṭho brahmasiṅhas sa yo nujaḥ

4 tayor api mahābhāgyau bhāgineyau vabhūvatuḥ / dharmmadevaḥ prathamajaḥ siṅhadevas tv anantaraḥ

2 There was a king Śrī Rudravarman, with the valour of Trivikrama-Viṣṇu, whose excellent rule is as famous even today as that of Dilīpa.

3 He had two principal physicians, brothers like the Aśvins. The elder was Brahmadatta; the younger Brahmasiṅha.

4 And they had two illustrious sororal nephews: the elder was Dharmadeva; the other Siṅhadeva.

described is identified not only as the grandson of Candravarman (a king otherwise known to us only from one inscription, K. 658[17]), but also as the son of the sister of a Jayavarman (whom Claude Jacques [2007:50] identified, probably mistakenly, with Jayavarman I). Famous later instances are to be found in the celebrated stela of Sdok Kak Thom (K. 235, first edited by Cœdès and Dupont [1943]), in which a hereditary priesthood again passes through several generations from maternal uncle (*mātula*) to sister's son (*bhāgineya*, *svasriya*).[18]

As suggested elsewhere, it seems possible that the co-presence of Khmer inheritance patterns with ideals from India may partly explain why, in spite of an obsession with planetary genealogy, there is an absence of the grand lunar and solar dynastic families that are typical of Indian history (Goodall 2019:61):

of his sister (or sisters). Cœdès (*IC* I, p. 12) is of the opinion that the patron's name is not mentioned, but it is possible that he is in fact named and that he is to be identified as the founder who also produced K. 1059 (see Goodall 2020).

17 A revised edition of K. 658 is now in press: Goodall forthcoming A.

18 Cf. also K. 522 (of the tenth century) and K. 253 (beginning of the eleventh). K. 253, which describes a priestly lineage not unrelated to that of K. 235, also illustrates instances of another relationship that seems to be favoured in non-royal successions, namely that with a *bhāgineyīsuta*, 'son of one's sister's daughter'.

> Perhaps such a 'mixed system' of inheritance patterns could go some way to explain a striking difference between genealogies in Khmer-speaking territories and those of the Indian subcontinent: whereas the names of dynasties are ubiquitous in epigraphs from the subcontinent (in this article alone we have had cause to mention in passing the Cholas, Pallavas, Licchavis, Śālaṅkāyanas and Ikṣvākus, and there are of course hundreds more), such clan-names seem to be absent among the Khmers.

To sum up this section, while their political poetry presents both Khmer and Indian dynasts as descended from sun or moon, in the Khmer cases there is no reduction to an idealised patriline.

3. Rājā and Yuvarāja: Royal Patrilines & Khmer Matrilines

atha prajānāṃ ciram ātmanā dhṛtāṃ nitāntagurvīṃ laghayiṣyatā dhuram
vaśīti matvā maticakṣuṣā suto nṛpeṇa cakre yuvarājaśabdabhāk
narendramūlāyatanād anantaraṃ tadāspadaṃ śrīr yuvarājasaṃjñitam
agacchad aṃśena guṇābhilāṣiṇī navāvatāraṃ kamalād ivotpalam
(Raghuvaṃśa 3.35–36)

> Then, when the king, who judged by the eye of his mind, saw that his son was self-controlled, he made him bear the title of Young King, intending to lighten the extremely weighty burden that he had borne so long of governing his subjects (3.35).
> Desirous of excellence, Majesty next moved a part of herself from her principal residence, the King, to the one who had come to be called the Young King, just as beauty partly moves from the lotus to the newly opened waterlily (3.36).

Michael Vickery, particularly in his major study of 1998 (pp. 24ff, 369ff, and *passim*), has emphasised the Khmer inheritance pattern in which titles (notably *poñ*) pass from maternal uncle to sister's son. He has also spoken of ultimogeniture, for which the evidence seems less strong (see the edition

of K. 1150 in Goodall 2019 for the evidence for removing one famous supposed case of ultimogeniture from the record). What is also clear, however, is that the societal model imported with brahmins and with Sanskrit introduced (if it was not already there) another inheritance pattern that competed with the *mātula-bhāgineya* one, namely patrilineal primogeniture. It is possible that the mutual interference of incompatible notions of inheritance made some of the conflicts over succession bloodier than they might otherwise have been. The ideal, as we see in the above quotation from chapter 3 of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, is that the king is able to share power with his first-born son once that son is recognised as *yuvarāja*, 'Crown Prince', or, more literally, 'Young King', a status that allowed and obliged the son to share the duties of rule. Khmer epigraphy indeed contains references to the concept of the Yuvarāja, the next-in-line by patrilineal inheritance to the throne, who spends a period of sharing the burden of governance with his father the king; but there seems to be no known case where we can be sure that such a system was actually followed. Furthermore, even those instances of the mention of the notion of the Yuvarāja concern successions which appear to have borne no relation whatsoever to the ideal. Rājendravarman, for instance, in the great Mebon inscription (K. 528, st. 29), punningly alludes to his having earned the status of *yuvarāja* from his father:

> *dhanurvvikarṣapratatoruśaktir yyuvapravīro yuvarājalakṣmīm*
> *ayonijāṃ yo janakopanītāṃ sītāṃ satīṃ rāma ivoduvāha*

> Just as Rāma, a hero in youth, his broad powers increased by bending [Paraśurāma's] bow (*dhanurvikarṣapratatoruśaktiḥ*), married (*uduvāha*) the faithful (*satīm*) Sītā, who was born of no human mother (*ayonijām*), led up to him by Janaka (*janakopanītām*),
>
> > *so too Rājendravarman, a hero as a youth, his power made broadly famous by the drawing of his bow (*dhanurvikarṣapratatoruśaktiḥ*), 'married' the faithful Glory of being Crown Prince (*yuvarājalakṣmīm*), which did not come to him from his mother's side (*ayonijām*), but which was presented to him by his father (*janakopanītām*).*

The emphasis here on his paternal inheritance in effect highlights how common the rival Khmer inheritance pattern was, in which a man's sister's son is typically his heir. Seen in the context of the rest of the Mebon inscription (K. 528), this verse is an oddity. It is first of all peculiar because Rājendravarman's father is a certain Mahendravarman, about whom we know only that he was king of the city Bhavapura and that it was claimed that his royal lineage was solar. It is rather Rājendravarman's mother who was said to be of lunar descent and to belong to the family of hereditary rulers of the wider Khmer 'empire'. So if Rājendravarman really was *yuvarāja* in the full sense of being consecrated as 'Young King' while his father was still ruling, then he could only have been *yuvarāja* of Bhavapura.[19] Secondly, it is clear that, even if this stanza punningly implies adhesion to the patrilineal norms illustrated in the ideal ruling lineage of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, the idealising sketch of Rājendravarman's genealogy given at the beginning of the Mebon inscription presents instead, as Finot has observed (1925:311), his matriline (*mātṛvaṃśa*).

Real instances of a *yuvarāja* being appointed by his still reigning father may be unknown in Cambodia. One possible exception is the younger brother of Dharaṇīndravarman and Jayavarman VI. The youngest of these three sons of Hiraṇyavarman is mentioned only as Yuvarāja (K. 384, st. 5, and K. 191, st. 31–33), and he might have been so named because he was designated by his father as *yuvarāja*, perhaps because patrilineal ultimogeniture was the inheritance pattern in the eleventh-century kingdom of Mahīdharapura, but died before he could fully assume the throne. In any case, Hiraṇyavarman was the king only of Mahīdharapura, supposedly in what is now Thailand, not of the entire Khmer 'empire', as Jayavarman VI became. Real instances of a *rāja-yuvarāja* duumvirate are, however, attested elsewhere, for example among the Cōḻa kings, whose inscriptions may be dated by naming simultaneous but differing regnal years of two different kings.[20]

19 For a longer discussion of this matter and of Rājendravarman's ancestry, the problems of which have been much discussed in secondary literature, see the introduction to Goodall's edition of K. 528 (2022:56–57).

20 One such instance is found in an inscription on the North side of the base of the temple of Kṣetrapāla, in the compound of the Kapardīśvara temple in Tiruvalañcuḻi (No. 237 [AR No. 633C of 1902], on p. 130 of *South Indian Inscriptions* VIII,

After sharing the burden of governance, the old king, in Kālidāsa's ideal, should withdraw from the world and devote himself to the path to liberation.[21] Here, for example, is a stanza drawn from a passage in which the administrative activities of the young king Aja are juxtaposed with the spiritual pursuits of the old king, Raghu, who has renounced the world (*Raghuvaṃśa* 8.23):

na navaḥ prabhur ā phalodayāt sthirakarmā virarāma karmaṇaḥ
na ca yogavidher navetaraḥ sthitadhīrā paramārthadarśanāt

Steadfast in his work, the new king did not desist from action before attaining the fruit of his labours; nor did the old king, steadfast in mind, desist from the practice of yoga before seeing the supreme goal.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is nothing to parallel this in the Khmer epigraphical record. But Khmer royal poets do portray some still ruling kings as both warriors and yogins. Rājendravarman, for instance, is described in this way in a punning stanza (53) of the Mebon inscription, K. 528:[22]

nijāsanaṃ prāpya ripūn nirasya ruddhvā marudvartma manorayañ ca
vijitya yasyābhyasato 'vatasthe 'py atīndriye yo(ga i)veṣuvarṣam

The rain of arrows [of Rājendravarman] as he merely (*api*) practised [archery], once they had been set to his bow (*nijāsanam prāpya*), destroyed

Subrahmanya Aiyer 1937), dated in the 3rd regnal year of Rājendra and in the 29th regnal year of his father Rājarāja. Thus Rājendra's regnal era began with his consecration as *yuvarāja*, at a time when his father still continued to rule.

21 This ideal is repeated several times in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, often with considerable textual variation, apparently concerning the nature of the renunciatory path chosen by kings. This is the subject of a lengthy article by Tsuchida (1997), unfortunately produced before the readings of Vallabhadeva, the author of the oldest surviving commentary on the *Raghuvaṃśa*, could be determined from Kashmirian manuscripts. A more up-to-date treatment of the topic is that of Dezső 2022.

22 This stanza is incompletely transcribed in Finot's edition, and so was not fully interpretable for him.

his enemies, blocked the sky (*ruddhvā marudvartma*), surpassed the speed of thought (*manorayaṃ vijitya*) and came to rest in a place that was beyond the range of the senses (*atīndriye*);

*just as his yoga, as he practised it, once the appropriate posture had been adopted (*nijāsanam prāpya*), destroyed the [internal] enemies [that are the passions], blocked the passage of his breaths (*ruddhvā marudvartma*), overcame the flightiness of the mind (*manorayaṃ vijitya*) and came to rest in that [ultimate reality] which is beyong the senses (*atīndriye*).*

Similarly, in the long praise of Narendrāditya given in K. 384 from Phnom Rung, the fourth chapter is devoted to the hero's yogic powers and practices and it bears the chapter colophon *iti vidyāsiddhiyogapaṭalam samāpta*(*m*), 'Thus [ends] the chapter about his powers (°*siddhi*°) from mantras (*vidyā*°) and his yoga'. Now Narendrāditya was not exactly a king, but a warrior and descendant of Sūryavarman II who, if he had been being groomed for possible succession, as his fulsome eulogy might appear to suggest, must have died inopportunely around the time Sūryavarman II died: the date given in one of the scruffily scrawled post-mortem stanzas added to the end of the text on the stela is 1150 CE.[23]

While on the subject of features pointedly not copied from Kālidāsa by Khmer poets, we may note in passing that the stanza just quoted (8.23), comes from a famous chapter of the *Raghuvaṃśa* that is largely taken up by the grief of Aja, who must mourn both his father's death and then that of his spouse. The metre chosen for this narrative — and the choice is no accident, for Kālidāsa uses the same metre for the *rativilāpa*, the lament of Rati after the burning of her husband Kāmadeva in the *Kumārasambhava* — is a limping measure in which the first and third quarters have ten syllables and the

23 Only half of the stela K. 384 was known to Cœdès (*IC* V, p. 297ff), and the only complete edition has long been that in the MA thesis of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (1978), which is unpublished and written in Thai. I have therefore prepared a fresh edition with English translation, now in press (Goodall, forthcoming B).

second and fourth have eleven: ˘˘-˘˘-˘-˘-/˘˘--˘˘-˘-˘-. This haunting metrical pattern was known as *vaitālīya* and also, probably after Kālidāsa's *rativilāpa* became famous, as *viyoginī*, 'she who is [suffering] in separation'. As observed elsewhere (Goodall 2016:257–259), this metre seems never to occur in the Khmer epigraphical corpus, and it seems reasonable to assume that this is because Kālidāsa's use of it had rendered it so charged with sorrow that it could no longer serve for royal eulogy.

4. The King and his Built Heritage

vaṅgān utkhāya tarasā netā nausādhanoddhatān
nicakhāna jayastambhān gaṅgāsrotontareṣu saḥ
(Raghuvaṃśa 4.37*)*

With his driving force the commander king destroyed the Vaṅgas, who were proud of their navy, and installed columns of victory among the streams of the Ganges. (4.37)

If there is one thing that is popularly associated with the kings of Cambodia, it is the grandeur of the enormous monuments that they erected, ostensibly out of devotion to the gods they venerated, but plainly also in part for themselves and their families to be remembered by. This is something about which Kālidāsa does not really speak at all, presumably because he simply belonged to a time before the era in which kings were expected to erect great stone temples as acts of public piety. He does mention one physical temple more than once, namely the temple of Mahākāla in Ujjain (*Meghadūta* 1.33–35 [Mallinson 2006:42–45] and *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.34), but we learn nothing from these mentions about its buildings or about when or by whom they were constructed. Kālidāsa does, however, refer to the practice of installing Victory Columns (*jayastambha*), and this convention is alluded to repeatedly by one early Cambodian king, Citrasena-Mahendravarman of the beginning of the seventh century. Almost all his various inscriptions are dotted in a broad swathe across the Dangrek mountains

in the North and record that he conquered the surrounding territories and installed either a *liṅga* or a bull that was, as it were, a column or mark of victory. Thus the third and final stanza of K. 363, K. 496, K. 497, K. 508, K. 509, and K. 1106 reads:

> *jitveman deśam akhilaṅ giriśasyeha bhūbhṛti*
> *liṅgam niveśayām āsa jayacihnam ivātmanaḥ*
>
> Having conquered this entire area, he planted a *liṅga* of Śiva here on this mountain, a Mark of Victory for himself, as it were.

Similarly, the third stanza of K. 1102, K. 1280, K. 1339, and K. 1340 reads as follows:

> *vijitya nikhilān deśān asmin deśe śilāmayam*
> *vṛṣabhaṃ sthāpayām āsa jayastambham ivātmanaḥ*
>
> Having conquered all [surrounding] places, he erected a stone bull in this place, a Column of Victory for himself, as it were (*iva*).[24]

The expression is varied in the third stanza of K. 1173, an estampage of which is shown as Fig. 5:[25]

24 If it were not for the presence of *ātmanaḥ*, one could have taken the *iva* as marking not a poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*), but rather a simple simile (*upamā*): 'like (*iva*) a victory column'. In their English rendering, Chirapat Prapandavidya and Willard van de Bogart (Mangmeesukhsiri 2021:277) omit the word.

25 It is also varied in the third stanza of K. 1174, omitting the notion of a victory column:

> *devabhūyaṅ gatasyāpi pituś śrīvīravarmmaṇaḥ*
> *nāmasmṛtyai vṛṣam imaṃ śilāmayam atiṣṭhipat*
> Although (*api*) his father Śrī Vīravarman had become a god,
> [Mahendravarman] erected this stone bull to the memory of his name.

Once again, Chirapat Prapandavidya and Willard van de Bogart (Mangmeesukhsiri 2021:279) omit the word (*iva*) in their English rendering. They have incidentally also missed the *t* in the word *śaktyānūnaḥ* in 1c and mistranscribed 2c as *citrasena ity*

sa śrīkṛtāntapāśasya pitṛvyasya śilāmayam
vṛṣabhaṃ sthāpayām āsa yaśaḷkīlam iva sthiram

He erected a stone bull to be, as it were, an enduring (*sthiram*) Pillar of Fame for his father's brother Śrī-Kṛtāntapāśa.

Thus Citrasena-Mahendravarman may not have set up Victory Columns to mark his victories, but, conscious of the practice that Kālidāsa mentions, he set up images for the worship of Śiva that were, as it were, to serve also the function of Victory Columns!

Although he may not speak of temples as being a preoccupation of kings, Kālidāsa does allude to the kings of Raghu's lineage having a duty to the streets, buildings and tanks of their ancestral city Ayodhyā. This comes to expression in chapter 16, when the forsaken Ayodhyā takes human form and appears magically at midnight in the bedchamber of King Kuśa, describes her abandoned condition and requests Kuśa to return and restore her to her proper state (*Raghuvaṃśa* 16.18 and 16.22):

kālāntaraśyāmasudheṣu naktam itas tato rūḍhatṛṇāṅkureṣu
ta eva muktāguṇaśuddhayo 'pi harmyeṣu mūrcchanti na candrapādāḥ
tad arhasīmāṃ vasatiṃ visṛjya mām abhyupaituṃ kularājadhānīm
hitvā tanuṃ kāraṇamānuṣīṃ tāṃ yathā gurus te paramātmamūrtim

---

eva (the stock expression in Citrasena's inscriptions). Stanza 2 (in which the idiom *āhatalakṣaṇa* / *āhitalakṣaṇa* is probably used in conscious echo of *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.71) should rather read:

> *citrasenanāmā yaḥ pūrvvam āhatalakṣaṇaḥ*
> *sa śrīmahendravarmmeti nāma bheje bhiṣekajam*
> He who was previously celebrated as one whose name was Citrasena took the name Śrī Mahendravarman from his consecration [as king].

As for *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.71, it reads:

> *ikṣvākuvaṃśyaḥ kakudaṃ nṛpāṇāṃ kakutstha ity āhitalakṣaṇo 'bhūt*
> *kākutsthaśabdaṃ yata unnatecchāḥ ślāghyaṃ dadhaty uttarakosalendrāḥ*
> There once was a scion of the Ikṣvāku lineage, chief among kings, named Kakutstha. After him the high-minded lords of Uttara Kosala bear the worthy epithet Kākutstha.

Fig. 5 Image of EFEO Estampage n. 1699 of K. 1173.

> At night, the moonbeams, though still white as strings of pearls, no longer dazzle upon the terraces, whose plaster has blackened with passing time and in which grass has taken root and sprouted here and there. (16.18) Therefore you should leave this residence and come to me, your ancestral capital, just as your father [Rāma] left the human body he had adopted for a reason and returned to his form of Supreme Soul. (16.22)

Now it might seem, from the presentation of Claude Jacques and other historians, as though Cambodian kings had no such notion of loyalty to the cities founded by their forebears. Just to take some of the kings about whose capitals we have information, we are to believe that in the pre-Angkorian period Bhavavarman I founded Bhavapura (location disputed); Īśānavarman I founded Īśānapura (Sambor Prei Kuk); Jayavarman I founded Purandarapura (location unknown). There follows a sizeable gap in the epigraphical literature, into which we must now insert the reign of Jayavarman I *bis*, whom we have mentioned above, before we enter into the still extremely misty early Angkorian period with the reign of Jayavarman II, who is believed, on the strength of the evidence of much later inscriptions (notably K. 235) to have founded three capitals: Indrapura (location disputed), Mahendraparvata (Phnoṃ Kulen) and Hariharālaya (Roluos).

But even in the Angkorian period, named after the conurbation known today as Angkor, the capital has been shifting about, most famously to Koh Ker for the reign of Jayavarman IV, but also hither and thither within the

Angkor area: under Yaśovarman, who founded Yaśodharapura (see Jacques 1999:51ff and the map of Guy Nafilyan on p. 53), under Rājendravarman (see Jacques 1999:70–71 and the map of Guy Nafilyan that is printed there), under Jayavarman V (see Jacques 1999:79–81 on his city, 'Jayendranagarī', and the map of Guy Nafilyan) and under Sūryavarman I (see Jacques 1999:97–98 and the map of Guy Nafilyan).

Some of these places are hundreds of kilometres apart, but Hariharālaya, Yaśodharapura, Rājendravarman's capital, Jayendranagarī and Sūryavarman I's capital are not: they are all within Greater Angkor. Furthermore, Christophe Pottier has argued that Bhavapura might well have been there too, a late-sixth-century city centred upon the temple of Gambhīreśvara (Ak Yum) on the Southern side of the Western Baray (Pottier 2017). If so many of these 'capital cities' were in fact next-door to one another, then it would not be surprising if some monarchs regarded them as simply parts of the ancestral city of the lineage kings of the Kambujas, to which they all claimed in different ways to belong. And there is arguably some evidence of just that in the inscriptions of Rājendravarman, since he is presented as restoring to glory the city of Yaśodharapurī, just as Kuśa restored Ayodhyā to glory in Kālidāsa's epic (K. 266, st. 13):[26]

śrīmadyaśodharapurīñ cirakālaśūnyaṃ
bhāsvatsuvarṇṇagṛharatnavimānaramyam
bhūyo 'dhikāṃ bhuvi mahendragṛhopamāṃ yo
'yodhyāpurīm iva kuśo 'bhinavāñ cakāra

The glorious city of Yaśodhara, which had long lain empty, Rājendravarman (*yaḥ*) once again made new, just as Kuśa renewed the city of Ayodhyā,

26 Cf. also K. 806, st. 274. From stanza 34 of the inscription in the Northern tower of Bat Chum (K. 268), we learn that the architect Kavīndrārimathana built a palace for Rājendravarman inside Yaśodharapura. For archeological evidence for the continuity of royal occupation of 'Yaśodharapura' through both the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods, the publication of Jacques Gaucher's work is awaited.

> once again great, delightful because of the jewelled turrets of its houses of gleaming gold, like a city of great Indra upon earth [/like the palaces on the Phnom Kulen] (*mahendragṛhopamāṃ*).[27]

So it is clear that Rājendravarman regarded 'his' capital city as being part of (or in continuity with) that of Yaśovarman I, namely Yaśodharapura. Further, it seems not unreasonable to suppose, given how close together many of their various 'capitals' were, that other kings, just like Rājendravarman, saw themselves as renewing their ancestral capital by developing particular religious sites within it. And we see that it is once again to Kālidāsa's epic that Rājendravarman's poets appeal to show that the fostering of an ancestral capital had an illustrious precedent in the loyal maintenance of Ayodhyā by the solar lineage of Raghu.

Before we leave entirely the topic of Khmer royalty and Khmer 'built heritage', it is perhaps worth remarking that the popular association of monuments with kings is somewhat exaggerated. Leaving aside the fact that there are many buildings for which no associated inscriptions have come to light, and for which the patrons are therefore unknown to us, the inscriptional record shows that plenty of religious foundations were evidently made without any direct royal patronage. For the pre-Angkorian period, inscriptions that attest to direct royal patronage seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Out of more than 300 surviving pre-Angkorian inscriptions, only sixty-five record activities that appear to be very directly sponsored by a royal figure.[28] Of those sixty, about twenty are the brief and

27 As well as perhaps referring punningly to the city or palace of Jayavarman II on the Phnom Kulen (Mahendraparvata), it is possible that there is a further pun intended in the qualification *mahendragṛhopamāṃ*, for we know (from K. 806, st. 12) that Mahendravarman was the name of Rājendravarman's father, and that Mahendravarman was king of Bhavapura. The palace could, in other words, have been 'like that of the Great Indra on earth [that was his father Mahendravarman]'.

28 At present, I count 65 out of 320. For these figures, I rely on a perusal of the version dated to 9th April 2017 of Dominique Soutif's invaluable 'Inventaire CIK des inscriptions khmères', published and updated online here: https://cik.efeo.fr/inventaire-cik-des-inscriptions-khmeres/ I have obviously included inscriptions that are

repetitive inscriptions of Citrasena-Mahendravarman installing bulls or *liṅga*s that seem to mark out the contours of his conquests. As we have seen above, they are likened to victory-markers, and there is little to suggest the creation of well-endowed foundations around them. Of the remaining 40, several are edicts laying down rules in existing shrines or ratifying the arrangements in foundations made by others and thus appearing to involve no contribution of wealth by the king himself:

> K. 38, K. 44 of 596 *śaka*, K. 49 of 586 *śaka*, K. 90, K. 137, K. 341S of 596 *śaka*, K. 341N of 622 *śaka*, K. 367, K. 426, K. 502, K. 561 of 603 *śaka*, K. 940, K. 1004 of 612 *śaka*.

A few others concern royal figures about whom we know almost nothing and belong to liminal areas that may have been beyond the control of the Khmer kings of the lineage of Bhavavarman I.

> K. 7 (a king Śambhuvarmadeva, of Sadec province in Vietnam), K. 400A (a king of Canāśa, Korat, Thailand), K. 404 and K. 1221 (a certain Jayasiṅghavarman/Jayasiṅhavarman, Korat, Thailand), K. 503 (gift of Pṛthivīndrasya, Thailand), K. 577 (a certain Nāyaka Ārjava, son of Śāmbūkeśvara, Thailand), K. 964 (Harṣavarman, grandson of an Īśānavarman, U Thong, Thailand), K. 1082 (Pravarasena, king of Śaṅkhapura, in Surin province, Thailand?),[29] K. 1096 (Nṛpendrapativarman, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand).

explicitly dated in the *śaka* era from before the beginning of the ninth century CE. For those assigned to the pre-Angkorian period on the basis of palaeography alone, I have looked at photographs of the EFEO's estampages and, where possible, at published discussions.

29 Gerdi Gerschheimer is the person who has most recently published and discussed K. 1082. As he observes (Pichard and Gerschheimer 2007: 93ff), we cannot know whether Pravarasena ruled over a large area or whether any of his descendants also claimed to be kings, nor can we be sure where Śaṅkhapura was, although it is tempting to identify it with the nearby town of Sangkha in Surin Province in Thailand (Pichard 2007:92).

To these we may add those of such an early period that we do not know for sure how or if the kings in question may be meaningfully attached to the same polity or connected to the lineage beginning with Bhavavarman I:

K. 5 (Guṇavarman), K. 40 (Rudravarman), K. 365 (Devānīka).

A few others again are the foundations of queens, not of ruling kings:

K. 124 of 725 śaka, K. 437, K. 904 of 635 śaka, K. 259S, K. 875, K. 1009.

Occasionally, we have gifts made by the king to already existing foundations, such as in K. 483, which concludes with a gift made by a Bhavavarman to the Śiva called Utpannakeśvara; in K. 607 (edited by Soutif 2009:411–415), which appears to record gifts, notably of personnel, by a Bhavavarman, probably Bhavavarman II; in K. 55, which records the gift of a *liṅgakośa* by Jayavarman I; in K. 1294, which is engraved on a silver vessel given by Jayavarman I *bis* (see Estève and Soutif 2023).

Bracketing out the victory-markers of Citrasena-Mahendravarman, this leaves only a small number — less than ten! — of inscriptions recording foundations by the Khmer kings of the seventh and eighth centuries: K. 658 (edited in Goodall forthcoming A) records the installation of an image (or *liṅga*) of Śiva by Candravarman (perhaps the same Candravarman as the one mentioned in K. 1142, whose opening was quoted above); K. 213 records the installation of a *liṅga* by Bhavavarman I using the wealth won by his bow; K. 978 records the installation of various *liṅga*s by Bhavavarman I on the occasion of his accession; K. 440 and K. 442 record Īśānavarman's foundation, installation of deities and endowment of his temple of Śiva Prahasiteśvara at Sambor Prei Kuk; K. 146 (undated, king unidentified), K. 1417 (Jayavarman I *bis*), K. 1236 (Jayavarman I *bis*), K. 1254 (Jayavarman I *bis*).

The last mentioned case is, incidentally, a useful corrective to the expectation that the king must always be the great builder, for we learn from stanzas 17–18 of K. 1254 that he commissioned the silver image of a Viṣṇu called Tribhuvanañjaya, but that it was a man who bore the title of 'Favourite of the King' (*rājavallabhākhya*) who built the temple to house it, and we learn from K. 939 that it was a certain Svāmicāturvidya who endowed the Tribhuvanañjaya with slaves and land.

Of course there are many more inscriptions that mention the king prominently and that are connected with the milieu of the court, notably about thirty pre-Angkorian inscriptions that record foundations made by court favourites and officials appointed by the king. Cursory consultation of such inscriptions, particularly through the lens of those interested primarily in regnal history, can too easily lead historians to assume the involvement of kings in temple-construction, particularly since such dignitaries often fill many verses of their inscriptions with royal eulogies and royal genealogy. To cite just one example, K. 81 consists of an inscription of 35 stanzas on the North doorjamb of a brick-built Śaiva sanctuary at Han Chey, and a further 12 stanzas on the South doorjamb.

Among all of these, 33 stanzas (21 on the North) are devoted to praising a king Bhavavarman and his son, and only 13 stanzas describe the 'servant' who was the founder of the sanctuary. About that servant, we learn that he was governor of Ugrapura (*ugrapurādhīśa*), but we are not told his name.[30]

The figures cited above cover, as we have mentioned, only the pre-Angkorian period, which may reflect a very different degree of royal involvement

30 Compare the interesting reflections about the forms and functions of South Indian epigraphic royal eulogies (Skt. *praśasti*; Tamil *meykkīrtti*) that Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid have included as a preface to Vijayavenugopal's translation of *Pondicherry Inscriptions* (Kuppusamy *et al.* 2010), where they observe, for instance, on p. xx: 'It must be emphasized that sometimes the king appears only in the *meykkīrtti* and has apparently nothing to do with the content or decision recorded in the business part of the inscription.'

from that at the height of the Angkorian period. Nevertheless, for those who have tended naïvely to assume (and here I include myself) that Cambodian inscriptions predominantly reflect regalian activities and concerns, it may be useful to be shown that this seems not to be true, at least for the long seventh century. Even if we were to make allowances for all the buildings without inscriptions, and for the inscriptions from which only small fragments can be read, or of which all that survives are lists of donations of slaves, cattle, paddy-fields and fruiting trees — buildings and inscriptions which might, in other words, have furnished evidence of royal involvement but from which the relevant information might now have been lost to damage —, it seems likely that the proportion of inscriptions recording the foundations of Cambodian kings would still remain low. In one important respect this must have been different in the 'Angkorian' period because of the status of 'Angkor' itself, for in Greater Angkor we see the surviving evidence of generations of kings vying with each other in creating monumental temples attesting to their temporal power as much as to their piety. For a map of Angkor, see Fig. 6. Even there, however, there are numerous temples whose authorship is unknown and some that we know were not the foundations of kings. These non-royal foundations include celebrated monuments such as Bat Chum (famed for its particularly finely composed inscriptions K. 266, K. 267 and K. 268), and Banteay Srey, a richly carved gem of a temple in sandstone of a warm reddish hue which some consider the most beautiful of all the Khmer monuments (see Fig. 7). For we learn from K. 842 and from K. 573–575 that Banteay Srei was created and endowed by the learned tenth-century *brahmakṣatra* Yajñavarāha, whom we mentioned earlier, and by his family circle.

> Fig. 6 Localisation of some of the sites mentioned, based on the archeological map of Greater Angkor (published by Evans, Pottier et al., 2007, and kindly modified by Chea Socheat). In the Eastern Baray (Yaśodharataṭāka) is the Mebon temple whose foundation is recorded in K. 528, with Pre Rup (recorded in K. 806) on its South bank. To the NE is the Phnom Kulen (Mahendraparvata), and to the SW is the vast lake, the Thonle Sap.

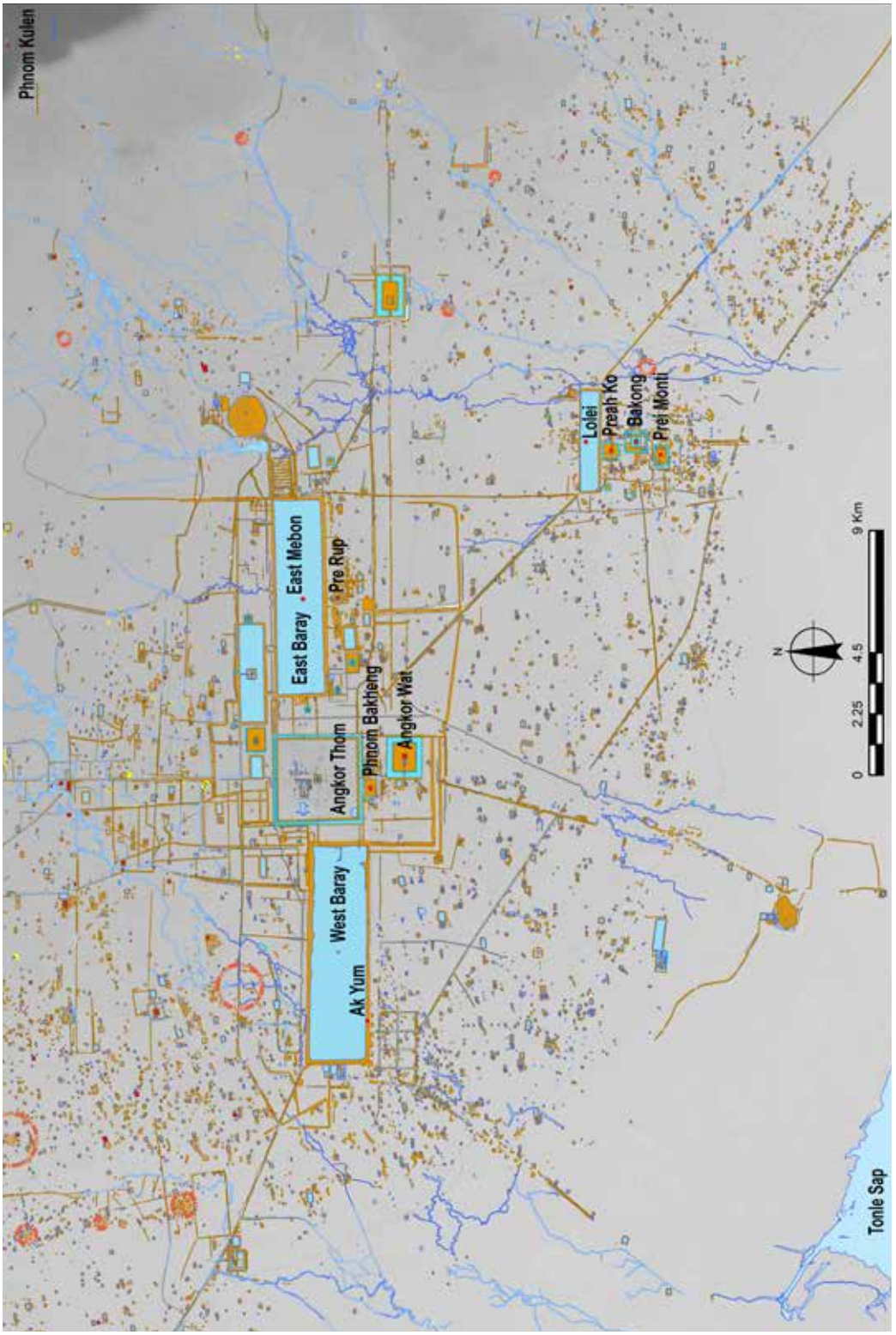
Phnom Kulen
East Mebon
Pre Rup
East Baray
Angkor Thom
Phnom Bakheng
Angkor Wat
West Baray
Ak Yum
Lolei
Preah Ko
Bakong
Prei Monti
Tonle Sap
N
0
2.25
4.5
9 Km

Fig. 7 Detail of one of the many finely carved pediments at Banteay Srei. In the centre is Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha (half man, half lion) disembowelling the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu.

5. The King and War: Fealty, not Resource Control?

iti jitvā diśo jiṣṇur nyavartata rathoddhatam
rajo viśramayan rājñāṃ chattraśūnyeṣu mauliṣu
sa viśvajitam ājahre kratuṃ sarvasvadakṣiṇam
ādānaṃ hi visargāya satāṃ vārimucām iva
sattrānte sacivasakhaḥ puraskriyābhir gurvībhiḥ śamitaparājayavyalīkān
kākutsthaś ciravirahotsukāvarodhān rājanyān svapuranivṛttaye 'numene
(Raghuvaṃśa 4.88–90*)*

When victorious Raghu had thus conquered everything in all directions, he turned homewards, letting the dust raised by his chariots settle on other kings' heads that were bereft of parasols. (4.88)

He performed the All-Conquering Sacrifice, the sacrificial fee of which is everything one possesses. Indeed the virtuous, like clouds, take only so that they can give. (4.89)

At the end of the sacrificial session, Raghu, attended by his ministers, assuaged the pain of the princes' defeat with great gifts of honour and gave them leave to return to their own cities, where their wives were pining from long separation. (4.90)

The same seventh-century inscription from Han Chey that we have just discussed furnishes some of the first unmistakable allusions to the *Raghuvaṃśa* to have been spotted in Khmer epigraphy (K. 81, st. 6 and 7):[31]

śaratkālābhiyātasya parānāvṛtatejasaḥ
dviṣām asahyo yasyaiva pratāpo na raver api
yasya sainyarajo dhūtam ujjhitālaṅkṛtiṣv api
ripustrīgaṇḍadeśeṣu cūrṇṇabhāvam upāgatam

31 It was Kielhorn (1902:3–4), in his introduction to the Mēguṭi inscription at Aihole, who first pointed out these literary echoes. The Han Chey doorjamb inscription K. 81 bears no explicit date, and it is not clear which Bhavavarman is mentioned in it. For what may be the earliest explicitly dated implicit allusions to the *Raghuvaṃśa*, those of K. 1235 and K. 604, both of 627 CE, see Goodall 2019:35–36.

> When, in the autumn, he set out on campaign, his splendour unshadowed by rivals, it was was his ardour, not that of the sun, which was intolerable to his enemies.
> The dust thrown up by his army became the powder for the cheeks of the wives of his enemies, from which all adornment had been banished.

These plainly echo stanzas 52 and 48 respectively of chapter 4 of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, the chapter devoted to a description of Raghu's autumnal military campaign to achieve a 'Conquest of the Directions' (*digvijaya*):

> *diśi mandāyate tejo dakṣiṇasyāṃ raver api*
> *tasyām eva raghoḥ pāṇḍyāḥ pratāpaṃ na viṣehire*
> *bhayotsṛṣṭavibhūṣāṇāṃ tena keralayoṣitām*
> *alakeṣu camūreṇuś cūrṇapratinidhīkṛtaḥ*
>
> Even the sun's heat weakens in the south, yet in just that quarter the Pāṇḍyas could not withstand Raghu's fiery power.
> The women of Kerala discarded all adornment out of fear; but he provided a substitute powder for their hair — the dust raised by his army.

In the poetic universe that Raghu inhabits, war is an activity in which he engages naturally, quite simply because he is a *kṣatriya*, a warrior king, and he does so when autumn approaches, for then the sky is cleared of monsoon clouds and the land dries out, rendering the roads passable, as *Raghuvaṃśa* 4.24 reminds us:

> *saritaḥ kurvatī gādhāḥ pathaś cāśyānakardamān*
> *yātrāyai codayām āsa taṃ śakteḥ prathamaṃ śarat*
>
> Making the rivers fordable and drying out the mud on the roads, Autumn, even before his power, urged Raghu to start a military campaign.

Incidentally, we may notice that this poetic topos about autumn inviting

the king to set off on campaign is oddly perpetuated in K. 81, quoted just above, and elsewhere in the Khmer epigraphical corpus (e.g. K. 528, st. 39), even though the sequence of six seasons of North Indian convention really cannot be made to fit the Cambodian climate (see Goodall 2016).

Battles display Raghu's invincible valour and establish him as the supreme overlord to whom all others are subordinate vassal kings. War is presented as having nothing to do with expanding the frontiers of the king's rule and thereby gaining control over more resources. Instead, these are autumnal 'hit-and-run' conquests whose purpose, in as much as there is one beyond the king simply following his duty as a *kṣatriya*, is to establish hierarchical superiority over rivals. This point is made especially clear at the end of Raghu's conquest of the directions, when he performs a sacrifice that involves redistributing all his wealth to the kings he has just conquered, who are then permitted to return, chastened, but not actually impoverished, to their respective capitals (see the quotation introducing this section).

Similar claims about the king (in this case Rājendravarman) matching the scorching effects of his bellicose valour with downpours of extraordinary generosity are to be found in the Khmer corpus (K. 528, st. 144):

> *pratāpānalasantaptā śaṅke dāhābhiśaṅkayā*
> *āplāvitāsakṛd dhātrī yena dānāmvuvṛṣṭibhiḥ*
>
> Fearing a conflagration, I suppose, he repeatedly flooded the earth, which was heated by the fire of his valour, with the torrents of waters [poured for the solemnisation] of acts of giving.

Similar liberality with the spoils of war, but this time ostensibly exclusively in the name of piety, is implied in pre-Angkorian records, as in this one-stanza inscription of Bhavavarman I (K. 213, Barth 1885:26–28):

śarāsanody(o)gajitārthadānaiḥ karasthalokadvitayena tena
traiyambakaṃ liṅgam idaṃ nṛpeṇa niveśitaṃ śrībhavavarmmanāmnā

By means of gifts of the wealth conquered by the exertions of his bow, this king Śrī Bhavavarman, who holds two worlds in his hands,[32] erected this liṅga of Tryambaka.

Among the Khmers, however, there are arguably claims of territorial acquisition as a result of war, which is therefore, unsurprisingly, not invariably presented as purely a costly exercise in causing other princes to recognise the principal sovereign's prestige. In K. 528, st. 108, for example, it seems as though Rājendravarman is boasting, once again using allusions to the *Raghuvaṃśa*, of having expanded the area under his control:

(ju)gopa gāṃ vasiṣṭhasya prāk prajecchayā
labdhvā prajās svavīryyeṇa bhārgavīṃ yas tu [medi]nīm

Dilīpa formerly [only] protected the cow (*gām*)[33] of Vasiṣṭha out of a desire for progeny (*prajā*°); whereas Rājendravarman (*yaḥ*), after obtaining [extra] subjects (*prajāḥ*) by his own strength, [protected also] the land of Bhṛgu [viz. Campā].

32 Presumably the king has this world in his hand because he has conquered it, and he has assured his grasp on the next world by his piety. It is possible that there is also a punning allusion to his keeping this world under the obligation of paying tribute or taxes (*kara*°). There is probably an implication that the king thus trumps even Viṣṇu, who holds only one earth. For what I earlier thought to be the earliest epigraphical mention of this detail of iconography, and for another instance of *kara* in the senses of both 'hand' and 'tax', see K. 762, st. 3 in the edition of Goodall (2021:19–20).

33 For the play on words here to work, one must recall that *gāṃ* can mean 'cow' or 'earth'. The claim is that Rājendravarman thus goes one up on Dilīpa, for he not only protects the *gāṃ* entrusted to him, as Dilīpa does in chapter 2 of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, but he also acquires further land (*gāṃ*) to protect. The interpretation here differs from that of Finot, who read the stanza differently.

Here it is assumed that *bhārgava* is used as an adjective for what belongs to Campā, for we know that Bhṛgu was held to have founded the city of Campā from, for instance, the third verse of C. 67, namely what Finot calls the 'seconde stèle de Dong-duong' (Finot 1904:105–112). The claim of this stanza of K. 528 appears thus to be that Rājendravarman extended his rule over territory that was at the time associated with Campā, 'traditionally' ruled over by descendants of Bhṛgu. The claim that Rājendravarman burned a city of Campā (which city has not been determined) is made in stanza 146, and the claim that he vanquished the descendant of Bhṛgu (and so king of Campā) at the head of an army is set out in stanza 182, so in this context the above-quoted evidence, which has not hitherto been interpreted in this light, might mean that he took pride in having expanded the region under his control by military means. There is, however, no mention of a specific king, nor of building or endowing a temple or installing a vassal, or anything which might really confirm that this is not simply a reference to some hit-and-run raid, or to an episode that was part of regular low-level warring with Cham neighbours.

The notion that the king is alone victorious and that his great armies are only really necessary as a retinue for the sake of protocol is also widespread in the *Raghuvaṃśa*[34] and in Khmer epigraphs. Here, for example, is king Aja blowing upon his conch to proclaim his victory over rival royal suitors who had ambushed him after he had won the hand of his queen Indumatī (*Raghuvaṃśa* 7.63):

tataḥ priyopāttarase 'dharauṣṭhe niveśya dadhmau jalajaṃ kumāraḥ|
tena svahastārjitam ekavīraḥ pivan yaśo mūrtam ivābabhāse

34 Other than in Aja's battle with the suitors in chapter 7, in which Aja's army is defeated but Aja alone snatches victory, and from which we have quoted, the notion is, for instance, alluded to directly in *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.19 and 2.4, and obliquely in 3.57 (where the armies of both sides stand by to watch while Raghu duels with Indra).

> Then, setting a conch against his lower lip, which had now tasted the sweetness of his beloved, the crown prince blew, as if, having seized glory with his own hands in battle unaided, he was now drinking it in liquid form.

Similarly, the ninth-century monarch Indravarman is described in these terms in st. 13 of Face A of K. 1320:

> *tuṅgādrisaṃsthas sarathāśvasūtas sūryyas sahasreṇa karais tamorīn padātir ekena kareṇa yas tu durggāṇy anāśritya raṇe vijetā*
>
> With its chariot, its horses and its coachman, installed on a high mountain, the sun is victorious (*vijetā*) over its enemies the shades of darkness thanks to its thousand rays (*karaiḥ*); but he [is victorious] in battle with [just] one arm (*ekena kareṇa*), walking on foot and without seeking refuge in hard-to-reach places (*durgāṇi*).

The myth of the solitary warrior king is belied, at least for the Angkorian period, by the sophistication of Khmer military equipment displayed in the numerous battle scenes represented in low relief on walls of Angkor Wat and of the Bayon (see Fig. 8) and meticulously studied, for instance, by Jacq-Hergoualc'h (1979), sometimes including large numbers of corpses of fallen fighters (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 8 Image of a bas-relief sculpture from the Bayon showing armies fighting.

Fig. 9 Image of a bas-relief sculpture from the Bayon showing felled soldiers.

6. The King as Father of his Subjects and Guru of the *varṇāśramas*

prajānāṃ vinayādhānād rakṣaṇād bharaṇād api
sa pitā pitaras tāsāṃ kevalaṃ janmahetavaḥ
(Raghuvaṃśa 1.24*)*

By imposing discipline on his subjects, by protecting and supporting them, he was their father; their fathers only caused their births (1.24).

Numerous passages in Khmer epigraphy present the king as the father of his subjects, ministering to their needs, protecting the social order, and using tax revenue for their benefit. If there is any one king who, more than all the others, comes to mind for his desire to play this rôle, putting in place countless socially useful institutions, it is of course Yaśovarman I. And indeed we find in his several inscriptions of 811 *śaka* plentiful allusions to these aspirations, many of them quite clearly echoing stanzas of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. In st. 41 of K. 323, for instance, we learn that

yaḥ prajānān na niragān muhūrttam api mānasāt
kalau kāpathasaktāni manāṃsi vinayann iva

He never left the minds of his subjects even for an instant, disciplining their thoughts, as it were, which were attracted to bad ways in [this Age of] Kali.

This seems certainly intended to recall *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.17:

rekhāmātram api kṣuṇṇād ātmano vartmanaḥ param
na vyatīyuḥ prajās tasya niyantur nemivṛttayaḥ
The subjects of that charioteer, moving like the fellies of a wheel, did not stray even a hair's breadth outside their proper paths.

This parallel is all the more plain because the very next stanza echoes the sentiments, with a fresh image, of the next stanza of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. Here is K. 323, st. 42:

karatyāgena yasyārtho varddhito diggajasya hi
utsāraṇāmvujāmodo made lagnālivarddhanaḥ

By his giving away of what he collected in tax/tribute (*karatyāgena*), his wealth [only] increased. Indeed the fragrance of the secretions exuded by an elephant of one of the directions when in rut [only] increases the number of bees that cling to it.

And here is one evident source of its inspiration, *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.18:

prajānām eva bhūtyarthaṃ sa tābhyo balim agrahīt
sahasraguṇam utsraṣṭum ādatte hi rasaṃ raviḥ

He levied taxes from the people, but only for their own prosperity; for the sun draws up moisture only to pour it down a thousand-fold.

In the midst of these echoes underscoring the king's rôle as a father-figure, there is a stanza that alludes to a large-scale project of social engineering in which, to judge from his inscriptions, Yaśovarman took great pride, namely his construction of one hundred *āśrama*s across his realm, and four *āśrama*s ranged around the great tank, the Yaśodharataṭāka, in his capital city (K. 323, st. 46):[35]

caturāśramamaryyādāṃ śāsitā kalpayann api
āśramāṇāṃ praśastānāṃ śatan dikṣu cakāra yaḥ
Although (*api*) as ruler (*śāsitā*) he determined *caturāśramamaryyādāṃ* [viz.]
1) the rules of conduct of the four walks of life [of the twice-born],
2) the upper limits of the four stages of life,
3) the outer limits of four *āśrama*-foundations,
4) the rules of conduct of four *āśrama*-foundations,

35 For recent writing on the *āśrama*-building programme of Yaśovarman, see Estève & Soutif 2011, and for information about all archeological work on the *āśrama*s from the beginnings up to the present day, see the thesis of Chea 2018.

> he made a hundred excellent *āśrama*-foundations [spread about] in all directions.

This punning verse seems deliberately to have been couched in language that, once again, recalls the *Raghuvaṃśa*, in echo of the notion that the king is the protector of brahmanical social order. For it is the king who ensures that all twice-born citizens obey the duties specific to their particular *varṇa* (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*) and to their particular *āśrama*, their adopted 'walk of life' (or, in later times, their 'stage in life'), namely those of celibate student (*brahmacārin*), married householder (*gṛhastha*), forest-dwelling recluse (*vānaprastha*), ascetic who has internalised the Vedic fires (*saṃnyāsin*). This duty of the king is adverted to by Kālidāsa, for instance, in chapter 5 of the *Raghuvaṃśa*, when the brahmin student of Varatantu approaches king Raghu to request a gift. The student's explanation of why he needs this gift is introduced with a stanza that mentions Raghu's rôle as the protector of the social order (5.19):

> *tato yathāvadvihitādhvarāya tasmai smayāveśavivarjitāya*
> *varṇāśramāṇāṃ gurave sa varṇī vicakṣaṇaḥ prastutam ācacakṣe*
>
> Then the learned Vedic student explained the matter in hand to him, who duly performed sacrifices, on whom pride had no effect, and who was the master of the social estates and conditions of life (*varṇāśramāṇāṃ*).

The punning echo of this notion in Yaśovarman's eulogy is all the more striking in view of the paucity of evidence among the Khmers for the existence of caste-communities aligned with the *varṇa*s. The poet seems deliberately to have found a form of words that only appears to laud the Khmer sovereign for protecting Kālidāsa's idealised social order, but that actually describes Yaśovarman's social programme involving a network of monasteries. It seems, in other words, as though the poet must have been well aware that

Kālidāsa's social order did not exist among the Khmers,[36] but ingeniously contrived nonetheless to appear to praise Yaśovarman for protecting it!

36 We have touched above on Bourdonneau's observations about the paucity of brahmins, but not said anything about the other *varṇa*s. Of course *kṣatriya*s might be deemed a self-selecting group: whoever seizes power is a king, and therefore a *de facto kṣatriya*, but what of *vaiśya*s? Naturally, the epigraphic record gives us less information about the less prestigious social groups, but onomastic evidence can sometimes help. For example, K. 151, the oldest inscription to be dated according to the conventions of *bhūtasaṃkhyā*, records the installation, in 520 *śaka* (598 CE), of an image by a certain Narasiṅhagupta (st. 6):

> *khyātas sa nāmnā narasiṅhagupto gurvvāśritaś* śrībhavavarmmarājye
> *= - ˘ - napratimāṃ murārer imāṃ pratiṣṭhāpitavān ˘ - -*
> By name, he was famed as (*khyātas*) Narasiṅhagupta; he approached his guru (*gurvvāśritaś*) during the reign of Śrī Bhavavarman … he installed this statue of Viṣṇu (*murārer*)…

Now a quotation attributed to the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (3.10.9 in the critical edition) in Kullūka's commentary on *Manusmṛti* 2.32 (ed. Mandlik 1992:126) reflects the notion that names ending in °gupta are typically for *vaiśya*s:

> śarmavad *brāhmaṇasyoktaṃ varmeti kṣatrasaṃyutam*
> *guptadāsātmakaṃ nāma praśastaṃ vaiśyaśūdrayoḥ*
>
> It is taught (*uktam*) that the name of a brahmin has [the suffix] °śarman, that of a *kṣatriya* is joined with °varman and that those formed with °gupta and °dāsa are recommended for *vaiśya*s and *śūdra*s [respectively].

But while °śarman and °varman may be relatively good indicators of social status, this is less clear for names in °gupta and °dāsa. Furthermore, names ending in °gupta are occasionally found preceded by the distinctively Khmer title Poñ (e.g. in K. 688, K. 726, K. 1214), which one would expect to have been transmitted from maternal uncle to sister's son, thus making it seem less likely that these persons were seen as descendants of an Indian patriline of *vaiśya*s. Of course one could counter that they might have seen themselves as *vaiśya*s regardless of their ancestry. In diametrical opposition to the *vaiśya* hypothesis, Vickery (1987: 200, fn. 87) suggests instead that names ending in °gupta might actually be indicative of non-patrilineal Poñ-status! Whatever the case, evidence for pervasion of the *varṇa*s in Khmer society at any time is very weak. Cf. Mabbett 1977.

7. Sexual Allure, Sexual Prowess, Sexual Restraint

sa nirviśya yathākāmaṃ taṭasv ādhīnacandanau
stanāv iva diśas tasyāḥ śailau malayadurdurau
asahyavikramaḥ sahyaṃ dūramuktam udanvatā
nitambam iva medinyāḥ srastāṃśukam alaṅghayat
(Raghuvaṃśa 4.54–55*)*

He enjoyed to his heart's content the Malaya and the Durdura mountains, both covered with sandalwood on their slopes, as if they were the breasts of that region, and then, with irresistible prowess, he mounted the Sahya, which was left far behind by the ocean, as if it were the hips of the earth from which the garment had slipped. (4.54–55)

The king, as might be expected, is often presented as irresistibly attractive to all women, being skillful in many arts and as beautiful as the god of love Kāmadeva re-incarnate. This may be illustrated, for instance, by this description of Yaśovarman from the end of the ninth century (K. 323, st. 51–52, of 811 *śaka*):

yas sarvvaśāstraśastreṣu śilpabhāṣālipiṣv api
nṛttagītādivijñāneṣv ādikartteva paṇḍitaḥ

savyāpasavyadormmuktair yyo jahāra jayaśriyaḥ
vāṇais sarvvāṅganirmuktais tu kāmavāṇair vvarāṅganāḥ

In all the sciences and with all weaponry, in arts, languages and scripts, in dancing, singing and such domains of knowledge, he was as skilled as if he had been their first creator.

With the arrows that he shot both from his right arm and from his left, he won himself the glories of victory; with the arrows of Love that he shot out from all of his limbs at once, he won himself beautiful women.

But in spite of wielding tremendous sexual power, the king is nonetheless utterly in control of it and does not allow himself to become a prey to passion, as we read, for instance, of the beautiful but dispassionate Rājendravarman in K. 528, st. 131:

rāmāṇāṃ hṛdayārāme tiṣṭhantaṃ kāmataskaram
prajihīrṣur ivāśrānto yo viveśa muhur mmuhuḥ

Into the gardens that were the hearts of ladies Rājendravarman (*yaḥ*) entered again and again, untiring, as though he wished to attack the thief Kāma residing there.

This chaste restraint, in the face of the assaults of impassioned women, is a frequent theme. Often these importunate 'women' are anthropomorphised grammatical feminine concepts, such as Fame (*kīrti*), Royal Glory (*śrī*) or Earth (*bhū*), as we find for instance in K. 806, st. 88:

aho yuvaiva svam uraḥ sthiro yam apy ekadādān na parāṅganābhyaḥ
itīva yasya pratikūlabhāvā vakṣo rilakṣmīr aviśad raṇeṣu

'Ah! even though a youth, this steadfast man has never once offered his chest to the wives of other men!'. It was as though she had this in mind (*itīva*) that in battles the Royal Glory of his enemies (*arilakṣmīḥ*), though of a nature opposing [that steadfastness of his] (*pratikūlabhāvā*), installed herself [enduringly] upon his chest.

Indeed it is exclusively with such anthropomorphised abstracts and with metaphorical women (such as 'Earth') that the king may be permitted to indulge in any sexual dalliance at all. Here, for example, is a case from the eulogy of the twelfth-century ruler Tribhuvanādityavarman, who is described as ravishing Jayaśrī ('Glory of Victory') in the tenebrous fog of war, just as the brahmin sage Parāśara once ravished Satyavatī (and thus fathered Vyāsa) on her ferry-boat in the middle of the river, after first creating a fog

around them so that their love-making could not be observed (K. 1222, West face, st. 16):[37]

hriyā satām ājirajondhakāram utpādya reme nu jayaśriyā yaḥ
parāśaraḥ prāg iva gandhavatyā kṛtvā hriyā sāndrahimāndhakāram

Because of the modesty (*hriyā*) of worthy people (*satām*), he took his pleasure (*reme*) with the Glory of Victory (*jayaśriyā*) after [first] having produced (*utpādya*) the darkness of the dust of battle (*ājirajondhakāram*), just as (*iva*) Parāśara once upon a time (*prāk*) [had his pleasure] with Satyavatī (*gandhavatyā*), after [first] having created (*kṛtvā*), out of modesty (*hriyā*), the darkness of a dense fog (*sāndrahimāndhakāram*).

Using such personified abstracts enables poets to make the tropes lubriciously erotic, and this poetic eroticism serves to underscore the king's sexual power without impugning his dignity. Thus, for example, when Kālidāsa treats (in *Raghuvaṃśa* 4.7) the theme of the new King enjoying the Earth as though she were a virginal bride, a sexual resonance is palpable:

manuprabhṛtibhir mānyair bhuktā yady api rājabhiḥ
tathāpy ananyapūrveva tasminn āsīd vasundharā

Although the earth had been ruled by kings of good repute beginning with Manu, nonetheless under his reign it seemed as if she had not belonged to anyone else before.

37 For this myth, see for example Vettam Mani 1975, s.v. Satyavatī. For another allusion to this myth in the Khmer corpus, cf. K. 282, st. 14. The four-faced stela K. 1222 is not yet published, but an edition and translation have been prepared, begun more than a decade ago by Claude Jacques and now completed by Dominic Goodall. Important elements that contextualise the inscription will be furnished in a forthcoming article by Louise Roche, Éric Bourdonneau and Dominic Goodall.

The poet of K. 806, in st. 133, reprises the same theme but intensifies the sexual imagery by alluding punningly to a bridegroom impressing nail-marks on his bride during love-making:

mantravīryyaprayogāḍhyaṃ prāpyānanyavareva yam
kṛtārthā kāmadā pṛthvī karajāmarddamārddavāt

The earth, when she attained him, who was richly endowed with the power of mantras (/ with good counsel and valour), was as though she had never had a husband before, [both] fulfilled (*kṛtārthā*) and wish-fulfilling (/love-bestowing) (*kāmadā*) because of the gentleness of the pressure resulting from his taxes (/ because of the softness of the pressure of his nails).

Still more ribald examples may also be found, as in this case, where it seems to us that we must assume the figure of *nindāstuti* — a figure in which a first reading implies censure (*nindā*) that is revealed, upon a second reading, to be in fact intended as praise (*stuti*) —, here of the eleventh-century king Sūryavarman I (K. 834, st. 52):[38]

asakto py ātmahāneṣu nītiśāstraviveky api
sapuṣkaro raṇaratau paradārīhate sma yaḥ

nindā:
Although he was not attached to acts of self-destruction (*ātmahāneṣu*), although he had discernment in the discipline of statesmanship, this adulterer (*paradārī*), with his 'proboscis' (*sapuṣkaraḥ*), desired battle-like sexual coupling (*raṇaratau*).

38 Cœdès' translation (*IC* V, p. 263) does not reflect exactly this interpretation: Bien qu'il fût sans passion pour la perte de la personnalité et qu'il fût doué de discernement en ce qui concerne la science de la conduite, ce destructeur de ces ennemis accompagné de ses éléphants [ou : cet adultère avec son *puṣkara*] cherchait son plaisir [*ou* : recherchait Rati (épouse de Kāma)] dans le combat.

stuti:
Although he was not attached to the killing of other souls (*ātmahāneṣu*), although he had discernment in the discipline of statesmanship, this destroyer of his enemies (*paradārī*), along with his elephants/his scabbard (*sapuṣkaraḥ*), took pleasure in battles (*raṇaratau*).

It is worth mentioning a particular sub-type of this sort of bawdy play on words that suggests, by association, the king's sexual prowess, because it seems to have been missed by Cœdès in the few places in which he encountered it.[39] It concerns the verses in which there is an allusion to a practice of sexual self-denial known as the *asidhārāvrata*, the 'sword-blade observance'. In the most literal understanding, this involves a man and a woman sleeping in the same bed but with a sword placed between them, but various variants have been described, involving sexual arousal but no penetration, or penetration but no orgasm, in which case the 'sword-blade' or 'knife-edge' is metaphorical. Sanskrit dictionaries perhaps helped to lead Cœdès astray on this subject, for Monier-Williams 1899, for example, tells us that *asidhārā* means either 'the blade of a sword' or an 'exceedingly difficult task'. This may just have been coyness, for a first exploration of the various attested understandings of the *asidhārāvrata* was attempted by Stenzler in 1886. Recently, Shaman Hatley (2016) has presented early tantric accounts of versions of this observance, which, other than being a test of resolve, is of course also to be understood as intended to conserve the energy (of the man) by retention of semen, since it is commonly assumed that the spilling of semen (*vīrya*) is a spilling of virile energy (*vīrya*).

Without further ado, and without needing to go back over Cœdès' translations, which do not entirely make sense because he was missing a crucial

39 In 2016, Dominic Goodall produced an article in French on the subject entitled 'La prouesse et la retenue sexuelles chez les rois khmers et indiens', for the research project AUTORITAS, but, as is often the fate of writings on sexual themes, that article seems unlikely to be published, and would need in any case now to be reworked to take account of Hatley's article of 2016, so instead it is condensed here to a couple of paragraphs.

key to their understanding, we may now cite and translate three allusions to the 'sword-blade observance' in Khmer epigraphy. The first two are in the Pre Rup inscriptions and describe Rājendravarman (K. 806, st. 89 and 229):

tīkṣṇāsidhāram api yañ jayinañ jayaśrīr
āliṅgya vakṣasi vṛhaty akarot sarāgam
naisarggikaṃ svasubhagatvam udāharantī
gaurīva dagdhamakaradhvajadeham īśam

Although he held a sword-blade (/although he practised the 'sword-blade' observance of sexual abstinence]), Victorious Glory passionately embraced this victor round his broad chest, proclaiming that her own sexual good fortune (*svasubhagatvam*) naturally belonged to him, just like Gaurī [embracing] Śiva, [although He was the one] who had burned the body of the Makara-bannered [god of Love].

etāvatānumeyo yo yoddhā śastravidāṃ varaḥ
dviṣaṃ sāṅgam ivānaṅgaṃ yac cicchedāsidhārayā

By this much one could infer (*anumeyaḥ*) this fighter [to be] the best of those who master weapons, namely the fact that (*yat*) he could cut in two Anaṅga [literally: 'the Discarnate [god of Love]'] as though he were cutting his incarnate (*sāṅgam*) enemies with the blade of his sword [/by means of the observance called 'sword-blade'] (*asidhārayā*)

Here the poet actually leaves open the possibility that Rājendravarman really practised the observance of the blade of the sword! Of course, we need not be convinced that he actually observed it, but he may have wanted us to believe that he did, and it is indeed not totally implausible that he should have: we should bear in mind, after all, that a version of the *asidhārāvrata*

was evidently followed by the most celebrated Indian politician of the twentieth century.[40]

One more instance is worth quoting because its interpretation has a bearing on regnal history. It is to be found in a description of Narapativīravarman in K. 356 of 902 śaka (ed. Cœdès 1911):

tasmin dharmmanidhau payodhiraśanāṃ kṣoṇīṃ pradāyānuje
kāntān nispṛhadhīr yyuvāpi sa vaśī vaddhāsidhārāvrataḥ
sadbhaktir haraye hariṅ kalijite haimaṃ svamūrttiṃ parāṃ
prādād utsavayāyināṃ suracitan tan tāratārkṣyasthitam

After giving the ocean-girdled earth as spouse (*kāntāṃ*) to that treasury of virtue who was his younger brother [Udayādityavarman I], this [king Narapativīravarman], who even as a youth was of a mind devoid of desire, [self-]controlled (*vaśī*), a performer of the sword-blade observance, a man of true devotion, gave to Hari, who vanquishes Kali, a golden Hari, a further image of himself that is to go out in festival[-procession]s, beautifully fashioned, mounted upon a silver Garuḍa.

It would seem (*pace* Cœdès) that the reference to this 'sword-blade observance' is supposed to suggest that Narapativīravarman in fact also became king — which his name in -varman also faintly suggests, for it is typically a

40 A recent biographer of Gandhi has highlighted this, for instance in a salacious newspaper article entitled 'Thrill of the chaste: The truth about Gandhi's sex life. With religious chastity under scrutiny, a new book throws light on Gandhi's practice of sleeping next to naked girls. In fact, he was sex-mad, writes biographer Jad Adams'. *The Independent* of 2nd January 2012, consulted 20 October 2016: www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/thrill-of-the-chaste-the-truth-about-gandhis-sex-life-1937411.html
Adams does not seem to have understood that this was an old practice, because he says 'Such behaviour was not part of the accepted practice of brahmacharya'. Adams also seems unaware that Gandhi's rationale was a traditional one: 'He had an almost magical belief in the power of semen: 'One who conserves his vital fluid acquires unfailing power,' he said.'

name of royal consecration —, but that he did not reign long enough to enjoy his wife Earth.[41] This implication becomes clearer when we realise that this description is clearly inspired by a well-known stanza of the *Raghuvaṃśa* that uses the same comparison. There, Rāma speaks thus to Sītā about the fourteen years during which his brother Bharata had kept the kingdom for himself, without personally benefiting from it in any way (13.67):

> *pitrā visṛṣṭāṃ*[42] *madapekṣayā yaḥ śriyaṃ yuvāpy aṅkagatām abhoktā*
> *iyanti varṣāṇi nitāntakaṣṭam*[43] *abhyasyatīva vratam āsidhāram*
>
> Out of consideration for me, [Bharata] has not enjoyed Royal Glory (*śriyam*), whom my father gave to him, even though he is a young man and she was placed in his lap, as if for so many years he has been practising the extremely difficult observance of the blade of the sword.[44]

Not only was the king held to be handsome, well-educated, trained in various arts and valorous in battle, but we learn that he was also sexually potent, even if it was expected that this potency was to be kept mostly latent: outside his numerous concurrent marriages, the king was ideally chaste. We also learn, from this last quotation, that an understanding of such tropes might occasionally be of some small help in establishing details of regnal history.

41 There would thus have been a rapid succession of Narapativīravarman, Udayādityavarman and Jayavīravarman, all in a single year (1001–1002). Much ink has already been spilled on the subject of the succession at this time: see the long discussion of Cœdès (*IC* VII, pp. 167–172) and, more recently, Hubert de Mestier du Bourg (2011).

42 *visṛṣṭāṃ*] Vallabhadeva ; *nisṛṣṭāṃ* Mallinātha. (The readings of Vallabhadeva are drawn from the forthcoming volume of the edition by Csaba Dezső, Dominic Goodall, Harunaga Isaacson and Csaba Kiss.)

43 *nitāntakaṣṭam*] Vallabhadeva ; *tayā sahogram* Mallinātha.

44 Louis Renou, who was translating the version of this stanza that was known to Mallinātha, has rendered it differently (1928:151) :
« C'est à lui que notre père a transmis sa Fortune royale ; mais, par égard à moi, il n'en a pas joui, quoi qu'il fût jeune encore et qu'il la tînt sur son sein ; on eût dit que, durant tant d'années, il observait avec elle le vœu sévère de la chasteté. »

Conclusion

In his brief introduction to the first edition and translation of the Mebon inscription, Louis Finot made quite plain that he did not relish reading its text, an enormous royal eulogy that seemed to contain few 'facts' (1925:310):[45]

> The true object of the deed only covers 10 verses (cci–ccx): the rest of the stela is filled with laudatory formulae and final curses. The only important pieces of information that we may glean from the interminable panegyric of Rājendravarman concern his antecedents.

Finot's attitude, typical of his time, was that ascertainable dates and facts about political history had some useful value, but that it was necessary to fight through screeds of ludicrously exaggerated flattery to get at them.

Times have changed, and reconstructing the details of regnal history may seem a tedious business to many now. After all, what do we really learn when we discover that one particular man instead of some other was the head of state at any given moment, particularly when we know so little about the characters of any of them, and indeed rather little about the evolving structure of the state? To the author of this article, it seems that understanding the often surprising ways in which the rights, rôles and duties of the king were conceptualised is at least equally important, even if the conceptualisations might seem to be nothing but distortive idealisations that are far distant from ascertainable facts. After all, the idealising notions about kings that are expressed in Khmer inscriptions must, at least to some extent, reflect what these kings thought about themselves and what they meant to their Khmer subjects, and such notions thus necessarily conditioned their behaviour. Their ideas about, for instance, the relation between the forces of *brahman* and *kṣatra* appear to have had a very direct effect on

45 'L'objet propre de l'acte ne comprend que 10 vers (cci–ccx) : le reste de la stèle est occupé par des formules laudatives et les objurgations finales. Les seuls renseignements importants que nous puissions glaner dans l'interminable panégyrique de Rājendravarman concernent ses ascendants.'

how they married and on family structures, and so must inevitably have engendered endless ripple effects on land-use, administration, the spread of literacy and so forth. In the foregoing pages I have tried to illustrate how one major literary work informed Khmer notions of what it meant to be an ideal king, while at the same time indicating some of the ways in which Khmer royalty departed from Kālidāsa's ideals, even though court-poets still paid them lip-service.

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ABSTRACT

To cover Khmer kingship and more than a century of scholarship about it in one article is obviously an impossible task. Instead, this short piece is structured around commented verses quoted from the *Raghuvaṃśa* (arguably the most influential idealisation of classical Indian kingship ever) and from Cambodian inscriptions, with a view to highlighting attempts to conform to some ideals of Indian kingship, which are omnipresent in Cambodian representations, but often in a way that rings more than usually false because of the entirely different historical context. The themes explored include: 1) dynastic families descended from sun and moon, 2) Patrilineal descent, with the son (as *yuvarāja*) sharing the burden of kingship for some years before becoming fully king, 3) hit-and-run conquest in all directions (*digvijaya*) as part of the *dharma* of kings, thus establishing hierarchical supremacy, but not control of the resources of the territories thus 'conquered', 4) the symbiosis of Kṣatriyas with brahmins, who together dictate cosmic order, with the Kṣatriyas protecting the Veda-ordained activities of the brahmins, 5) the protection of the Sanskritic social order (*varṇāśrama-dharma*). All of these elements very clearly figure in many royal eulogies, but they are perhaps particularly muddled up in the Cambodian case, where patrilineal descent occurs, but doesn't seem to be the rule, and where we find no named dynastic families; where war (as almost everywhere else on the planet) was not unrelated to resource-control; where there is no large corpus of grants to brahmin communities predating those that create and endow temples and monasteries; and where the Vedic 'substrate' religion seems to have had little hold, and there is concomitantly little evidence of *varṇa*s or of a *varṇāśramadharma* for the king to protect.