

## The Devaraja Cult of Kampuchea: A Different type of Tantric Shaiva Cult

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**Abstract:** Devaraja, in ancient Cambodia, the cult of the “god-king” established early in the 9th century ad by Jayivarmān II, founder of the Khmer empire of Angkor. For centuries, the cult provided the religious basis of the royal authority of the Khmer kings. The devarāja cult grew out of both Hindu and indigenous traditions. Devarāja is the Hindu-Buddhist cult of deified royalty in Southeast Asia. It could be simply described as Southeast Asian concept of divine king. The concept viewed the monarch to possess transcendental quality, the king as the living god on earth, the incarnation of the supreme god, often attributed to Shiva or Vishnu. The concept is closely related to Indian concept of Chakravartin (universal monarch). In politics, it is viewed as the divine justification of a king’s rule. The concepts was institutionalized and gain its elaborate manifestations in ancient Java and Cambodia, where monuments such as Prambanan and Angkor Wat were erected to celebrate the king’s divine rule on earth.

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## INTRODUCTION

The name Kampuchea is derived from Kambuja. It comprised the Valley of Mekong River with the three provinces of Kampot on the west and Svay Rieng and Thbong Khmum on the east. The last two are watered by the two branches of the River *Vaicos* which are joined to the *Mekong* across the vast marshy plains by innumerable canals, both natural and artificial, and may be regarded as its tributaries forming a common delta in Indo-China. The *Mekong* is the very life of Kampuchea.

The Earliest Hindu Kingdom of Kampuchia is known as Fu-nan. According to the Chinese account, the primitive people of Fu-nan were semi-savages. They went about naked and decorated themselves with tattoo marks. Hiuen-tien, who was a follower of the Brahmanical religion, introduced the elements of civilized life among them; in particular he made the women wear clothes. This Hiuen-tien was most probably a Hindu colonist who came direct from India, though the possibility is not altogether excluded that he might have been a Hinduised colonist from some part of Malay Peninsula. From the accounts of subsequent events, his arrival cannot be placed later than the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The Indian religion and scriptures introduced by Kaundinya I, and later on, Kaundinya II in the 5<sup>th</sup> century brought about Indianisation of Fu-nan. The Brahmanic religion, with its multi-faced character, was adapted in accordance with prevalent local beliefs within the Shaiva cult. The inscriptions commemorating the creation of *lingas*, temples and sanctuaries portray Shaivism as the state religion of the country. With

the accession of Jaivarman II at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE begins a new era in the history of Kambuja. A brief survey into the historical and cultural development of Kampuchea portrays a picture of the existence of Sanskrit culture during ancient and medieval periods. The upper classes starting from the king's courtiers and learned priests had pure Sanskrit names with genealogies connecting them to important Indian dynasties. Brahmin scholars occupied a position of honour and prestige in the Khmer courts acting as a *Hotars* and *Bakos*, as the guardians of the royal *linga* and the sacred sword.

## THE DEVARAJA CULT

Jaivarman II (802-850), founder of the Angkor dynasty, initiated the Devaraja cult which made a great impact on the religious, political and social life of Kambuja. It was based upon the parallelism between Macro-Cosmos and Micro-Cosmos, between universe and the world of men, and the harmony between the empire and the universe, was obtained by organizing the former as the image of latter, as a universe on a smaller scale. The ancient Naga traditions were assimilated along with those of ancestor worship in this new cult of Devaraja. The upright stone symbol of the god of fertility of earth was synthesized with the *linga*, which represented the magical essences of royalty. The mingling of the ashes of the ancestors in the soil completed the blending of all the heterogeneous elements of indigenous traditions with the new wave of deification of the king who was endowed with supernatural magical powers. The worship of the lord of mountains was in vogue in ancient Kampuchea, but now it was made synonymous with Shiva as the Lord of Mount Meru. Again, the ancestor worship of Neolithic age was fused with the persons of the kings, dead or alive, in synthesis with Hindu pantheons and Bodhisattvas of Buddhism. The Kampuchean Naga traditions required the royal consort in the form of a female transfiguration of the god of soil to have nightly intercourse with the divine king at the top of the sacred pyramidal tower. The place for king's communion either with Nagi or any other supernatural power was only at the summit of a temple, specially erected for that purpose. The Nagi origin legend of Khmer kingship was kept up even up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the Chinese envoy Chou-Ta-Kuan reported, "In the palace there is a golden tower (Phimeankas) on the top of which the king sleeps. All native believe that in the tower there is the spirit of a nine headed serpent, master of earth and the whole of kingdom. It appears every night in the form of a woman with whom the king must sleep. If one night the spirit does not appear, then the time for the king to die has arrived" (Wales.1937: 190-191).

Jaivarman II was an ambitious ruler who wanted to expand his empire and bring neighbouring princes under his vassalage. This could only be achieved on being consecrated by a Brahmin possessed with supernatural magical powers. It was the general belief in South-east Asian region that Lord Shiva could enter the material body of the king only through a Brahmin belonging to the Shiva-Siddhanta sect, who could through their divine and magical powers invoke the god, and thus grant him immortality and divine omnipotence for maintaining law and order in the country. Brahmins alone could confer the highest sanctity to local festival through their divine powers. The mystic rituals of the Devaraja cult were calculated to transform the king into an independent manifestation of Shiva (Cady.1964:89). Jaivarman II realized the importance of religious sanctions when he began a new dynasty in Kampuchea. He took into his service a learned Brahmin, Shiva Kaivalya as his royal chaplain. In order to achieve the divine immortal status, which would place the king above all the human beings, a special consecration ceremony was required. Hiranyadama, a learned Brahmin, most probably belonging to the Shiva-Siddhanta sect, famed for his wide learning and magical skill in India, was invited by the king to perform the sacred ceremony, the details of which were given in the

inscription of Sdok Kok Thom. Hiranyadama chose Mahendra Parvata (Mount Kulan) as the sacred place for the performance of the ceremony. They followed four holy shastras: *Siraschheda*, *Vinshikha*, *Sammoha* and *Nayottara* in order to prepare the magic formula. Hiranyadama recited the holy hymns which were preserved by Shiva Kaivalya in writing for future references. Hiranyadama instructed Shiva Kaivalya to perform the ritual concerning Devaraja. Jaivarman II, under the guidance of Hiranyadama took an oath to employ Shiva Kaivalya and his descendants to perform the rituals of the Devaraja cult and to appoint him as chief priest and no outsider could perform the worship. The consecration ceremony was performed according to the holy *Vinshikha*; where by Jaivarman II was identified with Shiva, a sort of apotheosis of the king during his life time. The king god was conceived to be the eternal and abstract essence of the king, blessed with divine essence and worshipped in the form of a *linga*. To the first part of the king's name the suffix Esvara (Ishvara-Lord) was conjoined. Hiranyadama selected Rong Chen summit for enshrining the royal *linga*, the symbol of sovereignty; here a pyramid temple was erected by Jaivarman II. The terraced temple symbolized Mount Meru, the abode of gods in Hindu cosmology. This royal *linga* at Rong Chen might have been known as Jayeshvara. It was a sort of palladium of the kingdom, being obtained from Shiva by the king through the intermediary of Shiva Kaivalya, who gave it to the founder of the dynasty, Jaivarman II (Coedes.1968: 100). Through his impressive ceremony performed by Hiranyadama, with the help of Shiva Kaivalya at Mahendra Parvata (Mount Kulan), Jaivarman II was declared as Chakravartin (Universal ruler). The divine right of kings was thus established in Kampuchea. The core of cult was the belief that the essence of royalty resided in a *linga* obtained by a priest of Shiva. It was a Khmer declaration of independence from Java. This one stroke of ceremonial ritual made Kambuja an independent kingdom, possessing suzerainty over small neighbouring states, so their king was Chakravartin, the living embodiment of Devaraja of the divine essence of kingship. The temple of royal *linga*, symbolic of the king's temporal authority, was in the centre of the capital, the magically determined axis of universe by mystic rituals.

Through Shiva Siddhanta tantric rituals and ceremonies, Kambuja was converted into a theocracy, centered on the god king, who was transformed into an independent manifestation of Shiva. The royal *linga*, during the time of the king, was symbolic of the living god, erected in a precious stone or gold. The king was supposed to possess a subtle personality, which during his life-time was represented in a portrait statue, not like that of supreme Shiva of Hindu mythology, but the local Shiva of the kingdom. The erection of the sacred ego of the reigning monarch, either in the shape of a stone image or a *linga*, was the continuation of the cult of ancestor worship. His relics were deposited at the base in an urn or casket. Each statue was considered an artificial body, endowed with magical properties, where by the person thus deified became immortal. The innumerable statues of Shiva, Vishnu, Harihara, Lakshmi, Parvati and those of Bodhisattvas enshrined in the temples throughout the country, were actually the portraits of the king, queens and nobility of the empire. Their names carved on the statues, with the suffix Esvara for a male and Devi for a female depicted the fusion of their persons to the gods and goddesses (Hall.1986:108). The king thus deified was endowed with divine supernatural powers which helped him to destroy all political opponents, and the title of Chakravartin, gave him authority over the neighbouring kingdoms. Jaivarman II was a despotic ruler endowed with supernatural powers to rule over the universe by destroying his enemies in the manifestation of Shiva himself. Kambuja made great progress during the successive Khmer rulers for over four centuries following Devaraja cult.

In the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, through strong Shaivite religious impacts, the king was a manifestation of Shiva, symbolized as a royal *linga*, made of precious stone or gold enshrined in a pyramidal sanctuary, in the centre of each capital. The Devraja of each reign was considered a supreme power. Mahendra Parvata was considered the residence of Shiva. Indravarman made further progress in Devaraja cult

under the guidance of his spiritual guru Shiva Soma. He inaugurated the first great stone monument to enshrine the royal *linga* Indreshvara at the pyramid of Pakong, south of Preah-Ko. A new form of ancient worship was added by Indravarman, when he dedicated six stucco brick towers of Preah-Ko to the statues of his parents and maternal grand parents in the garb of gods and goddesses, while Jaivarman II and his queen were deified as Shiva and Devi. His successor, Yashovarman constructed a four-towered brick sanctuary at Hariharalaya similar to Preah-Ko, later known as Loley, where the images of king's parents and grand parents were enshrined. The king built a new capital named Yashodharapur. It had a mountain in the centre corresponding to Mount Meru, where Shiva Soma erected a sacred *linga* on the top of the summit. The city is still marked by a double wall of earth, while the central quadrangle is marked by Phnom Bakhen hill, crowned by a pyramidal temple. According to an inscription, it sheltered the royal *linga* of Yashovarman I. It had become the tradition that the temple of the royal *linga* was later to be converted into a mausoleum of the king after his death, so a new *linga* had to be consecrated and enshrined in a new temple at the accession of a new ruler. Thus, Bakhong, the first city of Angkor, enshrined Devaraja of Yashovarman who was posthumously named Paramshivaloka. Jaivarman II, in the vicinity of Kohker Prang, built huge monuments of which the most important was the five-stepped pyramid on the summit of which the pedestal of the royal *linga* was designated as Kamrateng Jagat Ta Raja-the god who is the royalty, and raised the *linga* to a height of 35 mts (Foucher.1922:12-17).

Rajendravarman (944-968) brought back his Devaraja to Yashodharapur and built a sanctuary in brilliant gold, like Indra's palace on earth. This was the initial stage of Phimeankas when Rajendravarman built a temple in East Mebon Rup with five brick towers. He placed the statues of his parents in the form of Shiva and Uma following the traditional ancestor worship, while the central tower enshrined the royal *linga* Rajendreshvara. Later, he built another mountain temple of Pre Rup, enshrined the royal *linga* under the name of Rajendrabhadreshvara in the centre. In the memory of his early ancestry, the image of Vishnu, Rajendravishvarupa, was erected in one of the corner towers. In another, the memory of Harshvarman II as Shiva with the name of Rajendravarmadeveshvara and Jaya Devi, his queen as Uma, were erected. Rajakulamahamantri and Brahmin Shivacharya, as the royal chaplain, *hotar*, were important figures in the regency period during Rajendravarman's reign. His posthumous name was Shivaloka. The state cult of Devaraja along with Shiva worship made further progress in the reign of Jaivarman V (968-1001). The chief propagator of that was Diwakar Pandit, a Brahmin from northern India. He had imbibed Vaishnavite doctrines and helped its propagation in Kampuchea. He built a pyramid temple of Phimeanka to enshrine his Devaraja-Jayeshvara, in the centre of the capital-Jayendranagari, keeping in view the ancestor worship traditions. The erection of the images of Uma and Maheshvara at Bantey Srai were with the objective of increasing the piety and merits of his parents. Two famous sacerdotal functionaries, Shivacharya Pandit and Kavishvara Pandit, came into predominance towards the end of his reign. His posthumous name was Paramvirloka (Coedes. 1968: 63-67).

The next king, Suryavarman I (1002-1050), coming from Tambralinga was a Buddhist by faith, but he did not interfere in the state religion of Devaraja cult. He continued to follow prevalent traditions of strong kings to build a capital and a central shrine by building a Buddhist monument on the site of Bayon and appointed Shankar Pandit as purohit. Devaraja cult, earlier had been connected only with Shiva worship, but it was modified in accordance with the faith of sovereign. There is no indication of Suryavarman identifying himself with Shiva in a *linga* or becoming Sureshvara, but he did not altogether discard the god king ideology. The new god king established at Bayon was a sort of Buddharaja. Shankar Pandit, though a Shaivite was appointed as Buddhist chief priest. It was the syncretism of

Mahayana Buddhism with Shaivism. Suryavarman's posthumous name, following Buddhist traditions, was Nirvanapada. Shankar Pandit, who had till now performed Buddhist ceremonies, became Purohit of Udiyavarman II in Shaivite traditions. Udiyavarman II's Devaraja-Udityeshvara was in the central temple of Baphuon. The spiritual guru of the king was Sadashiva, a former priest of Devaraja cult. Another great scholar was Jayendra Pandit, on whom the semi-royal titles of Dhuli Jeng (dust of the feet) Vrah-Kamrateng and Sri Jayendravarman were conferred. According to the Lovak inscription, in the middle of Jambudvipa, the island dwelling of gods, a mountain of gold (Hemadri or Meru) arises and on the east of this mountain of god is a temple of gold, shining with a celestial brilliance. Here the king erected a *linga* of Shiva in gold and honoured it with ablutions at the prescribed times. The changeover again to Shaivite traditions of the Devaraja cult after Suryavarman I's Buddhist experiment was not difficult. Baphuon was probably the fourth Vnam Kantal abode of Devaraja at Angkor, as a period of religious reaction against Buddhism had set in the emergence of Vaishnavism as a state religion of Kambuja made a strong impact on the Devaraja cult during Suryavarman II's reign. The masterpiece of Khmer architecture was Angkor Wat, where Suryavarman II was deified as a Vishnu statue, instead of a Shiva-*linga*, with the posthumous name of Paramvishnuloka. Here, syncretism of Shaivism and Vaishnavism was apparent and the cult of Devaraja was temporarily superseded by that of Vishnuraja. The Devaraja cult was still amenable to further adaptations during Jaivarman VII's reign (1181-1218) at Bayon. The cult of Lokeshvara Bodhisattva was again a syncretism of Mahayana Buddhism and Maheshvara Shaivism with the substitution of Devaraja with Buddharaja and the transformation of Bayon into a pyramid temple. The idea of a Buddharaja, a king god with himself apotheosized as the Buddha during his life, could not have been distasteful to an ambitious mystic like Jaivarman VII. The symbolism of fifty or more towers of Bayon representing the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara-Samantamukha, are the faces of Jaivarman VII as Lokeshvara. He extended his benevolent protection to the entire empire. The statue portrays the king with traits similar to those of Buddha at Bayon. In place of Devaraja royal *linga* of gold, the central sanctuary now enshrined an enormous stone statue of Buddharaja (Jaivarman VII). This statue was not only a Buddhist substitute for Shaivite Devaraja but also the statue of apotheosis of the founder king, whose features are undoubtedly also to be seen on the upper parts of the towers in the form of Bodhisattva Lokeshvara-Samantamukha with a great pyramid of Kohkur the Phimeankas, Baphuon Angkor Wat and Bayon (Dobby.1964:53).

Devaraja cult in Kampuchea, through the piety of rulers, mystic rituals and ceremonies propagated and performed by the purohits, formed the basis of Khmer culture. It helped bridge political rifts and troublesome episodes connected with the shift of rulers. Symbols of authority were impressively maintained and the priestly offices at court were transmitted by hereditary succession (Coedes. 1968:175). Hiranyadama, the great Shiva Siddhanta scholar, who on the one hand transmitted supernatural power to Jaivarman II, with another, created a powerful sacerdotal hierarchy of Brahmins in the person of Purohit of Devaraja. It was only through the intermediary of a Brahmin priest that the king could become the manifestation of Shiva. As the inscription says, "His Majesty Parmeshvara and Brahmin Hiranyadama gave benedictions and imprecations enjoining that the line of Shiva Kaivalya should officiate for Devaraja and it should be forbidden for others to officiate" (Briggs.1951:190). According to Kambuja tradition, a sacred sword was the symbol of sovereignty. The palladium of Kambuja was entrusted to a Bako-ancient Brahmin- to guard it religiously day and night. A permanent temporal heredity was established for the celebration and continuation of cult and there could be a number of appointments of *hotars* by the king. The Brahmins played a great role in Kampuchian theocracy in their appointments as hotars, gurus and ministers; some of the religious teachers had great influence in political affairs too. The priestly order founded by Shiva Kaivalya had expanded

so much that during the reign of Harshvarman, its reorganization became necessary. When Jaivarman IV established himself at Chok Garyar in 921, there were two royal gods, one at Yashodharpur and another at Chok Garyar, and two chief priests, purohits for Devaraja, Kumaraswamy at Yashodharpur and Ishanmurti at Chok Garyar.

Kampuchia was dependent on the sacerdotal families for the administration of the country during the time when the crown princes were minors, as a result of which their power and authority gradually increased. The change of dynasties did not affect the position of the sacerdotal hereditary families. They continued to have the exclusive privileges and hereditary rights to provide purohits, hotars and judges. Brahmins known for their wisdom, which possessed the essence of the science of Vedanta, who followed the path of Smritis, were free of passion, without avarice and faithful to their duty, were revered. Later, in order to weaken the Shaivite priestly authority, Buddhist and Vaishnavite judges and ministers were chosen. In this period of anarchy, religious monuments must have been damaged, as the inscription of Sdok Kok Thom mentioned; so there was need of restoration of religious monuments which was done by Shivacharya, the highest ecclesiastical dignitary. The weakening power of Shaivite line of Shiva Kaivalya had started by Suryavarman through his famous guru Yogishvara pandit, who was a descendant of Bhavaswamini, the chief queen of Jaivarman II. He was entrusted with religious functions along with building activities, such as the erection of the Panchsheel on Hemagiri Ta Keo. He was a Vaishnavite Brahmin who propagated the worship of Vishnu. His disciple, Brahmin Keshava was appointed as the next priest and the guardian of Yogeshvara Devaraja at Ta Keo. Suryavarman I encouraged the family of Saptadevakula. The king's maternal uncle, Shankar Pandit, who was a great scholar belonging to Saptadevakula family, came into prominence as an accomplished poet and illustrious scholar. He was made a hotar in the early part of the reign and later on succeeded as purohit of Devaraja in place of Sadashiva Jayendra Pandit. Thus Suryavarman I was able to destroy the exclusive privileges of Shiva Kaivalya and family, appointing his own favourites to the position of highest sacerdotal authority.

In the reign of Udiyavarman II, one of the high ranking religious dignitaries was Vagindra Pandita of Sruk Siddhayatana of Purva disha, a relative and guru of Jayendra Pandita. He was given the title of Bhuli Geng Vrah Kamratengaon, the highest honour ever to be bestowed on a Brahmin. After his death, Jayendra Pandita was made Vrah Guru with the title of Vrah Kamrateng and Sri Jayendravarman. He was in-charge of the education of kings in sciences, grammar, law and the shastras. He performed great religious ceremonies conforming to the sacred doctrine of Devaraja cult. Udiyavarman II built his new Vnam Kantal and installed a gold *linga* at Baphuon and appointed Shankar Pandita as purohit of Devaraja. Religious reaction against Buddhism had set in through the building of magnificent new Hindu temples and the increase in Brahmanic learning of Shastras. Jaivarman VI of Mahindrapur dynasty made Diwakar Pandita as the chief adviser, who was a native of Vhur Dnang in Sadya district. He was employed by Udiyavarman II at a very young age to serve Devaraja at Baphuon and Harshavarman III promoted him as Acharya Pradhan. Jaivarman VI bestowed great honour on Diwakar by making him Vrah Guru, with the title of Diwakar Pandita. The king presented him with a gold palanquin, a white parasol with carrier-men for both. He was made in-charge of ceremonies for distribution of ritual articles, precious metals, animals and slaves at religious sanctuaries. Diwakar Pandita performed coronation ceremony of the king and accompanied him on all pilgrimages. He had served many kings, was a brilliant Brahmin and entrusted with important missions and offices. Dharnindravarman kept Diwakar Pandita as royal guru and chief minister, but appointed Bhupendra Pandita, another Brahmin as an inspector of justice. Virendradhipativarman and Yogishvara Pandita were other notable Brahmin figures of his reign. When Suryavarman II deposed Dharnindravarman from throne, there was a change in ruling dynasty, and Vrah Guru Diwakar Pandita was invited to

perform the coronation ceremony and to make offerings to religious sanctuaries of Sri Bhadrashvara and god Shikhareshvara. In spite of his mature years Diwakar Pandita played an important role in politics and continues to occupy the highest priestly position in Kampuchea even when one king succeeded another. He performed the coronation ceremonies of three monarchs. In spite of his being a purohita of state cult of Devaraja, Diwakar Pandita took a leading part in the construction of Angkor Wat and the development of the Vishnu cult. He was responsible for syncretism of the state cult of Shaivism with that of Vaishnavism to a great extent.

On becoming the king, Jaivarman VII changed the character of religious theocracy from Shaivite and Vaishnavite to Buddhist. The king was a devout Buddhist. Now, the state cult of Devaraja royal *linga* lost its importance and might have been just a nominal ceremony, as the place was now taken by royal deity in the form of Buddharaja. Jaivarman VII appointed Jaimangalaratha as his guru by showering gifts and honours on him, and his family was given royal titles. The court of Kambuja attracted Brahmin scholars far and wide during this period. A young Brahmin named Hrishikesha from Myanmar came to the Kampuchian court. Jaivarman VII was so much impressed by his learning and qualities that he was appointed the royal chaplain (hotar) and given the title of Jai Mahapradhan. Brahmin sacerdotal hierarchy became dormant, but old traditions were kept up, as royal hotars and chaplains went on performing their religious duties. The period following Jaivarman VII's reign was again that of violent Shaivite reaction against Buddhism. Buddhist images were destroyed and the great Buddha statuette was broken into pieces and thrown into a well. The sacerdotal hierarchic power and influence in the royal court increased and Buddhism was cast off by the priests and monarchy alike. The high personages occupying important offices during Buddhist ascendancy might have made a show of being Buddhist, but now they reverted to their old religion. So much so that Jai Mahapradhan and Jaimangalaratha openly professed Shaivism as their religion. Jai Mahapradhan was actively connected in religious reactions against Buddhism. In order to consolidate his position still further, he married Sri Prabha, a young rich girl from a prominent Shaivite family at the age of sixty. A temple named Mangalaratha was built in the memory of Jaimangalaratha by Jaivarman VIII. In this temple, the statues of Jaimangalaratha and his mother were worshipped under the vocable Sri Jaya Trivikrama Mahanath and Sri Jaya Trivikrama Deveshvari. As the king was anxious to further propagate the cult, he established a hereditary chief, gave three villages for his upkeep and numerous slaves to serve him. There was a provision in the priestly hierarchy that if the male priestly line became extinct, the female line was permitted to perform ceremonies and rituals of the cult. This temple was the last Khmer architecture of Kambuja period.

Vidyasavid and Madhurendra Pandita were the last important wise Brahmins of priestly families. Vidyasavid had consecrated Indravarman as a king and was appointed as a hotar of Bhadrashvara. Madhurendra Pandita of Sruk Madhurendragamma, acharya of Vrah Guru Yajnavarah, looked after Bhutasaka, was an able administrator, a great favourite of the king and had married his guru's niece. The hereditary character of high priestly offices and their important role in the matters of succession, made the Kampuchean government a theocracy, as all royal monuments were religious in character, and so were inscriptions (Cady.1964:89). During this period, the priestly class held religious as well as administrative appointments, built temples and sanctuaries provided the kings with ancient genealogy, formulated religious formulas, provided Kampuchea with intelligentsia, and drafted all the inscriptions that were, to a great extent, responsible for the multifaceted development of Khmer kingdom, specially in the field of literature.

The Khmer period in Kampuchea has given the evidence of literary activity and learning of religious texts, Brahmanic or Buddhist. A place of great honour was reserved for Brahmins who possessed

literary accomplishments, religious learning and the knowledge of science in the king's court. They acted as acharyas or instructors at court and teachers of the princes, court physicians and astrologers. The Khmer kings were required to employ services of purohita of Devaraja, hotars and gurus in order to perpetuate their supernatural divine powers. Their sacerdotal hierarchy formed an integral part of the Khmer empire. Angkor became a centre of religious learning and attracted learned Brahmins from all over northern India. Divakara Bhatta was one of such learned pandits who was honoured by Jaivarman V and was accorded a very high position. The study of sacred language of Sanskrit was desirable for the performance of religious ceremonies and various rituals of Shaivism which was the state religion most of the period. Its grammar and vocabulary was assiduously studied. In a way, Sanskrit had become lingua franca of all the South-east Asian kingdoms. During the Khmer period of Kampuchian history, high competency in Sanskrit language was considered essential for the study of Hindu classics, religious texts, political treatise and the laws of Manu. The higher strata of society were well versed in Sanskrit literature and verse. Many original contributions to the Sanskrit language were made by the Khmer scholars. The pure Sanskrit inscriptions on the temples and sanctuaries, running up to even hundred of verses with historical background using varied meters of Sanskrit verse, demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the learned pundits.

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