



Śaivism in Thailand as Recorded in Inscriptions and Old Documents from Sixth Century to Early Ayudhyā Period

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Abstract

From the literary evidence the contact between India and Southeast Asia must have begun a few centuries before the Christian era. Śaivism, as one of the major sects of Hinduism, must have existed in Thailand, especially in the northeastern and eastern parts, as early as the 6th century CE, as evidenced by the earliest inscriptions written in Sanskrit. It can be assumed that the Thai people, who appeared in Southeast Asia as early as the 11th century CE, before the Sukhodaya period, must have adopted Buddhism as well as Hinduism as their religions, similar to the Mons and Khmers who also occupied the area which is now present day Thailand. Based on the high frequency of inscriptions belonging to Śaivism found in northeastern Thailand it is quite certain that Śaivism was very influential from 6th to the early 12th century. It began to decline during the time when the Buddhist King Jayavarman VII came into power between the later part of 12th century and the early 13th century. In spite of Singhalese Buddhism being adopted as the state religion by King Rama Khamhaeng, the third king of Sukhodaya, Brahmanism was also practiced along with Buddhism by the Thais, and this has remained the same in Thailand ever since.

Key words: Thailand Śaivism, inscriptions, old documents

Indian Contact with Southeast Asia

The region known collectively as *Suvarṇabhūmi* and *Suvarṇadvīpa*, roughly implied, in those days, Southeast Asia. “There are many references to sea voyages between Indian ports and *Suvarṇabhūmi* or *Suvarṇadvīpa* in old popular stories in the Sanskrit works based upon the lost Bṛhat-kathā, as well as Buddhist *Jātakas*, *Jain Samarāichcha-kathā* and other works. The heroes of most of these stories are



merchants and, in a few cases, princes, or chiefs in straightened circumstances, who wanted to acquire wealth by trade or other means. The *Kathākośa* relates the story of *Nāgadatta* who went to *Suvarṇadvīpa* with five hundred ships in order to acquire wealth. The Buddhist works *Milindapañha* and *Niddesa* also refer to regular trading voyages to *Suvarṇbhūmi*” (Majumdar 1963 : 7). An attempt has been made to prove that the Indianization of Farther India, or Southeast Asia, dates back at least to the *Maurya* Emperors (cir. third century BC). Cœdès is of a different opinion (1968: 16). According to him, neither archaeological and epigraphic documents nor foreign sources can be dated any further back than the *Niddesa* which dates, at the latest, to the very first centuries of the Christian Era. It enumerates a number of Sanskrit or Sanskritized places that may be identified with Farther India (1968:lo.cit.).

Bhavavarman I's inscription

This much damaged stone pillar inscription was discovered at *Bān* (village) *Vang Phai*, *Vichianburī* District, *Petchabūn* Province. From what remains, it appears that King *Bhavavarman*, who is equal to *Indra*, is the son of *Prthivīndravarman* and the grandson of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*). The inscription tells us of the erection of images of *Śiva* (Kaewkhilai 1986 Lem 1: 141; Cœdès 1964: 156-8). On the basis of this inscription, the territory of *Bhavavarman I* must have extended as far as *Petchabūn*, the north central part of Thailand. *Bhavavarman*, grandson of *Sārvabhauma*, the universal monarch, that is, of the king of Funan, was well known to be a Śaivite. He ruled *Chenla*, the Cambodian pre-Angkorian kingdom, which was constituted after gaining independence from the *Chams* during the second half of the sixth century. The center of the state can be located in the middle *Mekong*, in the region of *Bassac* (Cœdès 1968: 66).

Citrasen's Inscriptions (cir. seventh century CE)

Few inscriptions, each of which is basically a repetition of the earlier ones, have been discovered in *Ubonrātchathāni*, *Burīram* and *Khonkaen* Provinces. They tell us that *Citrasena*, who is the grandson of *Sārvabhauma*, and whose marks of characteristics are reputed (*āhatalakṣaṇa*), has, in spite of his being the youngest brother of *Bhavavarman*, obtained the name, after his coronation, of *Mahendrarvarman*, on account of his power (*śakti*). He is mentioned in the inscriptions to have erected *Śivaliṅgas* and the bull *Nandi* as the symbol (cihna) of his conquest over the entire territory (Kaewkhilai 1986 Lem 1: 155-67). Evidently, these inscriptions are among



the earliest documents that record the presence of Śaivism in Thailand. *Citrasena*, according to Coédès, was actually the cousin of *Bhavavarman* not the brother (1968: 68 n.20). King *Mahendravarman* ruled *Chenla* from circa CE 600 to circa CE 616 (1968: 69). Just very recently a version of this inscription which differs slightly from other versions was found in Roi-et Province. It says that *Citrasena*, grandson of *Sārvabhauma*, son of *Vīravarman*, is anointed king on account of his power in spite of his being the youngest brother of King *Bhavavarman*. He obtained the royal title as *Mahendravarman*. He, who is extremely devoted to the god whose emblem is a bull (*vr̥ṣadhvaḥja*), erected a bull made of stone, after having conquered the entire territory and after having removed (*apanīya*) the previous form of worship (*purātānī medhā*). *Purātānī medhā* here seems to refer to Buddhism which flourished in the kingdom of Funan during the reign of King *Rudravarman* (CE 514-cir.CE 550), its last king (1968: 60-1).

Mahendravarman is also mentioned in an inscription found at *Chong Sa Chaeng, Prāchīnburī* Province, to have dug a reservoir named *Śaṅkara* (Thipkesorn 1986 Lem 1: 43; Coédès 1964:152), which undoubtedly was related to Śaivism.

Cāruek (inscription) Phaen Thong Daeng Ūthong (cir. seventh century)

The inscription is on a copper plate and was dug up by Mrs. *Thaem Suadam* from her own land opposite *Ūthong Sueksālaya* School, *Ūthong* District, *Suphanburī* Province, in the west-central part of Thailand in CE 1957. It tells us that *Śrītharṣavarman*, grandson of King *Śrī Īsānavarman*, after ascending the throne, offered a palanquin decorated with gems and also an umbrella, to the accompaniment of dance and music etc. to *Śrīmad Āmrātakeśvara*, that is, venerated *Śiva* named *Āmrātakeśvara*. Thereafter, he offered a sheath for *Śivaliṅga* (*Śāmbhavakośa*) together with best ritual utensils and equipment to the accompaniment of dance and music to *Śrīdhareśvara*, (*Thongkhamvan 1986:225-8*). The names *Āmrātakeśvara* and *Āmrātakeśa* of *Śiva* are mentioned in a number of inscriptions of the pre-Angkorian period (Bhattacharya 1961: 51; Diskul 2004: 24; Coédès 1937: 8; Coédès 1942:149-50; Coédès 1951:159). There were two kings by the name of *Īsānavarman* in the history of Cambodia, namely, *Īsānavarman I (616-c635)* and *Īsānavarman II (925)*. King *Śrītharṣavarman* who, according to this inscription, was King *Śrī Īsānavarman's* grandson, appears to be a king who might have succeeded King *Bhavavarman II (637-639)*, son of *Īsānavarman I (Prapandvidya 2010:79-84)*. The date of the inscription should therefore be assigned to cir. 7th century. Figures 1 and 2 are the

pictures of the *Śāmbhavakośa* taken from the Guimet Museum in Paris. If this copper plate inscription is in situ there should be a temple of Lord *Śiva* named *Āmrātakeśvara* in the vicinity. *Ūthong* was an ancient town known in the inscription of King *Rāmkhamhaeng* of *Sukhodaya* as *Subarṇaburī*. King *Ūthong*, the founder of *Ayudhyā* used to rule here (Thabian Borānavatthu Sthān Thua Rāja Ānā Cakr 1973: 158-9).

Earliest inscriptions in Sanskrit bearing on Śaivism in the early period of Thailand



Figure 1 A golden sheath of a Śhivaliṅga from Champa at the Guimet Museum, Paris.



Figure 2 A sheath of a Śivaliṅga from Champa at the Guimet Museum, Paris.

Don Muang Toey Inscription (cir. seventh century CE)

The inscription was discovered at an ancient town known as *Don Muang Toey* situated in *Bān* (village) *Song Pluay*, *Tambol Song Pluay*, *Kham Khuan Kaew* District, *Yasothon* Province and was damaged to some extent. It was edited and translated into Thai by Cha-Em Kaewklai (1986 Lem 1: 168-75). From what remains, it tells us about a celebrated ruler of *Prajāsaṅkhapura*, *Pravarasena*.

He might have had a son called *Śṛtkroṅcabāhu* who in turn had twelve amazingly powerful sons. The youngest of them was known as *Śrī* (Añjali?) and because of his dedication to truth and religious acts for the people, the assembly of *Brāhmaṇas* added the word *Dharmasena* to his name. He appears to have had strong devotion to *Śiva*, and to have erected a shrine of *Śivaliṅga* at a pond.

Bān (village) Phan Dung Inscription (CE 829)

An inscription which dates back to CE 829 was found at *Bān Phan Dung*, *Khām Thale Saw* District, *Nakhonrāthasima* Province. It begins with a salutation to *Śiva* who is known as *paśupati*, the lord of creatures. He is described as having the sun, the moon and wind as his body; as being all-pervasive; as becoming one with the daughter of the mountain (*Pārvati*); as being the teacher of the demons and gods; as being resorted to by men and gods and as being a receptacle of excellence. The image of Lord *Harihara*, the combined form of *Hari* (*Viṣṇu*) and *Hara* (*Śiva*), which is adorned with the crescent moon, is mentioned to have been erected by an intelligent person (Prapandvidya 2004: 192-4). Figure 3 is a picture of *Harihara*

taken from the Guimet Museum in Paris. The inscription shows the syncretic nature of the religious beliefs of the region, where the inscription was located, as it mentions the erection of the image of *Harihara*, the combined form of *Śiva and Viṣṇu*, of the image of *Viṣṇu* and of the image of *Sugata*, that is, the Buddha. It is interesting to note that an inscription in Sanskrit written in the script of a somewhat earlier period (cir.seventh century CE) on a stone pedestal was discovered at Wat (monastery) *Cantuek*, *Tambol Cantuek*, *Pāk Chong* District, *Nakhonrātchasi* Province. It describes the erection of a Buddha image (*tāhāgati mūrti*) by the daughter of the king of *Dvāravatī* (*dvāravatīpati*). She was probably a queen of a certain king. The inscription is edited and translated by Cha-Em Kaewkhai (1986 Lem 1: 145-6). However, it seems that his translation may be incorrect. This inscription indicates that Buddhism was present in the area of *Nakhonrātchasi* Province earlier.



Figure 3 Harihara of the Phnom Da style of pre-Angkorian period, 7th century, at the Guimet Museum, Paris.



Inscription of *Bo Īkā* (CE868)

This inscription was found at *Bān* (village) *Bo Īkā* to the south of the old city of *Nakhonratchasima*, *Nakhonratchasima Province*. It is written in Sanskrit and Khmer. On one face it tells us that the King of *Śricanāśa* made a resolve to attain enlightenment, so he donated 20 female buffalos together with their calves and 50 cows also with their calves to the Buddhist Order. On the other face of the stone, it begins with an invocation to *Śiva* who is described as having fire, the sun and the moon as his eyes. He is the essential cause (*kāraṇasāraka*) of all things. He, who is extremely subtle, has a bull as his emblem. The inscription records the erection of a divine golden *Śivaliṅga* by *Aṃśadeva* in 790 of *Śaka* era (Thongkhamvan 1986: 23-8).

The inscription of *Bo Īkā* is a strong indication that the center of *Śricanāśa* is in the vicinity of the city of *Nakhonratchasima*.

Inscription of *Wat Bān Nong Nā Thui* (cir. 9th century)

The inscription was found in 2005 under the ground at the depth of 1.60 m, in a mound where a new Buddhist ordination hall was to be constructed. It is kept at *Wat* (Buddhist monastery) *Bān Nong Na Thui*, *Bān* (village) *Nong Nā Thui*, *Tambol Phutsā*, *Muang District*, *Nakhonratchasima Province*. It is fragmented and the three pieces that are found are badly damaged but it undoubtedly belongs to Śaivism. It begins with an invocation to *Paramātman* and to *Śūlabhṛt*, that is *Śiva*. King *Indravarman I*, who reigned at Angkor from CE 877 to CE 889 (1968:110-1), is mentioned in the inscription and the erection of a *Śivaliṅga* at *Devāśrama* is also mentioned.

The Inscription of *Śricanāśa* (CE937)

The inscription was found at a Brahmanic temple near *Cheekun Bridge*, *Muang District*, *Phranakhonśrī-ayudhyā Province*, in central Thailand. It is written in Sanskrit on one face and in Khmer on the other. Most probably it must have been brought from elsewhere. It begins with an invocation to *Śiva* who is described with the epithet of *Śaṅkara*; as having burnt the God of Love (*kāma*); and as having borne the petal of the heavenly flower in the form of a half moon, as if for fear that the world may be burnt (like *Kāma*). Additionally there is an invocation to the daughter of *Himavat* (*Pārvati*) who is described as forming a half of the body of *Hara* (*Śiva*). As a result *Guha* (*Skanda*) is perplexed as he is not sure whether she is his mother or

not. Then there is the genealogy of the kings of *Śricanāśa*, of which *Nāgadatta* was the first ruler. The inscription also tells us that *Maṅgalavarman*, brother of King *Narapatisimhavarman*, erected a statue of *Devī (Pārvatī)* representing his mother in 895 of the *Śaka* era. The Khmer part gives the name of slaves dedicated to the temple. (Cœdès 1986: 42-9).

The inscription of *Ubmung* (CE 993)

The inscription was discovered at Bān (village) *Ubmung*, *Vārinchamrāb* District, *Ubonrāthathāni* Province, in northeastern Thailand. The first verse, which is identical with that of the inscription of *Bān Tād Thong* (see Kaewkhilai 1986 Lem 3: 87), is an invocation to *Śambhu (Śiva)* who is described as having his matted hair shining on account of the rays from the untainted crescent moon, as having created parasols (to protect) the lotus-born one (*Brahmā*) and (to protect) the lotus-eyed one (*Viṣṇu*). (Khamtho 1986:131-2). Figure 4 is a picture of a head of *Śiva* taken from the Guimet Museum in Paris.



Figure 4 Head of *Śiva* of the style of Bakheng of Angkorian period, the end of 9th century to the beginning of 10th century, at the Guimet Museum, Paris.



***Prāsād Thapsiam* Inscription (CE 1007).**

The inscription was found at *Prāsād* (palatial building for gods) *Thapsiam*, *Aranyaprathet* District, *Prachīnburī* Province. It dates back to CE 1007 and bears the name of King *Sūryavarman*. The king is evidently *Sūryavarman I* who ruled Cambodia from CE 1002 to CE 1050 (Cœdès 1986:134). The inscription was edited and translated into Thai by *Cha-Em Kaewklai* (1986 Lem 4). It is almost identical with the inscription of *Phnom Sangke Kong* except for the addition of two more stanzas after the first two (See Cœdès 1954: 228-35). *Prāsād Thapsiam* is situated in *Tambol Khoksūng*, *Aranyaprathet* District, *Prāchīnburī* Province (Thabian Borānavatthu Sthān Thua Rāja Ānā Cakr 1973:368). It begins by Śiva being invoked and described as being the sole abode of Unmanā. Both of them are united as fire with flame. He (Śiva) is actually one. Nevertheless, he (Śiva) becomes many in the form of *ātman* in all living beings just as the moon appears on the moving waves (Kaewklai 1986 Lem 4: 55, verse I; Cœdès 1954: 229, verse I). The concept of one God of the *Upanisads* can be seen here. The Self (*ātman*) is described in the *Kathā Upaniṣad* thus: “That one (Supreme) ruler, the soul of all beings, who makes His one form manifold, to the wise who perceive him as abiding in the soul, to them is eternal bliss ___to no others.” (Radhakrishnan 1953: 640). Śiva is the light that glows in fire, earth, water, the sun, the wind, the moon and the sky (Kaewklai 1986 Lem 4, 55, verse II; Cœdès 1954: 229, verse II). A similar idea is found with regard to Brahman who is conceived in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* as sparkling like the wheel of fire thus: “Then having pierced through what is thus enveloped one sees *Brahman* who sparkles like a wheel of fire, of the color of the sun, full of vigor, beyond darkness, that which shines in yonder sun, also in the moon, in the fire, in the lightning.” (Radhakrishnan 1953:834). Śiva, before giving the lustrous *Soma* juice to the gods to drink, is said to have drunk the inexhaustible power of the conqueror of the death who he has shown abiding in his own self (Kaewklai 1986 Lem 4, 55, verse III; Cœdès 1954: 234, verse III). It also records that *Smaravīravarman*, *Dharaṇīndraparākrama*, *Vīravarman* and *Nṛpendravallabha* have installed a *Śivaliṅga* (*ajeśaliṅga*) and one image each of *Śambhu* (Śiva) and *Devī* (*Pārvatī*) at the mountain designated as *Mrt*, that is the earth, bestowed (on them) by the king of the mountain (1986 Lem 4, 56, verse IX-XIII; 1954: 230, verse VII-XI).

***Phimai* Inscription II (CE 1041).**

The inscription is fragmented and discovered at *Prāsād Hin Phimai*, *Phimai* District, *Nakhonrāthchasi* Province. It is interesting that on one face of the in



scription the salutation is addressed to the Buddha, whereas on the other the salutation is to *Śiva* (Cœdès 1964: 124-6). *Śiva* is described here as one whose lotus feet deserved to be worshipped constantly by *Brahmā* and the other gods. He has one self-nature (*ekasvabhāva*). Nevertheless, he has all the forms of existence (*akhilabhāvamūrti*). He is of the state of void (*śunya*). Still he has several existences (*anekabhāva*). The inscription also eulogizes King *Sūryavarman* who is no doubt *Sūryavarman I*. It seems that during his reign Buddhism and Śaivism co-existed peacefully. In spite of the fact that he followed the *Devarāja* cult, his favor for Buddhism earned him the posthumous name *Nirvāṇapada* (Cœdès 1968: 135).

***Prāsād Phnomrung* Inscription (CE 1150)**

The inscription dates back to CE 1150 and was found at *Prāsād Phnomrung*, *Chalermphrakiat* District, *Buriram* Province, (H.R.H.Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn 1978 : 139). *Śiva* is described here as having three eyes which are the sun, the moon and fire. He bears the daughter of Sage *Jahnu*, that is, *Gaṅgā*, on his head (1978 : 91, verse 21). *Narendrāditya*, who appears to be a ruler of a country which has its center at *Mahidharapura*, an unidentified locality, probably somewhere near *Prāsād Phnomrung*, is mentioned in the inscription. He is eulogized as identical with *Śiva* on earth, being one with *Viṣṇu* and *Brahmā* (1978:102, verse 32), having *Śiva*, *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and the moon as part of his body (1978: 109, verse 41) and as being identical with 8 forms (*mūrti*) which are the elements constituting *Śiva* (1978: 118, verse 48). It is mentioned in the inscription that he has burst open the *Brahmadvāra* from his practice of austerity at *Prāsād Phnomrung*. This may signify that he attained God-hood through the austerity. “The process of Yoga consists in rousing the radiant serpent and lifting it up from the lowest sphere to the heart, where in union with *prāṇa* or life-breath its universal nature is realized and from it to the top of the skull. It goes out through an opening called *brahmarandhra* to which corresponding in the cosmic organism the opening formed by the sun on the top of the vault of the sky” (Radhakrishnan 1953: 76). Most probably, the sect of *Śaivite* practiced at *Prāsād Phnomrung* was *Pāśupata* as indicated by the word *sthūlādripāśupata* used in stanza 65 which means *Pāśupata* of the great mountain (*Phnomrung*). Mention of the *Pāśupata* sect appears in the inscriptions of *Īśānavarman* at *Sombor- Prei Kuk* and that of *Bhavavarman II* at *Phnom Prah Vihar, Kampong Chnang* (Bhattacharya 1961: 43ff; Subhadradis 2004: 21ff; Cœdès 1937: 3-5). The sect of the *Pāśupatas*, devotees of *Paśupati* or *Śiva* arose a little later than the sect of the *Bhāgavatas*, worshippers of *Vāsudeva*, identified with *Kṛṣṇa* and *Viṣṇu*, which was active at least a century before Christ (Basham 1982: 331).



***Prāsād Sdok Kak Thom* Inscription (CE 1052)**

The inscription was found at *Prāsād Sdok Kak Thom* and dates back to CE 1052. It records the erection of a *liṅga* named *Śārvajayendravarṃśvara* by a *Brāhmaṇa* named *Sadāśiva* whose title is *Jayendrapañḍita* at the temple named *Bhadraniketana*, known at present as *Prāsād Sdok Kak Thom*, (Chakravarti 1980 : *Introduction*, XXI). *Prāsād Sdok Kak Thom* is situated in *Tambol Khoksūng*, *Tāphrayā* District, *Prāchīnburī* Province (Thabian Borānavatthu Sthān Thua Rāja Ānā Cakr 1973:370). It begins with an invocation to *Śiva*, who is described as the one whose real nature is *ātman* (Supreme Reality) which cannot be expressed in words but its existence can be inferred by the fact that it pervades the whole bodies of living beings and causes their sensual organs to function (Chakravarti 1980 : 1, verse II). He is further invoked to protect the whole universe with his three eyes which are the moon, the sun and fire. Those, who see the real nature of *ātman*, see him clearly in all respects (1980: 1, verse II). This inscription is a very important source of the cult of *Devarāja* in ancient Cambodia. The cult gradually developed when a *Brāhmaṇa* named *Hiraṇyadāma* who disclosed the mystery of *Devarāja* and taught to *Śivakaivalya* four texts embodied the doctrine of the cult, namely, *Vīṇāśikha*, *Sammohana*, *Śiraścheda* and *Nayottara*. King *Jayavarman II* and *Hiraṇyadāma* gave to the matrilineal family of *Śivakaivalya* the right to worship *Devarāja*. Seven generations of successors of *Śivakaivalya*, the kings they served, the property they acquired and the foundations they made in different parts of the country are described (1980 : *Introduction*, XIII). King *Jayavarman II*, the founder of the kingdom of Angkor, ruled Cambodia from CE 802-52. He started after returning from Java by establishing himself in the city of *Indrapura*. It was here, it seems, that the young king took into his services as royal chaplain, a *Brāhmaṇa* named *Śivakaivalya*, who was to follow him in all his changes of residence and to become the first chief priest of a new cult, that of the *Devarāja*, or “God-King” (Cœdès 1968: 95-8).

The Inscriptions in the Khmer language

The inscription of *Prāsād Hin Phnomvan 3* (CE 1182)

The inscriptions in the Khmer language that are related to Śaivism commonly record the gift of land, slaves, and other materials useful for temples by kings or by certain dignitaries to certain Brahmanic temples. Here is one example. The inscription of *Prāsād Hin Phnomvan 3*, dated CE 1182, is at one of the doors on the



western side of *Prāsād Wat Phnomvan*, Muang District, *Nakhonrāthasima* Province. It was edited by Prasān *Bunprakhong* and translated into Thai by *Thongsueb Suphamāk* (Cāruek Nai Pradeś Thai Lem 4 1986: 26-31). Beginning with the salutation in Sanskrit to *Śiva*, it records how the temple called *Devāśrama* is managed by caretakers appointed by King *Jayavarmadeva VII* who ruled Cambodia from CE 1181 - circa CE1218 (Cœdès 1968: 169).

Inscriptions in the Thai Language

The *Pū* (grandfather) *Khun Cit Khun Cot* inscription (CE1370)

The inscription which is in the Thai language belongs to *Sukhodaya* period and is related to the oath-taking by people of the ruling class of *Sukhodaya* Kingdom. *Śaivite* deities namely *Maheśvara*, *Sadāśiva*, *Ardhendasura* (*Ardhanārīśvara* ?), *Umā*, are cited among other deities to be the witnesses in the oath-taking ceremony (Prapandvidya 1996: 56). *Śaibāgama*, which is probably the sacred text of *Śaiva* sect, is also cited in the inscription to act as a witness bringing misfortune to anyone who breaks the oath (1996: 56).

The inscription in Thai on the base of a statue of *Śiva* (CE 1510)

The inscription records that *Phrayā Śrī Dharmāśokarāja* built a statue of *Śiva*, now in the National Museum, *Kampaengpet* Province, so that the god may protect the bipeds and the quadrupeds and he may also help to maintain the purity of the *Buddha sāsanā*, the *Sayya sāsanā*, and the *Phra Deva-karma* (1996: 56). Here we can see the syncretic nature of the belief in the period contemporaneous with the inscription from the fact that *Śiva* is invoked to protect *Buddhasāsanā*, that is, Buddhism, *Sayyasāsanā*, that is *Śaivism* and the unidentified form of religion called *Phra Deva-karma*.

Old literature on *Śaivism* in the early *Ayudhyā* Period

Lilit Onkār Chaeng Nām (cir. CE 1350)

One of the widely known pieces of Thai literature of *Ayudhyā* (Skt. *Ayodhyā*) period (CE1351-CE1767) is the Brahmanic ceremonial text entitled *Lilit Onkār Chaeng Nām*. Most probably it was composed when *Ayudhyā* was founded, that is, in CE 1351 (Bhumisak 1981: 7). The title can be broken up as follows: *Lilit* is a



type of poetry. The word probably corresponds to *lalita* in Sanskrit which means graceful, charming, or fine. *Oṅkāra* means here in Thai a “sacred text”, whereas in Sanskrit it means the sacred syllable *Om*. *Chaeng* means “consecration”, and *Nām* means “water”. The title of the text, therefore, probably means “The Graceful Poetic and Sacred Text for the Consecration of Water”. This text is to be recited by court *Brāhmaṇas* at the royal ritual to ensure the loyalty of the king’s servants who are required to drink the consecrated water. To consecrate the water, *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* and *Brahmā*, are invoked respectively. After each invocation to *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* and *Brahmā* the arrows named *Palaiivāt* (probably Skt.-*Pralayāstra*), *Agnivāt* (Skt.- *Agnyastra*) and *Phrommāt* (Skt.- *Brahmāstra*) are to be dipped respectively by thrusting them in the water. Here *Śiva* is described as being *Parameśvara*, that is, the Supreme Lord, as residing at the Great Mountain, that is, *Kailāsa*, as riding on a white bull, that is, *Nandi*, as having a serpent as his sacred cord, as having a digit of the moon as the ornament on his matted hair, as keeping matted hair, as having three eyes, as wielding *vajra* as his weapon and as the one who destroys obstacles and visitations (See Prapandvidya 2004: 39-43; Vaṅṅakam Samay(a) Ayudhyā Lem 1 1997:7).

Lilit Yuan Phai (cir. CE 1529)

It is poetry eulogizing King *Boromtrailoknāth* (=Paramatrayalokanātha) of *Ayudhya* on the occasion of his victory over the northern Thai group. In spite of the fact that the king was a Buddhist he is described as being created by the Hindu Triad, *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Īśvara* (*Śiva*), out of their compassion towards the people presumed to be those of Ayudhyā, by mixing the *aṣṭamūrti*, that is, the eight forms of *Śiva* (Vaṅṅakam Samay(a) Ayudhyā Lem 1 1997:331).

The king is also described as being the incarnation of *ekādaśadeva* which probably are the *Rudras*, the eleven forms of *Śiva* (1997: lo.cit.).

Concluding Remarks

1. From the reign of King *Bhavavarman I* till King *Jayavarman VII*’s accession to the throne, the major religion in the northeastern region of ancient Thailand was *Śaivism*. Buddhism, however, was allowed to be practiced as can be attested by its big center at *Phimai* Temple, *Phimai* District, *Nakhonratchasima* Province and by epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidence.
2. So far, only one inscription belonging to *Vaisnavism* has been found at Prasad Khao Noi, Sra Kaew Province, in eastern Thailand. This shows that *Śaivism* was more prominent in this region, especially in northeastern Thailand.



3. No philosophical interpretations were given to *Śaivism* in the earlier inscriptions until the ninth century CE.
4. *Vedāntic* philosophy appears prominently in *Prāsād Thapsiam*, *Prāsād Phnomrung* and *Sdok Kak Thom* inscriptions.
5. During the reign of the last great king of ancient Cambodia, that is, King *Jayavarman VII*, *Śaivism* was still supported by the king in spite of the fact that he was a staunch Buddhist.
6. In *Sukhodaya* period, after the Sri Lankan form of Buddhism was adopted by King *Rāmklamhaeng* the Great, *Śaivism* seems to have lost its importance as evidenced by the few allusions to it in the Thai inscriptions.
7. Syncretism between Buddhism and Brahmanism existed even though both *Sukhodaya* and *Ayudhyā* kingdoms adopted *Theravāda* Buddhism as their state religion. Brahmanism still played an important role in state ceremonies such as the coronation, the oath-taking ceremony, the ceremony for the oath of allegiance by drinking consecrated water, etc.



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