

# The History of Cambodia from 1<sup>st</sup> Century to 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## [5] Why did Chinese call Cambodia “Chenla[s]”?

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The architectural style of the shrine, which scholars call the pre-Angkorian Khmer style, is the progenitor of the Rolous group of monuments built in the ninth century in the vicinity of Angkor. Today it is still possible to visit the ruins of the two palaces on either side at the foot of the hill. Naga-shaped staircases are attached to the sides of the palaces and rise to the hilltop in the company of enormous trees. Human sacrifices were performed at the temple, ministered at night by the king of Zhenla.

## [5] Why did Chinese call Cambodia “Chenla[s]”?

### Zhenla Period (550-802)

THE first classical Chinese text to provide any detailed information on Zhenla is the Sui Annals, written in 627, seventy-seven years after the kingdom became established in 550. The Kingdom of Zhenla is south-west of Linyi (Champa). It was originally a vassal kingdom of Funan. It bordered Chequ on the south. The kingdom of Chu-ch’uang (Red River) on the west, and took six days’ travel by sea from Rinan. The family name of the king was Ch’a-li (Kshtriya); his personal name was She-to-ssu-na [Chitrasena]; his ancestors had gradually increased the power of the country. Chitrasena seized Funan and subdued it. Chitrasena died, and his son, Prince Isanavarman, succeeded him as king. This prince makes his residence in the city of I-she-na (Isanapura), which contains more than twenty thousand families. In the middle of the city is a great hall where the king gives audiences and holds court. The kingdom included thirty other cities, each populated by several thousand families, and each ruled by a governor; the titles of state officials are the same as:

In Linyi....Every three days the king proceeds solemnly to the audience hall and sits on a couch made of five kinds of aromatic wood and decorated with seven precious things. Above the couch there rises a pavilion hung with magnificent fabrics; the columns are of veined wood and the walls of ivory strewn with flowers of gold. Together this couch and this pavilion form a sort of little palace, at the back of which is suspended, as in Chih-t’u, a disc with gold rays in the form of flames. A golden incense-burner, held by two men, is placed in front. The king wears a dawn-red sash of ki-pei cotton that falls to his feet. He covers his head with a cap laden with gold and precious stones, with pendants of pearls. On his feet are leather, or sometimes ivory, sandals; in his ears, pendants of gold. His robe is always made of a very fine white fabric called pe-tie. When he appears bareheaded, one does not see precious stones in his hair. The dress of the great officials is very similar to that of the king. These great officials or minister are five in number. The first has the title of ku-lo-you [guru?]. The titles of the four others, in order of the rank they occupy, are hsiang-kao-ping, p’o-ho-to-ling, she-ma-ling, and jan-lo-lou. The number of lesser officials is very considerable...Those who appear before the king touch the ground in front of them three times at the foot of the steps of the throne. If the king calls them and commands them to show their rank, they kneel, holding their crossed hands on their shoulders. Then they go and sit in a circle around the king to deliberate on the affairs of the kingdom. When the sessions are finished, they kneel again, prostrate themselves, and retire. More than a thousand guards dressed in armour and armed with lances are ranged at the foot of the steps of the throne, in the palace halls, at the doors, and at the peristyle....The customs of inhabitants is to go around always armoured and armed, so that minor quarrels lead to bloody battles.

The above passage from the Sui Annals: the Story of Zhenla gives an account of the reign of Isanavarman I (ca 616-35) and provided detailed descriptions of Zhenla's dynastic system and practices. Taking a lesson from the Funan court, where fratricide was rampant, the Zhenlas took drastic measures to make sure that history did not repeat itself:

According to the customs of Zhenla, only the sons of the queen, the legitimate wife of the king, are qualified to inherit the throne. On the day that a new king is proclaimed, all his brothers are mutilated. From one a finger is removed, from another the nose is cut off. Then their maintenance is provided for, each in a separate place, and they are never appointed to office....The men are of small stature and dark complexion, but many of the women are fair in complexion. All of them roll up their hair and wear earrings. They are lively and vigorous in temperament. Their houses and the furniture they use resemble those of Chih-t'u. They regard the right hand as pure and the left hand as impure. They wash every morning, clean their teeth with little pieces of poplar wood, and do not fail to read or recite their prayers. They wash again before eating, get their poplar wood toothpicks going immediately afterwards, and recite prayers again. Their food includes a lot of butter, milk-curd, powdered sugar, rice, and also millet, from which they make a sort of cake which is soaked in meat juices and eaten at the beginning of the meal...Whoever wishes to marry first of all sends presents to the girls he seeks; then the girls' family chooses a propitious day to have the bride led, under the protection of a go-between, to the house of the bride-groom. The families of the husband and wife do not go out for eight days. Day and night the lamps remain lit. When the wedding ceremony is over, the husband receives part of the goods of his parents and goes to establish himself in his own house. At the death of his parents, if the deceased leave young children who are not yet married, these children receive the rest of the goods; but if all the children are already married and endowed, the goods that the parents have retained for themselves go to the public treasury...Funerals are conducted in this way: the children of the deceased go seven days without eating, shave their heads as a sign of mourning, and utter loud cries. The relatives assemble with the monks and nuns of Fo (Buddhism) or the priests of the Tao, who attend the deceased by chanting and playing various musical instruments. The corpse is burned on a pyre made of every kind of aromatic wood; the ashes are collected in a gold or silver urn which is thrown into deep water. The poor use an earthenware urn, painted in different colours. There are also those who are content to abandon the body in the mountains, leaving the job of devouring it to the wild beasts. The north of Zhenla is a country of mountains intersected by valleys. The south contains great swamps, with a climate so hot that there is never any snow or hoar-frost; the earth there produces pestilential fumes and teems with poisonous insects. Rice, rye, some millet, and coarse millet are grown in this kingdom.

The above passage is significant in its record on Zhenla funeral rites. The poor people's 'painted urns' may be closely related to the recently excavated 'ban Chiang painted pottery', an important clue in investigating the origin of the Khmers.

The Sui Annals: the Story of Zhenla continues with the narrative:

Near the capital is a mountain named Ling-chia-po-p'o, on the summit of which a temple was constructed, always guarded by five thousand soldiers and consecrated to the spirit named P'o-to-li, to who human sacrifices are made. Each year, the king himself goes to this temple to make a human sacrifice during the night. It is thus that they honour the spirits. Many of the inhabitants of Zhenla follow the law of the Buddha; many other practice the cult of the Tao. The Buddhists and the Taoists place pious images in the houses where travellers stop. In the twelfth year of the Daye ear (616), Zhenla sent an embassy to the Middle Kingdom. The expedition was received with great honour, but relations were then interrupted.

The mountain Ling-chia-po-p'o, 'on the outskirts of Isanapura', was called Lingaparvata in an epigraph. Located in the Bassac area, it was the first capital of Zhenla and in fact several hundred miles away from Isanapura. The Sui Annals is probably incorrect in its account. Also, it is not a mountain but a 75-meter-high knoll. A rock over 10 metres tall in the shape of a linga (phallic emblem) stood on the hilltop. At the foot of the rock was a shrine called Vat Phu.

The architectural style of the shrine, which scholars call the pre-Angkorian Khmer style, is the progenitor of the Rolous group of monuments built in the ninth century in the vicinity of Angkor. Today it is still possible to visit the ruins of the two palaces on either side at the foot of the hill. Naga-shaped staircases are attached to the sides of the palaces and rise to the hilltop in the company of enormous trees. Human sacrifices were performed at the temple, ministered at night by the king of Zhenla.

In the middle of the seventh century, Bhavarman II (ca 635-ca 640), perhaps not the son of Isavarman I and not eh approved successor by the Zhenla court, ascended the throne. He declared the cult of Siva as the court religion, though ordinary people found satisfaction with Mahayana Buddhism. Bhavarman II reigned briefly and was then succeeded by Jayavarman I (ca 639-81), who, for reasons unknown, established his capital at Angkor Borie near Takeo.

The Former Tang Annals, written in 944, is the first Chinese text to call Zhenla the Khmer empire:

The kingdom of Zhenla bordered Linyi (Champa) on the north-west. It was originally a vassal of Funan (See more about 4-Why did Chinese call Nokor Ba Phnom "Funan"? ) and a part of Kunlun....It herded five thousand combat elephants. They were always fed with meat. During battles, the elephants would line up at the front. On the elephants' back, wooden towers were erected, mounted by four warriors with bows and arrows. The country worshipped Hinduism and

followed the law of the Buddha respectively....In the sixth year of the Wude ear (623), Zhenla sent an embassy to the Emperor's court and offered products of the country as presents. In the second year of the Zhenguan era (628), Zhenla sent a tribute mission again, with the Kingdom of Linyi, to the Middle Kingdom. Emperor Taizong praised the loyalty of their long extensive journey and opulent gifts. The southern people called Zhenla the Kingdom of Khmers. After the Chenlong period (705-707), Zhenla was divided into two states. The southern half, bordered on the south by the ocean, was covered with lakes and waterways. It was called Water Zhenla. The northern half, which consisted of mountains and valleys, was called Land Zhenla. She was also known as the kingdom of Wendan. Land Zhenla sent tribute missions to the Emperor's court during the following periods: Gaozong (618-89); Zetian (690-704); and Xuanzong (705-755). Water Zhenla's territory was eight hundred li in area. It bordered Bentuolang on the east, the Kingdom of Duoluobodi on the west, the ocean on the south, and Land Zhenla on the north. The king lived in a city called Po-lo-ti-pa (Isanapura). There were many cities (principalities) on its eastern border, which were said to be states. The Kingdom had many elephants. In the Yuanhe era 830, they sent a tribute mission to the Emperor's court.

### **The new Tang Annals rehashes the observations of the older histories**

The Kingdom of Zhenla, some call 'Khmer'. It was originally a vassal of . It was twenty-seven thousand li away from the capital of the Middle Kingdom. It bordered Chequ on the east, Pi'ao on the west, the ocean on the south, Tao-ming on the north, and Huan-zhou on the north-east. They family name of the king was Ch'a-li (Kshatriya). He attacked and subdued Funan at the early period of the Zhenguan era (627-49). After the Chenlong period (705-707), Zhenla was divided into two states. The northern half, which consisted of mountains and valleys, was call land Zhenla. The southern half, bordering on the sea, was low and covered with lakes and waterways. It was called Water Zhenla. The king lived in a city called Po=lo-ti-pa (Isanapura). Land Zhenla was also known as the Kingdom of Wendan and Po-lien. The title of its imperial reign is Da Qu.

Modern Chinese scholars believe that Land Zhenla first established its capital in the Taqu area, and that both 'Ta Qu' and "Da Qu' are Chinese transliterations of the Lao words "Tha Khaek'. It is common practice for classical Chinese texts to name a foreign capital after the title of its ruler's reign, or to name the title of a foreign ruler's reign after the name of his capital. Xuan Zang's the Western Territories in the Great Tang Dynasty has many such examples. Ta Qu may be Land Zhenla's first political centre. It is only at a later date that the Kingdom moved its capital northward to Wendan (hence the Kingdom of Wendan), today's Vientiane.

According to Chinese sources, after Zhenla sent an embassy to China in 710, further tribute missions were dispatched by order of the Kingdom of Land Zhenla, or Wendan. But in 813 the name of the kingdom went back to Zhenla. The records are, however, sketchy, stating merely the dates of the embassy's arrival and the gifts it brought. There is no record of Water Zhenla to the

south. Also, Water Zhenla had been under the control of two Southern Sea Kingdoms and had become their vassal. The Mekong Delta area broke up into tiny pockets of power controlled by minor local chiefs. Land Zhenla, in an effort to free itself from such chaos kept moving northwards, eventually establishing a sphere of influence as far away as Yunan.

One of the two new maritime powers, or South Sea Kingdoms, was the Malayan Kingdom of Srivijaya in south-east Sumatra. From the mid-seventh century onwards it replaced Funan and held dominion of the major sea lanes.

### **The stories of various foreign countries, written in 1225, records**

The country (Kingdom of Srivijaya) controlled the chief entry ports; if commercial ship passed without coming in, warships would be dispatched to demolish the fleet.

In 618, Jayavarman I seems to have been succeeded by his wife for thirty years. No doubt, the eight century constitutes one of the confusing periods of Khmer history. Who was the successor of Jayadavi (the widow of Jayavarman I)? History has no account of his name, though he was known to be hot-headed and stupid, and eventually lost his head to the Maharaja, Emperor of the Southern Seas. In 916, an Arabian writer wrote down the account of a trader, Sulayman:

In the eight century, the king of Zhenla said to his ministers: 'I have a wish: to behold the head of the Maharaja before me on a platter.' The wish passed from mouth to mouth, and finally reached the ears of the Maharaja himself. Pretending to start off on a voyage of inspection of his Kingdom, the Maharaja set sail directly for Zhenla. He had no trouble in sailing up the river to the capital, entering the palace and seizing the king. 'You have expressed a desire to see my head before you on a platter,' he said. 'If you also said you wished to seize my country, I would have done the same to yours. But as you only expressed the first of these desires, I will be content to give you the treatment you wished to try on me.' Then he had the prince beheaded, and ordered the prime minister to proclaim a new king. Then Maharaja departed immediately to return to his country without taking a single thing, or allowing any of his followers to do so.

In 790, a Water Zhenla prince, who for reasons unknown had been living in exile in Java, returned home. Generally referred to as the great grand-nephew through the female line of a prince of Aninditapura, the young prince united the two Zhenla and defeated the invaders from the Southern Sea. In 802, on the hilltop of Phnom Kulen in Angkor, he declared independence from Java, proclaimed himself the 'Universal Monarch', and founded the cult of the Devaraja, or God King. This young prince was Jayavarman II, generally accepted as the founder of the Khmer empire. Thus began the glory of the Angkor period.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Wai-Chuen: Angkor Wat, The Khmers in Ancient Chinese Annals (2000) Pp.17-21

### **Book of Barbarians states**

Water Zhenla and Land Zhenla shared the same borders with the barbarians at Zhennan (Kengtung). The barbarian thieves led an army to the coast, saw the big waves, and dejectedly retreated.

Zhenla was established in the mid-sixth century and continued to expand. The Emperor of the Southern Seas, Sri Maharajah, had dominion over it for a time, but beginning from the early century, with the ascension of Jayavarman II, the Khmer empire grew to include not only the territories of Funan, but also northwards to Dali and Xishuangbanna in today's Yunnan province, north-eastwards to Nhe Tinh province of Vietnam, and westwards to Burma's Shan state.

### **The Tsefu Yuan Kuei: the story of Zhenla, states**

[The king of Zhenla] wore an ornamented gold crown, a pearl necklace, leather shoes, and gold earrings.

### **The late Han Annals from the third century states**

In AD 74, the southern-western barbarians of Ainu, Daner, and Jiaoyao respectively sent missions. All Ainus pierced their noses and ears.

The paintings and murals from the third to seventh century, now on display in Rathburi on Thailand's Menang River, and the museums in Phnom Penh, often depict nobility and commoners wearing enormous earrings. Most importantly, the Cambodia national Museum in Phnom Penh and the Musee Guimet in Paris both house stone statues of Jayavarman VII, with a big in his earlobe to indulge his passion for earrings.

The Shan and the people of Funan and Zhenla also had a passion for chewing betel nut.

### **Chinese Encyclopedia, Nationalities states**

The Shans...practiced body tattoos...and enjoyed chewing betel nuts.

### **The new Tang Annals**

In Zhenla, also called Khmer, hosts treated their guests to betel nuts.

### **The story of Luonyang's Buddhist temple**

Funan was the largest and strongest Kingdom among the southern barbarians. Its people were many, and it produced gold, jade, crystal, and other treasures and the people loved chewing betel nuts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Wai-Chuen: Angkor Wat, The Khmers in Ancient Chinese Annals (2000) Pp.24-25



Even today, there are some old Khmer women, who are living in Australia, still chewing betel nuts. They ask their relatives in Cambodia to send some betel nuts for them chewing in their spare time. I saw my grand-mother and her sisters also chewed the betel nuts when they were still alive before 1975. But this Khmer generation who like to chew chewing gums instead of chewing betel nuts in their spare times. The chewing gums today is to care for our healthy teeth, I suppose. But I was told in an old day of Prince Sihanouk's monarchy reign and Lon Nol's republic regime that chewing betel nuts are to make the old Khmer women's teeth stronger and healthier.

The Sui Annals also carries information on the people of Zhenla and 'painted pottery':

When parents died, children would fast for seven days, cut their hair, and cry. Monks, priests, and relatives would gather at the house of the deceased. Music would be played to accompany the departure of the spirit. Incensed woods were used to cremate the body of the deceased. The ashes would then be put into golden or silver pots and sent out to sea. The poor would use painted pottery.

### **The former Tang Annals: the story of Zhenla states**

The people to the south of Linyi all have curly hair and dark complexion, and are generally know Kunlun....the Kingdom of Zhenla bordered Linyi on the north-west. It was originally a vassal of Funan and a part of Kunlun.

### **The new Tang Annals: the story of Zhenla states**

Funan is situated seven thousand li to the west of Rinan...The imperial reign is titled Gulong....The emperor travels by elephant. Its people have dark complexion and curly hair, and they go about naked.

Finally, Memorials on the customs of Cambodia, written in 1297, comments on the natives as: 'a coarse people ugly and deeply sunburned.

The above texts describe the people of Funan or Zhenla as 'of small stature and dark complexion, and with curly hair'. Of particular important, however, is the word 'Kunlun'. The New Tang Annals mentions the title of the imperial reign as 'Gulong', a derivative of 'Kunlun'. This word first appeared in the Jin Annals, volume 32, written in the third century. People who had a long figure and dark complexion were called Kunlun.

### **The history of the Chinese people, states**

The word 'Kunlun' first appeared in the Jin Annals. During the Tang dynasty) 618-907) 'Kunlun and 'Kunlun slaves' were often found in history books and short sketches. Kunlun slaves were dark in complexion, and 'Kunlun' also meant black. It was even used to convey the meaning of



a black person. Such usage can also be found in Song poetry....Xu Weijun's Record of Sea Voyages mentions two mountains, one large and one small, standing in the sea to the south of Qizhouyang, that are called Kunlun. 'Not only the natives of Zhenla, but most inhabitants of the South Seas archipelagos have dark complexion....Kunlun occupies an important position in the Southern Seas lances and is familiar to all seafarers. Hence the natives become generally known Kunlun. Sometimes they are also called black people. During the Tang Dynasty the kingdom of Zhenla was powerful and ruled over the natives of the Southern Seas; and Kunlun was also a dominion of Zhenla. Hence the natives of the Southern Seas are generally known as Kunlun. The name is derived from Kunlun Island.

Kunlun is in fact Con Dau, situated 180 kilometres off shore from today's Vung Tau, a port at the mouth of the Mekong delta. Also called Poul Condore, it is an archipelago comprised of one large island and more than a dozen small islands, and has been an important index to seafarers travelling between China and West Asia since the third century BC. The archipelago was inhabited by people with dark complexion and curly hair. Hence traders, pilgrims, and seafarers called them by the name of the islands-'Kunlun'. At the height of its power during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Zhenla controlled much of the Southern Seas. Since the people of Zhenla also had dark complexions and curly hair, they too became known as 'Kunlun' to the Chinese.

Classical Chinese texts make repeated references to the Zhenla people's short stature. The General Records, written in 801, is the first book from Imperial China to mention the pygmies of Indochina:

During Emperor En's time (110), about three thousand barbarians called Jiaoyas from Yunchang surrendered. They presented ivory and buffalos. These barbarians were about three feet tall. They lived in caves and were good at swimming. Animals and birds were scared of them. Their lands bloomed in summer and died in winter.

Those black pygmies probably lived in the Shan state of today's Burma. Their dark complexion, short stature, and curly hair are exactly the same as the Funan or Zhenla people described in classical Chinese texts.

The most innovation publication of the northern school is by the Chinese scholar Chen Xujin, A Preliminary Investigation of the History of Funan (1975):

The first settlement of the Mon-Khmers may be the south-western part of China, near the borders with Vietnam and Laos, Migration continued slowly and they eventually arrived at the Mun River on the upper reaches of the Mekong River. It is possible that the Mon-Khmers took residence in this area for quite a long time...Afterwards a branch moved south-westwards and created such Mon Kingdoms as Loudou and Nuwang, and Panpan, Chitu, and Luoyue on the Malaya peninsula. Another branch travelled south-eastwards and arrived in today's Kampuchea

and South Vietnam, creating the kingdom of Funan. It later became Zhenla and eventually modern Kampuchea.

The name of Chenla first appeared in history when, according to the Sui-Shu (A.D. 589-618), that country sent an embassy to China in 616 or 617. Isanavarman I was ruling in Chenla at that time. The paragraph on Chenla says: "It was originally a vassal of Funan....Sitrasena attacked Funan and subdued it." Pelliot adds that Chenla was Cambodia. (660, 37)

At the time of the embassy mentioned above, Chenla already had a history perhaps two centuries old. Its originally dynasty had disappeared, and Isanavarman was the third king of a new and apparently foreign dynasty.

The primitive site of Chenla seems to have been in the region of Basak, on the Mekong, in what is now southern Laos, just below the mouth of the Mun River. The early kings increased the territory toward the south. As we shall see, Bhavavarman and Sitrasena added Funan (without its dependencies), the lower Mun valley, and part of the region south of the Great Lake. Isanasena added the region north of the Great Lake and apparently all of what is now eastern Siam.

Hsuan Chuan says that in the middle of the seventh century, Isanapura (Chenla) occupied the region between Dvaravati (the lower Menam valley) and Mahachampa. At the time of the division into two parts-Maritime and Upper Chenla-at the beginning of the eighth century, Chenla bordered Annam (present Tonkin) on the northeast and the Tai Kingdom of Nan Chao, in what is now the Chinese province of Yunnan, on the north. It does not seem to have inherited the vassal states of Funan.

Chenla, at its greatest extent, consisted of two natural physical divisions-a northern or upper land region, extending from the southern slope of the Dangrek Mountains to the border of Nanchao, and a southern or low region, consisting of the basins of the lower Mekong and the Tonle Sap. The northern division was composed of mountains and valleys. The southern division was low. It was cut up by rivers and dotted with lakes, partly subject to annual inundations and daily tides.

About 220 miles above the present mouth of the Mekong, at the site of the present capital of Phnom Penh, the river divides into two great forks-the Anterior (eastern) and the Posterior (western). This is considered the head of the delta, and from here these two forks divide and subdivide into countless branches and channels, which form the network of waterways of the delta. The Mekong, one of the world's great rivers, as long as the Mississippi and carrying a great volume of water, rises, where all good Asiatic rivers rise, in the snow-capped plateau of Tibet, and flows into the forks from the northeast. The Tonle Sap, which drains the central basin of Cambodia, flows in from the northwest to complete the X, the Caturmukha (Four faces), present site of the capital.

The Great Lake, located in the central basin of Cambodia, and drained by the Tonle Sap, is one of the world's marvels. In normal times it is a shallow, muddy pool, or collection of pools, thirty or forty miles long, and four or five miles wide, navigable only for shallow boats poled by hands. But, during the flood season, which lasts from July to January, the Mekong, swollen by the rains, hit the delta with such a tremendous impact of water that the course of the Tonle Sap is reversed and the central basin is filled until it becomes a great lake, eighty to one hundred miles long, fifteen to thirty miles wide, and in places forty or fifty feet deep.

Late in October the water begins to recede and, by the time it has reached its normal limits in February, millions of fish are left imprisoned in the many muddy pools and bayous formed by the retreating water. These fish, which today rank second to rice among the products of Indo-China, no doubt attracted early settlers to this region. The discoveries made at the pre-historic station of Samrong Sen, on a branch of the Tonle Sap, show that this region was at least partly occupied by a people similar to the ancestors of Funanese, only a few centuries before the Kingdom of Funan was established in the delta.<sup>3</sup>

Be that as it may, the inscriptions of Chenla show no knowledge whatever of the Kambuja and say not a word of Kambu or Srutavarman or Sreshthavarman. The inscriptions of Bhavavarman and his successors go on repeating that they are members of the Lunar dynasty of Kaundinya-Soma, as if they had never heard of Kambu and Mera (368). There are, however, a few indications that some of these terms were in use at that time. The term Kambu or any derivation of it does not occur in any inscription of the Chenla period. The country and its principalities were called by the names of their capitals-Bhavapura, Isanapura, Vyadhapura, Sambhupura, etc.-which, in their turn, are sometimes named after their founders. But Chenla is said to be a Chinese transcription of Kambuja, which seems to be an indication that the term was applied to the country from the time it was first mentioned by the Chinese, if not earlier. An inscription of the twelfth century (Vat Phu) mentions a Vijaya (district) of Sreshthapura as existing in the vicinity of Vat Phu, the reputed cradle of Chenla and several inscriptions of Kambuja period mention Sreshthapura.

More recently, the principal interpreters of the inscriptions have been epigraphists, Louis Finot and George Coedes. Finot considered Chenla as the beginning of Cambodia and enumerated the first kings as follows: Srutavarman, Sreshthavarman, Bhavavarman, and Mahendravarman assuming that Viravarman was not a king of Chenla and that Bhavavarman conquered Chenla on the death of Sreshthavarman and Funan on the death of Rudravarman.<sup>4</sup>

Our information regarding the history of Funan is based chiefly on the statements of the dynastic histories of China and Chinese visitors and travellers, especially the data collected by Paul Pelliot. Right at the beginning of the history of Chenla, however, inscriptions become an

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.37

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.40-41

important, perhaps the principle, source of information. Some of the inscriptions which give us data on the reign of Bhavavarman I belong to later reigns; others seem to belong to the reign of this monarch.

The two inscriptions on the inner pillars of the old brick sanctuary at Hanchey, just above Kompong Cham on the Mekong, were among the first discovered and were long considered as the most ancient in Cambodia. Coedes, as we have seen, thinks they belong to the reign of Bhavavarman II.

Barth praises the inscriptions of the Chenla period as models of regularity, finish, and elegance such as have never been found at any time in India. Almost from the beginning, they were partly in Khmer, while those of Funan, as well as the early inscriptions of Champa, were nearly all in Sanskrit.

The inscriptions of this reign were all Sivaite. Most of them commemorate the erection of lingas, under various vocables-Sambhu (Thma Kre, Chruoy Ampil, Tham Pet Thong), Tryyambaka (Phnom Banteay Neang), Tribhuanesvara (Veal Kantel). These lingas are interesting, because they are the first ones mentioned in Cambodia epigraphy. Nagasena almost certainly referred to a linga under the vocable of Mahe'svara, and their worship was probably introduced or systematized by the second Kaundinya, who introduced the customs of India.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the inscriptions of this reign show that from the beginning, Chenla received instruction in the sacred books of India. The inscription of the Prasat Ba An, near the village of Veal Kantel, province of the Tonle Repou, just below the border of Laos, relates the erection of an image to Tribhuanesvara (Siva), accompanied by a figure of the sun. The donation was made by a Brahman savant, named Somasarman, husband of Bhavavarman's sister. Among the gifts made to the temple were a complete copy of the Mahabharata, a copy of the Ramayana, and apparently a copy of the Puranas.

This inscription is interesting as showing the extent to which Indian influence had penetrated the country, even to this Northern Province at this early date. B. R. Chatterjee, an Indian historian who has written on Cambodia, cites an item from this inscription which shows how the most hide-bound Indian customs may become liberalized outside of the mother country. It was that a Brahman married a Kshatriya and the offspring was a Kshatriya. Such marriage, he says, are rare in India, and when they occur, the children belong to the caste of the father, whereas in Indo-China they belonged to that of the mother.

Some of the ruins of buildings of the ancient Chenla region run back to the reign of Bhavavarman I, perhaps earlier. Among these may be noted, in order descending the Mekong,

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.42-43

the remains of the earliest temple at Vat Phu, the Prasat Bran, the Asram Maharosei, and the the Hanchey group. These monuments are described in the chapter on architecture.<sup>6</sup>

But on the slope of Phu Basak, probably the Lingaparvata of the inscription, where now stands the immense temple of Vat Phu, was erected what was probably the oldest know Khmer temple.

Prasat Bran, on the west bank of the Mekong across from Stung Treng at the mouth of the Se Kong belong probably to the reign of Bhavavarman I; for an inscription found in the vicinity mentions this king under a name other than his posthumous name and also gives the names of his father and sister.

Asram Maharosei, which parmentier assigns to the period intermediate between Funan and Chenla, is believed by Mauger to have been erected originally near the Kratie, near the place where the rock inscription of Thma Kre was found, and later moved to its present site near Angkor Borei.

The sanctuary at Hanchey, on the west bank of the Mekong a little above the present city of Kompong Cham, is believed to have been erected during the reign of Bhavavarman I, as its two pillar inscriptions are believed to be this region. The mandapa may have been of the Funan period.

The south tower of Banteay Prei Nokor is believed by Parmentier to have been one of the earliest buildings of the transition period between the architecture of Funan and Chenla.

Chenla, before the annexation of Funan, was entirely an inland country, communicating with the sea only by the Mekong through Funan. It had no means of holding in subjection the different states of the vast empire of Funan. The states on the Malay Peninsula may have remained loyal to Funan for some time after its reduction to vassalage by Chenla.<sup>7</sup>

The history of the T'ang dynasty says that, shortly after the beginning of the Cheng-Huan period) 627-649), i.e., in 627 or shortly afterward, Isanavarman conquered Funan and deniftely annexed its territory. Under Bhavavarman I and Mahendravarman, it seems, Funan had occupied the position of a vassal state, with its capital at To-mu (probably Ba Phnom). Now, its existence was ended and its territory was incorporated into Chenla. The Hsin T'ang Shu says, "(Their king) had his capital at the city of To-mu. Brusquely, his city was reduced by Chenla and he was forced to emigrate to the south, to the city of Nafuna (660, 274). Coedes translates the name of this capital as Naravaranagara and think it is equivalent to Angkor Borei.

Up to this time, the capital of Chenla seems to have been in the vicinity of vat Phu, or possibly at Stung Treng. But Isanavarman, undoubtedly bent on consolidating and extending his kingdom,

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.42-43

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.44

found the old capital too near his eastern border. So, sometime early in his reign, he moved to a place on the Stung Sen river, about twelve miles north of the present city of Kompong Thom, where, in the dense forest, near the present village of Sambor-Prei Kuk, the most remarkable group of ruins of pre-Angkorian Cambodia have been discovered.

In Isanavarman's time, Isanapura must have been a considerable city, far larger than any precious capital. "This Prince made his residence in the city of Y-che-na [=city of Isana=Isanapura], which counts more than 20, 000 families....The Kingdom contains more than 30 other cities, each peopled with many thousands of families are the same as Lin-yi" (Champa).

An undated inscription (21, st. 2) speaks of Isanavarman as the "suzerain of three cities." Another inscription (80, st. 4), as stated, gives the names of the three cities-Cakrankapura, Amoghapura, and Bhimapura. As Chinese writers say that Chenla contained thirty important cities and as each of the three cities mentioned above is said to have had a governor, they seem to have been vassal Kingdoms.

Chenla had probably exercised some sort of suzerainty over this region, for there had been some Khmer activity there before this date. As has been seen, an inscription celebrating a victory, found in Battambang, mentions King Bhavavarman and that king probably erected a temple to Gambiresvara at Ak Yom and possibly the earliest temple at Prasat Kok Po. An inscription dated 609 has been found at Ak Yom, probably in reemploy from a sixth-century temple in light material. An inscription of an earlier date had also been found in the upper Mun Valley.<sup>8</sup>

Isanavarman was a great builder as well as a conqueror and organizer. The capital he erected at Sambor Prei Kuk and named after himself (Isanapura), without counting addition made to it by later rulers, was the greatest conglomeration of buildings of pre-Angkorian Cambodia. Chenla seems to have reached its apogee during his reign.

There are indications of building activity in other parts of Chenla during this reign, especially in the vicinity of Angkor Borei, where an inscription dated 611 has been found (354, 1935, 491). A stele inscription at Ang Pou, or Vat Pou, in the same region, relates the erection there of a linga, an image of Siva-Vishnu (Harihara) and an Asram (hermitage) to Bhagavat, by a Muni (i.e., a man retired from the world), whose praises Isanavarman. The two-dated inscriptions (dated 604 and 624) came from the great temple of Bayang, but were probably earlier than the temple, which seems to have been completed during the later years of Isanavarman's reign, or very early in that of his predecessor; for the inscription consecrating the temple mentions a King Bhavavarman and Coedes dates it about 640.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the Prasat Bayang was probably completed and dedicated during the reign of this King. It is probable, also, that the temple of Asram Maharosei, believed to have been originally constructed

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.48-49

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.51

on the Mekong in Chenla, was removed to its present location about this time, when there seems to have been much interest in this region.<sup>10</sup>

Jayavarman I (of Chenla), “The Protégé of Victory,” came to the throne some time between 640, the last probably date of Bhavavarman II, and 657, his own earliest certain date. His relationship with his predecessors is not known; but he retained as court physician, Simhadatta, son of Simhavira, poet and minister of Isanavarman, of the hereditary family Adhyapura; so he seems to have belonged to the royal dynasty of Isanavarman, which his predecessor apparently did not.

He is generally known as Jayavarman I, by writers who consider Chenla, but not Funan, as hereditary antecedent of Cambodia, although there was apparently at least one Jayavarman between him and the king generally known as Jayavarman II of Kambuja. All we know about Jayavarman I, we get from contemporary inscriptions. Rosny says that, between 618 and 699, Chenla sent ambassadors four times to the Imperial Court (680, 181). Some of these embassies may have been sent during the reign of this king, but we know nothing about. The genealogies of the later inscriptions generally attach themselves to Bhavavarman and Rudravarman and do not mention Jayavarman I.

These inscriptions praise Jayavarman, frequently and fulsomely, for his qualities both as warrior and man. Here are some of the praises they bestow on him:

“Conqueror of the circle of his enemies”; “the glorious lion of kings, the victorious Jayavarman”; “Victory is to the King Sri Jayavarman, whose commands are respected by innumerable inclined Kings and who in combat is a living incarnation of Victory...then this supporter of the earth, punisher of his enemies, governed the earth inherited from his ancestors and increased by the conquest of other lands”; “Victorious is the King Sri Jayavarman...to whom the fickle goddess of fortune; Laksmi, is firmly attached...skilful in the task of the protecting the world, he is proclaimed by sages to be the thousand-eyed god (Indra) in person”; “His arrow, his excellent bow, which he bends in spite of its double weight, after his long campaigns, he has deposited them as useless; he, the first of those who knew the science of combating the impetuosity of elephants, the force of cavalry, the will of man; he, the incomparable master of all the arts, to begin with those of singing, instrument music and dancing; he, a true repository of everything desirable and subtle, an ocean of which science, patience, moderation, cleverness, judgment, liberality, are the jewels,...this master of masters on earth, His Majesty Jayavarman”.

The inscriptions praise Jayavarman for his skill in the warfare. He seems to have been credited with some improvements in the art of war. The inscription of Vat Phu says he introduced cavalry and a method of checking the charges of elephants. Then, the inscription says, he laid aside his bows and arrows as useless; i.e., apparently devoted himself to the art of peace.

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<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.52



In his early years, he seems to have conquered the present Central and Upper Laos. The Chinese tell us that, in 650-656, Sang Kao, which we placed in the vicinity of Cammon, and several other states which had sent embassies to the Imperial Court in 638, near the close of Isanavarman's reign, were now conquered by Chenla. These states must have extended north to the no-man's land inhabited by Khas between this region and that occupied by the Tai of the new Kingdom of Nan Chao, in Yunnan; for, as will be seen, in the division of the Kingdom which followed closely on the end of Jayavarman's reign, Upland Chenla extended to Nan Chao.

We have seen the effect of Pallava, or perhaps it would be better to say pre-Pallava, influence on Funan. This influence continued during the Chenla period. Pallava power was now at its height. It reached its pinnacle during the reign of its King Narasimhavarman I, which came to an end in 655 or 660, during the early days of the reign of Jayavarman I in Chenla. The Pallavas has lost the Vengi country, between the Kistna and Godaveri; but around Kancipura at the south they were building fine stone monuments and carving sculptures which were among the best of which India can boast.

Many inscriptions were made on stone during this period. The new Pallava script, developed from the same pre-Pallava, or Vengi, which had been taken into Indo-China and Indonesia, was practically identical with that used in Chenla. The language appeared in the inscriptions of southern India in the seventh century-the same century Khmer appeared in the inscriptions of Chenla. (The first known dated inscription of the Pallava country, partly in Tamil, was apparently the Vallam Cave inscription, during the reign of Mahendravarman I, 600-630; the earliest inscription wholly or partly in Khmer seems to have been that of Angkor Borei, 611, or possibly Ak Yom, 609; that in Cham, Dong-Yen-Chau, 400(?), (229); in Old Malay, Kedukan Bukit, 683; in Kawi, Dinaya, 760).

An undated Sanskrit inscription of the reign of Jayavarman I (Tang Krang, 213 (1), st. 4) is only the inscription of Indo-China which mentions Kancipura, the Pallava capital.

Two inscriptions ascribed to Jayavarman I are Buddhist. A stele inscription of Vat Prey Veir (I), dated 664-665, relates the transmission, by hereditary right, but authorized and guaranteed by King Jayavarman, of the property or use of the religious domain. This was believed by Barth to have been the first Buddhist inscription of Cambodia and the first one not beginning with an innovation to the Brahmanic gods.<sup>11</sup>

Jayavarman I seems to have reigned in the Banteay Prei Nokor-Ba Phnom (Vyadhapura) region. After 681 we have no dated inscription or other document which mentions a ruler by name for thirty-two years, when an as-yet-unpublished inscription, found at the West Baray, Angkor Thom, mentions a ruler called Jayadevi, who in the opinion of Coedes (who has read the inscription) was the widow of Jayavarman I and reigned after his death. These twenty-five or

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<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.54-55

thirty years constitute one of the most confusing periods of Khmer history. There was trouble; for Jayadevi complained of it in the above-mentioned inscription. A group of petty kings sprang into prominence and the country became divided into an Upper and a Lower Chenla. But Jayavarman I and his successors seem to have been at least nominally in control of Lower Chenla during the entire period; for later inscriptions refer to them as “Adhirajas” (=Supreme Kings).

Aninditapura (or Jayadityapura as it was probably called at first), since its conquest, apparently early in the Isanavarman I's reign, had been a dependency of Chenla, governed by “Isavara” (Lords) of the family of Baladitya. A much later inscription-Pre Rup-says Sarasvati, maternal niece of Baladitya, married a Brahman named Visvarupa. Their son, Nripatindravarman (who seems to have been a contemporary of Jayavarman I, at least during the latter part of that monarch's reign) ruled as king and apparently restored the old Kingdom of Jayadityapura, with a strip of delta to the sea at the ancient port of Oc Ek and possibly with a capital at Angkor Borei.<sup>12</sup>

At any rate, this region assumed great prominence during the last two decades of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth centuries. Many inscriptions and monuments of this period are found there, some of which are dated. At first, Sambhupura may have included what became Upper Chenla in what is believed to have been the vassal state of Bhavapura. These Chinese say the division into Upper and Lower Chenla took place after 707. The first ruler of Sambhupura mentioned in the inscriptions is a female-x (a)-presumed to have been a daughter married Pushkaraksha, son of Nripatindravarman of Aninditapura, and he thus became king of Sambhupura.

Chinese writers say that, after the Chen-long period (705-707), Chenla was divided into two states. The northern part, which consisted of mountains and valleys, was called Land Chenla. It was said to be 700 li in extent. The southern part, bordering on the sea, was low and covered with lakes and waterways. It was called Water Chenla. Its extent was 800 li. The king lived in a city called Po-lo-ti-pa. These divisions may better be called in English, Upper Chenla and Lower, or maritime Chenla. (Upper Chenla was also called Wen Tan and Po-lien by the Chinese.)

The identification of Sambor as the capital of Upper Chenla soon became the subject of further discussion. Aymonier, in the third volume of his *le Cambodge*, published in 1904, expressed the opinion that Sambor was “incontestably one of the capitals at the time of the succession; but of which part we are not in a position to decide”, and Pelliot, in his review of Hirth and Rockhill's translation of Chua-Ju-kua's *Chu-fan-chi*, modified his previous opinion as follows: “There is no doubt of the position of Wen Ta in ‘Upper Cambodia’; but it will be necessary to arrive at a more precise determination.

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<sup>12</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: *The Ancient Khmer Empire* (1999) P.57

It should be recalled that Pelliot had admitted that the distance to Sambor was too great to correspond to the Wen tan of Chia Tan's itinerary. So it seemed to be established that the capital of Wen Tan, or Upper Chenla, in the eight century, was well up into what is now Central Laos. In a later study Seidenfaden thought he had located it near the present site of Tha Khek, at the ancient seat of Nakhon Phanom (Nagara Bnam), where he says that ruins of a great city with traditions are found.

Taking up the question of the location of the capital of maritime Chenla, in 1928, Coedes contended that the Vyadhapura of the later inscriptions referred to the capital of Funan and not to that of Lower Chenla and corresponded to Ba Phnom rather than to Angkor Borei, or one of the capitals, of Lower Chenla.

Thus, it seems, both identifications made by Georges Maspero in 1904 were discarded. The capital of Upper Chenla seemed to have been near Tha Khek and one of the capitals of Lower Chenla may have been at or near Angkor Borei, while another capital seems to have been, at least for a time, at Sambor. The fact that the Chinese speak of Chenla and Wen tan in the same sentence indicates that Lower Chenla was considered the true successor of Chenla of Jayavarman I.

Recently, Pierre Dupont has advanced the idea that the Upper Chenla which seceded after 707 was the original Chenla of Bhavavarman I's reign, bearing, in honour of its first great king, the name Bhavapura. The old homeland of the Khmers, he believes, was the Bassac-Pakse region and the lower of the Mun valley. (Coedes, following a lead of Aymonier who found a reference in an inscription of Koh-Ker to Mula-desa which in Sanskrit is said to mean "country of origin", thinks a souvenir of the name may be found in that of the Mun river and suggests that in the name of the country through which the Se Mun runs (Mun- or Mula-desa) may be found the "country of origin" of the Khmers.)

Little is known of the dynasty of Bhavapura after the secession, but it was believed to be an offshoot of that of the old Chenla, as Upper Chenla claimed to be the legitimate Chenla. Long ago, Coedes expressed the opinion that the King Jayasimhavarman mentioned in the inscription of Phu Khiao Kao in the upper Se Mun valley (which inscription Coedes thinks is of the seventh-eight century) may have been a king of Bhavapura, i.e., of Upper Chenla (694, 90). Recently Coedes has advanced the less probably theory that the dynasty mentioned in an inscription of 937, found at Ayuthia, may have ruled in the same region.

All we know about the history of Upper Chenla during the eight century is what Chinese say about the embassies it sent to the Imperial Court. It seems to have extended the northward to the present Chinese province of Yunnan, with a wide, ill-defined borderland inhabited by Khas, speaking generally a Mon-Khmer language, and possibly Tai tribes on the border of Nan Chao. (H. Maspero's linguistic map shows the extent of the Mon-Khmer speakers in this vicinity. The Lolos and Tais in this region are generally later comers.) We know more about Wen tan's

dealing with China than we do about is relations with Lower Chenla during this period. Its route to the Imperial Court doubtless lay across the Annamitic chain to Nghean, thence to Chiao-Chou (Tonkin).

The first embassy from Wen Tan, we are told, arrived at the Imperial Court in 717; so the separation was consummated before that date. We know nothing else about it. Five years later (A.D. 722) Wen tan joined in a war against the Chinese governor of Chiao-Chu. A native chief of Nghean-probably a Tai or a Muong-revolted and, aided by the Chams and Khmer force from Wen tan, defeated the Chinese forces, conquered Chiao-Chu and proclaimed himself Hei-ti, "Black Emperor." A new Chinese expedition completely defeated his forces and he himself was killed in battle.

Another embassy appeared at the Imperial Court in 750, but it is not quite clear from which Chenla this embassy came. In 753 the Crown Prince of Wen Tan came to the court of China with a suite of twenty-six relatives and was received with great honor and given the title of "Protector Firm and Persevering." China was at war with the King of Nan Chao and was undoubtedly courting the King of Wen Tan for his assistance in helping to guard its southern frontier.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Northern and Northern Frontiers**

While continuing unsuccessful warfare against Kolofong, China prepared to strengthen its defences on its southern frontier. In 756 Chiao-Chu was transformed into the march of Ngan-an (Annam) and placed under a military commandant. In 767, as a result of Malay raids, the citadel of Lo-Thanh was constructed near the site of the present Hanoi. In 771 "the Viceroy of Upper Chenla, named Pho-Mi, came to the Court with his wife and offered in tribute eleven trained elephants. This Pho-Mi was given the grade of second president, inspector of the palace, and was given also the surname of Pin-han, 'guest of the Emperor.'" Another embassy is said to have been sent in 779.

Finally in 799 a last envoy appeared at court and received a Chinese title. Some time near the end of the century, Chia Tan wrote his famous itinerary of the route from Nghean to the capital of Wen Tan-a route which was followed by the Khmer expedition of 722 and has been followed ever since.

This seems to be about all we know Wen Tan, or Upper Chenla, during its independent existence.

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) Pp.58-59

## Lower Chenla

### Eight Century Inscriptins

We have no record of any embassies to the Chinese court from Lower Chenla during the eight century; unless it be the uncertain one of 750-of which we know nothing-and that of Pho-Mi, which Ma Tuan-lin, probably wrongly, attributed to Maritime Chenla (584, 484). But there are a few inscriptions of this period-all from Maritime Chenla.

The inscription of West Baray (mentioned above), in Sanskrit and Khmer, dated 713, celebrate the foundation to Siva Tripurantakesvara by Queen Jayadevi, apparently the widow of Jayavarman I, and her daughter, who was married to the Brahman Sakrasvamin. The inscription alludes to the misfortunes of the times. It seems to indicate that Jayavarman I's posthumous name was Sivapada.

A fragment of slab-inscription, in Sanskrit, undated, found recently in Vat Sre Beng, in the village of O lam, province of Chaudoc (Meat Chrouk/pig's mouth in Khmer Krom), in the delta, contains the name of Baladitya. A pillar-inscription, from a ruin at the foot of Phnom Ba The, or Nui Ba The (not far from the recent excavations of Oc Eo), in Sanskrit, undated but believed to be of this period, commemorates the erection of a Vardhanaman linga and a brick chapel for the devotion of Nripadityadeva.<sup>14</sup>

Four inscriptions-Mebon, Pre Rup, Preah Eynkosei, and Prasat Kompbhus-mention Baladitya and say he was king of Aninditapura and descendant of Kaundinya-Soma. This leads Coedes to think that the he must been connected with the ruling dynasty of Chenla, as he believes the Adhirajas of Vyadhapura were the descendants of the rulers of Funan.

Meanwhile, a new people-the Malays-were forming in western Indonesia. Our first knowledge of the formation of these new Kingdoms come to us from the earliest history of the Tang dynasty of Chia. Its first Kingdom seems to have been Malayu, whose center was in the lower valley of Jambi river near the southeast coast of Sumatra. Its first embassy appeared at the court of China (the Chinese called it Mo-Lo-yeou) in 644-646. In the period 670-673, an embassy arrived from Srivijaya (called Shih-li-fo-shih by the Chinese), whose capital of the same name was located near the site of the present Palembang little to the south of Jambi. From the statement of a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim and several inscriptions, the information is gained at Srivijaya conquered Malayu and sent an expedition to subdue java, which had not been submissive to Srivijaya.

The appearance of this new maritime Kingdom-which was to develop into the Empire of Srivijaya so soon after the dissolution of the maritime empire of Funan, had a tremendous influence on the all the countries and people of Southeast Asia, and especially Cambodia.

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.60

Even less is known of Srivijaya's conquests on the Malay Peninsula, which was now becoming Malay-for the first time. The Sanskrit inscription of vat Sema Muang, Tambralinga, known as the Ligor inscription, dated 775, recorded the erection of there of several Buddhist stupas by order of the King of Srivijaya. This inscription shows Srivijaya was in possession of the Bandon region at that time. How and when it came into possession of the region to the south is not known. To the north, perhaps the narrowness of the peninsula and the Mon occupation there discouraged the spread of the Malays in that direction. The old vassal states of Funan in the Bandon region and immediately to the south-Pan Pan, Tambralinga, Chih-t'u-seem to have been independent at the time of their conquest of by Srivijaya. Chenla seems never to have exercised political control over them, but the early language of this region was probably a pre-Khmer Austro-Asiatic and Khmer trade-settlements probably existed along the transpeninsula trade-route. So Khmer language and culture probably persisted there.<sup>15</sup>

Coedes agreed to the separation of Srivijaya from the early Sailendra, but not from Palembang. Thus, while Majumdar's theory of a north Indian origin of the Sailendra was not well based and has not received much consideration, to him belongs the credit of separating Sailendra and the Sailendra-before 775,at least. In reply to Majumdar's theory, Coedes advanced the hypothesis-once suggested by Finot-that the old Funan dynasty, known also as "kings of mountains," after the conquest of Funan by Chenla, may have gone to Java or the Bandon region or some former vassal of Funan and may have later reappeared as the Sailendra dynasty.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.60

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.66



JAYAVARMAN I AS A BUILDER

One of the principal reasons for thinking that the reign of Jayavarman I—which apparently began in revolution and was followed by chaos—was a troubled or impoverished one, is that no building can with certainty be assigned to this apparently long reign, well provided with inscriptions.

We are fairly certain that Jayavarman I was interested in the region around Banteay Prei Nokor, for

to the west of it, very early in the Chenla period, probably during the reign of Bhavavarman I. Jayavarman I probably built the center and northern towers, established his capital there, and built an earthen rampart and moat with the new central prasat as a center.

EXTENT OF JAYAVARMAN I'S EMPIRE: HIS CAPITAL

We know that Jayavarman I's predecessors conquered Funan in the south and as far as the valley of the Menam in the east; and the Chinese tell us that Jayavarman I conquered what is probably now central and northern Laos. But Jayavarman I's immediate predecessor had apparently been a usurper and had probably been overthrown by him<sup>10</sup> and Jayavarman I's reign was to be followed by the division of the kingdom into three parts. Civil wars and divisions seemed to have been the rule of the day. How much of the kingdom was actually under the control of Jayavarman is a question. The distribution of his inscriptions may throw some light on the subject.

Of the nineteen inscriptions assigned to this reign (p. 54), one—a doubtful one, Phu huu—was far to the south in the delta, near Sadek, the most southerly Khmer inscription yet found except Phnom Ba-Thé (p. 60). One—Vat Phu—was far to the north. Eight of the other eighteen were strung along the eastern bank of the Mekong, between the region of Ba Phnom and that of Kompong Cham. Of these, three—Vat Prei Vier (I and II) and Kdei Ang Chumnik (II), were in the Ba Phnom region; three—Kompong Rusei, Tüol Preah Theat, and Snay Pol—were in the province of Prei Veng, a little to the north; one—Prasat Preah Theat—was at Banteay Prei Nokor, still a little further up the river; and one—Tang Krang—was just across the river near Kompong Cham. Two were on the western side of the Mekong, a few hundred kilometers from the river—Vat Barai, or Baray, in the north; Loñvek, near the Tonle Sap, and five—Vat Tnot, Phum Chrei, Tüol an Tnot, Phum Komrieng, and Tüol Tramung—a little to the north and west of Angkor Borei (maps 6 and 7). The only inscriptions to get away from the valley of the Mekong were Baset, in Battambang, near the head of the Great Lake, and Preah Kuha Luong, near the seacoast south of Angkor Borei.

It will be noted that none of the inscriptions was in the immediate vicinity of Iśānapura. It seems certain that city was no longer the capital. Jayavarman I's capital probably was not at Angkor Borei, because that of Bhavavarman II seems to have been there<sup>11</sup> although many inscriptions of the period come from that vicinity. The choice seems to lie between Ba Phnom and Banteay Prei Nokor, with the odds in favor of the latter (map 6).

<sup>10</sup> Coedès seems to think, on the contrary, that Jayavarman I was a son of Bhavavarman II (278, 124).

<sup>11</sup> This argument would have no force if, as Coedès seems to believe, Jayavarman I was the son of Bhavavarman II.



MAP 7. Inscriptions, Chenla in the Eighth Century. 1. Sambor; 2. Anglung Prang; 3. Tuol Kuk Prasat; 4. Trapang Prei; 5. Vat Tasar Mo Roi; 6. Ta King.

an inscription dated 655 has been found on the walls of one of the group of three or four small square brick temples of Prasat Preah Theat, a few kilometers to the east of that ancient city. This group was probably built by Jayavarman I at that time, which was probably near the beginning of his reign. Banteay Prei Nokor was near the center of Jayavarman's kingdom, judging by his inscriptions, and was accessible to the Mekong at Ba Phnom as well as at Kompong Cham. The Prasat Preah Theat Toc group of temples had been built there probably in the Funan period and the south temple of the Prasat Preah Theat Thom group was built a few meters

The inscriptions and monuments assigned to the last years of the eight century and the first few years of the ninth are found in the Mekong valley above the forks, in the valley of the Tonle Sap and in the "V" between the water-basins. Jayavarman II, it seems, did not, at first at least, have



control of Upper Chenla, or even of all of Lower Chenla, but he seems to have begun the conquest of Lower Chenla soon after his return. This he didn't accomplish without trouble.<sup>17</sup>

Between the paragraphs given above, was inserted the following paragraphs, said to be extracted from the later Geography of the Ming, which may not refer to this period.

Chenla touches the south frontiers of Chen-ching. It has the sea at the east, Pu-kan (Pagan=Burma) at the west and Kia-lo-hi (Grahi, on the Bay of Bandon) at the south. Its fortified cities, villages and also the customs of its inhabitants resemble much those of Chen-ching. Its extent is 700 0 li. One sees in this country a tower of copper and eight figures of elephants of the same metal, placed as to guard the towers, each weighing 4,000 pounds. The Kingdom possesses war-elephants to the number of 200,000 and a multitude of horses, but they are small.<sup>18</sup>

Why did Chinese call Cambodia "Chenla[s]"? What does Chenla mean in Chinese? In 1296 Chou Ta-Kuan, like Marco Polo a few years earlier, sailed along the coast of what is Kampuchea Krom (now Vietnam). Instead of continuing towards Indonesias, however, he headed inland up the Mekong River, leaving it to enter the Great Lake that lies in the heart of the Cambodian plain. Crossing the lake, he disembarked on its north-eastern bank, not far from Angkor. Chou Ta-Kuan, who was accompanying a mission to extract homage for his master the Chinese emperor, arrived at the Cambodian capital in August 1296 and remained there until July 1297.

The 'Middle Kingdom' had long entertained diplomatic and commercial relations with Chenla, as the Chinese called Cambodia. What made Chou Ta-Kuan's visit to Cambodia so significant was the account of it he gave on his return.<sup>19</sup>

### **From Wen-Chou to Angkor**

Chou Ta-Kuan was a native of Yung-Kia in Chekiang, the home of Chou K'iu-Fei, author of Ling-Wai-Tai-Ta (1178). He embarked at Wen Chou, a port of Chekiang, and sailing south southwest, arrived at Chan Cheng (Chan Cheng (=the city of Chan) is the Chinese transcription of Champapura. The word Champa, applied to this region, first appeared in the Sanskrit inscription of Sambhuvarman, at Mi-son, in the fifth century saka (347; 535, 3, 12). The first mention of Chan Cheng is a couple of centuries later) (Champa). From there, he says, with a good wind one arrives in fifteenth days at Chen-Pu, (Probably near the site of the present Baria) the frontier of Cambodia. Then, one crosses the sea of Ku-Lun (probably between the mainland and the islands of Pulo Condor, which are called Kun-Lun) and reaches the mouth of the river (Mekong).

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<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.83

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.189

<sup>19</sup> Bruno Dagans: Angkor: Heart of an Asian Empire (1995)

One of the many mouths one can enter only by the fourth (Coedes believed this was the Mytho branch). All the others are encumbered with sand banks, which large ships cannot cross. Whichever way one looks, he sees only long rattans, old trees, yellow sands, white rushes. At first glance, it is not easy to locate the true mouth. Even mariners find it difficult. From the mouth one can, with a favourable current, in fifteen days reach at the north a country called Ch'a Nam. (Believed to be Kompong Chnang, but Pelliot suggests Phnom Penh). Here, one changes to a smaller boat and in ten days, with favourable current, passing via Pan-Lu-Suen, "half-ways village," and Fohsuen, "village of the Buddha," (Pelliot suggests Kompong Chnang and Babaur. Coedes thinks Fohsuen is Pursat), and crossing the fresh water sea, (now Tonle Sap River) one arrives at Kan-p'ang Hsui, (Kan Pang =Kompong, landing, would be the Angkor landing, at the mouth of the Siemreap river) 50 li from the city (of Angkor).<sup>20</sup>

### **Functionaries, Vassal governments, Villages, Army**

In this country, there are counsellors, generals, astronomers, etc., and, below them, all kinds of small employees; only the names differ from ours. Most of the time, princes are chosen for office; if not, those chosen offer their daughters as royal concubines. The insignia and the retinue depend also on rank. The highest dignitaries use a palanquin with gold litter and four parasols with gold handle; then come a palanquin with gold litter and one parasol with gold handle; finally simply a silver-handled parasol. There are also those who receive a palanquin with silver litter....These parasols are made of red Chinese taffeta and have fringes falling to the ground. The oiled parasols are of green taffeta with short fringes.

There are more than 90 vassal [subordinate] governments: Chen-Pu, Ch'a-Nan, Pa-Kien, Mou-Leang, Pa-Sie, P'ou-mai, Pa-Sseu-Li, and others each has its own functionaries. A wooden palisade serves as rampart.

Each village has a temple or stupa. However small, each has a police officer. On the great routes, there are places of rest like our post relays. In the recent war with Siam, the country was entirely devastated.

The troops go both naked and barefooted. In the right hand, they hold the lance; in the left, the buckler. The Cambodians have neither bows nor arrows, neither ballistas nor cannon, neither armoured-plate nor helmets. It is said that in the recent war with the Siamese, all the people were obliged to fight. They have neither tactics nor strategy.<sup>21</sup>

On his epic travels through Asia in the late 13th century, Marco Polo failed to see Kambuja, getting only as close as northern Burma and what is now northern Vietnam. So the people of Europe were not to know of the existence of the fabulous stone city until 1860.

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.244

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence Palmer Briggs: The Ancient Khmer Empire (1999) P.249

There remains only one reliable written account of life in Angkor, compiled by a Chinese visitor who was still stunned by the glittering magnificence of Angkor. He rapturously described the staggering stone work, and wrote of the gilded and mirrored audience halls and of the 3,000 to 5,000 concubines and palace girls.

But perhaps he still never saw the best: I have heard it said that inside the palace are many marvellous things; but the palace is strictly guarded and one cannot enter.

On several occasions Chou saw the King leave his palace:...on his wrists, ankles and fingers he has bracelets and rings of gold...he goes barefoot and the soles of his feet as well as the palms of his hand are dyed red. When he set out from the palace he was preceded by girls of the palace carrying utensils of gold and silver. Then followed goat carriages and horse carriage, all ornamented with gold. More than one hundred parasols were garnished with gold and had gold handles. Then followed the King, standing on an elephant whose tusks were enveloped in gold, holding in his hand the golden sword. He was surrounded by his bodyguards made up of palace girls carrying lances and shields, and by a cavalry guard mounted on horses and elephants.

Chou wrote of the abundant food-the two or three rice crops per year, onions and egg-plants, melons and gourds, sugar cane and taro: luscious oranges, peaches, bananas, lychees, plums and apricots. Domestic animals included horses, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens, while the forests teemed with game and birds.<sup>22</sup>

A Chinese-Cambodian born Ly Thiem Teng, in 1962, who was in charge of Khmer Culture, had led Khmer delegates and writers to China. There, he met a man, 69, Tea Sieu Meng who showed him many books of 14-15-16 century about relations of Cambodia. He copied these articles of 63 pages, which he translated from Chinese Tieu Chieu and Cantonese into Khmer. Many Chinese living in Cambodia from the past up to the present day are Chinese Cantonese, Hainan (Hainans mostly in Kampot province) and Tiew Chiew like myself-Sang Leng Keath of Chinese origin.

Ly Thiem Teng wrote a book of Chou Ta-Kuan's note on his memorials on the Customs of Cambodia, 1973: To prove why did Chinese call Cambodia "Chenla"? Chinese called Cambodia "Chenla" was that there were many Chinese merchants and sailors who had business with Cambodians. Chinese always bought beeswax and honey to their home. Especially Chinese bought pure wax to make candles.

Chenla had dense forests where there was a lot of honeybees and beeswaxes so "Chen" means "Pure/sot/Sar," whereas La means "Wax/bee/candles/Kramuon" (Chinese uses an adjective before a noun). Therefore, Chen+La means "Pure Wax/ Kramournsar/sot".

There were two Chenlas "Land Chenla and Water Chenla". Land Chenla was a part of former Khmer Empire is now Laos. In those old days, Cambodians always sold pure wax and honeybees

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<sup>22</sup> Simon Ross: Subjugation of Cambodia (1983) P. 7

to foreigners and Chinese sailors in Water Chenla before taking those pure wax and honeybees back to their home.

Water Chenla, where in those old days was the stocking place of pure wax and honey, known as “Srok Kramournsar”, as a great part of Khmer Kingdom is now Rach Gia of Yuon colonialists and expansionism. The great laziness of European historians who can’t tell us exactly what Chenla means? They're so extremely lazy to tell us Chenla is Chenla but had two Chenlas-Land Chenla and Water Chenla. What such lazy they are, European historians!

Chinese ambassador, Chou Ta-Kuan, entering to the mouth of Peam, travelled along the river northward for another half month, then come to one district, Ch’a-nan (Chinese travellers and businessmen in those days who could not pronounce properly the names of Khmer villages and provinces in Khmer. So “Ch’a-nan” was pronounced in Chinese accent instead of “Kompong Chhnang” province in Khmer accent...etc.)

Ly Thiem Teng wrote a book of Chou Ta-Kuan’s note on his memorials on the Customs of Cambodia, 1973 on P.35:

### **About Language**

Chinese language has also similar sound to these villagers but can’t communicate to each other at all. These villagers have a special language even though the languages of its neighbouring Cham or Siamese can’t be the same; they can’t listen to each other, either. They call their fathers “Pa Tho”. They also call their uncles “Pa Tho”. They call their mother “Me”. Aunts and women next door are also called “Me”.

We see Chinese heard Khmer called their father “Pa Tho”. Uncle was also called “Pa Tho”, which Chinese still could not pronounce Khmer names properly, was instead of “Pa Thom” that means “Uncle”. “Me”, in which Chinese still can’t pronounce in Khmer language properly instead of “Mae/Mother.” So Chinese called “Me instead of Mae/mother”. Khmer called their aunt “Miing instead of Me”. “Aunt” in Khmer; the younger sisters of one’s father or mother: pronoun, you (form used to address one’s younger aunt or a step-mother). May be it’s really hard for Chinese to say in Khmer names being already mentioned as above, like “Me/Miing/Aunt”. They said otherwise in their Chinese accent.

We sincerely would like to thank to Ly Thiem Teng's dedication and great effort, who could translate Chinese Chenlas into Khmer.

Why did “Chenla period” of its past greatest glorious zenith rapidly go down the drainage like that? Who was Angkar Leu/Cap Tren? Who brutally forced Cambodian refugees back into Cambodia from 1975 to 1979? Who secretly created Killing Fields in 1800-1845 and 1945 to present day in Khmer Krom, and in Kandal from 1975 to 1979 to brutally massacre more than 3 million innocent Cambodians, more than 460,000 live again from 1979 1991 in Cambodia like

that? Who were behind the Gall Bladder harvesters? How many Khmer Rouge groups are there? How many Pol Pots are there? Why are there so many and many Khmer refugees who are brutally dispersed to live everywhere on this planet so far so worse? Why are Cambodian lands getting shrank a little by little in the West “Siam” and in the East “Yuon” like that? Can the people in the outside world consider “Siamese and Yuonese” as the “Two civilized Nations” on the dead bodies of Khmers who were brutally butchered in the name of protecting of a tiny present-Cambodia? Who keep encroaching and plundering Cambodian lands so far so worse like that?