

magnificent state temple that is known today as Angkor Wat. There is no Buddhism at Wat Phu in modern Laos, the other site where Sūryavarman also built sanctuaries.<sup>3</sup> It remains an anomaly that so many fine Buddhas dressed in high courtly style and seated on the coils of a large, multi-headed serpent should stylistically be associated with his reign. Where were they all erected? Pierre Dupont noted the iconographic inconsistency in 1936, when he remarked that adorned Buddhas on *nāga* appeared in a period of intense Vaiṣṇavism, but could not explain it.<sup>4</sup> Today, the Musée Guimet website still echoes Dupont, pointing to the apparent blossoming of Buddhist icons under Sūryavarman, despite the fact he built no temples for them:

A revival of 10th century hieratic statuary styles took place under the reign of the great conqueror and builder King Sūryavarman II (1113-c.1145), and the finest of all the Khmer temples, Angkor Wat, was erected under his patronage. In the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, although Brahmanism was still the dominant faith, more and more Buddhist representations were appearing, indicating the growing importance of Buddhism at this period. However, it was not until the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century that it became the official state religion.<sup>5</sup>

These scholars attribute the crowned Buddhas to the 'Angkor Wat style' because of their crowns, heavy jewelry, sharp facial features and crisp double lines around staring eyes. But this overlooks one detail – that the hair cover or *jaṭāmukuta* of the Buddhas above the diadem is distinctly higher than the many, many icons we know in the Angkor Wat style. That is a minor change in royal attire but I will now argue that it is a fashion indicator of a slight evolution at the end of the strongly established style of Angkor Wat.

This slight shift in courtly fashion, along with the emergence of a large series of adorned Buddhist icons in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, suddenly takes on new meaning when we consider an inscription that recently surfaced in Paris, which will change our history of the ancient Khmer state in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. This inscription on a stone stela, numbered K. 1297 by the École française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO), which is now translating it, shows that Angkor reached its ultimate sway under Buddhist kings, with the notable exception of the conquering Viṣṇu devotee king Sūryavarman II (r. 1113-49 CE). The inscription establishes beyond doubt that a hitherto unrecognised Buddhist king built

eight sanctuaries for Buddhist images in a 30 year reign (1149-c1180 CE) after succeeding his elder brother Sūryavarman. This new arrival in our history of the Angkor court is king Tribhuvanādityavarman, who addressed K.1297 to Vajrasattva, the supreme deity of Esoteric Buddhism.

The Khmer empire has always been considered Brahmanical or more specifically Śaiva, with a turn to Buddhism in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century before the empire began to decline. The emergence of the 30-year reign of Tribhuvanāditya changes the mix. With him included, we now see that from 1080 CE to 1270 CE, when the empire achieved its apogee, five out of six kings – Jayavarman VI<sup>6</sup>, Dharaṇīndravarman, Tribhuvanādityavarman, Jayavarman VII and Indravarman II – were Buddhist and Sūryavarman was Vaiṣṇava. There is much evidence to show the continuing importance of Śiva and Viṣṇu, who for more than three centuries after the founding of Angkor, were deeply entangled with beliefs in ancient local deities, and who both had sanctuaries in the Jayavarman's Buddhist state temple, the Bayon; but the kings were predominantly Buddhist and their posthumous titles showed them going to Buddhist paradises after death.

From the stylistic and now from the historical points of view, we must assume that Tribhuvanādityavarman's sanctuaries housed this royal series of crowned Buddha icons, one of which reached Vijaya in Champa. The inscription stone, shipped to France long ago and recently sold at a Paris auction, is a vivid illustration of what we all know: accounts of ancient history are dependent on a thin patchwork of data and are liable to be punctured whenever hard new data surfaces. This is the theme of the paper Professor Claude Jacques of EPHE gave to the EFEO on his draft translation of the stone in April 2016 entitled 'De la fragilité de notre science historique: la stèle K 1297'. We express gratitude for access to his still unpublished paper.

K. 1297 identifies Tribhuvanāditya's lineage as the Mahīdharapura dynasty that began under Jayavarman VI and it gives us his status as the (much) younger brother of Sūryavarman II. It records his coronation date and at the same time tells us that Sūryavarman died in 1149 CE. Tribhuvanāditya reigned for some 30 years before being killed in the only recorded Cham attack on Angkor, probably shortly before his successor Jayavarman VII seized power in