

Sri Lanka-Cambodia Relations Version imprimable Suggérer par mail

Sri Lanka-Cambodia Relations with Special Reference to the Period 14th - 20th Centuries

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The emergence of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia is conventionally traced back to the 13th century A.C. However, there is emerging epigraphical and sculptural evidence, that Buddhism of both the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri of Sri Lanka had made a strong early impact on the development of Theravada Buddhism in South East Asia when a good part of this region was dominated from about the 5th-6th century A.C. by the Mon Khmer culture, and later became part of the Khmer empire.

The movement of Buddhist monks and teachers from Sri Lanka to the region was facilitated by advances in navigation technology that witnessed a quantum leap during the period of the fourth-fifth centuries. This helped the spread of the Pali language, the lingua franca of Theravada through

Pali texts written in Sri Lanka.

Cambodian monk translates Sri Lankan Pali text into Chinese

From the first to the sixth century, Funan, the earliest known kingdom in Cambodia with Oc Eo (in present day Vietnam), as the central port, was a trading power, and known as the most powerful kingdom in mainland Southeast Asia. The capital city of Funan was Phnom Ksach Sa in the province of present day Prey Veng in Cambodia. According to a local legend, the kingdom was founded by an Indian Brahmin named Kaundinya (Chinese form: Hun-t'ien) after subduing the queen of Funan, Soma (Chinese form: Liu-ye), a legend paralleling our Vijaya-Kuveni legend.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, Funan was an important centre of Buddhist learning (P. Pelliot, "Le Fou-nan", BEFEO, vol. III, 1903, Briggs 1951, p. 12). According to the Chinese History of Southern Ts'i (479-501), the King of Funan, Kaundiya Jayavarman (478-514) sent in 484, an Indian Buddhist monk, Nagasena, a resident of Funan as ambassador to the Court of the Chinese Emperor Wu-ti taking ivory stupas with him. According to another Chinese source, History of Leang (502-556), the same king sent another envoy to China in 503 with gifts including a coral statue of the Buddha (Hazra, 1981, p. 73). These illustrate the importance of Funan as a centre of Buddhism then.

One of the earliest references to Buddhist relations between Cambodia [Funan] and Sri Lanka goes back to 505 A.C. The *Vimuttimagga*, (a manual of practical instructions on sila, samadhi and panna) a Pali text of the Abhayagiri school of Sri Lanka, composed by Upatissa in the 2nd century

A.C., exists today in the Chinese language. At the invitation of the Chinese emperor, the Funanese monks Mandrasena and Sanghabhara (or Sanghapala) had taken many Theravada and Mahayana texts to China. It was the latter who translated the *Vimuttimagga* into Chinese in 505 A.C. (Demieville et al 1978). The Pali language and the Abhayagiri tradition of Theravada, it can be concluded, was known in Cambodia during this time. It may be noted here that it was several decades before this time that the Chinese Buddhist monk Fa-Hsien stayed at the Abhayagiri Vihara, and went back to China with a large number of Buddhist texts written in Sri Lanka.

Further evidence for the presence of Pali Language in Cambodia There is other evidence for an early Pali presence. A statue of the Buddha with an inscription with the formula in the Pali language "Ye dhamma..." was found near Toul Preah in the province of Prey Veng in Southern Cambodia (IC, Vol. I, p. 297). The whole inscription is in Pali with only the word *hetuprabhava* in Sanskrit. On the basis of the script, Bhattacharya has dated this inscription to the 7th century. The presence of the Pali language in the 7th century in the Southern part of Cambodia indicates that Theravada Buddhism existed there at the time, at least in some pockets.

Evidence of an early Pali presence throughout South-east Asia comes from the very north of the South-east Asian region. Two gold plates with the same formula were found in Hmawza in Myanmar, also dated to the same period of 6th/7th centuries (Hall, 1981). The same formula was found at the Katuseya monastery at Mihintale containing the Pali form "Ye dhamma ..." written in the 9th century Sinhala characters on a thin gold scroll. The verse is followed by a passage in corrupt Sanskrit (Goonatilake, 1974, p. 53).

Cambodia-Sri Lanka marriage and trade alliances

The Sri Lanka chronicle, *Culavamsa* records that Cambodia and Sri Lanka had close political and cultural contacts in the 12th century. This was a time when there was trade rivalry between Burma and Cambodia. The Burmese king suspecting the Sri Lankan envoys of consolidating contacts with the king of Cambodia, disrupted these friendly contacts. The Burmese king intercepted a letter written by the Sri Lankan King Parakramabahu I (1110-1153 A.C.) addressed to him in the hands of Sri Lanka envoys, and seized them alleging that they were envoys sent to Cambodia (Cv, LXXVI, 21, 22).

The Sri Lankan envoys were punished by tying pestles to their feet, and forcing them to water plants - a punishment that exist even today in Burma. On a later occasion, the Burmese captured a Sinhalese princess sent to Cambodia by the Sri Lankan king (Cv, LXXVI, 35 See also Sirisena 1978, pp. 22). Probably the king of Sri Lanka was responding to a request made by the Cambodian king Dharanindravarman II (who was a Buddhist) by sending a princess as a bride to his son Jayavaraman VII. Cambodia and Sri Lanka apparently attempted to consolidate their friendship by a marriage alliance as well.

Luce (1969) has argued that the rulers of South-east Asian countries, especially the Cambodian and Burmese kings were eager to have consorts from Sri Lanka, probably because the people of these countries regarded Sri Lanka as the Holy Land of Buddhism. According to the Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma (p. 114), the Burmese king Alaungsitthu (1112-1167) visited Sri Lanka, married the Sri Lanka king's daughter, and returned to Burma with an image of Maha Kassapa Thera.

During this time, Sri Lankan envoys and merchants travelled to the Isthmus by sea, and by land to Cambodia and China through Burma. Burma controlled these land routes leading to China. Chinese sources reveal that Cambodia was actively engaged in trade with the Chinese Empire. It is possible that the king of Sri Lanka had sent envoys to Cambodia with the intention of participating in this trade (Sirisena, 1978, p.66).

When, as described above, the king of Burma captured Sri Lankan envoys, he also confiscated their elephants, money as well as their ships. Further, he immediately stopped selling elephants to foreign countries and increased their prices. Sri Lanka at the time, was importing and exporting elephants.

From the 6th century, Sri Lanka was a large emporium for foreign merchants and therefore these Burmese elephants may have been for re-exportation to the West. The 12th century Nainativu inscription of Parakramabahu I mentions that Sri Lanka was engaged in trading elephants and horses (Indrapala, 1963, p. 70).

In retaliation to the Burmese King's action, a raid on some of the ports of Burma was carried out by King Parakramabahu. A fleet of ships was equipped with the necessary arms and provisions together with physicians, nurses, and medicines. Only five ships, however, finally arrived at the port of Kusumi (present day Bassein) under the command of Nagaragiri Kitti. They defeated the Burmese army and destroyed many villages. The attack on the port of Kusumi is confirmed by the contemporary inscription of Devanagala written in Sinhalese (EZ, Vol III, No 34, pp. 312). In response, Burma lifted the ban on elephant trade. Sri Lankan monks now intervened between the two Buddhist countries, Sri Lanka and Burma, and their friendship was resumed (Cv, LXXVI, 10-75).

Cambodian prince studies in Sri Lanka

After Parakramabahu I's purification of the Sangha, Sri Lanka once again became an important international center of Buddhism, in fact, the most important one for Theravada. The Burmese Glass Palace Chronicle as well as the Kalyani Inscriptions in Burma (named after the Kalyani river in Sri

Lanka on which higher ordination was performed) give accounts of how Uttarajeeva and his disciples visited Sri Lanka during 1171-1172 A.C.

During this visit, the Sangha from Sri Lanka and from Burma jointly performed the higher ordination (upasampada) on Chappata, the only novice (samanera) in the Burmese group. The

group returned to Burma. But Chappata stayed back in Sri Lanka for 10 years, and studied the Tripitaka and

commentaries under Sinhalese monks. Chappata returned to Burma with four other monks who were well versed in Tripitaka. Of the four monks, Sivali was a native of Tambralipi, Ananda, a South Indian from Kanchipura, Rahula, a Sinhalese monk, and Tamalinda, a son of the king of Cambodia.

These monks including Tamalinda returned to Burma, and formed a Sinhala sect. George Coedes (1968, p. 178) identified Tamalinda as the son of Jayavaraman VII (1181-1219). Jayavarman VII was a Mahayana Buddhist who identified himself with the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara as reflected in his religious monuments such as the Bayon. It is not clear whether Tamalinda went to Sri Lanka with Chappata and the group, or whether he was already in Sri Lanka when Chappata arrived. Jayavaraman VII's chief priest (purohita) at his court was a Brahmin scholar from Burma. It is likely that Burma being a center of Buddhism in the region during this time, Burmese Buddhist

monks visited Cambodia and Tamalinda learnt about Sri Lanka from these monks.

Sri Lankan Buddhism came to Cambodia in the 12th century

Michael Wright, in a recent paper (Conference Proceedings, 2001) has put together a few items of architectural evidence (supported by some circumstantial written evidence) to show that the Sinhala form of Buddhism, reformed by King Parakramabahu I, and the Lankavamsa ordination may have arrived at Angkor during the reign of Jayavarman VII. This he says, was probably via Nakhon Sri Thammarat in the southern part of modern Thailand, and probably found a foothold at Jayavarman VII's court. Wright also suggests that from Angkor, the Lankavamsa spread north and west into what

is now Thailand and Laos, carrying with it also Angkor prestige, sacred script and the cult of divine kingship. As the main evidence for this, he cites that the Pali language was consistently written in Khmer script in the region for a long period of time. If Buddhism arrived in Thailand first, he has argued then Pali would have been written either in Sinhala or Siamese script. He has also pointed out that the Ratanabimba Vamsa ("History of the Emerald Buddha") claims that the Emerald Buddha image, the Thai national palladium came from Lanka, first to Angkor and only later travelled to Thailand and Laos.

As for architectural evidence, Wright has pointed out that the stone stupa in the central tower of the vast temple Prasat Phra Khan was built in Sri Lankan style by Jayavarman VII (1181-1215) in honour of his dead father. This stupa is reminiscent of the then contemporary stupa style in Sri Lanka, as exemplified by the Kiri Vehera of Polonnaruwa. Wright further states that this stupa has been explained away by others as "a later addition" without any evidence what so ever. Although Jayavarman VII was certainly a Mahayana Buddhist, he would have been aware of Sri Lankan stupa architecture.. Tamalinda who was ordained in Sri Lanka was probably his son, and thought that a Sinhala style stupa was a suitable monument for his father. The second item of architectural evidence Wright has presented is the presence of a statue facing Potgul Vihara (12th

century) at Polonnaruwa, an elderly man with a slight paunch, without royal adornment who he says, could be Jayavarman VII in old age. He points out that it is widely

accepted that there are a number of sculptured portraits of Jayavarman VII, although royal portraiture is not well attested to in Asia. He has further stated that usually kings keep their eyes open, and that Jayavarman VII (1181 - 1210), a well-built young man with slight paunch, is unique in having himself portrayed without crown or jeweled ornaments with eyes closed in the ecstasy of meditation. Only one similar figure outside Cambodia has been found, according to Wright, and it is this anonymous statue of this elderly man at Potgul Vihara, which is also similarly unique in Sri Lankan art, closing his eyes to the world. It should be recalled here that Sri Lankan historians who are equally at a loss to definitely identify this image have variously identified it as that of King Parakramabahu or of the rishi Pulasti.

A prince from the Khmer empire becomes king of Sri Lanka

King Kirti Sri Nissankamalla (1187-1196 A.C.) of Sri Lanka was a successor and a nephew of Parakramabahu I. He has been recently identified by Mendis Rohanadeera as a prince from Singburi near Lopburi of the Dvaravati kingdom (present day Thailand), which during the 12th century, formed part of the Khmer empire. Rohanadeera also argued that the princess sent to by King Parakramabahu was a bride for Nissankamalla while he was still in Singburi (Rohanadeera 1998, pp. 38).

One of the inscriptions of Nissankamalla (Slab Inscription of Kirti Nissankamalla, EZ, No. 13, pp. 17) mentions "Kambojavalasa" (gateway to a Cambodian street) in Polonnaruwa, the Sri Lankan capital city after Anuradhapura. This indicates that there was a special residential quarter for Cambodians in Polonnaruwa which may have had Khmer monks, ambassadors or even soldiers. The inscription also states that the king bestowed on Cambodians, gold, cloth and whatever they wished, and commanded them not to catch birds. This inscription has been wrongly interpreted by Sri Lankan historians implying that the Cambodian residents sold birds to supplement their wages. The mention of catching of birds created further confusion among the then British researchers as to why Cambodians known to be Buddhists had the habit of killing birds, and therefore, they were interpreted to be non-Buddhists (Burrows, J.C.B.R.A.S., Vol. X, p. 65). Only those who are aware that the practice of eating birds has been common among the Cambodians and other South-East Asians and continues even today,

could understand that king Nissankamalla may have been embarrassed with this un-Buddhist habit, and made every effort to stop it.

Influence of Cambodian architecture on Sri Lanka

The influence of Sri Lankan art and architecture on Cambodia unlike in the case of Thailand where Sri Lanka, made a significant early contribution (examples Dvaravati, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Chiang Mai, Sri Sacchanalai, Sukkothai and Ayutthia), can be noticed only after the 15th century (see below), except for the stupa during the time of Jayavarman VII, referred to above. It is interesting to note, however, that there was a reverse flow in that Cambodia influenced Sri Lanka in the field of architecture.

A pyramidal solid structure without doors or windows rising from a square at ground level found in Polonnaruwa has been identified as an uncommon stupa. This stupa known as Sat-mahal-prasada (a seven storied building) is a single tower with seven storeys, with each storey becoming less in width and height at each stage. In the centre of each of the four faces above the ground level, there is a niche projecting from the wall where there is a standing figure of stucco, which appears to be a deity. Two archeologists/historians Fergusson and Bell compared this unique Sri Lanka structure to the Cambodian prasats (Fergusson, Vol. I, 1910, p. 245) and Bell, ASCAR, 1903, p. 16). It has been, however, pointed out that Cambodian prasats have shrine rooms on top of their pyramidal bases, and a deep staircase in the middle of each face (Paranavitane, *The Stupa in Sri Lanka*, p. 99). There are others who argued that the Sri Lanka structure was more similar to the Wat Kukut (Coedes, BEFEO, Vol. XXV, p. 83), Si Liem chedi in Chiang Mai (Frederic, Louis, 1965 p. 376), and Wat Phra Tat, in

Harijaya (Frederic, 1965, p. 41), all located in Northern Thailand.

Another unique architectural piece in Sri Lanka, the Potgul Vihara (built during the reign of Parakramabahu I (1110-1153) has also been considered to be influenced by Cambodia (Bell, pp 16). Bell pointed out that the Potgul Vihara was unique in Sri Lanka for its highly symmetrical plan which closely resembled the plan of the Eastern Mebon at Angkor (EZ, Vol. 11, pp 238) The Potgul Vihara which was a monastery resembles in its plan the temple of Mebon (a Hindu temple) and Pre Rup. The temple of Mebon erected in 952 A.D. is an example of the early Khmer pyramid temple built on three tiers of artificial terraces. The base of Mebon made of moulded sandstone supports five towers, the central tower being further elevated on a foundation of about four feet high. This arrangement of the towers is similar to that of the central shrine and four stupas on the top tier of the Potgul Vihara (Briggs, p. 127). An identical plan was used for Pre Rup, which was built about fifteen years afterwards (Parmentier, *Angkor Guide*, p. 127). The similarities of these three buildings are that they have three tiers, the arrangement and the symmetrical placing of the five monuments on the uppermost tiers.

Differences between Mebon and Potgul Vihara have also been pointed out.. For example, Mebon has four main entrances while Potgul Vihara had only one, and two subsidiary entrances to the lower two tiers. It has also been pointed out that the more important features of the two monuments are similar, and therefore, it is possible that the Potgulvehera was inspired by Cambodian architecture and modified by the Sinhalese according to their needs (Sirisena p. 138). In fact, Bell has suggested that the "Kambojavalaya"(residential quarters of the Cambodians) referred to above, was to the south of the city of Polonnaruwa, and that the Potgul Vihara could have been built in commemoration of the arrival of this Cambodian mission. Bell further said, "In the erection of the Potgul Viharamonastery, Sri Lanka and Cambodian architecture joined firm hands, each yielding somewhat to the idiosyncrasies of a people mostly foreign by blood, but united in bonds of faith and close friendship" (Bell 1906, p. 17).

Another piece of architecture that can be identified as having been influenced by Cambodia is the fortress of Yapahuva, the 14th century capital.. The palace can be accessed by three flights of steps separated by terraces. The first with plain balustrades consisted of 24 steps and the second of 40 steps. The third flight had 35 steps and leads to the porch of the palace. These steps are flanked by heavy balustrades with intricately carved figures at the top of the balustrades. The

lower steps were flanked by pedestals, the first pedestal being supported by huge lions, the next two by demons, and then a pair of gajasimhas having heads of elephants and bodies of lions (UHC, Vol. I Pt 2, ASCAR, 1910-11, pp. 57). Although staircases with balustrades, moonstones and guard-stones were common in Sri Lanka from the early centuries of the Christian era, the third flight of steps is unique, and it has been compared to staircases which gives access to certain prasats in Cambodia by Victor Gloubew (JCBRAS, Vol. XXXI, p. 461). The Pre Rup and Bakheng temples (889-900) have axial staircases with

seated stone lions flanking each flight (Rawson, 1967, pp. 48, 54, 65). The lions found in Yapahuva have strong similarities with this Khmer style.

Sri Lankan monks make rapid progress in Cambodia

Mahayana Buddhism was the predominant faith in the royal court of Dharanindravarman II and Jayavaraman VII at the time when Sinhala interactions were intensifying. Special mention should be made of the two wives of the latter, Jayarajadevi and Indradevi who contributed greatly to popularise Buddhism among the people by dramatizing Jataka stories, the first traces of Theravada features (Goonatilake, 2000). Cambodia for a long time was a country of religious pluralism, also practicing Vaisnava worship, Shiva worship along with Mahayana Buddhism. However, in less than eighty years after the reign of Jayavarman VII, Theravada had become the predominant religion in Cambodia, as documented by the Chinese envoy Chou Ta-kuan who lived one year in Cambodia between 1296-1297.

He was a member of a Chinese mission from the Mongol-Chinese ruler Timur Khan, Kublai Khan's grandson and successor, arrived in Cambodia in the reign of Indravaraman III (1295 A.C) the son-in-law of Jayavaraman VII. Chou Ta-Kuan gives an account of the social, political and religious conditions of Cambodia during this period. He mentions that three distinct religious sects existed in Cambodia namely, Pan-Ch'i (men of learning), Buddhist monks called Ch'u Ku (Thai: Jao-gu) and the Taoists Pa-ssu-wei. (Chou Ta-Kuan, Trans, 1987)

From Chou Ta-Kuan's description Ch'u Ku "shave their heads, wear yellow garments, uncover the right shoulder, fasten a skirt of material around the lower part of the body, go barefoot ... take only one meal a day, and recite numerous texts written on palm leaves ...". It is clear that the Ch'u kus were Theravada monks. That they were known during this period by its Thai name might indicate the close relations between Thailand and Cambodia.

By this time, the Sinhala Mahavihara sect had spread to Nakhon Sri Thammarat in southern Thailand after close relations between Sri Lanka and Nakhon Sri Thammarat were established during the time of Parakramabahu II (1236-1270 A. C.) (Goonatilake 2001a). Sinhala monks also had influenced the construction of the first Sinhala style stupas there (Noonsuk, 2001) We know from Thai inscriptions that in 1292, King Rama Khamheng of Thailand founded an aranna (forest) monastery, and offered it to the Mahathera from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, and the king, princes and princesses observed precepts during the vassa season, and the kathina ceremony lasted a month (Griswold & Prasert, 1971). The predominant form of Sinhala Theravada that came to South-east Asia was of the forest kind from its then headquarters in Dimbulagala (referred to as Udumbaragiri in Thai inscriptions).

Forest dwelling and Pali language institutionalized in Cambodia

It was about the same time that the forest dwelling form became popular in Cambodia. By the reign of King Siri Sirindavamma or Indravaraman III (1296-1307), kings not only donated kutis and villages to the monks, but also became monks and also went to the forest to practice the dhamma. It appears that through the Sri Lanka monks, Pali began to be increasingly used in Cambodia during the same time. A Sanskrit inscription of Preah Khan found near a tank near Angkor Thom in which several Pali words occur belongs to the reign of Indravaraman III. It refers to the kuti, the dwelling house for monks, constructed by Samtec brah Guru, the spiritual master of this king. The use of Pali in this inscription shows the gradual institutionalization of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia at this time.

Another inscription dated 1308 A.C. found in a temple named Wat Yok Khpos, probably brought from Kok Svay Chek near Siem Reap in Central Cambodia is written partly in Pali, Sanskrit and partly in Khmer. This gives the earliest epigraphic reference to a Sri Lankan monk. This inscription records that King Siri Sirindavamma after a year of his abdication from the throne, donated a village named Sirindaranagama to Mahathera Siri Sirindamoli. The Sanskrit portion mentions that in the following year, an upasika by the order of the king set up an image of the Buddha and made donations to it and that the king assigned four villages to the maintenance of the monastery (Coedes, BEFEO, Vol.XXXVI, p. 14-21; Coedes, 1968, p. 228; Briggs, 1949-1950, p. 251). After his abdication, the king went to the

forest monastery and became a Buddhist monk and devoted himself to the study and practice of Theravada Buddhism. The title Mahathera, referred to in the Cambodian inscription indicates the connection with Sinhala Buddhism.

Sinhala influence extended to literature

The Cambodian Mahavamsa or the extended version of the original Mahavamsa of Sri Lanka, written in Khmer script is a unique document discovered in Cambodia in the 19th century. The original Mahavamsa on Sinhala history written in the 5th century A.C. in Sri Lanka contains 2,915 verses while the Cambodian Mahavamsa contains 5,772 verses by having more episodes and other historical material taken from several Pali commentaries. The Cambodian Mahavamsa too deals with only Sri Lankan history. It has been attributed, based on its language and style by Ven. Saddhatissa (1980, p. 244) to a Khmer monk called Moggallana who lived in Cambodia in the 9th or 10th century. The availability of a large number of manuscripts of this text in Khmer script shows that the Mahavamsa was unusually popular among Khmer Buddhists.

The technical literature of Cambodia also increasingly changed from Sanskrit to Pali. The Bhesajjamanusa, a medical work, written in Sri Lanka, dated to 1267 A.C., was perhaps the most widely used medical text in Cambodia up to recent times.

Sri Lankan monks introduce Buddhism in Laos

The Cambodia-Sri Lanka connection made an impact on other lands too. King Jayavarman Paramesvara or Jayavarmadiparamesvara who succeeded King Siri Sirindavamma in 1327 is the

last king mentioned in the great inscriptions of Angkor Wat (The Cambodian chronicle begins with narration of kings from around 1350). By his reign, Sri Lankan Buddhism had penetrated to the masses, completely replacing Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism which had existed more as royal and personal cults rather than religions for the broad masses (Coedes 1968). The resident Sri Lankan monks by the 14th century had become the main advisors to Cambodian kings. Jayavarmadiparamesvara's reign also saw the abrupt end of Sanskrit inscriptions giving way to Pali as the official language.

King Jayavarmadiparamesvara gave his daughter, Nang Keo-Keng-Ya in marriage to Fa-Ngum of Laos who grew up in the royal palace and provided him with an army to reclaim his country of birth (Viravong, 1964, pp. 36). Fa-Ngum now founded the Kingdom of Laos in 1353 (Laos had earlier been part of the Khmer empire). When the Cambodian princess found that the people in Laos believed in cults of spirits, and performed animal sacrifice, she requested her father to send a Buddhist mission. According to the Wat Keo inscription in Luang Prabang dated 1602 A.C., the king of Cambodia sent a team of Buddhist monks, headed by three Sinhala monks. These three Sri Lankan monks were Mahadeva Lanka, the elder brother, Mahadeva Lanka, the younger brother, and Maha Nandipanna. The chief of these three monks and the Cambodian monk teacher of Fa-Ngum became the first two Sangharajas of Laos. The team included 20 Buddhist monks and three other experts, Norasing, Norasan Noraray and Noradet. A gold Buddha image gifted from Sri Lanka to Cambodia called Prabang was brought along together with the Tripitaka. The first capital city of Laos was named Luang

Prabang after this image. This information is confirmed by the Wat Keo inscription in Luang Prabang dated 1602 A.C., (Coedes, 1925; Goonatilake, 2002; Le Boulanger, 1931; Levy, Paul, 1940; Viravong, 1964). The Prabang image remains up to now, the palladium of Laos and an important annual procession carrying the image is held in its honour, reminiscent of the

Dalada Perahera carrying the Sri Lanka national palladium.

This 14th century Buddhist mission also planted a Bodhi tree, and later a pagoda was constructed by the name of Vat Po Lanka (Lanka Bodhi Vihara). This is attested by a stele near the Bodhi tree commemorating this event, as well as by the Wat Keo inscription. In the third year, Wat Keo was built, and it was named after the queen Keo. The queen placed an emerald on the breast of the Buddha image. These factors taken together document the introduction into Laos, of Buddhism, especially its Sinhala School that had by now become dominant in the region. The introduction of Buddhism now served as an important factor for the moral unity and consolidation of the

Lao State (Goonatilake, 2001).

Cambodian monks receive upsampada in Sri Lanka.

The period that followed Fa-Ngum's founding of Laos was one of political confusion and foreign invasions. The Thais and Chams (in Southern Vietnam) were engaged in war with the Khmers. Around the same time Fa-Ngum founded the kingdom of Laos, Ayutthiya seized Angkor, in 1351, again, in 1393, and finally in 1430. According to the Annals of Ayutthiya, Angkor was

seized in 1353. The Cambodian chronicles record that Angkor was sacked in 1351 and that the Cambodian king took refuge at the court of Laos until he was eventually restored to the throne of Cambodia in 1355 (Briggs, p. 253, 257)

In spite of political turmoil, religious connections between Cambodia and Sri Lanka continued through the 15th century A. C. The Jinakalamali refers to this religious intercourse between Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Thailand that took place during these years of political unrest. In 1423, eight monks from Cambodia headed by Mahananasiddhi with twenty-five monks from Nabbisipura (Chiang Mai) and six Burmese monks went to Sri Lanka. Afterwards six Mon monks from the Ramanna country joined this group. Having studied the Tripitaka from the Mahatheras in Sri Lanka, they received upasampada ordination in the presence of a chapter of twenty Sihala Mahatheras under the chairmanship of Vanaratana Mahathera, the Sangharaja of Sri Lanka at the time who was the head of the Keragala monastic institution in 1424 A.C., on the river Kelani.

The ceremony was presided over by King Parakramabahu VI (1412-67) of Jayavardhanapura. Sangharaja Vanaratana and Dhammacariya acted respectively as the kammavacacariya and upajjhaya. The evidence from the Jinakalamali reveals that although there were political differences between Cambodia and Thailand, this did not impede religious connections between them. On their return, the Sinhala upasampada was introduced (in some cases, re-introduced) to the Syama, Lav, Ayojjha and Kamboja kingdoms (roughly covering present day Thai, Lao, Cambodian and Southern Vietnam regions).

The spread of this Sinhala sangha in Cambodia during this time is also attested by a Khmer inscription dated by Coedes to the 15th century with several Pali words found at Kompong Svay in Eastern Cambodia. It refers to a monk whose name was "Lanka ... Sriyasa". He is said to have taught the Dhamma to royal princes. He did various activities to popularise the religion. The king conferred on this great person a title "Svami Silaviyyadhika Boddhissambhara. Sanghaparicara Mahapurusha". These details are not sufficient to identify him with a then known therā in Sri Lankan sources. But it is quite certain that Lanka ... Sriyasa was a learned monk and played an important role in the religious history of Cambodia during this period. The name Lanka strongly suggests that he was from Sri Lanka.

Continued Sri Lankan presence in new capital

King Ponhea Yat, also known as Suryavarman finally abandoned Angkor because it was too difficult to defend from the Thais, and moved to Basan (Srei Santhor) in Campong Cham province. After one year there, Ponhea Yat established himself in Phnom Penh in 1432. (Coedes, BEFEO, XIII) The Sri Lankan monks who had resided in Angkor appeared to have also followed the king to Phnom Penh. It is possible that the Cambodian monks who returned after receiving upasampada in Sri Lanka also contributed to a new resurgence of Buddhist activities.

After King Poðhea Yat established Phnom Penh as the capital, he built there five key wats (vihara). They were Wat Boddhaghosachar, Wat Unnalom, Wat Koh, Wat Dhammalankara and Wat Lanka. All these wats were associated with Sri Lankan monks.

Two monks from Sri Lanka, Assajita Maha Thera and Buddhaghosa Maha Thera had lived for some time in Cambodia during this time, and when Ven. Buddhaghosa passed away, the king built a temple in his honour, and this temple was named Wat Boddhaghosachar. This is better known today as Wat Chen Dom Deik. When Ven. Assajita passed away, the king built a stupa on the hill of Bodhilom enshrining the eyebrows of Ven. Assajita to commemorate him.. From that time, Bodhilom was known as Wat Unnalom. Wat Unnalom today is the abode of the Cambodian Sangharaja.

At the time the five wats were built by the king, it appears that a Wat Pheam Phlom already existed in Phnom Penh near the present Phsa Chah (old market). This wat was well known to possess a golden Buddha statue brought from Sri Lanka. No mention is made in the Cambodian chronicles as to who, and how this Buddha image was brought to this wat. The chronicles only mention that King Poðhea Yat carried this statue in a procession=2 0from Wat Pheam Phlom, and placed it in Wat Unnalom and named it 'Preah Sokhalin' because the colour of the statue was gold. This statue is not found any

more at Wat Unnalom.

At the ancient site of Wat Koh, only the Bodhi tree can be seen today. However, another pagoda by the same name exists today at a different place, not too far from Wat Unnalom. Wat Dhammalankara, however, is no more (Som Chan Ven 2002).

Wat Lanka was one of the five key wats, and was then designated the principal library in the country where the Tripitaka was kept. There were also buildings to house the Sri Lankan monks who taught the Tripitaka, and hence the wat was named after the Sri Lankan monks. The ancient site of Wat Lanka was where the Cambodian Development Council stands today and there still remains a part of the early stupa. Today's Wat Lanka is at a different site. In the 1960s, the present king Norodom Sihanouk's mother Queen Kossamak had the new Wat Lanka repaired, and renamed it as Wat Kossamak. Yet, people continued to use the old name of Wat Lanka because of the strong Lanka connotation, and is so known up to now.

Cambodia-Sri Lanka religious exchanges in the 19th century

Cambodia witnessed dramatic political changes from the 18th century.. The north-west region was annexed to Thailand in 1795 with Battambang as its centre. In 1779, the capital moved to Udong (35 km from Phnom Penh) and the rest of the kingdom (except Battambang) faced until 1845, political instability and destruction caused by royal conflicts and wars between Thailand and Vietnam to take control of Udong. King Norodom (1860-1904), took the capital back to Phnom Penh and in 1863, the French imposed a protectorate over Cambodia. Norodom's mother remained in Udong and had

several viharas constructed in Udong in Sinhala style.

The Buddha's ashes brought from Sri Lanka by Achar Ong were enshrined in the main stupa of the Sangharaja's monastery in Wat Unnalom by King Norodom's mother. The organization of

this ceremony is recorded to be the most memorable merit making that King Norodom's mother performed during her lifetime (Eng, Ibid, p. 1171, Yang Sam, 1990, p. 115).

King Norodom had spent ten years in Bangkok before he ascended the throne, and brought to Cambodia the newly formed elitist Thammayut Nikaya from Thailand.

The Cambodian monk Pan who belonged to the spiritual lineage of King Mongkut of Thailand was made Sangharaja of the Thammayut Nikaya of Cambodia. Wat Batumvaddey (Pathmavathi) which was constructed by the king adjacent to the royal palace became the headquarters of the Thammayut Nikaya.

As in Thailand, this sect served the royalty and the elite families in Cambodia. The Mahanikaya, however, continued to be the major nikaya which the vast majority of people followed.

In 1886, King Norodom in consultation with Sangharaja Pan of the Thammayut Nikaya and Sangharaja Nil Tien of Mahanikaya, sent Preah Maha Utol Mer, Preah Sivikajinadhamma Chap and Preah Bhikkhu Nanda as envoys to Sri Lanka along with an elephant tusk, a white umbrella studded with diamonds and other precious gifts to be offered to the Sacred Tooth.

The Sangharaja Paramavamsa Dhammananda Mahathera, and the Upalivamsa Sangharaja Sirimangalacarya of Sri Lanka gifted in return, a relic of the Buddha and one of Ananda thera and two saplings of the Sacred Mahabodhi tree. The Sinhala monk Preah Ratanasara, accompanied the Cambodian envoys back to

Phnom Penh in 1887. King Norodom received the relics and the Bodhi trees with great honour and conducted celebrations for three days and nights, and the king himself planted one Bodhi sapling in Wat Batumvaddey Rajavararam in Phnom Penh (Eng Soth, 1985).

An inscription at the Bodhi tree at Wat Prachumsakor in Phnom Penh, about one km. from the royal palace, with no date, but installed in the twentieth century, describes the mission sent by King Norodom to Sri Lanka as well as the return mission accompanied by the Sinhala monk Preah Ratanasara who brought a relic of the Buddha and a relic of Ananda Thera and two saplings of the Sacred Mahabodhi tree. The inscription also adds that the other Bodhi sapling was planted in front of the Wat Prachumsakor on the second day of the waxing moon in the month of Vaisakha, the year of mouse, 2431 B. E. (1888 A.C.)

It also describes the procession of monks, royal family members, generals, officers of the royal government and other dignitaries that escorted the holy relic on elephants, horses and carriages with traditional music and dancing. The inscription also records the following information as reported by an old woman in 1951 (indicating that the inscription was installed after 1951). "The precious materials deposited by those who attended the ceremony in the hole in which the Bodhi sapling was planted were stolen on the day after the ceremony. The leaves of the sapling faded for three days, and the Sangharaja Nil Tieng replanted it with a special ritual called Pin Peath, and royal body guards were stationed to protect the tree".

There is no mention in any Sri Lankan source of either the Cambodian mission to Sri Lanka or of a Sri Lankan monk accompanying a Cambodian mission to Cambodia around the year 1887. However, Upalivamsa Sangharaja Siri Mangalacarya of Sri Lanka who is mentioned in Cambodian sources can be identified for certain as Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thera of Vidyodaya Pirivena. Although he was not a Sangharaja (the term used in Sri Lanka by then was Mahanayake), he was the leading monk during that period in terms of scholarship as well as of leadership, accepted nationally as well as internationally.

The Sangharaja Paramavamsa Dhammananda Mahathera of Sri Lanka, referred to in Cambodian records cannot be identified with any of the monks who held leadership positions during that time. Mahanayake of the Malwatte chapter in 1887 was Mahanayake Tibbotuwawe Unnanse. Cambodian sources mention Preah Ratanasara as the Sri Lankan monk who accompanied the Cambodian delegation on their return to Cambodia in 1887. The term Preah which means Venerable was and is still used in Cambodia to refer to a Buddhist monk, the equivalent in Thai being Phra. The fact that there is no mention of the name of the village Venerable Ratanasara came from, makes it

more problematic to identify the monk.

The only monk by the name of Ratanasara associated with Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala was Ven. Kahawe Ratanasara. But it was only in 1897 that the Ven. Ratanasara received higher ordination under Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala. The Ven. Ratanasara received the title “Sri Sumangala”, became the Chief Sangha Nayake of Colombo, and was appointed the third Principal of the Vidyodaya Pirivena only in 1922. The unidentified monk would be none other than Venerable Kahawe Ratanasara if the date of the arrival of Preah Ratanasara in Cambodia was any time after 1897, since a samanera could not have been sent as a representative of Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka

Thera. If the latter’s choice was a scholar monk to have been sent as representative to Cambodia, it would have been Ven. Mahagoda Gnanissara, the second Principal of the Vidyodaya Pirivena.

Cambodia-Sri Lanka relations continue up to now

The first record of Sri Lanka-Cambodia links in the twentieth century occurs in reference to the famous Buddhist missionary, Ven. Narada Thera’s visit to Cambodia. In March 1939, Ven. Narada Thera visited Cambodia and Laos at the invitation of these two governments. His visit was considered a symbolical renewal of the long time relationship between these countries (Bechert, 1967, p.237).

The next renewal of Sri Lanka relations with Cambodia appears with the formation of the World Fellowship of Buddhists initiated by G. P. Malalasekera. Its first world conference held in June 1950 was attended by Buddhists of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana from many countries in the world. Cambodia was represented by the Sangharaja Chuon Nath of Maha Nikaya who was the greatest Cambodian Pali scholar in the recent past (WFB Souvenir, 1950)..

In the mid 1970s, Cambodia underwent the Pol Pot holocaust, during which almost all temples were destroyed, and a large number of monks killed or forced to disrobe. With the overthrow of Pol Pot, Buddhism was gradually restored. And in the 1990s, leading Buddhist institutions had been re-established. Sinhala connections again played a key role in these restoration activities. These activities included the restoration of the Buddhist Institute, the major centre of Buddhist education, research and documentation, the premier centre of monks' education, Monk's High School, the Buddhist Monks' University.

Three Sri Lankan monks served as teachers in these institutions during the last ten years. The writing of a Pali Grammar, instituting an annual research conference in the universities, and the initiation of a national level organization of Dasa Sil Mathas are among the other contributions made by the Sinhalese. As the present writer played a central role here, it would not be appropriate to describe these activities further.

Conclusion

The earliest traces of Cambodia-Sri Lanka religious relations go back to the beginning of the 6th century. Close political as well as religious relations between Cambodia and Sri Lanka during the 12th century resulted in a mutual influence, with the Sri Lanka stupa style being adopted in Cambodia while several Cambodian architectural features made a significant contribution to Sri Lanka.

Theravada Buddhism became the religion of the court as well of the people from the beginning of the 14th century when Sinhala monks became advisors to Cambodian kings. By mid 14th century, Sinhala monks headed the Cambodian delegation that introduced Buddhism to Laos, and the senior Sinhala monk in the delegation became the first Sangharaja of Laos.

The spread of Theravada temples throughout Cambodia from the 14th helped democratise Cambodia, and made the literati establish close links with the people. Deep cultural influences on the laity followed, including the influences of Pali on the every day vocabulary, and the growth of indigenous Pali and Khmer literature, partly based on Sri Lanka models.

This spread of culture among the broad masses, contrasted with the earlier adoption of Brahmanic culture by only the court. And in the court it-self, speech forms in use for, and among the royalty changed from Sanskrit versions to Pali. These religious interactions between Cambodia and Sri Lanka continued up to the 19th century, and continue up to now. After the Pol Pot disaster, Sinhalese again played a leading role in helping restore the Khmer Buddhist heritage.

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