

Society and Culture of Cambodia in the Angkorian Period under the influence of Buddhism

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Abstract: The purposes of this article were 1) to present the society and culture of Cambodia in the Angkorian period, 2) to discover Buddhism in the Angkorian period, and 3) to analyze the influence of Buddhism on the society and culture of Cambodia in the Angkorian period. This relies on the primary source of data used in the documentary research. The methodology adopted in the study is of a critical and investigative approach to the analysis of data gathered from documentary sources. The result indicated that: ancient Cambodia inherited civilization from India. The ancient Cambodians, therefore, respected both Brahmin and Buddhism. The Cambodian way of life in the Angkorian era was primarily agricultural occupation, and the monarchy was the ultimate leader. Buddhism has spread in Cambodia after the finishing of the 3rd Buddhist Council. The king accepted Buddhism as the Code of conduct and carried on for a period. Mahayana Buddhism was the main school in this period. King Jayavarman VII was one of the kings in this period. In this period, the Jayavarman VII has changed the Hindu worldview of “Deva-rajā” to “Buddha-rajā” instead. The influence of Buddhism in this era is in the field of society. One hundred two hospitals have been built, Arogayasala 121 places. The Dhammasala is a public shelter along the way, and the property is donated to the monks and the poor. In culture’s dimension, it consisting of 1) In the architectural aspect such as Bayon castle, Angkor Thom castle, Ta Phrom castle, etc. 2) the building of the 20, 400 Buddha’s statues made of silver, bronze, stone, and to distribute in the kingdom. Also, important Buddha statues have been established and passed on to be enshrined throughout the kingdom, including Thailand today, such as Suphanburi, Ratchaburi, Singburi, and Lopburi, etc. It was Cambodia’s golden age.

Keywords: Buddhism, Society, Culture, Angkorian Period

1. Introduction

The earliest known kingdom in Cambodia, founded in the lower valley of the Mekhong in the first century A.D. was Funan. According to a local legend, the king was founded by the Indian Brahmana named Kondanya (called Hun-t’ien by the Chinese source), who got married to the Local queen. The archaeological finds that Chinese chronicles prove that from the end of the fifth century AD. Buddhism flourished in Cambodia, though it did not occupy a dominant position. It was less popular than some forms of Brahmanical religion of Kaundinya Jayavarman (478-514 AD) Rudravaraman (514-539 AD) were important from the religious and cultural point of view. Kaundinya Jayavarman sent a mission to China under the leadership of a Buddhist monk named Nagasena in 484 AD. [1]

Cambodia is considered a nation of long-ago civilizations and occupies many lands such as Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. These countries have all been given ancient Cambodian civilizations called Khmer, which requests together. At the same time, The Cambodian or Cambodia itself is influenced elsewhere: the culture of India, rather than the Chinese civilization, a much closer country. Meanwhile, neighbors like Vietnam fully adopt Chinese culture.

On this connection, Buddhism spread to Suvarnabhumi and Cambodia areas when the Funan or Chenla Empire is in power. There was a Funan monk called Sanghapala; he was the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* expert and is also proficient in *Dhamma-Vinaya* to specialize in many languages. Thus, he had translated several Buddhist texts, and the significant one was called “*Vimuttimaggā*”. This work had widely, though not universally, been thought of a text associated with the heterodox *Abhayagiri vihāra* of medieval Sri Lanka, which may have played some role in shaping the forms of Buddhist practice in Cambodia following the fall of Angkor in the fifteen Century. The presence of the *Vimuttimaggā* might suggest the existence of Mahayana and Sravakayana styles of Buddhism in Funan. [2]

After the Chenla Empire period, Cambodia turned to “Mahanakara Period” or “Angkor period” that the Cambodia empire had the most powerful. In this period, Mahayana Buddhism progressed together with Hinduism, and some of them were mixed. However, Theravada Buddhism was prospected by the ordinary people, which we can call Theravada Buddhism was a civil religion, but Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism were for the monarch.

However, the three traditions were stayed together with friendly and peaceful. Thus, when Buddhism came to propagation in ancient Cambodia and influenced Cambodians' society, politics, and culture, the author will present in further detail.

2. The Society And Culture Of Cambodia In The Angkorian Period

This is the era when the word “*Campujdesa*” was used in Cambodia for the first time. There are 31 kings in this era. It was a war period with Vietnam and many throne takings, and many castles were built as temples.

For the Buddhist activities, the king was designated, especially Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism, and there was a Devaraj cult.

There are three most prominent monarchs:

(1) King Jayaraman VII has changed the city's policy from Brahman's worldview to a Buddhist worldview. Mahayana Buddhism replaced Brahmanism Jayaraman VII created a moral for many aspects: architecture, especially Ta Phrom castle, is home to the Rajaganayati (a dignitary belonging to the Royal chapter) and monks, along with tens of thousands of families. Jayaraman VII manages public health, provides donations to the poor, and has created Buddha statues. This is an era when Cambodia's country is thriving and is truly Cambodia's golden age

(2) Indaravarman III. This king made a historic appearance by revering Theravada Buddhism, which the commoner initially owned. As it turns out, Theravada Buddhism stands out in this kingdom. In this era, a Pali inscription was formed in the first time. The king gave the treasure to his son and then ordained him as a Buddhist monk. It was the first king to be ordained in Buddhism permanently until he passed away.

(3) Dhammashokaraja king, who during the Ayutthaya period of Thailand was armed with a war with Thailand. The captives were held in Ayutthaya. Cambodia has a heart to the Vietnamese side, but Thailand honors Cambodia for two reasons: the king and Theravada Buddhism alike. In this day and age, the king has used his authority to manage Buddhism, especially in the field of organizing studies and organizing Sanghas as well.

3. Buddhism In The Angkorian Period

Since ancient times, Cambodia has been a prosperous civilization from India as a national treasure as a world heritage site. Cambodian religions derived from India are Brahminism and Buddhism, which were accepted during King Asoka's reign, who sent Buddhist ambassadors into Suvarnabhumi with Sona and Uttara as the 8th as the head of this group. Its earliest reference is in the *Dipavamsa*, the *Mahavamsa* and the *Samantapasadika*. It was occasioned by the need of establishing the purity of the canon which was endangered by the rise of different sects. [3]

Therefore, the both religions have sought to influence the general people to the leader society such as the ministers, the royal family and the king. At any time, the monarchy revered Brahminism; in that era, Brahminism was flourished. But in a period when Buddhism grew, in that era, Buddhism was flourished. Some Cambodians have mixed Brahminism and Buddhism. Thus, the resulting in the two religions continuing to have deep roots in Cambodians' hearts. For the Royal family, the Cambodia's first king Buddhist king as Suryavarman I (1001-1050 AD). He came from Tambralinudotga in the south and was a Mahayanist. The state religion of his country continued to hold its ancient position unchanged by his advent; so, did Theravada Buddhism Continue in Louvo where the Mons lived. Surayavaraman. Thus, the first on the throne to give recognition to this other school of his own faith. [4]

Angkorain period 1975-1345)B.E. (It refers to the era when Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, was the Cambodian capital, located near the lake north of Siem Reap. The era when the People of Khmer had the highest levels of shame and art and architecture flourished. The city plan is a model of the center of the universe; the Devalai enshrined Shivalik as a center, built on a tall base that forms a thin layer of pyramids like it is located on a mountain.

In the Angkorain period was the era when Angkor Wat and Nakhon Thon played the role of Rajasthani, named Yasodharapura. This era was when Cambodia's history became most evident. It was an era of long rule and Cambodian architecture entered a revolutionary glory era than any age. Most of the stories are based on Chinese archives. On the religious side, Hinduism has played a more significant role in the royal court than Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism also plays a role among the people. It can be said that “Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism belong to the monarchy of this land, and Theravada Buddhism belongs to the general people.

4. The Influence Of Buddhism On The Society And Culture Of Cambodia In The Angkorian Period

According to the art historian Phillippe Stern, who studies Jayavaraman's reign in detail, perceived three stages in the development of his iconography and architecture. These coincide with the three phases of construction that Stern had noted for early Cambodian kings- namely, public works, temple in honor of parents, and the king's own temple-mountain. [5]

A. The influence of Buddhism on the society and culture of Cambodia in the Angkorian period

The public works of earlier kings, as we have seen, usually took the form of reservoirs (*baray*). Other projects just as a roads and bridges were also built, but they are seldom noted in inscriptions. But Jayavaravaman's program departed from the past. His hospital, probably established early in his reign, were an important innovation, described in the stele of Ta Prohm. Four of them were located near the gateways to Angkor Thom. Others were built to the west of Angkor into what is now northeastern Thailand and so far, north as central Laos. About twenty hospital sites have so far been identified. The Ta Prohm inscription says that the hospital could call on the services of 838 village, with adult populations totaling roughly eighty thousand people. The services demanded appear to have been to provided labor and rice for the staffs attached to each hospital, or approximately a hundred people, including dependents. The hospital steles give details about the administration of the hospital and about the provisions and staff allocated to them.

In this connection, it concerns the Rajavihara (i.e., the temple of Ta Prohm) and its adjuncts where the king set up an image of his mother as Prajnaparamita.

As many as 66,625 people were employed in the service of the deities of the temple and 3,400 village were given for defraying its expenses. All this was meant for a single group of temples. And the inscription informs us that there were 798 temples and 102 hospitals in the whole kingdom, and all of them were given full support by the kings. [6]

A second set of Jayavarman VII's public works consisted of "house of fire" placed at approximately sixteen-kilometer (ten-mile) intervals along Cambodia's major roads. There were fifty-seven of these between Angkor and the Cham capital and seventeen more between Angkor and a Buddhist temple-site at Phimai in the northeastern Thailand. The exact purpose of these buildings is unknown.

Finally, Jayavaraman VII's own reservoir, known now as the northern Baray and during his reign as the Jayatataka, is located to the northeast of Yasodharapura.

These innovations stemmed from what Jayavarman saw as his mission to rescue his subjects, as the hospital inscription says:

Filled with a deep sympathy for the good of the world, the king swore this oath: "All the beings who are plunged in the ocean of existence, may I draw them out by virtue of this good work. And may the kings of Cambodia who come after him me, attached to goodness...attain with their wives, dignitaries and friend, the places of deliverance, were there is no more illness." [7]

B. The influence of Buddhism on the culture of Cambodia in the Angkorian period

The various capitals of the Angkorian kings may be read symbolically as miniature images of the universe. The revers and barays represented the cosmic ocean: the enclosing walls, the irion-mountain chain (*cakravala*) at the limit of the world's golden disk; and the temples, the central world mountain, Mount Meru. The various hydraulic projects at Angkor may all be reduced to simple form of a *baray* surrounding a temple-mountain. In essence the mountain collected heavenly water and is fructified by the encounter. The water then runs down into a *baray*, from where it fertilizes the surrounding soils. We find this arrangement first at Kulen, but it may also be observed at Angkor Wat and the great Buddhist temple complexes of Jayavarman VII. The king ruled from his cosmic center; he both "consumed" his domains and, by the proper performance of the royal cult, radiated back quasi-divine power. In this way, order and prosperity were sustained. At death he was absorbed back into the immaterial realms above the central world mountain and replaced by a new king. The tremendous cosmic cycles of origination and dissolution so typical of the Khmero-Indic worldview were recapitulated as one reign followed another. This basic pattern worked whether the cult performed at the center was Brahmanical or Buddhist, the system reaching its apogee during the reign of Jayavarman VII. [8]

Thus, with the passage of time the Brahminical gods in the great sanctuaries like Angkor Wat were replaced by the Buddhist image. We cannot tract the exact states of this conversion, but, gradually, Buddhism became the dominant creed in the Cambodia and today there is hardly any trace of the Brahmanical religion in the country, except in some of the ceremony and festival of the people of Cambodia.

On the other hand, Angkor Thom and its vicinity reflect mostly Buddhist epics. Built by King Jayavannan VII around the end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the thirteenth century, at these sites also, each cardinal

direction has its own distinguished monuments and symbolism. Among them, *Bayon* evokes many Buddhist symbols of *Avalokiteshvara* with its more than two hundred large faces carved on 54 towers; this monument remains one of the most enigmatic as well as majestic temples of the Angkor group. [10]

As mentioned above, it is evidence that: Buddhism and Brahminism have a huge influence on the construction of Cambodian society, both psychologically. Traditions, rituals, literature. Language, education, architecture, construction. It is a culture that all Cambodians have finally seen and is unique to Cambodia. When foreigners think of Cambodia, they often think of Nakhon Wat Castle, Angkor Thom Castle, and the beauty of churches, cathedrals, palaces, etc. Therefore, Brahminism and Buddhism have a real influence on Cambodian society and culture in all aspects.

5. Conclusion

An ancient Cambodia inherited civilization from India. The ancient Cambodians, therefore, respected both Brahmin and Buddhism. The Cambodian way of life in the Angkorian era was primarily agricultural occupation, and the monarchy was the ultimate leader. Buddhism has spread in Cambodia after the finishing of the 3rd Buddhist Council. The king accepted Buddhism as the Code of conduct and carried on for a period. Mahayana Buddhism was the main school in this period. King Jayavarman VII was one of the kings in this period. In this period, the Jayavarman VII has changed the Hindu worldview of “*Deva-raj*” to “*Buddha-raj*” instead. The influence of Buddhism in this era is in society; there are 102 hospitals built, Arogayasala 121 places. The Dhammasala is a public shelter along the way, and the property is donated to the monks and the poor.

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