



## Kalinga and Funan : A Study in Ancient Relations

Dr. Benudhar Patra

Kalinga had maritime relationship with ancient Funan (Kambuja or modern Cambodia). The kingdom of Funan roughly corresponds to Cambodia proper and a part of Cochin-China and comprised the lower valley of the Mekong.<sup>1</sup> It was an oldest Indianised state of Indo-Chinese peninsula. The capital of this kingdom, according to some Chinese texts, was 500 *li* (200 km) from the sea. The materials for writing the history of Funan of the earlier period are obtained from the Chinese sources, while for the period between c. 650 to c. 800 CE are gleaned from a large number of inscriptions found there.<sup>2</sup> Funan is a name derived from the Chinese term *Phnom* meaning mountain.<sup>3</sup> The natives of Funan or Cambodia, called Khmers, believed that an Indian *rishi* or sage was their ancestor.<sup>4</sup> The discovery of Indian and Dongson style objects suggest that there was very early Indian contact with Funan. It is generally believed that the civilization in Funan began with the arrival of Indian traders<sup>5</sup> followed by missionaries. Funan was rich in all that Indian merchants were looking for and, in addition, was an ideal half-way house on the sea journey to China.<sup>6</sup> In ancient times there was tremendous influence of Indian culture and civilization over those of Funan or Cambodia. In the word of Ramranjan Das<sup>7</sup> who has done extensive research on the ancient relation between India and

Cambodia “Cambodia presents a conspicuous example of the penetrative power of Indian civilization. The local people, the Khmers, were at one time thoroughly Hinduised. They had adopted the Hindu system of administration and their political ideas were based on the study of Sanskrit books on political science like Kautilya’s *Arthasastra*. In religion they were thoroughly Indian. The Brahmanical divinities gained a special favour. Saivism was the dominant religion. Vaishnavism was also popular as also Buddhism though in a lesser degree. Sanskrit literature, both sacred and secular, was widely studied. Numerous Sanskrit inscriptions have been found, showing that their authors had thorough knowledge of the most developed rules of Sanskrit rhetoric and prosody. Numerous *asramas* were established after the Hindu model and these served as so many centres for the diffusion of the ethical and spiritual view of life so characteristic of Indian civilisation. The art and architecture of Cambodia as manifested in temples and sculptures of the country speak of this Indian affiliation in a very striking manner”. Further, emphasising the influence of Indian art on Cambodia he says, the inspiration of Cambodian art and architecture was drawn from religious belief. Whatever cult or religious practice, in whatever form was prevalent at different times in India, reached Cambodia at



different epochs and found expression of its particular form in Cambodian art and architecture<sup>8</sup>.

The origin of the kingdom of Funan, however, is shrouded in mystery. According to K'ang T'ai, a Chinese envoy who visited Funan in the middle of the third century CE, the first king of Funan was a certain Hun-t'ien, that is, Kaundinya, who came either from India or from the Malay Peninsula or the southern islands.<sup>9</sup> This Chinese version of the dynastic origin of Funan has been corroborated by a Sanskrit inscription of Champa belonging to the third century CE. Though scholars agree on the point that the kingdom of Funan came into existence some time during the first century CE, after union of a Brahmin named Kaundinya with the Naga Princess Soma(Lieu-Ye), there is considerable disagreement on the homeland of Kaundinya. This mystical union which was still commemorated at the court of Angkor at the end of the thirteenth century in a rite identical with that of the Pallava kings of Kanchi made some scholars to believe that Kaundinya probably belonged to the Pallava kingdom.<sup>10</sup> On the basis of the Mysore inscription (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) which records the grant of land, to a Siva shrine of the Brahmins of the Kaundinya *gotra* (clan), B.R. Chatterjee pointed out that Kaundinyas might have migrated from Mysore to Indo-China.<sup>11</sup> H.B. Sarkar<sup>12</sup>, however, has rejected this view and proposed that the migrating clan of Kaudinyas might have migrated to Funan from the Amaravati region of Andhra on the ground of the discovery of specimens of Amaravati style of sculpture at Dong Duong which was then under Funan. He argues that the Mysore Kaundinyas were not in the picture in the first century CE when Funan was founded; hence the Kaundinyas of Funan could not have gone from the Mysore region. On the other hand, though many scholars

have admitted the important role of Kalinga in the Indianization of Southeast Asia during the early centuries CE, none of them so far has taken notice of Kaundinya Brahmins who still continue to live near Mahendra mountain range of Orissa which is very close to the sea. On the basis of this, it is presumed that the Kaundinya Brahmins might have migrated from Mahendra mountain region of Kalinga and the port of Palur which was referred to by Ptolemy, the Greek geographer during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE as an international port could be the port from where Kaundinya embarked for Funan.

The main reason for the belief that the homeland of Kaundinya Brahmins of Funan could be Mahendra Parvata of Kalinga arises from the fact that the name of Mahendra Mountain appears in the history of Funan on two important occasions. The *History of the Southern Ch'i* states that during the reign of Jayavarman (5<sup>th</sup> century CE) 'the custom of this country [Funan] was to worship the God Mahesvara (Siva)' who continually descends on Mount Mo-tan.<sup>13</sup> Mo-tan could be another name of Mahendragiri of Orissa which was also considered as an abode of Lord Siva and early Saivism.<sup>14</sup> It was shortly before c. 500 CE that the Gangas of Kalinga(the Eastern Gangas) were worshipping Siva-Gokarnasvamin as the tutelary deity of the family (*ista-devata*) on Mahendra Mountain<sup>15</sup>. Even now there is the shrine of Gokarnesvara on the top of the hill. Worshipping of Gokarnasvamin (on *Mahendra Parvat* in Kalinga) and Mahesvara (in Funan) belonged to the same time. This led to an important assumption that as Funan was Indianised by the traders and merchants from the eastern coast of India, the migrants, with the passage of time named a local mountain of Funan as *Mahendraparvata* after the *Mahendra Parvata* of Orissa which had god Mahesvara(Gokarnesvara) on it. The imitation and



adoption was obvious on the part of migrant Indians in the process of spread and introduction of Indian culture there as elsewhere. The question comes why they named a mountain of Funan as Mahendra Parvata and not after any other Indian mountain names which logically implies that Kaundinya and early emigrants most probably went from Kalinga region, especially from the *Mahendraparvata* region. This is further corroborated by Jayavarman II (9<sup>th</sup> century CE) of Cambodia who went to reign at 'Mahendraparvata' and installed a miraculous Siva *linga* there as *devaraja* or king of gods (which is god Siva or Mahesvara himself in c. 802 CE) with the help of a Brahman named Hiranyadama<sup>16</sup> whom he invited from *Janapada* (probably in India). Jayavarman II is most often cited in the inscription as "the king who established his residence on the summit of Mount Mahendra". This *Mahendraparvata* (i.e. Mount Mahendra) has been identified with Phnom Kulen, the sandstone plateau that dominates the northern part of the Angkor plain.<sup>17</sup> As Jayavarman II went to *Mahendra Parvata* to reign and established his residence there, it appears that mount Mahendra which was considered as *Kula Parvata* (Phnom Kulen) and used as the abode of *devaraja* was already there in Funan (Cambodia) before the reign of Jayavarman II. So, this could have been the mount Mo-tan of the Chinese record of the fifth century CE. This indicates that the Kaundinyas of Funan were not only ardent Saivites but also had intimate association with the Mahendra Parvata of Kalinga and there was close contact between Kalinga on the eastern sea coast of India and Funan of Indo-China.

It is a well known fact that fifth century CE onwards Saivism became popular both in ancient Orissa and Cambodia. God Siva was worshipped in Funan under different names like

Mahesvara and Tribhubanesvara. Somasarma, the brother-in-law (of Chenla ruler) Mahendravarman (c.600-611 CE) installed a statue of Tribhubanesvara (Siva) in a temple. During the same time, Sasanka of Karnasuvarna (Gauda or modern Bengal) had constructed the Tribhubanesvara Siva temple at *Ekamra Kshetra* (modern Bhubaneswar) in Kalinga. This contemporary installation of same god could be a pointer to the close relationship between Orissa and Cambodia. During the time of Isanavarman I (c.611-635 CE) footprints of Siva were installed, which find a reference in the Phnom Bayang inscription of 624 CE<sup>18</sup>. In India, worship of Siva's footprints is rare except in places like Ranipur-Jharial of Western Orissa<sup>19</sup>.

The *Devaraja* cult which traces its origin to India was a very popular religious cult in Cambodia. Scholars<sup>20</sup> identified *devaraja* as a *chalanti pratima* (movable image) of the god Siva. The *Devaraja* cult of Cambodia has much similarity with that of the early medieval Orissan Saivite cult. The *devaraja*, as 'idol unique' is only the central god statue or the *linga* in the central sanctuary of the temple. Besides the main statue there is a further form of the *murti* (image) of a god which still plays an extremely important role today in the Hindu temples of India. This further form, found in many of the larger temples of India, is the *chalanti pratima*, which generally takes the form of a bronze mobile image of the chief divinity. These movable god-images are an important constituent of the cult, especially during the festivals of major temples. At the time of the festival they are carried through the streets on temple carts or litters as *utsava murti* (festival image) of the god – whose primary image remains standing in the temple. A *chalanti pratima* is especially important in Saivite temples, in which a *linga* is worshipped. In this connection we may cite an example of the Lingaraja temple of



Bhubaneswar in Orissa.<sup>21</sup> At the nucleus point of the temple stands a *svayambhu-linga*, a 'self-existent' manifestation of the god Siva, in massive stone. This 'self-generated' image of Siva cannot be removed from the spot where Siva originally manifested himself. So, during the numerous festivals of Lord Lingaraja, the function of 'deputy' for Siva outside the temple is discharged by a four-armed bronze sculpture of about 45 cm in height, which represents Siva as Chandrasekhara.<sup>22</sup> During the festivals, this sculpture is the focus of all those rituals that are directed to Lord Lingaraja as "(Siva) *Linga* which is the king".<sup>23</sup> In an Angkorian inscription reference is made to the worship of *devaraja* in the form of *chalanti pratima*.<sup>24</sup> An inscription of Kok Rosei enumerates the endowments made by the priest Sivacharya, who was presumably the famous *purohita* of the *devaraja* under kings Jayavarman V and Suryavarman I at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries CE<sup>25</sup>.

However, in about the twelfth century CE, the Saivite ideology had lost its significance both in Cambodia and in all the states of southern and eastern India including Kalinga. Saivism as an ideology of state experienced a crisis. It happened so perhaps because of the activities of the Great Vaisnavite reformer Ramanuja. Thus, at the beginning of the twelfth century CE, king Suryavarman II (c. 1113 – 1150 CE) in Cambodia submitted to the allure of Vaisnavism at the same time as Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva, the Ganga emperor of Orissa (c. 1112 – 1146 CE), in eastern India. Both gave up the Saivite state religion of their forefathers and built up new gigantic temples in honour of the god Vishnu. So, on either side of the Bay of Bengal, huge Vaisnavite temples appeared simultaneously, the Jagannatha temple at Puri, in Orissa, and Angkor Wat in Cambodia<sup>26</sup>. In the beginning years of the

sixth century CE, Gunavarman "the moon of the Kaundinya race" established a sanctuary at Thap-muoi called *Chakratirthasvami* (Vishnu temple) that contained the footprints of Vishnu<sup>27</sup>. In Orissa, Puri is known as *Chakratirtha* and Lord Jagannath is venerated as *Chakratirthasvami* (Vishnu).

From the history of Funan we also learn that a second Kaundinya ruled the country in the fourth century CE who enforced Hindu social and religious code with more vigour and contributed greatly for Indianisation of the natives. He changed all the laws of the country and brought them in the line with those prevalent in India. According to H.B. Sarkar<sup>28</sup> this Kaundinya II (an Indian Brahman) had come to Funan from P'an-p'an, a small state in Malay Peninsula which was dominated by the Brahmins. These Brahmins in the days of yore perhaps went from the coast of Kalinga to the Malaya Peninsula and thence to Funan "in search of wealth". To strengthen this ancient Funan-Kalinga contact and migration of Kaundinya from Kalinga, there is also another evidence that the river Mekong (Me-khong according to Ptolemy) which flows through the kingdom of Funan was called by the name 'Mahanadi', the principal river of Orissa.<sup>29</sup> Mekong, however, was also called *Ma-Ganga* (the Mother-Ganga) in some places.<sup>30</sup> From this narration it can be presumed that Mekong played an important role in the history of Funan (Kambuja or Cambodia) as Mahanadi and Ganga did in the early history and civilization of Kalinga and northern India respectively. Further, the naming of such an important river of Funan by a Kalingan name positively indicate emigration of a large number of Kalinga people into that country in ancient days.

The Hindu Kingdom of Funan flourished from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE to the middle of the sixth



century CE. In the time of Funanese king Fan Chan (c.225 to 250 CE) there was a diplomatic mission from Funan to China and to the court of Murunda ruler in India. The Murundas were ruling over the Kalinga and Magadha regions of India.<sup>31</sup> The *History of the Liang Dynasty* mentions that Meou-loun was the title of the king of the Murundas and the envoy who came from Funan to India was Su-Wu. Su-Wu coming by sea arrived at the port of Tamralipti and met the Murunda king. The Murundas became prominent in Kalinga in the second and third centuries CE. Their rule over Kalinga could be also attested from the discovery of a gold coin from Shishupalagarh on the obverse of which the name of the king is read as Dhamadamadhara (Dharmatamadharasya) who received Su-Wu<sup>32</sup>. The king presented Su-Wu with four horses. From this it appears that in those days there was regular export of horses from the port of Tamralipti to Funan in which the Kalingan merchants were also involved<sup>33</sup>. The religion, art and architecture of Kalinga also significantly influenced that of Funan. Regarding the significance of the art of Funan, U. Thakur<sup>34</sup> says, "Of these Hindu colonies [like Java, Champa, Burma, Borneo etc.], the kingdom of Kambuja occupies the most prominent and exalted position. Apart from the fact that it constituted the largest kingdom in South-East Asia, it also witnessed the remarkable evolution and growth of art and architecture producing some of the most notable monuments e.g. Angkor Wat which still excites the wonder and admiration of the world...In respect of architecture, however, Kambuja surpasses even the motherland." Besides art, the Indian sculptures also influenced the sculptural form of Cambodia. R.R. Das<sup>35</sup> remarks, "The Hindu colonists had however brought with them not only traditions and techniques of developed Indian art, but also probably actual specimens of Indian sculpture.

Some of the earlier sculptures in Cambodia and other countries such as Siam and Malaya Peninsula bear so striking resemblance to Indian prototypes that many scholars have held that they were either brought from India or made by such craftsmen who were fresh arrivals from India. For not only the motifs and the general details but even the very technique was purely Indian, and there was hardly anything to distinguish those from Indian products". The famous Angkor-Wat of Cambodia has some affinities with the *sikhara* of the temples of Orissa and *gopuras* of the Tamil temples.<sup>36</sup> In the Banteay Srei and Prah Khan temples of Cambodia, the mullioned openings are very splendid and in their 'pattern and intention' are akin to the contemporary temples of Bhubaneswar in Orissa<sup>37</sup>. In Angkorean sculptures, the round eyebrows and deep plump lips are of Orissan variety<sup>38</sup>. In the open part of terrace on each side of entrance of Angkor Wat, small shrines were there, which were similar to *pancharatha* (division of shrine tower into five vertical segments) pattern of Orissan temples<sup>39</sup>. From the above analysis it is evident that there was close cultural affinity between Kalinga and Cambodia in ancient times.

### References and Notes :

1. R.C.Majumdar, *Kambuja-Desa or An Ancient Hindu Colony in Cambodia*, Madras, 1944, p.25
2. N.Dutt, 'Presidential Address', *Year Book of the Asiatic society for 1959*, Vol.II, 1960, p.18.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The legendary account regarding the origin of ancient Funan or Cambodia kingdom narrates: In the dim past Cambodia was a desert of sand and rocks. One day Kambu Svayambhuva, the king of *Aryadesa* [India] found himself in this dreary landscape. The death of his wife Mera, whom the great god Siva himself gave him, made him disconsolate and he left his country 'in order to



- die in the wildest desert' he could find. Having reached Cambodia he entered into a grotto. To his horror Kambu found himself in the midst of a large number of huge, many-headed snakes whose piercing eyes were turned towards him. Kambu, however, boldly unsheathed his sword and advanced towards the biggest snake. To the utter amazement of Kambu, one of the snakes spoke in a human voice and asked his whereabouts. On hearing Kambu's story the serpent said: 'Your name is unknown to me, stranger, but you spoke of Siva who is my king as I am the king of the Nagas, the great snakes. You seem to be courageous too; therefore abide-with us in this land you have chosen and end your grief'. Kambu chose to remain there and developed a liking towards the Nagas who could take human shape. Several years later, he married the Naga king's daughter. The king of the Nagas possessed magic power and turned the arid land into a beautiful country like that of *Aryadesa*. Kambu ruled over the land and the kingdom came to be called after him as Kambuja." A reference in brief to the above-mentioned mythical legend can be found in the Baksei Camkron inscription dated c. 947 CE, where the Kambuja king treats himself as the descendant of the great sage Kambu Svayambhuva, to whom Hara (Siva) gave as his wife Mera, the most beautiful among *apsaras*. Though the authenticity of this legend is doubtful it traditionally refers to an epoch of the beginning of Hindu colonisation in ancient Cambodia. R.C.Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta (Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd.), 1991, p.183; R.R.Das, *Kambuja: A Blending of Indian Cultural Heritage*, Kolkata (Education Forum), 2008, p.22; K.M.Srivastava, 'The Hindu temples of Cambodia', in: G.C.Pande (ed.) *India's Interaction with Southeast Asia (History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization, Vol.I, Pt.3*, New Delhi (Centre for Studies in Civilizations), 206, p.322.
5. D.P.Singhal, *India and World Civilization*, Vol.II, Calcutta (Rupa & Co.), 1972, p.121.
  6. *Ibid*.
  7. R.R.Das, *op.cit.*, pp.12-13.
  8. *Ibid*, pp.58 and 135.
  9. Quoted by G.Coedes, *The Indianised States of South East Asia*, Honolulu (University of Hawaii Press), 1967, p.37.
  10. *Ibid*, p.38.
  11. B.R.Chatterjee, *Indian Cultural Influences in Cambodia*, Calcutta, 1965/1964, pp.261-262.
  12. H.B.Sarkar, 'The Homeland of Kaundinya of Funan and Tradition about his Marriage', *Journal of Institute of Asian Studies*, Madras, 1934, p.25. H.B.Sarkar, *Trade and Commercial Activities of South India in the Malayo-Indonesian World*, Calcutta (Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd.), 1986, pp.48-49.
  13. Quoted by G.Coedes, *op.cit*, p.61.
  14. P.P.Mishra, *Cultural Rapprochement between India and South East Asia*, New Delhi (National Book Organisation), 2005, p114.
  15. H. Kulke, 'Royal Temple Policy and Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdoms', in: Anncharlott Eschmann *et al*, eds., *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi (Manohar Publishers), 2005, p.130; N.K.Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol.I, Bhubaneswar (Utkal University), 1964, pp.92-93; B.K.Rath, 'The History of Mount Mahendra', *Orissa Historical Research Journal*(hereafter *OHRJ*), Vol. XXII, No. 3 & 4 (1977), p.89.
  16. G.Coedes, *op.cit*, p.99.
  17. *Ibid*, p.100.
  18. D.Daweewarn, *Brahmanism in Southeast Asia*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 25.
  19. P.P.Mishra, *op.cit.*, p115.
  20. H.Kulke, *Kings and Cults (State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia*, New Delhi (Manohar Publishers), 1993 and 2001 (Reprinted), pp355 ff.
  21. K.C.Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, Calcutta (Orient Longmans) 1961; Cuttack (Kitab Mahal), 1981, pp. 164-166; The Lingaraj temple is one of the largest Siva temples in eastern India. It is a contemporary monument of the largest temple mountain of Angkor, the Baphuon, which was built at the beginning of the second half of the eleventh century.



22. R.L.Mitra, *The Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol.II, Calcutta (Indian Studies: Past and Present), 1963 pp.133 ff.
23. H.Kulke, *Kings and Cults*, p.358. According to Herman Kulke, the names Lingaraj and Devaraj are constructed in parallel ways. He says if we relate *linga* to Siva=*Deva*, then the name Lingaraja comes very close to the name *devaraja* in meaning as well.
24. *Ibid*, p.359.
25. *Ibid*.
26. *Ibid*, p.375.
27. D.G.E.Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, New York (Macmillan), 1970, p.32.
28. H.B.Sarkar, *Cultural Relations between India and South East Asian Countries*, New Delhi (Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Motilal Banarsidass), 1985, p.153.
29. *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia (Further India and Indo-Malay Archipelago)*, G.E.Gerini, London (Asiatic Society), 1909; New Delhi (Oriental Books Reprint Corporation), 1974, p.136.
30. R.C.Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta (Firma KLM Pvt.Ltd), 1991, p.175.
31. N.K.Sahu, *op.cit*, p.418 ff.
32. B.B.Lal, 'Sisupalagarh', *OHRJ*, Vol.XV (1967), pp.51-55; B.B.Lal, 'Sisupalgarh 1948: an Early Historical Fort in Eastern India', *Ancient India* (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India), No.5 (1949), pp.100-101.
33. P.P. Mishra, *op.cit*, pp. 114.
34. U.Thakur, 'Kaundinya: The Founder of Indian Kingdom in Funan and Kambuja', *JBRS*, Vol. LIV, Pts. I-IV, (1968), pp.68-69; U.Thakur, *Some Aspects of Asian History and Culture*, New Delhi (Abhinav Publications), 1986, pp.15-16.
35. R.R.Das, *Art Tradition of Cambodia*, Calcutta (Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd.), 1974, pp.70-71.
36. R.Grousset, *The Civilizations of the East: India*, Delhi (Munshiram Manoharlal), 1969, pp.315-316.
37. P.Brown, *India Architecture, (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, Bombay (Taraporevala Sons and Co. Pvt.Ltd.), 1971, p.184.
38. H.G.Wells, *The Mountain of God: A Study in Early Religion and Kingship*, London, 1953, pp. 182 ff.
39. P.P.Mishra, *op.cit*, p.116.

---

Dr. Benudhar Patra, P.G. Dept. of History, Post Graduate Govt. College, Sector-11, Chandigarh (UT)-160011, India. Email: dr\_benudharpatra@yahoo.co.in.

**All art is but imitation of nature. – Seneca**