

MAPS FOR THE ANCESTORS: SACRALIZED TOPOGRAPHY AND ECHOES OF ANGKOR IN TWO CAMBODIAN TEXTS*

by

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This paper will be concerned with invocations to local spirits, known generically as *me sa*, which are found in two Cambodian texts: one dating from 1859¹ and the other, printed in 1946, dating at least from the 1880s.²

Halfway through the month of *srap* (July-August) 1859, the Cambodian king Duang (r. 1848-1860) sponsored a ceremony at his capital, Udong, to cleanse his kingdom of demerit by offering gifts to its guardian deities and spirits, summoned by name in prayers recited by his court brahmans, or *baku*. Another purpose of the ceremony, normally conducted somewhat earlier in the year, was to ask these guardians for rain.³

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- 1) *Bakya prakasa devata knung brah rajabidhi parunasatra* (Text of a decree to the spirits in a royal ceremony connected with Varuna) in Buddhist Institute (comp.) *Brah rajabidhi dvad samasa* (Royal Festivals of the Twelve-Months' cycle), Phnom Penh, 1951, 172-179, Translated (with several omissions) as Adhémard Leclère, "Les fêtes locales au Cambodge. Un pithi polikar pliang (rain-summoning ceremony)", *Revue Indochinoise* (RI) 1906, 90-99. A text with the same title in Leclère, *Cambodge, Fêtes civiles*, Paris, 1916, does not include the full list of toponyms.
- 2) Kingdom of Cambodia, *Saccā pranidhān samrap broe nau sālā jumnum knung kambujā* (Oath to be used in the courts of Cambodia), Phom Penh, 1946 (Text MCC 56.036 in the archives of the Buddhist Institute). I am grateful to Pech Think for providing a typescript of this text. The first lines of the invocation are identical to those in the oath cited in part by Leclère, *Fêtes civiles*, 634 ff., (collected in Kampot in the 1880s).
- 3) Rainmaking ceremonies were normally celebrated in April and May, according to *Brah rajabidhi*, II, 170-171; see also Eveline Porée-Maspéro, *Etude sur les rites agraires des cambodgiens* (*Etude*), 3 vols., Paris, 1961-1969, I, 237. The festival was delayed in 1859 because of Duang's absence in Kampot.

The invocation, in the Khmer text, runs to some eighty lines of print. About half of these are addressed to recognizable Indian gods. The last thirty five lines, however, invoke roughly a hundred local spirits identified with toponyms and topographical features throughout Cambodia. About two-thirds of these can be identified.

The second text to be examined is a civil oath (Saccā Prañidhan) the first two-thirds of which is taken up by a similar list of *me sa*, running to over two hundred names which, as Mme. Porée Maspéro has written, pose "arduous problems of identification".⁴ Five of the names in this list (two of which also appear in the 1859 text) are associated with archaeological sites from the reign of Yasovarman I (r. 889-c. 910), the founder of Angkor. These names are clustered together in such a way as to suggest "memories" of Angkor that are absent from other Cambodian sources, such as the post-Angkorean inscriptions, folk tales, and the chronicles, or *bangsavatar*.

The lists themselves, aside from this particular feature, are interesting for several reasons. In the first place, similar toponymical invocations have been recorded in Laos⁵ and among Indo-Chinese tribal peoples,⁶ but they do not seem to have been a feature of Thai ceremonies,

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- 4) Porée-Maspéro, *Etude*, 12, n.1. In identifying toponyms in the text, I have relied on G. Coedès, "Index alphabétique pour *Le Cambodge* de M. Aymonier", *Bulletin de la Commission archéologique de l'Indochine*, vol. I (1911) 85-169, and United States Army Topographic Command, Geographic Names Division, *Cambodia*, Washington, 1971.
 - 5) See Anonymous, "Prestation du petit serment à l'occasion du nouvel an laotien" *Bulletin de L'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* (BEFEO) XXIX (1929) 530-532; P. Nginn, "Invocation aux *devata* dans le cérémonie du serment" *France-Asie* (FA) VIII (1951) 573-576, and Thao Viboun, "Le Basi", *La Revue Française* No. 34 (Jan. 1952) 91-93. See also Charles Archaimbault, "La fête du T'at a Sieng khwang (Laos)" *Artibus Asiae* (AA) XXIV, 3-4 (1961) 191-2, n. 16, and Archaimbault, "Les cérémonies en l'honneur des *phi f'a* (phi célestes) à Basak (Sud Laos)" *Asie du Sud-Est et Monde Insulinde* (ASEMI) VI/I (1975) 85-114.
 - 6) For examples, see J. Boulbet, "Börde au rendez-vous des genies" *Bulletin de la société des études indochinoises* (BSEI) XXX (1960) 640; Bernard Jouin, *La mort et la tombe*, Paris, 1949, 227, and Albert Maurice, "Trois fêtes agraires rhade" BEFEO XLV (1951-1952) 191.

either at court or in the countryside, in spite of the extensive exchange of cultural baggage among the Thai, Lao and Khmer in the centuries that followed the abandonment of Angkor.⁷ Another interesting feature of the lists is that they are the only written maps, on a national scale, that have come down to us from pre-colonial Cambodia. The absence of pictorial maps (which survive from nineteenth century Thailand and Vietnam)⁸ is less important, when approaching the Angkorean echoes, for example, than the presence of these recited ones, which are suggestive of Cambodian notions, probably extending back at least to Angkor, of sacred space, ethnicity, and jurisdiction.⁹ The lists, like those found in the inscriptions at the ground level of the Bayon, a Buddhist temple built at Angkor at the end of the twelfth century, are in some senses an inventory of the kingdom, a map of and for the use of the ancestral spirits, or *nak*

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- 7) I am grateful to Ruth Inge Heinze, Charles F. Keyes, Craig Reynolds, and Hiram W. Woodward, Jr. for their (fruitless) efforts to unearth Thai toponymical litanies. One possible exception is the short list of ancestor spirits, some associated with places, in the fourteenth century Thai oath translated in A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "The Pact Between Sukhodaya and Nan. Epigraphical and Historical Studies No. 3", *JSS*, 57/1 (January 1969) 57-109 at 80-82.
- 8) For Thai examples see Victor Kennedy, "An Indigenous Early 19th Century Map of Central-Northeastern Thailand" in Tej Bunnag and Michael Smithies (eds). *In Memoriam Phya Anuman Rajadon*, Bangkok, 1970, 315-348 and Klaus Wenk, "Zu einer "Landkarte" Sued und Ostasiens" in Siam Society, *Felicitation Volume of Southeast Asian Studies presented to H.H. Prince Dhaninivat*, Bangkok, 1965 (2 vols) I, 119-122. See also the "map" of Burma and Siam described in F.A. Neale, *Narrative of a Residence at the Capital of the Kingdom of Siam*, London, 1852, 55, where Siam and Burma are depicted as two people, with Siam the larger. For reference to Vietnamese maps, see A.B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, Cambridge, Mass. 1971, 257; P. Huard and M. Durand (comps.), *Connaissance du Vietnam*, Hanoi 1954, 4, and Nguyen van Huyen, "A propos d'une carte de repartition des génies tutélaires dans le province de Bac-Ninh" *Institut Indochinois pour l'étude de l'homme* III (1940) 137-155.
- 9) For a stimulating discussion of ethnicity, see Robert A. Levine and Donald Campbell, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes and Group Behaviour*, New York, 1972, especially pp. 82-110. See also June Helm (ed.) *Essays in the Problem of Tribe*, Seattle 1968.

ta, being summoned from particular places to be revered.¹⁰ It is interesting to see how the toponyms are arranged. In both texts, they seem to proceed in a clockwise spiral, beginning to the east of Udong and gradually enclosing it within a *mandala*, or circle, keeping it to the right in a process known as *pradaksinā*.¹¹ The act of recital, it would seem, and the shape formed by names recited in a given order (perhaps as an aid to memorization) were at least as important to the celebrants because, in a sense, the recital "built" the kingdom as the accuracy of the names themselves.

Since only twenty-two toponyms are common to both lists, it is unlikely that they spring from a common source, or were compiled with reference to each other. In very general terms, the 1859 text appears to stress toponyms in the vicinity of Udong at the expense of those far from the capital, while the oath has a greater number of toponyms associated with archaeological sites.¹² But so many toponyms in both lists cannot be identified that it is impossible to contrast them usefully in terms of the way they are distributed over the Cambodian landscape.

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- 10) See J. Dumarçay and B.P. Groslier, *Le Bayon*, Paris, 1973, 113-134. The most succinct analysis of the cult of *nak ta* is Porée Maspéro, *Etude*, I, 3-16. For various legends about them, see Buddhist Institute (comp.) *Brajum rioeng preng* (BRP) (Collected old stories) VIII, Phnom Penh, 1971. There is an exasperated "definition" of the phrase in Jean Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge*, Paris, 1883, I, 172: "Sortes de divinité locales, des génies tutélaires, d'anges gardiens d'une territoire, d'une forêt, d'une montagne, d'une île, d'une rivière, d'un arbre, d'un village, des bêtes féroces d'une contrée." On *me sa*, see below, p. 184.
- 11) Eveline Porée Maspéro, personal communication. On the process in general, see J. Przyluski, "Pradaksina . . . en Indochine" *Festschrift für M. Winternitz*, Leipzig, 1933, 326-332, F.D.K. Bosch, "La procession du feu sacré" BEFEO, XXXII (1932) 7-21, and Groslier, *Bayon*, 194. There is an interesting set of Biblical parallels in E. Nourry, "Le tour de la ville et la chute de Jerico", Ch. 4 of his *Essais du folklore biblique*, Paris 1922.
- 12) The oath also has more references than the 1859 text to mountains (23 to 7, with 2 overlaps), islands (15 to 3) and forests (14 to 2), but many of these are unidentifiable. It is not surprising that more than half of the identifiable toponyms in both texts represent sites within reach of Udong.

Aside from Vietnam, which benefited from China's rich cartographic tradition,¹³ scientific mapmaking was slow to develop on the mainland of Southeast Asia, and only one indigenous map of Cambodia—of dubious authorship—drawn earlier than the colonial era has survived.¹⁴

The absence of cartographic tradition in Cambodia can be traced to the isolation of villages from each other, the sedentary quality of Cambodian life, and the absence of systematic cadastral records, transmitted from one generation or regime to the next. In their everyday lives, Cambodians had little use for national or even supra-village maps, although there is abundant evidence that smaller scale ones existed.¹⁵

The absence of national maps, however, should not be taken to mean that Cambodians lacked notions of national space, or internal divisions, especially as these were rendered sacred by local, royal, and Buddhist ceremonies.¹⁶ For ceremonial reasons, at least, Cambodia was

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- 13) See Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 3, Cambridge, 1959, 491-590.
- 14) Anonymous, "Notes to accompany a map of Cambodia", *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, 1851, 306-311; the map was "compiled for the purpose of registering some items of geographical information" brought to Singapore by a Cambodian trade delegation. The reference to a "Cambodian geographical work" in Charles Gutzlaff, *Three Voyages along the Coast of China*, London 1833, 49, is probably spurious. In 1867, the Cambodian king presented the Société Géographique with a map of Cambodia that had been prepared by the French; see H. Cordier, *Biblioteca Indosinica*, Paris, 1912 col. 2661.
- 15) See inscription K. 466, for example, dated 1006 A.D., which includes a small map. The spacing of rest-houses along Cambodian roads in the twelfth century, and the distribution of Yasovarman's digraphic inscriptions, also suggests fairly sophisticated notions of space. See G. Coedès, "Les gîtes d'étape à la fin du XII siècle", *BEFEO*, XL (1940) 347-49, and G. Coedès, "A la recherche du Yasodharasrama", *BEFEO*, XXXII (1932) 84-112. See also G. Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (IC) I, 193 (K806) and III, 19 (IC. 207).
- 16) On Buddhist rituals, see M. Giteau, *Le bornage rituel des temples bouddhiques au Cambodge*, Paris 1969, and Luc Mogenet, "Notes sur la conception de l'espace a Louang Phrabang", *Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Lao*, Nos. 7-8 (1972) 166-96. On Vietnamese cults, see L. Cadière, "Sur quelques faits religieux ou magiques observés pendant une epidémie de cholera en Annam", *RI*, 1912, 116, and Cadière, "Le culte des bornes" *BEFEO*, XIX (1919) 40-47.

divided, for most of the nineteenth century, into five *di* or "earths"¹⁷: Tboung Khmum to the east of Udong, Ba Phnom to the southeast, Trang to the southwest, Pursat to the west, and Kompong Svai (known today as Kompong Thom, and before about 1700 as Santhuk) to the north.¹⁸ These fell under the jurisdiction of five high-ranking officials, referred to in some sources as *stac tran* or "regional kings".¹⁹ Purely administrative districts, known as *sruk*, were governed by officials of lower rank.²⁰

The origins of the two institutions—*di* and *stac tran*—are obscure, although the motif of five sites, four grouped at cardinal points around a centre, is deeply rooted in Indian cosmology, and evident at Angkor.²¹

17) E. Aymonier, *Géographie du Cambodge*, Paris 1876, 29.

18) Adhémard Leclère, *Codes cambodgiens* Paris 1900, 119n.

19) References to *stac tran*, as such, are rare in Cambodian texts, which usually refer to these officials by their administrative titles. For French references, see Leclère, *Codes cambodgiens*, 114 ff., A. Leclère, "Le *sdach meakh*", *RI*, 1905, 1378-1384, and E. Aymonier, *Le Cambodge* (3 vols.) Paris 1900-1914, I, 280. A quartering of the kingdom was in effect under Jayavarman VII, according to Groslier, *Le Bayon*, 131, and Ceylonese governors in classical times were referred to as "the quarters" (Hocart, "The Four Quarters", *Ceylon Journal of Science* (1926) 105-111 at 108). See E. Porée Maspéro, *Etude*, 384, for a Khmer legend about *stac tran* collected in southern Vietnam. The institution may have been post-Angkorean (Michael Vickery, *personae communication*).

20) Groslier, *Bayon*, 131, argues that the kingdom was divided into twenty four districts under Jayavarman VII. A century later, a Chinese visitor said there were "more than ninety" districts (P. Pelliot, *Memoires sur les coutumes du Cambodge de Tchou Ta-kuan*, Paris 1951, 32). In the nineteenth century, the number fluctuated from around thirty to around fifty. Interestingly, only two-thirds of the districts in effect at any point in the nineteenth century appear in the oath, and less than a third appear in the 1859 text—an indication that the *baku* did not choose to proceed, in compiling these "maps", from an administrative vantage-point.

21) An excellent description of this pervasive notion is Paul Mus, "Barabatur, Les origines du stupa . . ." *BEFEO*, XXXII (1932) 398-411 *passim*. See also A.M. Hocart, "The Four Quarters", and William H. Alkire, "Concepts of Order in Southeast Asia and Micronesia", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XIV/4 (1972) 484-493, and H.W. Shorto's influential article, "The 32 *myos* in the medieval Mon kingdom" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (BSOAS) 26 (1963) 771-591. On directional symbolism, see B.L. Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map", *History of Religions* (HR) 10 (February 1970), 211-227.

The divisions as they stand are certainly post-Angkorean, however, if only because no *di* is centred at Angkor.²²

Aside from this "quartering" of the kingdom, what was important about the *stac tran* was their ceremonial role, and their relationship to the king. French sources assert that they shared with the king the power to impose death sentences;²³ another role they played, according to Leclère, was to preside on the king's behalf at new years' ceremonies in the *di*, including those known as *loeng nak ta* or "raising the ancestors", at which litanies of guardian spirits (and oaths of loyalty) were probably recited, and at which human and buffalo sacrifices occasionally took place.²⁴ At Udong, one manuscript suggests, the *stac tran* represented the *di* at royal ceremonies, and came under the supervision of the *baku*.²⁵ Incidentally, all five of the *di* are mentioned in the oath, but only two (Pursat and Tboung Khmum) appear in Duang's text.

Before examining the lists in general terms, a particular group of toponyms—numbering perhaps fifteen (some may have been intended as combinations, and others are unidentified) in the oath deserves detailed attention. Seven of them are identifiable. They are all from Siem Reap, in the vicinity of Angkor; six in fact, are archaeological sites. Of these, five contain temples (and, in two cases, inscriptions) from the reign of Yasovarman I. The sixth site, Bakong, is a temple built in 881 A.D. by Yasovarman's father, Indravarman I (r. 869-889). Two of the six—Phnom Krom and Phnom Bakheng—also appear in the 1859 text, as does an unidentifiable one (Phnom Prah). The cluster of toponyms in the

22) Originally, the central *dī* may have been Ba Phnom. See David P. Chandler, "Royally Sponsored Human Sacrifices in Nineteenth Century Cambodia: the Cult of *nak ta Uma Mahisasuramardini* at Ba Phnom" *Journal of the Siam Society* (JSS) 62/2 (July 1974) 207-222, n. 48.

23) E. Aymonier, *Cours de Cambodgien*, Saigon 1876, 125 and A. Leclère, *Recherches sur le droit publique des cambodgiens*, Paris 1894, 188-189.

24) Porée Maspéro, *Etude*, 246, 248.

25) France, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Indochinois 387, (Collection Adhémar Leclère)—an undated Cambodian manuscript that contains (37) a diagram of temporary buildings put up by the *stac tran* at the capital. See Leclère, *Cambodge, fêtes civiles*, 610, for the assertion that *stac tran* took orders from the *baku*, and also Leclère, "Bandenh trah reachea", *RI*, 1906, 581-86.

oath, which falls roughly half-way through the first one hundred names, is as follows:

1. *Phnom di* ("mountain of earth")

There are four sites of this name in present-day Cambodia.²⁶ Two are in Seam Reap, and one of these is a small hill, 272 metres above sea-level, north west of the Angkorean complex, where a temple dedicated to Harihara, and an inscription dated 893 A.D., was discovered by the French in 1914.²⁷ Coedès and B.P. Groslier have argued that the hill is one of four temple sites grouped roughly at the cardinal points around Yasovarman's "central mountain" of Phnom Bakheng (number 15, below).²⁸ Another site of this name, west of Siem Reap, was visited by Aymonier in the 1870s, and is associated nowadays with a powerful *nak ta*.²⁹

2. *promnat rusrei* (untranslatable)

Not identifiable as a toponym.

3. *brah indrachar* ("lord Indra the teacher")

Possibly an oblique reference to Indravarman I, or to one of his temples at Hariharalaya, but not identifiable with a particular site.

4. *jung khnes* ("point of a scraper")

Nowadays (and presumably in the nineteenth century) a floating village at the mouth of the Siem Reap river, near the base of Phnom Krom (below), with which it may be meant to elide in the text.

26) U.S. Army Topographic Command, *Cambodia*, 194.

27) G. Coedès, "L'inscription du Phnom Dei", *BEFEO*, XVIII/9 (September 1918), 13-14.

28. See *IC*, IV, 98, n.2, and Groslier, *Bayon*, 156. These scholars agree that four of the five mountains are Bakheng, Phnom Krom, Phnom Dei, and Phnom Bok. The fifth, to the north, is the Phimeanakas, according to Groslier. For a discussion of the alignment of temples at Angkor, see P. Paris, "L'importance rituelle du nord-est et ses applications en Indochine", *BEFEO*, XLI (1941) 301-333, with maps. Coedès suggests that the fifth site should be to the west of Bakheng, but no elevated site associated with Yasovarman has been located in that direction.

29) Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, II, 369. See also Buddhist Institute, *BRP*, VIII, 57-61.

5. *phnom krom* ("lower mountain")

A small hill, 140 metres above sea level, "below", (i.e. south) of the Angkor complex.³⁰ The site is also mentioned in the 1859 text. On its summit is a temple attributed by scholars to the reign of Yasovarman I.³¹

6. *prek banteai dom* ("stream of the lofty fortress [es]"?)

Not identifiable; perhaps an oblique reference to the Siem Reap River, which flows through the Angkor complex.

7. *prek banteai tvea* ("stream of the fortress [es] at/of the gate")

Not identifiable, unless as a reference to the Siem Reap river. There is a twelfth century temple, Athvea, between Phnom Krom and Siem Reap.³²

8. *phnom prah* ("mountain of the sacred"?)

This toponym also occurs in the 1859 text, where Leclère identifies it as a village near Udong "whose *nak ta* is very powerful".³³ There is a small hill called Prah Phnom ("sacred mountain") in western Siem Reap, with three inscriptions indicating devotions at the site to Siva.³⁴ The toponym is perhaps intended to merge with (9) below.

9. *our chay* ("beautiful stream"?)

Unidentifiable, even if read with (8) above.

10. *baray tuk thla* ("dam of clear water")

Unidentifiable, but perhaps a reference to the catchment area built at Angkor by Yasovarman, the Yasodharatataka, known today as the Baray, where four inscriptions of Yasovarman have been found.³⁵

30) On Cambodian directions, see S. Lewitz, "Recherches sur la vocabulaire cambodgien, VI. Les noms des points cardinaux" *Journal Asiatique* (JA) (1970) 131-141.

31) M. Glaize, "Le dégagement du Phnom Krom", *BEFEO*, XL (1940) 371-81.

32) Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, II, 400 ff. See also G. Coedès, "La grotte de Bon Prah Thvea", *BEFEO*, XI (1911) 398-400, which describes a site on Phnom Kulen dedicated to Siva.

33) Leclère, "Fêtes locales", 98, note 23.

34) See G. Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, III, 121.

35) G. Coedès, "A la recherche du Yaçodharaçrama" discusses inscriptions K. 279-282, as well as Yasovarman's digraphic inscriptions (note 50, below). The Yasodharatataka is mentioned in thirty-two inscriptions, including the digraphic ones.

11. *mahasiek rithi* (*siek* is not translatable; *maha . . . rithi* means "great power")

Unidentifiable: possibly intended as attributes of an unidentified person or deity.

12. *lolei* (not translatable; perhaps a garble for Hariharalaya)

An archaeological site in Siem Reap, located near temples built by Indravarman I at his capital of Hariharalaya. The site is marked by a four-towered brick temple erected (or completed) by Yasovarman I in honour of his ancestors in 893 A.D. The temple contains several of his inscriptions—one (K. 323) from 889 A.D. and the others (K. 324-338) from 893 A.D.³⁶

13. *bak dong* ("broken *dong* tree")

Although there is a village of this name in Kampong Thom, the phrase probably refers to the temple-mountain of Bakong, erected by Indravarman I at Hariharalaya in 881 A.D.³⁷

14. *phnom bok* ("hump-back mountain")

A small hill, 212 metres above sea-level, about 10 kilometres northeast of Angkor Thom, crowned with a temple attributed to Yasovarman I. Statues of Brahma, Siva and Visnu have been found there; the presence of these three resembles an arrangement noted by Glaize at Phnom Krom, and he suggests that the two temples were built at the same time, in alignment with Phnom Bakheng (number 15 below).³⁸

36) M. Glaize, *Les monuments du groupe d'Angkor*, (Paris 1963) 259-261. G. Coedès, "La date du Bayon", *BEFEO*, XXVIII (1928) 91 suggests that the temple was originally intended to include six towers, and that work was suspended after Yasovarman moved his capital to Angkor. The inscriptions from Lolei are K. 323-338 and 947.

37) Glaize, *Les monuments*, 250-254. Fourteen inscriptions have been found at this site: K. 304-308, 825-826, 829, 870, 882, 894-895, 915.

38) M. Glaize, "Phnom Bok. Dégagement", *BEFEO*, XXXIX (1939) 340-341. See also Jean Boisselier, *Le Cambodge*, Paris 1966, 290. Like its "sister" temple at Phnom Krom, the site has no inscriptions.

15. *bakheng* ("ancestor kheng" or "mighty ancestor")

A small hill, about 100 metres above sea-level, located inside the archaeological complex of Angkor Thom, and covered with an elaborate pyramid, dedicated to Siva, which contains seven inscriptions from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries A.D.³⁹ In 1932, V. Goloubew identified it as the "central mountain" (*phnom kantol*) associated, in the eleventh century inscription of Sdok Kak Thom, with Yasovarman's devotion to the cult of the *devaraja*.⁴⁰ The site is also mentioned in the 1859 text.

The toponyms discussed above clearly represent less than fifteen real places, but the occurrence of five sites associated with Yasovarman is extraordinary not only in a text which is not otherwise systematic, but also because verbal "memories" of this kind are difficult to find elsewhere in Cambodian literature.⁴¹ Two questions immediately arise:

- 39) Jean Filliozat, "Le symbolisme du montagne de Phnom Bakheng", *BEFEO*, XLIX (1953) 527 ff. None of the inscriptions is from Yasovarman's reign.
- 40) V. Goloubew, "Le Phnom Bakheng et la ville de Yaçovarman", *BEFEO*, XXXIII (1933) 319-44, and Goloubew, "Nouvelles recherches autour de Phnom Bakheng", *BEFEO*, XXXIV (1934) 576-600. For the eleventh century reference, see G. Coedès and P. Dupont, "Les stèles de Sdok Kak Thom, Phnom Sandak at Prah Vihar" *BEFEO*, XLIII (1943-1945) 56-154 at 113.
- 41) The question of "memories" of Angkor would repay detailed research. The so-called "modern" inscriptions of Angkor Wat date from the sixteenth century to 1747 A.D. (S. Lewitz, "Les inscriptions modernes d'Angkor Wat", *JA*, 1972, 107-129) but ten identifiably nineteenth century inscriptions (*IC*, VIII, 10) are all from southern Cambodia. A poem entitled "The poem of Angkor Wat" was written in 1620 (S. Pou, "Note sur la date du *Poème d'Angkor Wat*", *JA*, (1975) 119-124) and attributed the temple to a celestial architect, a theme echoed in the modern Khmer folk-tale, "Prasad Angkor" *BRP*, V, 1-25, trans. by P. Fabricius in *Nokor Khmer*, 2, (January-March 1970) 47-61. Although the word Yasodharapura remained part of Cambodian royal titles until at least 1602 (N. Péri, "Essai sur les relations du Japon et de l'Indochine au XVI et XVII siècles", *BEFEO*, XXIII (1923) 129, this king's role in the construction of Angkor, and his connection with the temples mentioned in the oath, were not clarified until the colonial era, by French scholars. On "post-Angkorean" Angkor, see B.P. Groslier, *Angkor et le Cambodge au XVI siècle*, Paris, 1958, esp. 90-139. In Khmer folk-beliefs their loss of the skills evident at Angkor is traced to the Thai theft, following the capture of Lovek in 1595, of Cambodian sacred texts (*kbun*) concealed inside a sacred ox (*brah ko*) - Thong Thei, personal communication. See also E. Porée-Maspéro, *Etude*, 111.

Why these sites, and not others? and why Yasovarman, and not another king?

Neither text mentions any of the monuments erected by Cambodia's greatest builder-king, Jayavarman VII (r. 1178-c. 1219), unless the reference to Angkor Thom in Duang's invocation refers to Jayavarman's capital, and neither text mentions Angkor Wat, even though this was familiar to eighteenth and nineteenth century Cambodians as a pilgrimage site.⁴² Indeed, with a few exceptions, the identifiable toponyms in both documents reflect post-Angkorean conditions. Only one toponym in the 1859 text (Nakor Ratchasima, in northeastern Thailand), and two in the oath (Basak in southern Laos, and Medaeng in southern Vietnam) can be located beyond the frontiers of eighteenth century Cambodia; these two, however, are probably references to sacred hills.⁴³ Another anomaly about the fifteen sites is that they appear under their present-day names rather than their Sanskritized, Angkorean ones. There is no mention of Yasovarman's capital city, Yasodharapura, for example, or of its predecessors, unless Lolei is a reference to Hariharalaya. There is no way of telling, of course, when these popular names caught hold and whether, for example, the "ancestor" in the phrase *ba kheng* is Yasovarman himself, Siva, the name of the hill as Yasovarman found it, or, in different ways, all three of these.⁴⁴ With only two texts to refer to, it is also impossible to

42) See David P. Chandler, "An Eighteenth Century Inscription from Angkor Wat", *JSS*, 59/2 (July 1971) 51-57.

43) Interestingly, neither list includes toponyms connected with Cambodian settlements in southern Vietnam, as listed in L. Malleret, "Anciens toponymes du delta du Mekong", *L'archéologie du Delta du Mekong*, 4 vols., Paris 1959-1963, IV, 192-197. On Khmer settlement patterns, see B.P. Groslier, "Pour une géographie historique du Cambodge", *Les cahiers d'outre-mer*, 104 (October-December 1973) 337-379. On Me Deng, see Paul Wheatley, "The Mount of the Immortals: a Note on Tamil Cultural Influence in Fifth Century Indochina", *Oriens Extremus* 21/1 (June 1974) 97-109. On Bassac, Ma Tuan Lin (tr. Marquis d'Hervey de St. Denis) *Ethnographie des peuples étrangers à la Chine*, Geneva 1876, 483 (the reference is to the mountain in c. 600 A.D.); Groslier, "Pour une géographie" 347 says that Wat Ph'u was a Khmer pilgrimage site in Angkorean times.

44) See S. Lewitz, "Recherches sur la vocabulaire cambodgien. VIII. Bakong", *JA* (1970) 147-149. Bakheng is mentioned as a Buddhist shrine in an unpublished post-Angkorean inscription, K. 1006, from Phnom Kulen, dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century: Michael Vickery, *personal communication*.

determine when, if, or why names were taken off or added to the lists, and thus, by implication, which regions and which ancestral spirits rose or diminished in power between Yasovarman's reign (or earlier) and the time when the texts assumed their present form.

The answer to some of the anomalies, I believe, lies in what we know, particularly from inscriptions, about Yasovarman's reign, which was marked by self-consciously proclaimed continuities with Cambodia's pre-Angkorean past, by bold architectural innovations, religious tolerance (or eclecticism) and centralized control, or at least suzerainty, extending throughout and well beyond the areas of present-day Cambodia.

On his mother's side, Yasovarman traced his ancestry to the ruling families of Vyadharapura, Sambhupura, and Aninditapura—regional power centres associated with kingdoms known to the Chinese as "Funan" and "Chenla".⁴⁵ On his father's side, he was a great-nephew of the first Angkorean king, Jayavarman II, under whose auspices the cult of the *devaraja* was allegedly introduced in 802 A.D.⁴⁶

Architecturally, Yasovarman was the first Cambodian king to build extensively in stone, rather than in brick, and he seems to have had a

45) See Claude Jacques, "Etudes d'épigraphie cambodgienne. VII. Sur l'emplacement du royaume d'Aninditapura", *BEFEO*, LIX (1972) 193-205 and O.W. Wolters, "Jayavarman's Military Power: the Territorial Foundation of the Angkor Empire", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)* 1973, 21-30.

46) Four recent studies of *devaraja* are G. Coedès, "Le véritable fondateur du culte de la royauté divine au Cambodge" in H.B. Sarkar (ed.) *R.C. Majumdar Felicitation Volume*, Calcutta, 1970, 56-62; H. Kulke, "Der *devaraja* Kult", *Saeculum*, XXV/1 (1974) 24-55; I.W. Mabbett, "Devaraja", *Journal of Southeast Asian History (JSEAS)* X/2 (1969) 2-4-209 and H. Mestier Du Bourg, "A propos du culte de dieu-roi (*devaraja*) au Cambodge", *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, 11 (1968-1969) 499-516. See also K. Bhattacharya, "Hari Kambujendra", *Artibus Asiae* 27 (1964) 72-76 and Jean Filliozat, "New Researches on the Relations between India and Cambodia", *Indica*, III (1966) 95-106. Coedès' synthesis in "Le véritable fondateur", p. 57, is impossible to improve:

"Les entreprises d'unification et d'hégémonie telle que celle de Jayavarman II s'accompagnaient régulièrement de l'établissement sur une montagne naturelle ou artificielle du culte d'une divinité étroitement associée à la personne royale, transcendant les cultes locaux, symbolisant l'unité du royaume, et doublant sur le plan religieux une action politique."

personal preference for building monuments on the top of natural hills. Here, too, perhaps, he was self-consciously identifying himself with his forebears, the "kings of the mountain"; Goloubew has speculated that Yasovarman saw Phnom Bakheng as the successor to earlier sacred hills (also honouring Siva) at Ba Phnom and at Wat Ph'u (Lingaparvata) in southern Laos.⁴⁷ Stylistically, too, the art of Yasovarman's reign marked a recognizable development from the past, and the beginnings of the so-called "Angkorean" style.⁴⁸

The king's religious eclecticism has been discussed by Coedès and L.P. Briggs,⁴⁹ but his primary devotion was to Siva, the deity mentioned most frequently in Yasovarman's so-called "digraphic" inscriptions, and the one to whom Bakheng was dedicated. The digraphic inscriptions—fourteen in all, with identical texts, except for one variable line, have been found throughout Cambodia, as well as at locations in southern Laos and eastern Thailand.⁵⁰

In this context, we can speculate that the survival of five toponyms associated with Yasovarman, rather than with another king, arose in part from the fact that he founded Yasodharapura not only as the site of a personal shrine but as a national capital, with the centre of the nation at Phnom Bakheng, and digraphic inscriptions (as well as temples

47) Goloubew, "Phnom Bakheng . . ." 344. In the 1870s, Ganesa, the offspring of Siva and Kali, was thought to be the guardian of Phnom Bakheng; see J. Moura, "De Phnom Penh à Pursat en compagnie du roi du Cambodge", *Revue d'Extreme Orient* I (1882), 100.

48) Boisselier, *Le Cambodge*, 246 refers to several stylistic innovations whereby Yasovarman sought to "place Angkorean power on a new footing".

49) Coedès, "A la recherche" 106, L.P. Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, Philadelphia, 1951, 112, and K. Bhattacharya, *Les religions brahmaniques dans l'ancien Cambodge*, Paris 1961, 29-30.

50) See Coedès, *IC*, VIII, 17 : inscription K. 323 at Lolei says that Yasovarman "made, at all the cardinal points, a hundred *asrami*". Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, II, 482-483 suggests, in view of their stylistic uniformity, that they were carved by a single artist. See Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, 103, map 9, which shows that while the inscriptions are fairly evenly distributed to the east, southeast, south, centre and north (the two inscriptions from Laos, not shown on the map) nothing appears to the southwest, a "dead zone" for temples, as Groslier has suggested (*Le Bayon*, 125).

carefully placed at four cardinal points around the capital) indicating the extent of the new king's jurisdiction. Yasovarman was a map-maker himself, and it is likely that toponymical litanies of a national sort were introduced, made popular, or refined during his reign.⁵¹ Yasovarman's ordering of toponyms in and around Yasodharapura—and thus to an extent his animation of the landscape—is what survives from his reign in these toponymical texts. Another reason for the survival of the names may be that the king's devotion to Siva found echoes at other levels of Cambodian life (such as village ceremonies of "raising the ancestors", for example) which Jayavarman VII's esoteric and grandiose Buddhism did not.⁵² Finally, there is the fact that the successors of Yasovarman's court brahmins, who presided over such non-Buddhist rites as rain-making ceremonies and oaths of loyalty in the nineteenth century, also retained custody of the lists.

Another interesting feature of the lists is the phrase *me sa* (written *me sar* in the 1859 text). Some thirty toponyms in Duang's invocation, and eleven in the oath, are preceded by these words. In some cases, *me sa* apparently should be read as a plural; in others, it is connected with only one toponym. The phrase is used inconsistently in the two texts—attached to archaeological sites, administrative divisions, and oddities of the landscape.⁵³ Its meaning of "guardian spirit" is fairly clear, but the

51) See Inscription K. 286 (*IC*, IV, 58) for a description of Yasovarman's frontiers. The fact that an eleventh century oath of office, with the two hundred-odd officials associated with specific *sruk*, is incised at the Phimeanakas, a temple with connections with Yasovarman (see above, note 28) may also indicate such a "memory". The ceremony may have included some ritualistic blood-letting; see note 52 below. See *IC*, III, 207-216.

52) See P.C. Bagchi, "On some Tantrik Texts Studied in Ancient Cambodia", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 5 (1929) 754-769. One of the texts, mentioned in connection with the *devaraja* cult by the Sdok Kak Thom inscription, the *Ciraccheda* ("Beheading") may also have been recited at the expiatory ceremony conducted prior to his coronation by Jayavarman II in the vicinity of Ba Phnom, recorded in inscription K956, (*IC*, VII, 128-129). See Claude Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II", *BEFEO XLIX* (1972) 105-120.

53) Thus, in the oath, the first *me sa* is associated with Ba Phnom (a site not mentioned in Duang's text); others in the oath are archaeological sites (e.g. Santbuk, Basak) or not identifiable (e.g. Prek Aeng, Sbat Sbay). The *me sa* in 1859 text are more widely distributed, and include Angkor Thom (the popular name for the Angkor complex), Pursat, and Bakheng, as well as several sites near Udong.

link between this guardian spirit and toponyms is not. In an earlier paper, I accepted Mme. Porée Maspéro's suggestion that the phrase be taken as a slurred contraction of the name Uma Mahisasuramardini—Siva's consort killing a demon buffalo.⁵⁴ The suggestion is tempting, as a statue of the divinity was worshipped as *me sa* at Ba Phnom as recently as 1944. But there seems to be no correlation, in the lists, between places where statues of the goddess have been found (or a cult in her honour mentioned in an inscription) and the inclusion of the phrase. Although *me sa* at one time may have meant "guardian spirit of the kingdom, of the sort worshipped at Ba Phnom," this meaning seems to have faded by the nineteenth century, when the word may have retained echoes of this connection and one with the word *mahisa* alone, Khmer, via Sanskrit, for "buffalo".⁵⁵

Why should toponyms be associated with buffaloes, or with a goddess in the act of beheading one? Here the evidence is clearer, for there are amply documented connections between buffalo-sacrifices and village religion throughout much of Southeast Asia, and especially in Laos, Cambodia, and among hill tribes,⁵⁶ and it is possible that the cult of the *devaraja* took hold in Cambodia (and in Java) when it did because it was based on centuries of local sacrifices to naga spirits, *nak ta*, *me sa*, and Indian gods like Siva and Uma.

The toponyms therefore—or at least some of them—may well represent places where sacrifices took place annually or at one time: this is not to suggest, however, that the names on the lists are confined to such places, or that sacrifices were identical from place to place or era to era. Many of the places, clearly, were the sites of some odd event of the sort that

54) Porée Maspéro, *Etude*, 9.

55) For an investigation of connections between the Sanskrit word for "buffalo" and the Javanese word for "tomb", see L. Damais, "Etudes javanaises. I. Les tombes musulmanes datées de Tralaya", *BEFEO*, XLVIII (1956-1957) 357-359, n.2. No such connection is possible in Khmer, according to Ms. Saveros Pou (personal communication), but this does not rule out links between the phrase *me sa* and the word *mahisa*.; L.F. Brakel (Personal Communication).

56) See Chandler, "Royally Sponsored Human Sacrifices", notes 36-38.

has produced devotions in recent times to particular *nak ta*.⁵⁷ There is no evidence to suggest that the lists are limited to the *nak ta* most honoured in Cambodia at a given time. In some cases, such as the sites associated with Yasovarman, what it was that had rendered the sites powerful in the tenth century—among the common people, who used popular names for the sites—had been forgotten, in a sense, by the nineteenth.

And yet something had been “remembered”: the toponyms related to Yasovarman are grouped together in the oath, and the most important of them, Bakheng, appears in both texts. One reason for this survival—perhaps more inclusive than others—may be Yasovarman’s devotion to Siva. As Paul Mus and others have shown, the worship of this god was widespread in Southeast Asia, and linked, in many places, to tombs, the propitiation of ancestors, the use of stone, the fertility of the soil and the sacralization of places.⁵⁸ One aspect of Yasovarman’s devotion, the cult of the *devaraja*, may have involved ritual beheadings, and the link between this kind of sacrifice and the installation (or celebration) of authority was echoed annually in the Cambodian *sruk*, after having been repeated—although this is uncertain—at the four corners, or quarters, of the kingdom. These rituals subdued the landscape by summoning the *nak ta* to renew their contracts with the world of the living—a process with parallels in classical China. At each level they also announced a celebrant’s territorial jurisdiction and only the king (or, technically, his

57) *BRP*, VIII, especially 175-195. For Indonesian parallels, see J. Knebel, “Legenden over de plaatsen . . .” *Tijdschrift Bataviaasch Genootschap* 48 (1906) 527-565, 50 (1908) 388-406 and 51 (1909) 377-430. See also C. Stevan Harrell, “When a Ghost Becomes a God” in Arthur P. Wolf (ed.) *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, Stanford 1974, 195-206.

58) See Paul Mus, “Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa”, *BEFEO*, XXXIII (1933) 367-410 and Paul Mus, “La tombe vivante, équisse d’une série ethnographique naturelle”, *La Terre et la Vie*, VII (1937) 117-127. The transmissions and reshaping of beliefs, as discussed by Mus, are refined in the last chapter of S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand* (Cambridge 1970) 367-378, which attacks the problem of “levels”. See also Filliozat, “Recent Researches”, 104, for the unverifiable statement, “In Cambodia there were no sacred places when the Saiva religion came”.

baku) had access to, or power over, the lists of "national" *me sa*.⁵⁹ The names they recited and the order they took summoned and synthesized the kingdom, seen as an amalgamation of ancestors, place-names, and features of a landscape. In some cases—but not these texts—the definition was stretched to include "Lao" spirits, perhaps because they responded to buffalo sacrifices, whereas Thai and Vietnamese counterparts did not;⁶⁰ but "Cambodia" in general was the sum of places, arranged in *mandala* form, where *nak ta* were honoured and sacrifices took place. This notion endured from Yasovarman's reign (and arguably, from the era of "Funan") through the collapse of Angkor and Cambodia's "dark ages" at least until 1969, when officials of Lon Nol's government met to swear loyalty to him and to Prince Sihanouk by summoning spirits to come and witness their oath.⁶¹

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- 59) This monopoly may explain why the litanies do not appear in French descriptions of the annual oath-taking ceremony; cf. Jean Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge* (2 vols.) Paris 1883, I, 251, and R. Menetrier, "Les fetes du Tanh Tok à Phom Penh", *RI*, 1912, 334-345.
- 60) For a bas-relief at Angkor depicting buffalo sacrifice, see Henri Dufour and Charles Carpeaux, *Le Bayon d'Angkor Thom : Bas Reliefs* 2 vols., Paris, 1910-1914, plate 9, reference supplied by Hiram W. Woodward. The rarity of buffalo-sacrifices in Thailand—and the rarity of statues of Uma Mahisasuramardini (frequent in Cambodia and on Java) — poses interesting historical problems, probably connected with the ways and times it was "Indianized". For an instance of ethnic Lao in Thailand sacrificing buffaloes, see Mary Cort, *Siam or the Heart of Further India*, New York, 1886, 362-363—a reference pointed out to me by R.I. Heinze. For an example of a Cambodian *nak ta* speaking "Lao", see *BRP*, VIII, 121.
- 61) *Realités cambodgiennes*, 22 August 1969. See also *Kambuja*, 22 October 1943. For a discussion of the links between toponyms, local deities, and the administration at Angkor after Yasovarman's reign, see Groslier, *Bayon*, 113 ff., 264-66 and G. Coedès, "Les expressions *vrah kamraten an et kamraten jagat en vieux-khmer*", *The Adyar Library Bulletin* XXV (1961) 447-460.