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On the Origin of the Śailendras of Indonesia

BY

Dr. G. Coedès.

After the publication of my article upon "*The kingdom of Śrīvijaya*" in *BEFEO.*, 6 (1918), Professors Vogel¹ and Krom² have each on his part developed a theory based upon a fact which I had pointed out only incidentally: the mention of the dynasty of the Śailendras in face B. of the inscription of Ligor (then called by mistake the inscription of Vieng Sa). This theory consists in considering the Sumatran kings of Śrīvijaya to have belonged from the beginning of their history to this dynasty of Śailendra and in admitting the equation Śailendra = the king of Śrīvijaya. Recalling the fact that the inscription of Kalasan (778 A.D.) has for its author a king, who was the "ornament of the Śailendra dynasty," Dr. Krom deduced in 1919 the existence of a Sumatran period in the history of Java—a period during which were constructed the great monuments of Central Java. This theory which was reproduced in his *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis* published in 1926, remained the standard

1 *Het koninkrijk, Śrīvijaya*, Bijdr. 75 (1919), p. 626.

2 *De Sumatraansche periode der Javaansche Geschiedenis*, Leyden 1919.

article till 1929, when Dr. Stutterheim¹ discovered in an inscription of the Kědu province the name of the king of Kalasan in a list of sovereigns of the Javanese dynasty of Matarām beginning with the name of Sañjaya, the author of the inscription of Caṅgal in 732 A.D. This discovery placed everything in doubt, since it became thenceforth difficult to consider a descendant of Sañjaya as belonging at the same time to the line of the kings of Śrīvijaya. Contradicting the theory of Dr. Krom, Dr. Stutterheim proposed to consider the Śailendras as a Javanese dynasty that had exercised authority over Śrīvijaya during a certain period. Against the "Sumatran period in Java," supposed by Krom, Stutterheim proposed a "Javanese period in Sumatra." Since that time each has supported his own theory: Krom has reproduced his theory in the second edition of his *Hindoe-Jvaansche Geschiedenis* (1932) and in the archaeological notes which he published from time to time in the *Bijdragen* or in the *Tijdschrift*; Stutterheim seems to consider his views to be the expression of truth itself.²

Dr. R. C. Majumdar has just devoted two articles³ to the Śailendras which complete each other and which, I think, solves, without taking a clear part in the controversy, this irritating problem. He completely dissociates the Śailendras from Śrīvijaya; he disputes the identification of Śrīvijaya with San-fo-ts'i of the Chinese and Zâbug or the empire of the Mahārāja of the Arab geographers—these two regions corresponding (according to him) to the empire of the Śailendras; finally, he proposes to place the cradle and the seat of power of the Śailendras in the Malay Peninsula, though he does not completely discard the possibility that the seat might have been found in Java, specially in the 8th century.

1 *Een belangrijke oorkonde uit de Kědoe*, Tijdschrift, 67 (1927), p. 172—*A Javanese period in Sumatran History*, Surakarta, 1929.

2 Cf. among other things, *De Verhouding tusschen Śrīvijaya en Matarām in de 8e eeuw A.D.* (Oudheidkundige Aanteekeningen, XVI), Bijdr., 86 (1930), p. 567.

3 *The Śailendra Empire*, *Journal of the Greater India Society* 1 (1934); *Les rois Śailendra de Suvarṇadīpa*, BEFEO., XXXIII.

The arguments used by Dr. Majumdar in support of his thesis are not equally convincing. I gladly recognise that the identification of She-li-fo-She (Śrīvijaya) with San-fo-ts'i is not certain either phonetically (inspite of the attempts of Aurousseau¹ to justify the same), nor historically, as the presence of the two names is attested at different dates. I recognise also the force of the argument derived from my previous works² which seeks to place the seat of the kingdom of Jāvaka and consequently of Zâbug in the Malay Peninsula.³ Without, however, wishing to refer everything to Palembang⁴ of which the archæology is still so poor in spite of recent discoveries,⁵ I feel obliged to record my protest, when Dr. Majumdar writes,⁶ "The definite identification of Śrīvijaya with Palembang does not rest at all upon any solid basis." Nevertheless, it is from Palembang, that comes the inscription relating to the foundation of Śrīvijaya,⁷ while the inscriptions of Bangka and of Karang Brahi (in the

1 BEFEO., XXIII, p. 477.

2 *A propos de la chute du royaume de Śrīvijaya*, Bijdr, 83 (1927), p. 459.

3 In favour of the localisation of San-fo-ts'i in the Malay Peninsula, there is one argument, which Dr. Majumdar does not seem to be aware of. The Chinese charts of Father Ricci (beginning of the 17th century) place *Kieou-Kiang and San-fo-ts'i* in the middle of the Peninsula (L. Giles, *Translation from the Chinese world-map of Father Ricci*, The Geographical Journal, LIII, 1919, pp. 20-21). But the charts give fantastic localisations for this region; besides, their late date takes away much of the weight of their evidence.

4 Everybody (including myself) has had difficulty in losing sight of a note in my first article on Śrīvijaya (BEFEO, XVIII, 6. p. 3, note 5) where I cautiously said, "This expression, 'The kingdom of Palembang', which will frequently occur in course of the present article, is a convenient designation: in employing it, however, I do not wish to affirm that the capital of this State was always at Palembang."

5 N. J. Krom, *Antiquities of Palembang*, Ann. Bibl. of Indian Archæology, 1931, p. 29; Devaprasad Ghosh, *Early art of Śrīvijaya*, Journal of the Greater India Society, I (1934) p. 30.

6 BEFEO., XXXIII.

7 This hypothesis of Prof. Ph. J. van Ronkel (*Acta Orientalia*, II (1924), p. 21) which Dr. Krom (*Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, p. 119) and myself (BEFEO., XXX, p. 37) did not believe to be maintainable,

hinterland of Jambi) in the name of the King of Śrīvijaya' seem to confirm this localisation well. Finally, when Dr. Majumdar claims that Yavabhūmi in the Nālandā inscription is a simple equivalent of Suvarṇadvīpa, which itself might be a vague term signifying the regions beyond the sea,² he neglects the testimony of the inscription of Čaṅgal in which Yavadvīpa could not reasonably signify any other place than the island of Java.

Whatever might be thought of these questions which I do not want to treat here for want of new evidence capable of being utilized for the discussion, there is one point in the article of Dr. Majumdar, which I think to be excellent and fruitful: this is the separation of the Śailendras and Śrīvijaya before the 11th century. I am so much the more eager to give him my support on this point, as Dr. Majumdar attributes to me "the hypothesis that the king of the Śailendra dynasty mentioned in face B of Ligor inscription was identical with the king of Śrīvijaya to whom face A of the same stèle refers". Although I had not formulated this hypothesis in a sufficiently precise manner in 1918,³ I willingly recognise my part of the responsibility for the identification of the Śailendras with the kings of Śrīvijaya.

Now, it is a fact (and Dr. Majumdar has the merit of bringing it out clearly) that the two faces of the stèle of Ligor are absolutely independent of each other. Face A

has been rendered possible by the interesting remarks of Dr. R. A. Kern. *Enkele aanteekeningen op G. Coedès' uitgave van de Maleische inschriften van Śrīvijaya*, *Bidr.* 88 (1931), p. 568 (Cf. esp. p. 511).

1 G. Coedès, *Les inscriptions malaises de Śrīvijaya*, BEFEO., XXX p. 29.

2 H. Kern, *Verspr. Geschr.*, VII p. 115.

3 After indicating that according to the Great Charter of Leyden, Māravijayottuṅgavarman, king of Katāha and Śrīviṣaya belongs to Śailendravamśa, I added, "Now the unfinished inscription incised upon the second face of the stèle of Vieng Sa (*read* Ligor) states precisely that the king Śrī Mahārāja was descended from Śailendravamśa. This proves at any rate that in connecting Śrīvijaya of the stèle of Vieng Sa with Śrīviṣaya of the charter of Rājarāja I, I do not depart from the right path in my researches.

(dated 775 A.D.) in the name of the King of Śrīvijaya gives a complete text. Face B commencing with the word 'Svasti' gives the beginning of a new text in a different script and a little later date, which could have been added by a king having no connection with that of face A.

In reality the epigraphic evidence mentioning Śrīvijaya and the Śailendras between the end of the 7th century and the beginning of the 11th divides itself in the following fashion:—

Dates	Mention of Śrīvijaya	Mention of Śailendra
685 690	Inscription in Old Malay from Palembang, Bangka etc.	
775	Stèle of Ligor, face A.	
After 775		Stèle of Ligor, face B.
778		Inscription of Kalasan
782		„ „ Kēlurak
ca. 850		Nālandā Plaque
1006	Great Charter of Leyden	

It will be seen from the above list that it is impossible, according to sound methods, to affirm that before the 11th century the kings of Śrīvijaya belonged to the Śailendra dynasty or that they reigned at Śrīvijaya. All that we can conclude from the above is that a little after 775, a Śailendra, probably that of the Kēlurak inscription,¹ incised at Ligor the beginning of an inscription upon the reverse of a stèle bearing on the other side a text emanating from Śrīvijaya and that in 1006 the king of Kaṭāha and of Śrīvijaya was a

1 The Śailendra king of the Kēlurak inscription of 782 A.D. bears the epithet *vairivaravīravimardana* "destroyer of the best of enemy-heroes"(a) The Śailendra king of face B of the Ligor stèle bears that of

Śailendra. It follows from this (and this should have been observed by Dr. Majumdar) that the controversy between Drs. Krom and Stutterheim is useless. The question of ascertaining if there was a Sumatran period in Java or a Javanese period in Sumatra, is badly presented, or rather it does not present itself at all. The existence of the Śailendras in Sumatra is not certainly attested before the 11th century. For the previous centuries one cannot attribute with Dr. Krom a Sumatran origin to the Śailendras of Javanese inscriptions of the 8th century, nor attribute with Dr. Krom to the Javanese Śailendras a supremacy over Sumatra during the same period. If the article of Dr. Majumdar serves to settle the difference by non-suiting both the adversaries, it will not be written in vain.

As regards the origin of the Śailendras Dr. Majumdar proposes to connect them with the Śaila and Śailodbhava dynasties of Orissa. "We do not lack the indication"; he writes at the end of his article, "to make us suppose that the Śailendras originated from Kalinga, and that they extended their power over the Far-East through the intermediary of Lower Burma and the Malay Peninsula". I would indicate here another possibility which, besides, does not exclude the hypothesis of Dr. Majumdar, and which could even complete the same.

Śailendra means "the king of the mountain". Now Indo-China in the first six centuries of the Christian era knew an empire governed by some kings bearing this title: this was Fu-nan. As early as 1911¹ Dr. L. Finot, retouching a

aśeśasarvārighamada (b), "impassioned for the murder of his innumerable enemies." These two inscriptions seem to be something other than the banal epithets of *praśasti*, since the Nālandā charter, referring no doubt to the same personage, states that he bore a name (perhaps indigenous) equivalent to that of "the destroyer of enemy-heroes". (*Śrīviravairimathānānugatābhīdhānah*) (c).

(a) *Tijdschrift*, vol. 68, p. 18.

(b) *BEFEO.*, XVIII, 6, p. 30 (corrected reading).

(c) *E.I.*, XVII, p. 323.

1 B.C.A.I., 1911, p. 29.

hypothesis of Gerini,¹ proposed to find in the name of Fu-nan (ancient pronunciation :—*b'u-nam*) a transcription of khmèr *bnam* (modern : *phnom*) meaning "mountain". More recently² he has suggested that "this name might correspond to an indigenous expression "kuruñ bnam", "king of the mountain", which the Chinese interpreted to mean "king of (the country) of Bnam". The Sanskrit inscriptions of Cambodia characterize in fact on different occasions the ancient sovereign of Fu-nan by terms signifying "king of the mountain". To the inscription of Han Cei (st. 10 face A., st. 5 face B.,)³ mentioned by Dr. Finot, I can add the testimony of the unpublished inscription of Kūk Prāl Kōt⁴ which calls them Śailarāja.

The kings of Fu-nan claimed the title of emperor. The inscription of Bhabavarman I⁵ gives one of them the title of *Sārvabhauma* which is an equivalent of *Caṅravartin*; the digraphic inscriptions of Yaśovarman I designate them by the expression *Adhirāja of Vyādhapura*.⁶ Now face B. of the Ligor stèle tells us that the king bore the title of Śrī Mahārāja "to signify that he derived his origin from Śailendravarṇsa," *Śailendravarṇsaṅprabha[va]nigadataḥ Śrīmahārājanāma*. This reading and this translation are the result of a corection⁷ by Mr. Mus of the faulty text of the original which reads *prabhanigadataḥ* Mr. Mus remarks that "the proposed interpretation⁸ furnishes the most explicit and much the most

1 *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography*, p. 207.

2 *J.A.*, vol. 210 (1927), p. 186.

3 The Sanskrit term is *parvatabhūpāla* (ISCC., pp. 13 and 16).

4 Coedès Inventory, No. 90 :—

"*Śrīśānavarmmā nṛpatiḥ prājñarataikaśaṅṣrayaḥ
ya āsit kṛāntabhuvonās=Śailarājasamunnatiḥ.*"

"King Isānavarman who found his only pleasure in the company of sages, attained, after traversing the earth, the exalted position of king of the Mountain (the Himālaya) [or of a "king of the mountain, Śailarāja]." The word—play makes equal sense if it is concluded from the above that it was Isānavarman I, who consummated the ruin of the power of Fu-nan and substituted for it that of Kambuja. (BEFEO., XXVIII, p. 130).

5 BEFEO., XXVIII, p. 130.

6 *Ibid.*

7 BEFEO., XXIX, p. 448.

ancient testimony that is to be found for the special sense of the Indian title of Śrī Mahārāja which characterized the Śailendravaṃśa according to the Arab travellers". While adopting *in toto* the very happy correction of Mr. Mus, I am tempted to translate it somewhat differently the better to render the value of the adverbial suffix *taḥ* which rather indicates an origin, a cause than an end to attain; and, I believe, I am nearer to the text in translating "bearing the title of Śrī Mahārāja, because of the mention of his origin which is the Śailendravaṃśa". The text seems to wish to say that it was only the announcement (*nigada*) of his origin that brought him the imperial title of Śrī Mahārāja, or in other words that in order to bear this title he must have issued from the Śailendravaṃśa, and must have been of the line of "the king of the mountain".

This formula makes sense only if this line enjoyed a great prestige such as was the case with the royal dynasty of Fu-nan. The ejection of this dynasty from its capital of Bà Phnom is not anterior to Īśānavarman I (ca. 620). The Chinese annalists tell us that the kings of Fu-nan were compelled to migrate more to the south, to the town of Na-fu-na¹ where they vegetated perhaps till the end of the 7th century.² Now it was in the first part of the following century that there appeared in Java, the founder of this dynasty of Matarām, to which belonged the donor of Kālasan, Rakai Panāṅkaran, "ornament of the Śailendra dynasty." Must we suppose that these Javanese kings claimed to be the descendants, or the inheritors of whatsoever title of the Śailarāja of Fu-nan? One fact seems to justify this hypothesis. The accession of the Śailendras of Java in the 8th century coincides with this obscure period in the history of Cambodia, during which the Chinese historians inform us that the country was split up in twain, and the Arab geographers relate that the khmér country had troubles with Zâbug and was compelled finally to accept its suzerainty.

These facts accord well enough with the hypothesis that

1 BEFEO., III, p. 274.

2 J.A., vol. 210 (1917), p. 186.

the descendants, real or fictitious, of the emperors of Fu-nan after having carved out a dominion in Java in the first part of the 8th century afterwards tried to claim back their ancient possessions. It became then an aggressive return towards the Indo-Chinese coast which was abandoned at the end of the 7th century to the power of the Kambujas, and this represented the campaign of the king of Zâbug in the khmèr country mentioned by Abū Zayd,¹ the Javanese incursions of 764, 774 and 787 into southern Campa² and the Javanese conquest of Ligor at the same epoch.³

If the Śailendras of Java claimed connection with ancient Fu-nan, one would better understand than has been the case up to the present, the manner in which Jayavarman II after his return from Java⁴ established his authority over Cambodia at the beginning of the 9th century. To shake off the tutelage "the king of the mountain" to which this title give precisely the quality of emperor *caṅravartin*, he should become one himself: and this was why he installed his capital upon Mt. Mahendra (Phnon Kulên), instituting at the same time the cult of devarāja, for, as the inscription of Sdök kāk thoṃ, says,⁵ "Kambujadeśa was no more dependent on

1 Ferrand, *Textes géographiques*, I, p. 85ff.

2 Dr. Majumdar has no doubt reason to view this not merely (as has been very often said), as the simple raids of Malay pirates but as veritable expeditions organised by the Javanese forces (*Javavala*, according to the inscriptions of Campa).

3 I have indicated above (p. 66 f.n.) the reason which has led me to identify the king of the Ligor stèle, face B, with that of the Nālandā charter bearing the title of king of Java, (*Yavabhūmipāla*). The existence of an incomplete inscription on the back of the stèle of Śrīvijaya is well explained through the hypothesis of a rapid conquest followed by a reverse. A king reigning peacefully at Ligor would have had the time to find a new stone and cause his inscription to be incised thereon to the very end.

4 A new argument in favour of the identification of *Javā* in the inscription of Sdök kāk thoṃ with the island of Java has just been given us by Mme. de Coral Rémusat who points out "the Javanese influences upon the art of Roluôh (9th century)." (*J.A.*, vol. 223, 1923, p. 190. Cf. *Indian Art and Letters*, N.S., vol. VII, 1933, p. 114).

5 *BEFEO.*, XV, 2, p. 88.

Javā and there was [in this kingdom] no more than one single sovereign who was *caḅravartin*." If the more or less effective suzerainty of distant Java had been only the result of expeditions at the end of the preceding century, there would have been no need (I think) of so many ceremonies for its liberation. But if the Śailendras of Java played the part of inheritors of *Kuruṅ Bnaṃ*, the ancient occupiers of the soil, it would be a different affair, and a new ritual associated with a new mountain would be necessary. When Jayavarman II and his successors ceased to reside at Mahendraparvata, they transported the sacred mountain to the centre of their successive capitals. At Hariharālaya (group of Rolôh), the "central mountain" was the pyramid of Bakoṅ; at Yaśodharapura (Aṅkor I), it was Bakhèn; at Chok Gargyaz (Kòh Ker) it was the Prāṅ du Prāsāt Thom; at Aṅkor they were successively the Phimānakās, the Bāphūon and the Bāyon.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood regarding the sense of the thesis sketched here. I do not claim that the Śailendras of Java had been the authentic descendants of the sovereigns of Fu-nan. But after noticing on the one hand a synchronism between the fall of the kings of Fu-nan and the accession of the Śailendras and stating on the other hand that the attitude of Jayavarman II towards Java is understood better if he had to break the ancient bonds and an old tradition of several centuries, I think I have been able to formulate the hypothesis that after the eviction of the kings of Fu-nan from Indo-China, a Javanese princely family, having more or less real ties with them, resumed their dynastic title of "king of the mountain" and at the same time made their own the political and territorial claims which this title implied. This hypothesis does not exclude that of Dr. Majumdar regarding the Indian origin of the Śailendras, but it completes and enriches the same by bringing the Javanese Śailendras into touch with the Śailodbhavas of Orissa, no more directly but through the intermediary of the Śailarāja of Fu-nan.