Chapter 4: The development of Brahmanism in Thailand through the archaeological evidence: Epigraphy and Brahmanical temple architectures:

4.1 The Brahmanism in epigraphic source

The emergence of Brahmanism in Thailand appears in the epigraphic records from early 6th century A.D. onwards. Most of these epigraphic records political history and temple royal grants. On contrary to Buddhism, the exact references of Brahmanical philosophy or any particular practice recorded in an intensive detail were apparently mentioned during this period. The inscriptions related to Brahmanism were normally erected mainly for three main purposes: informing the religious activities, recording of royal chronology and announcing the rules and social condition over the lands which were under the governing (protection) of particular Gods or temples.

The use of Sanskrit in Southeast Asia evidently emerged in early 5th century A.D. as the religious and official languages among the elite communities. In Thailand, the Sanskrit inscriptions, written in early South Indian scripts dated around 5th-8th century A.D., are broadly reported from the central plains, eastern region and northeastern plateau. These mostly mention short sentence (gatha) derived from Buddhist philosophy and royal donation for Buddhist monastery.

In context of Brahmanism, there are groups of Sanskrit inscriptions erected by local chiefs like Citrasen-Mahendravarman of Chenla state. He proudly praised his grand victory in expanding his political power and erected Nandi bull or linga as his memorial statues. The copper plate inscription at U Thong of King Sri Harshavarman also records the royal grant donation dedicated to Saivite temple signified by the name of principle deities Amrakesvara and Dharesvara. Moreover, the inscribed terracotta seal with depiction of Nandi and legend “Siva Brihaspati” means “Siva, the great” is also reported from U Thong and presently exhibited at the National museum, U Thong.

The early trace of Vaisnavism in Thailand can be seen in the inscription dated around late 7th century A.D. at Prasat Khao Noi, Prachinaburi province. This inscription was written in both Sanskrit and Khmer languages with South Indian scripts mentioning a person Chedhapuraswami, an important nobleman in the reign of King Bhavavarman II of Chenla. Chedharapuraswami was the Vaisnavite devotee. He has been referred as “the one who praised (praying puja) the Vishnu image in the war (battlefield)” (Shaem1990: 115-121). This sentence evidently mentions the worship of Vishnu image (Vishno pratima) that was perhaps widely spread during this period. In fact, the reference of Vishnu worship in this inscription is matches with the archaeological evidence dated to early 6th century and getting more acceptances from the 7th century A.D. onwards.
In addition to Sanskrit inscriptions, the Tamil inscription dated around late 8th-9th century A.D. was discovered at Ta Kua Pa district of Phang nga province. It speaks about a Tamil merchant guild named Manikrammam and their public work in tank construction named after the King Nandivarman III as Avaninarayanan. The inscription from Khao Chong Koi cave, Nakon Srithammarat province, briefly mentions the praising of Siva by the Saivite followers. It speaks that those who worship Siva will be blessed by the lord and welcomed in every place they visit (Thipkesorn and Shaem 1980: 89-93). Beside of being source of early Saivism in Southern region, it also reveals the movement of Saivite pilgrimage and where pilgrims may temporarily rest and conduct Saivite rituals.

According to a numbers of inscriptions, the Brahmanism might not be in high acceptance among the local people as was Buddhism. However, Brahmanism had emerged from the same period. Perhaps, it was developed paralleling with Buddhism. The Buddhism was well practiced in religious sects, while the Brahmanical rites were commonly used for administrative or political purposes. There are around 245 inscriptions dated before 13th century A.D. At least 67 Brahmanical inscriptions dated to the 5th–late of 13th century A.D. found in Thailand and 178 for Buddhism of the same period. The inscriptions were written in Sanskrit and ancient Khmer languages with mostly South Indian scripts (Inscription database: Sirinthorn anthropological center, Bangkok).

Before the rising of Angkorean Kingdom in Cambodia at around late 8th century A.D., the details of Brahmanical ritual practicing were still in unclear condition. In case of Saivism, only the royal donation and the general manner of linga worship were observed. And the worship of Vishnu image was practiced in specific occasion (war). It seemed that the early Brahmanism in Thailand was practiced in general and basic form, and perhaps developed paralleling with Buddhism.

Compared to the ancient Khmer Kingdom before the 9th century A.D. Brahmanism was well accepted and widely practiced among the peoples as reduced by Sanskrit inscriptions. The more complicated rituals of Brahmanical practices were narrated in literary way (gavya). The Brahmanical Gods, Siva and Vishnu, were commonly worshipped in both symbolical form and as sculptures. The ceremonies were conducted by Brahmins. For instance, the Vishnu pada named “Chakratirthaswamin” was erected at Thap-moi (Transbassac region) by the prince Gunavarman who was the royal member of Funan (Bhattacharya 1961b: 25). The inscriptions from Phanom Da, an important Vaisanavite site, also speak about Vaisanavite images which were possibly made in reign of King Rudravarman (Bhattacharya 1961b: 15, 1964: 274). In addition to Vaisnavite related sculptures, there are discovering related to the linga and Harihara images, but in lesser amount than Vaisanavite images.
The appearance of Brahmanism in other parts of Southeast Asia gradually started from the beginning of 5th century, proven by the group of early inscriptions discovered from Champa belonged to King Bhadravaran (357-407 A.D.) at My Son (Bhadrapura), inscription of King Mulavarman at Boneo (407 A.D.) and inscription of King Purnavarman. All of these are dated to 5th-6th century A.D. These literary sources clearly inform the royal religion and ritual practices of different Brahmanical sects that were in high popularity among the elite groups in this period (Coedes 1948: 84, 91, 93). Saivism was broadly accepted in Southeast Asia because of its well assimilated character by absorbing the primitive cults and adapted them into the Saivite concept.

While the complicated Brahmanical rituals were conducted in major parts of Southeast Asia, this particular tradition might not be well-practiced in present Thailand territory as can be suggested from its absence in epigraphic sources. Likewise it can be noticed from the inscription of King Mahendravarman (Citasena) discovered at Nong Hi district of Roiet province. This inscription states “… He (the King Mahendravarman) successfully won over the minds of the enemies, subduing them like the heavy stone placed over the bulbous roots. After he had got rid of the previous form of belief consisting of …” (Shaem1987: 79-84; Bhiromaukul 2007: 84).

The “previous form of belief” mentioned in the inscription perhaps means the other sects different from King’s devoted cult (Saivism). It was likely Buddhism that was well spread in northeastern region of the Dvaravati culture before the coming of Khmer political expansion. The widespread of Saivism in northeastern Thai region is suggested as a result of Khmer Saivite influence from the first half of Christian era.

The development of Brahmanism in Thailand during the Khmer dominant period, especially at the northeastern region, was increased as much as an intensive political connection. Though the numbers of temples, inscriptions and Brahmanical statues were discovered after the 9th century and mostly dated between 11th-13th century A.D., the majority of the inscriptions were dedicated to Brahmanical activities, mainly related the social and economic aspects.

For instance, the major details records on temple property, list of royal grand donation, land grants with the slaves and the administrative role of chiefs or nobles in particular district on the temple. The detail of Brahmanical philosophy is noticed very rarely and sometime almost absent. However, some significant feature of Khmer Brahmanical tradition can be clearly recognized from the invocation part of inscription that began by praising the Gods of different sects or between Brahmanical Gods and Buddha as seen from the inscription (K.953) at Pimai (Bhattacharya 1961 b: 36). The installments of different sectarian deities in the same shrine like Siva linga, Vishnu and Goddess were frequently recorded in the both Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions such as the inscription.
at Prasat Phanom Rung sanctuary (B.R. 19). It reflects the religion toleration noticed in Khmer tradition (Coedes 1982: 156-178). This inscription also provides information Saivite-Pasupati cult was well practiced during Khmer dominant period.

The epigraphic source normally mentions the group of Brahmanism patrons. The donors were from privilege classes such as Royal family, priest and local chiefs. Their important roles in the religious patronage were normally recorded in the temple inscriptions.

The Khmer King’s devoted cults, Saivism, Vaisnavism or Buddhism, are literary addressed in the posthumous name of each Kings. For example, the King Jayavarman II (802-850 A.D.) was the Saivite devotee and the name after death known as “Paramesvar”. King Suryavarman II (1113-1145 A.D.) was regarded as Vaisnavite devotee who had the honorific name as “Vishnu Lok”. King Jayavarman VII (1181-1220 A.D.) was grand devotee of Buddhist- Mahayanism and getting the honorific name after his death as “Maha Parama Sugatpada”.

Though these Khmer Kings officially declared themselves as grand “bhaktas” toward particular sects, they indifferently gave royal patronage to the others as well. This can be seen in religious activities of King Suryavarman I who was being the stronghold of Saivism, as mentioned in the inscription from Prasat Preah Vihar. He also gave patronage to Buddhism and his posthumous name is known as “Nirvanapada” (Bhattacharya 1961b: 36).

Thus, both the royals and priests belonging to different sects were the core patrons of religious activities and their personal devotions also contributed to the widespread of Brahmanism along with the political power, expanding over ancient Cambodian Kingdoms and northeastern Thailand.

All in all, the character of Brahmanism in Thailand reflected through the epigraphic sources appears to contribute on administrative and social contexts than on intensive philosophy as Buddhism successfully did. Likewise, it also suggests the role of Brahmanism that started from the beginning as primary way of Kingship and was gradually applied for the political expansion process. Perhaps, the growing of Buddhism and Brahmanism in the early Southeast Asian states was sustaining as imitating parts of each other.
4.2 The Brahmanism in ancient arts and Architectures in Thailand before the 13\textsuperscript{th} century:

The ancient schools of arts in Thailand are majorly classified into three styles, 

*Dvaravati* (around the 5\textsuperscript{th}-late of 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.), *Sri Vijaya* (the 8\textsuperscript{th} -12\textsuperscript{th} century) and *Lopburi* (Khmer art in Thailand: 9\textsuperscript{th} - 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.).

These styles are named after the culture or historical places that on which arts were formed or based on. It is important to note that majority of the ancient art in Thailand before getting influenced from Khmer art, belonged to Dvaravati and Srivijaya schools mainly related to Theravada or Mahayanist Buddhism.

Brahmanical images of the earlier period reflect a distinct character when compared to Buddhist art. These images were commonly influenced by Indian tradition, the art of neighboring countries or being distinctive group. Therefore, the unique Brahmanical images, which dated before 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. or contemporary to Dvaravati and Sri Vijaya arts, are generally set in separated group known as “Indian prototype” images (Diskul 1975). However, the arts of both religions also share some significant characters and should be described together in order to understand the general way of their development.

**The Dvaravati art and the Indian prototype Brahmanical images:** the 5\textsuperscript{th}- the late of 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

Before coming directly to Brahmanical arts, the brief detail of Buddhist art commonly known as *Dvaravati* style will be given. This artistic culture expanded over the major parts of central region, eastern and upper northeastern plateau.

The *Dvaravati* culture is defined on the group of early states or townships which sharing the common characters in religions and arts. Most of them are generally located in the major area of central basin, eastern and some parts of northeastern and Southern regions. The rise of Dvaravati coincides with the decline of Funan in the second half of 6\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

By 7\textsuperscript{th} century Dvaravati became one of the major Kingdoms in mainland Southeast Asia. Archaeological remains from this period attest its dominance for centuries as of a unique culture with predominantly Theravada Buddhist background.
However, Brahmanism also received certain popularity in Dvaravati culture. The Brahmanical practice, appeared in both religious and court aspects, were probably related to the early Khmer tradition, showing the religious connection between these two regions. Perhaps, the Dvaravati culture was transferred or absorbed into different local traditions and later on gradually replaced by Khmer (Angkorean) culture after late 8th century A.D.

The study of Dvaravati culture started from the 20th century onwards. The Archaeological and Art History studies of Dvaravati had been done extensively by many scholars like Lajonguiere (1909), George Coedes (1923, 1948) and Pierre Dupant (1959). In the contexts of cultural history, Coedes (1948) published the work regarding to Hindu culture in Southeast Asia and Indonesia (L’Etats Hindouises d’Indochine et d’Indonesie). There is reference of Dvaravati mentioned as one of the ancient cultures in Southeast Asia. Pierre Dupant (1959) has also done the research work “L’Archaeologie Mone de Dvaravati” related to the classification of Dvaravati Buddhist art and comparative study with other style of arts from neighboring countries.

The knowledge of Dvaravati has been improved by the contribution of important scholars. For example, Quaritch Wales (1969) published his research work as “Dvaravati: The earliest Kingdom of Siam”. This work describes the general perspectives of the Dvaravti culture in detail. According to Wales, Dvaravati was Buddhist base culture merely influenced from India (post Gupta period) since the early of Christian era. There are numbers of foreign and Thai scholars who have brought out the researches regarding to Dvaravati culture, especially in Buddhist arts, like Dupont (1959), Wales (1969), Diskul (1975), Lyon (1979) and also recent works such as Indrawooth (1999) and Saisingh (2003).

According to these researches in the context of art-history, the Buddhist art of Dvaravati is general depicted as being Indian prototype images, though showing the localized appearance. Its distinctive feature was also influenced by the art of neighboring countries like early Khmer (pre-Angkorean) and Burma (Mon). Dupont (1959) has stated on the early Buddhist arts of Dvaravati culture dated around the 6th century A.D. as they are reflected the Indian influence from late Gupta and Amravati schools of Andhara Pradesh but unskillfully done as compared to the Indian images (Dupont 1959: 472-493; Wales 1969: 125). This character is not only limited to Buddha images, but also to the Bodhisattvas made in both relief and sculptural forms. Although the Buddhist art of Dvaravati culture was getting such intensive influence from Indian schools, this classical feature would not continue after 7th century as they were gradually changed into localized character.
In case of Brahmanical sculptures, their artistic characters are very much different from those Buddha images as they strongly reflect the influences from Indian and neighboring country (pre-Angkorean). Because of its distinctive style and lesser number in comparison with Buddhist sculptures, they are not considered as Dvaravati art but generally known as the group of “Indian prototype” images (Diskul 1975). According to Wales (1969: 124), “…Religious sculpture in Dvaravati was by no means entirely Buddhist, but we cannot make a useful study of trends in Hindu figures, wheatear in high relief, as at U T’ong, or long-robed mitred Vishnu, found in the Prac’in valley (Prachinaburi province) as well as in the Malay peninsula, for the reason that the production of them seems to have ended soon after the 8th century…” He further states “…The inference is that they remain nearer to presumed Pallava prototype…”

It appears that the group of Brahmanical images was made independently under Pallava inspiration but this trend could not be continued after 8th century A.D. In fact, the Brahmanical images dated contemporary with Dvaravati culture are not exactly the Pallava prototype because of their developed carving technique as freestanding images. This distinctive character is noticed from the group of Vishnu images from Sri Mahosoth presenting strong localized feature on their facial appearance and simple costume decoration.

The examples of Indian prototype sculptures, especially four armed Vishnu images, are provided from central region (U Thong: Suparnburi province), eastern plain (Sri Mahosoth: Prachinaburi province) and the highest numbers from the Southern coast (Khao Sri Viajaya: Suratthani province, Nakon Srithammarat, Songkla, Phang Nga, Phuket and Petchaburi provinces). In addition to Vishnu images, there are a number of Siva lingas and other Brahmanical Gods like Ganesha and Surya images made of stone and bronze discovered from ancient port sites. They are mostly located along the coastal area and ancient towns, where there were religious center or in connection with maritime trade routes.
The *Sri Vijaya* art and Indo-Javanese images (8th-13th century A.D.)

The studies of arts and archaeology in Southern Thailand of different periods have been done by many scholars that both including foreigners and Thais. Coedes (1918) has pointed out the similarity in the name of maritime state “San-fo-chi” mentioned by Chinese sources since 7th century A.D. was corresponded to the name “Sri Vijaya” in inscriptions dated from 7th-11th centuries, assuming its possible capital located at Palembang of Sumatra Island. Although his theory has been accepted and followed by many scholars. Later on there are some doubts regarding its possibility. For example, Moens (1924), on the basis of *T’ang* annals, suggested that the first political center of *Sri Vijaya* was located on the Malay peninsular, near Kelantan. The capital was later moved to *Maura Takus* in Sumatra. Roland Braddell (1931) has followed the Arabic sources and suggested that the center of *Sri Vijaya* was situated on the west coast of Boneo (*Kalimantan: Sabak*) as the King of *Sri Vijaya* was known as the King of Zabag.

In fact, other scholars had tried to search for the possibility of *Sri Vijaya* capital in Southern Thailand as many ruins and sculptures in *Sri Vijaya* style have been found there (Suleiman 1980 :1). However, the actual location of *Sri Vijaya* is not certain and perhaps was changed several times, as happened with the ancient capital of Javanese Kingdom. In any case, *Sri Vijaya* can be considered as the powerful maritime state flourished with trades as well as political status leading to the high development of its valuable culture.

In the contexts of arts, *Sri Vijaya* art is generally studied as the art of Southern Thailand. There are a number of studies related to *Sri Vijaya* arts and in different aspects such as archaeology, architectures, religions and sculptures published by many scholars (O’ Connor 1972; Michel 2002; Srichaya 2000; Rashani 1999). However, the major context of art history is researched by Krairiksh...
Their valuable works have thrown the light on the development of art in Southern Thailand in such intensive manner, that these are considered as keynote studies of Sri Vijaya art.

The development of art in peninsular Thailand before 13th century A.D. is generally divided into two main periods on the basis of political history and the significant feature of arts. The Indianized periods of coastal states (5th-8th century), Sri Vijaya period is also known as Indo-Javanese period (8th-13th century). After the 14th century A.D. onwards, the art of Southern Thailand had changed to Thai style (Ayuthaya) as a result of the political expansion from Thais capital at Ayuthaya.

Similar to the central Thailand, the Indianized period before the 8th century is the emergence of early states located along southern coastal line. Maritime trade route was rapidly growing up and flourishing in these states, bringing both Indian trade commodities, and the religious objects such as amulets and early Brahmanical Gods or Buddha images dated to late of 4th-5th century A.D. (Krairiksh 1981: 3-4, 19-21). The art of this period shows an intensive influence of South Indian schools, especially Pallava, as reflected from the group of early Vishnu images dated around late of 6th-8th century A.D. These early Vishnu images discovered from the Southern region have shown similar characters with four armed Vishnu images from Sri Mahosoth of eastern region. Perhaps, similarity in cultural connection can be connected to the close maritime trade relationship between two regions.

Except Brahmanical images and Siva lingas, the Buddha statues of this early period (6th - 7th century) were made under Indian inspiration, Gupta (Sarnarth), and later on found amalgamating with local Southern or Dvaravati styles after the 7th century A.D.

The rising of Sri Vijaya Kingdom during 8th century A.D. brought important changes in historical and arts aspects. Sri Vijaya Kingdom located at the southern Malay Peninsula, had controlled the maritime trade route of east-west direction and became one of the most powerful states in both political and economic aspects. As a result of flourishing maritime trade connections and political alliance with eastern India, and central Java (Silendras) Kingdom, Mahayana Buddhism widespread over the Sumatra Island and Malay peninsular regions. It was leading to the most glorious time of Mahayana Buddhist art. The numbers of Mahayanism Bodhisattvas as well as Buddha images made of stone and bronze showing an amalgamation of Indo-Javanese and local southern styles have been reported from archaeological sites and monuments dated to this period.
During this period, the making of Brahmanical images seemed to have gone down in popularity and most probably replaced by the Mahayanist deities. However, there are some examples from the coastal sites such as Sathing Pra, Ta Kua Pa and Viang Sra which present such intensive influence of South Indian styles, late Pallava and Chola arts, through their arts and iconographic characters.

In addition to Indian and Javanese art influences, Khmer art of Angkorean style also played an important role in the development of religious arts of Southern Thailand from the 10th-13th century A.D. The Khmer style sculptures made of different materials are found in coastal region such as the seated Buddha in Naga coils from Wat Wiang temple (Chaiya : Suratthani province), the group of bronze standing Buddha images (Chaiya) and Avalokitesvara images (Wat Khanun : Songkla province) and some bronze Brahmanical images from Nakon Sri Thammarat province. Most of them having Khmer (Angkorean style) feature and are comparable to those of Khmer images from northeastern and central regions. Thus, it can be taken as the high acceptance of Khmer culture in the far distant states outside Angkorean Kingdom.

The Khmer dominant period in Thailand (9th-13th century A.D.)

According to epigraphic sources, Khmer culture influenced of both religious and art aspects in some parts of Thailand as early as 6th century A.D. But the more intensive Khmer cultural contact in Thailand is only seen after the 9th-10th century A.D. which reached to its highest point from the 11th-13th century A.D. until the downfall of Angkorean Kingdom. The high popularity of Khmer art is clearly noticed from the large numbers of monuments as well as sculptures belonging to Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism. During these centuries of cultural influence, Khmer art played an important role as the source of Brahmanism in Thailand and steadily continued its position up to period of Thais Kingdom around the 13th century A.D.

The studying of Khmer art in Cambodia and Thailand of different styles have been done extensively by many scholars, to name a few, Boisselier (1955, 1966), Briggs (1951), Dupont (1936), Groslier (1925) Parmentier (1939), Stern (1931 - 34), Remusat (1940), Giteau (1972), Lee(1969), Bhattacharya (1971 b) and also Thai scholars such as Diskul (1967, 1970, 1975), Suksawasti (1994) and Krairiksh (1979). Their valuable works not only provide chronological development or comparative studies of Khmer art in an intensive manner, but also help to understand the character of this particular art in various aspects like architecture, art history and iconography.
Although there are slight differences in general dating of Khmer arts in Thailand and Cambodia, the major form of arts and architectures are comparable to each other. Thus, it is reasonable to date Khmer monuments and sculptures in Thailand on the basis of the authentic Khmer art from Cambodia. However, unique local appearance which are absent in authentic Khmer tradition should not be neglected.

**The chronology of Khmer art**

The chronology of Khmer art in Thailand is comparable to the authentic Khmer styles in Cambodia. The stylistic chronology is orderly arranged on the basis of the comparative study and epigraphic source. They are generally used for classifying the complicated Khmer arts to become more accurate and reliable, associated with the chronological of Khmer history.

In fact, the styles of Khmer art are named after the most important monument of particular periods, because of their permanent condition. The chronology of authentic Khmer art in Cambodia is mainly divided into three periods with sixteen styles orderly arranged in each of main periods.

The main periods are 1. **Pre-Angkorean period** (5th – 9th century A.D.) 2. **Angkorean period** (late of 9th – early of 13 century A.D.) and 3. **Post Angkorean period** (14th century onwards) (Boisselier 1955; 1966; Diskul 1967; 1970; Suksawasti: 1994)

- **Pre Angkorean period:** (5th-9th century A.D.)

  The significant feature of Khmer arts during this early period is that most of the architectures show such strong Indian influence as the amalgamation of northern and Southern India schools. The early Buddhist art clearly reflects such intensive impact of Amaravati and Gupta arts through the salient feature of Buddha statues. In case of Brahmanical images, especially Vishnu, their images were initially made in both high reliefs and free standing statues. Their costume and decoration style are generally arranged similarly to the Indian tradition with glimpse of distinctive Khmer features. In case of Vishnu, Harihara and Mahisasura mardhini images, they wear cylindrical mitre crown (kirita mukuta). The representation of Siva is available only in the form of linga until the 8th century A.D. when the early Siva images were made in Preah Ko style.

There are four different styles dominated the pre Angkorean period

1) **Phanom Da** style: middle of 6th – early of 7th century A.D.

2) **Thala boriwat** and **Sombor Prei Kuk** style: early of 7th – middle of 7th century A.D.

3) **Prei Kameng** style: middle of 7th – early of 8th century A.D.
4) **Kampong Preah** style: early of 8th- early of 9th century A.D. (and continued for some time until around 832 A.D.) and followed by **Kulen style** as transition period.

The general form of architectures dated to this early period is those of brick monuments constructed close to Indian style such as *Ashrama Maharishi* of Phanom Da, the group of brick temples at *Sombor Prei Kuk* (Isanapura) and *Prasat Kampong Preah*. Their plan and structural features are similar to the late Gupta brick monument at *Bhitargaon*, and Lakshman temple at Sirpur located at Madhaya Pradesh (Agrawala 1968) and early central Javanese art at *Diang* plateau such as *Candi Bhima*. Consequently, Indian culture well spread in this region, the early monuments in Cambodia, Champa and Java Island seemed to be constructed under Indian inspiration of late Gupta art after the 5th century A.D. There are intensive studies of Khmer art of Pre Angkorean period available in the works published by Dupont (1955) and Parmentier (1927); these works give description of primitive Khmer art and its development.

**Angkorean period:** (9th–early of 13th century A.D.)

The rising of Angkorean Kingdom (ancient Khmer Kingdom) at *Yashodarapura* leading to the new creation of authentic Khmer art considered as the most distinctive style of mainland Southeast Asia. The Indian influence was successfully adapted into the new form, assimilated with the ethnic tradition and became source of Angkorean art. Beside of Indian and ethnic Khmer arts that formed the Angkorean style, the influences from Champa and Javanese arts also shared their distinctive characters contributing the early styles of Angkorean period.

During these four centuries, there are ten different styles in this main period.

1) **Kulen style**: early of 9th –late of 9th century. A.D (transition period)

2) **Preah Ko style**: late of 9th century A.D.

3) **Bakheang style**: late of 9th –early of 10th century A.D.

4) **Koh Ker style**: early of 10th –middle of 10th century A.D.

5) **Pré Rup style**: middle of 10th –late of 10th century A.D.

6) **Banteay Sri style**: middle of 10th –early of 11th century A.D.

7) **Khleang style**: early of 11th century A.D.

8) **Baphoun style**: early of 11th – late of 11th century A.D.

9) **Angkor Wat style**: early of 12th –late of 12th century A.D.
10) **Bayon style**: the late of 12\textsuperscript{th}-early of 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

In fact, these ten styles are classified on the basis of their distinctive characters that can be seen through the architectures and sculptures. The various forms of authentic Khmer styles are identified by each of their significant features.

Khmer art had reached its highest point of artistic development in *Angkor Wat* style of 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. It is also considered as the most glorious style that widely expanded across the borders to northeastern Thailand. The Khmer monuments constructed during *Angkorean* period are built in more complicated plans as the group of monuments (sanctuary) established on ground or mountain, as if being divine abodes. The Khmer architectures always show their magnificent technique through their structural forms and decorations like *Prasat Banteay Sri* (10\textsuperscript{th}-11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.), *Prasat Baphoun* (11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.) and *Angkor Wat* (12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.). For further study, a number of research works related to Khmer art (*Angkorean* period), such as, Boisselier (1955; 1966), Briggs (1951), Remusat (1940), Diskul (1970; 1967) Suksawasti (1994) and Veeraprasert and Smittthi (1990), etc.

**Post Angkorean period (Srei Santhor)**: late of 14\textsuperscript{th} century (1373 A.D.)

The Siamese (Ayuthaya) invaded Cambodian Kingdom at around the middle of 14\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The Khmers had changed their capitals to other places and became vassal state of Ayuthaya Kingdom. Thus, Khmer art of this period was strongly influenced by *Ayuthaya* style (Suksawasti 1994: 58).

Of these three main periods and fifteen styles of Khmer art, only the art of Pre *Angkorean* and *Angkorean* periods are comparable to Khmer art in Thailand. However, the dating of Khmer art in Thailand may be dated slightly later than authentic Khmer art because of the far distance from cultural center, delaying the rising and declining of each particular style.

It is also important to note that Khmer art in Thailand has its distinctive artistic character, which is absent in Khmer authentic art. It had been influenced by authentic Khmer art from Cambodia during the centuries of political dominance. The examples are provided from the architectural style of *Prasat Pimai*, Nakon Ratchasima province, that showing an invention of stepped upper portion (*sikhara*) and the decorated high pedestal. These significant of Khmer art in Thailand might have given an inspiration to the construction of upper portion of five temples at *Angkor Wat* (Diskul 1967: 3).
The Khmer arts in Thailand

According to Suksawasti (1994), the Khmer art in Thailand can be divided into two periods on the basis of political history that affected the style of arts in northeastern and central Thailand, especially during the 11th - 12th century A.D. under the governing of Mahidharapura dynasty of Cambodia. There are important Kings of this dynasty such as Jayavarman VI (1080-1107 A.D.), Suryavarman II (1107-1145 A.D.) and Jayavarman VII (1181-1218 A.D.) who had well patronized the construction of Brahmanical and Mahayana Buddhist monuments in both Cambodia and Thailand. At the northeastern Thailand, especially Korat plateau, most of Khmer temples were built during the time of Mahidharapura dynasty (11th - 12th centuries) such as Prasat Phimai, Phnom Wan at Nakon Ratchasima province, Prasat Phanom Rung sanctuary at Burirum province and Prasat Muang Singh at Kanchanaburi province.

The Khmer art in Thailand can be classified into two periods as followed (Suksawasti 1994: 44-67)

1.) The contemporary styles of Khmer art before Mahidharapura dynasty: **Pre Angkorean period styles**: Phanom Da, Thala Boriwat, Sombor Prei Kuk, Prei Kmeng and Kampong Preah, dating from the middle of 6th – 9th century.

**Angkorean period** styles: Kulen, Preah Ko, Bakheng, Koh Ker, Pré Rup Banteay Srei-Khleang, dating from the 9th- early of 11th centuries A.D.

2.) The contemporary styles of Khmer art of Mahidharapura dynasty: **Angkorean period styles**: Baphoun, Angkor Wat and Bayon, dating from the 11th- early of 13th century.

According to the comparative style of art, one can assume that the Khmers had expanded a strong cultural impact in their political dominant countries. It is not only art and architectural styles, but the religions culture especially Brahmanism of Khmer tradition is also reflecting the well establishment of Khmer culture in Thailand. The high acceptance of Khmer religious arts is obviously seen from the sculptures and their iconographic features, having almost similar characters with authentic Khmers. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest an important role of Khmer Brahmanical tradition that strongly dominated the nature of Brahmanism in Thailand after the 9th century.

The role of Brahmanism reflected in early arts of Thailand, Dvaravati and Sri Vijaya, has revealed the nature of sacred sect in Buddhist dominated Kingdoms as being worshiped by particular groups or communities, especially elites or Indians. This character is noticed from the lesser number of Brahmanical images in comparing with Buddhist sculptures. Their individual style is also separated from Dvaravati art, the major artistic school in central region.
In Sri Vijaya art of Southern region and Malay peninsular most of the sculptures are dedicated to Mahayana Buddhism. Few Brahmanical images are available and strongly showing Javanese and South Indian arts influence. Hence, the style of Brahmanical arts directly identifies the sources of Brahmanism that practiced in Thailand during these early centuries.

The development of Brahmanism in Thailand through the arts after the 9th century A.D. was quite different from the early period. It was considered getting well established along with the expansion of Khmer political power. It is possible to state that since the Brahmanism had intimately related to the concept of Kingships, devoted Khmer Kings and his powerful royals kindly patronized Brahmanism of both sects in the form of monuments, land grants and precious gifts dedicated to Gods.

Their high religious devotion with the great wishes for obtaining merits and salvation is visualized in the splendid form of arts, leading to the royal tradition of constructing magnificent temples. In fact, there were also political and economic reasons behind the establishments of those temples which were sustaining ancient Khmer Kingdom and stability of royal power. Hence, when the temples considered as adobe of Gods, they played an important role in non-religious aspects such as economic and administrative centers. The images of principle Gods enshrined inside Khmer temples also signified as being symbolic of King divine power under the Devaraja (God-King) concept through the iconographic character.

4.3 The Brahmanical architectures in Thailand

The temple religious aspect is considered in as the house of images. It is necessary to describe the development of Brahmanical temples in order to understand the function and worship tradition towards the principle image of particular periods.

The development of Brahmanical temple in India

In India, the early trace of Brahmanical temple establishment is mentioned in the name of “the uttama prasada of Bhagavan Vasudeva” found in one of Besnagar inscriptions dated to the 2nd century B.C. The term “prasad” used to identify noble sanctuary which was perhaps mainly built of bricks, woods and stones (Banerjea 1968: 87). Besides of brick temple, the dhvajas or votive columns were also erected as associated structure of Vaisnavite temple. Actually, the early Brahmanical temples dated before the Gupta periods were probably made of wooden materials, thus they were not able to survive up to present days.
However, the reference of early stone temple is provided from literary source as the sanctuary of Madhayamika dedicated to heroic God of Bhagavatas, Samkarshana and Vasudeva, in Nagari inscriptions might have been round-roofless structure which King Sarvatata erected its enclose for temple protection known as pujasilaparakara in the 2nd century B.C.(Banerjea 1968 : 87). Moreover, there were stone temples (saila devagrihas or devakulas) in the main sanctuary (mahasthana) of Mathura mentioned in the Mathura and Mora inscriptions dated to Kushana period.

The Brahmanical shrines of early Gupta period were constructed as both rock-cut temples and monuments. In case of Vaisnavite rock-cut temple, Udaygiri cave located in Madhaya Pradesh has shown its significance in its carving arts and early Vishnu iconography. During the Gupta period, the construction of temple architecture is classified into three categories written in Silapasastras text as Nagar, Vesara and Dravinda, well accepted among the Saivas, Vaisnavas and other sects. The Nagar was mainly constructed in northern India in the form of Sikharas, but it also extended to the Deccan plateau, leading to the creation of Vesara style. The Vesara is known as the artistic combination of Nagar and Dravida as the temple was found in both influences normally seen in Chalukya style. And the Dravida is described as southern style of rathas and vimamas of South Indian architectural form like the pancha-rathas of Mamallapuram.

There are still a Gupta temples remain even after serious destruction. They are located mainly in Madhaya Pradesh at Eran, Deogarh, Bhitagaon and Nacha Kutara. Most of them are made in the form of Sikhara with extended shrine. The Brahmanical temple construction of early medieval period in northern India has shown its inventive structural plan of the group of five temples known as Panchayatana, enshrined five Gods of same or different sects. Lakshman temple at Khajuraho is Panchayatana in form and dedicated to three different forms of Vishnu and Surya. The temple architecture of early Medieval was normally constructed in complicated orders with high level basement for main temple structures and large enclosure surrounding the temples. This significant feature is obviously noticed from Orissa and Southern India monuments.

Precisely, the temple architecture in India presents its beginning from simple or single sanctuary made of bricks or stones that was gradually developed into more sophisticate structures furnished with graceful cravings and sculptures of mediaeval period. It can be assumed that the large expansion of Brahmanism and Sanskrit culture had caused such widespread of religious arts from place to places under an intensive cultural connection. Thus, this should be regarded as a result of the establishment of Brahmanical monuments in Southeast Asia where Indian aesthetic concept was in highly accepted and adapted into their ethnic tradition.
The development of Brahmanical temples in Thailand before the 13th century A.D.

Similar to the other Southeast Asian countries, the Brahmanism was well developed in Thailand from the beginning of Christian era up to the 13th century A.D. The flourishing religious culture can be witnessed through the various forms of arts and architectures dated to these particular centuries. Besides of being directly recognized as religious monuments, the architectural structures have reflected an intensive art influence of Indian style as well as from neighboring countries.

The early Brahmanical architectures in Thailand before the 8th century A.D.

The early religious temples in Thailand might have emerged from the time of Indian cultural impact. There are some important sites located at the central and southern regions which provide the source of early Brahmanical structures such as U Thong and Sri Mahosoth in central part. The southern hill sites at Khao Sri Vijaya, Khao Kha and Kuha cave. Though the major portion of these structures is damaged, the remaining basement has revealed simple plan and size of monuments.

U Thong, is one of the large ancient settlement located at Suparnburi province. There are the remains of Brahmanical temples which were discovered along with a number of brick stupas. This shows the parallel acceptance of two religions in this society. Besides early brick structures, the copper plate, recording the name of local King, Sri Harshavarman, and his Brahmanism patronage was also reported from this site (Wales 1969: 20-22). This inscription was written in pre-Angkorean scripts character dated before 9th century A.D. According to Wales (1969: 22), the stone mukhalinga was found nearby ancient square tank (snanadroni), located outside the city to the south. The general form of muklinga is similar to the other one discovered from Sri Mahosoth site at Prachinaburi province.

Moreover, at U-thong and its surrounding area were found a number of Vishnu images that can be dated to around the 5th-6th century A.D. Thus, it indicates that Buddhism was not the one religion in this region and the Brahmanical sects, Saivism and Vaisnavism, also played an important role in Dvaravati religious culture.

The remains of Brahmanical monuments at U Thong site are found in the form of square brick basement with extended platform or formed as mound surrounding ancient tank. Generally, the early Brahmanical temples at U thong such as the remains of three temples made of brick and laterite monuments were possibly built as simple square basement with low basement. One of them was constructed in rectangular plan with inner shrine at the center of platform. This basement is measured as 28.80 m. in length. The rectangular plan has small eastern projection, which is supposed to be entrance steps. Interestingly, the excavation reports of three Brahmanical remains mention
similar evidence showing the use of inscribed silver coins as ritual offerings. These silver coins have specific inscribed details such as depictions of cow, sun and some of them have legend “Sri Dvaravati Svara punya” meaning “the great merit of the King (of Sri Dvaravati)”. According to the architectural form and associated evidence, these three remains were probably Brahmanical temple during 6th-8th century A.D. (Fine Art Authority 2002: 99,119-120).

![Fig. 8. The plan of the basement remains of Brahmanical temple near by the ancient tank (no. 6.) at U Thong, Suparnburi province (Fine Art authority 2002: 99)](image)

The group of monument at U Thong is not only the Brahmanical center in this region. Other sites have also been reported from the eastern basin. The best known one is the site of Sri Mahosoth or Sri Mahabodhi, which has a large area covering three villages of Kok Peep district, Prachinaburi province. Most of the archaeological evidences found in this site can be related to Brahmanism such as Siva linga, Vishnu images, Ganesha including the remains of Brahmanical structures. Additionally, the trace of Buddhism is also discovered outside the center area where the group of Brahmanical structures is located. The tank which was built for religious purpose is decorated by the terracotta blocks depicted craving images of makara, elephant and lion. These mythical animal blocks appear to be inspired from Amravati art.

In the contexts of Brahmanical structures, the location of monuments in Sri Mahosoth sites can be divided into two groups; the group of monuments in ancient town (inside the circular moat) and the group of monuments located outside the ancient town.

The group of monuments located inside the ancient town consists of at least 18 remains and 77 mounds (Fine Art Authority 2005: 13-57). Most of them are the Brahmanical temples, according to their plans and associated archaeological evidences such as the images of Brahmanical deities like four armed Vishnu, Mahisasura mardhini and Ganesha. The temples are made of laterites in square or rectangular shapes with extended entrance platform at the eastern side. The role of posts aisle was perhaps to support the roof and wooden structures. The traces of enclosures are still available in
some monuments. These simple architectural plans are exactly similar to the monument plan at U Thong sites and the early brick shrine at Beikthano, Burma dated around 5th-8th century A.D.

In case of the other group of monuments located outside the moat, the majority of them belonged to Buddhism dated from Dvaravati period (6th - 7th century A.D.) up to Khmer dominant period (late of 12th century A.D.) as noticed from the Buddha images, Bodhisattvas and the ritual bronze utensils (Fine Art Authority 2005: 37). There is no difference in both religious monuments, except variation in size and minor architectural structures. The other remarkable point is the worship of Brahmanical Gods as principle images enshrined in an inner cell was discovered from some monuments, showing the highest position in worship ritual.

Hence, it is possible to assume that both Buddhism and Brahmanism were getting high acceptance among the people of this town. The Brahmanical cults and rituals were well practiced by elites and royals communities, while the Buddhism was practiced by locals. In addition to U Thong and Sri Mahosoth located in the central region, there are other important sites discovered in the hilly area of Southern Thailand known as Khao Sri Vijaya (Suratthani province) and Khao Kha (Nakon Srithammarat province). The remains of early Brahmanical monuments her been reported in the sites.
At *Khao Sri Vijaya* or *Khao Prah Narai* hill, a group of monuments extended in northward direction. The eight brick structural basements were built at the top of hill and the ten architectural remains at the ground have been recorded.

The remain no.6 situated at the top of hill, was used as Vaisanavite temple as the life size Vishnu image dated around 6th-7th century was discovered there. The fragment of Siva linga was also collected from the same monuments, reflecting the indifferent character in sectarian Gods worship.

Similar to the other early monuments dated before 8th century A.D., major part of temple structure was absolutely damaged. Thus, only the remaining basement can be suggested on the rough architectural plan of monument. The monuments at *Khao Sri Vijaya* were made of stone and bricks, mostly in square and rectangular shape with extended platform. According to the conservation report (Fine Art Authority 2009: 216-218), some of the monuments were founded on the high level stone basement supporting brick structure. It was probably used as hall in Brahmanical temple. The function of hall as for conducting religious worship is affirmed by the use of pillars and amount of roof tiles found attached to temple. A similar way of construction is also seen in the architectural remains at *Thung Tuk* (*Phang nga* province).

At *Khao Kha* hill, *Nakon Sri Thammarat* province, there are groups of Brahmanical temple. Most of these temples have survived only basement floor. The general plan and material of temple construction seems to be developed after *Khao Sri Vijaya* site at Suratthani. According to archaeological evidences, architectural structures, tanks and its surrounding, it is possible to state that *Kho Kha* was main Saivite temple and *tirtha* of this region. The *tirtha* on Brahmanical concept is the Saivite sacred place of pilgrimage on the bank of a river, the sea-shore or a lake. In fact, the sacredness of *tirtha* is identified by the purified water resource and divine images depicted in the shrine as the principle of worshiping. There was also Vishnu image dated around 7th-8th century A.D. found from one of the remains and presently kept as private collection, indicating the religious toleration in Southern Thai Brahmanism (Srijaya 1997: 183-184).

The group of temples at *Khao Kha* throws light on the concept of mountain *tirtha*. The architectural plan consists of three main structures used for religious activities and adobe of Siva in the form of *linga*. This suggestion is further established by the presence of high level pithas as well as the worship of *Swayambu* linga. Furthermore, *Khao Kha* was supposed to be the principle hill sanctuary of Saivite temples surrounded by the other Brahmanical temples located at the ground. They are architectural remains such as the sites at *Moghlana* temple, *Maheyanga* and *Tum Phung* temples. Most of them are dated to 6th-8th centuries A.D. These artifacts clearly suggest that the large

Besides these architectural remains, the natural hill was also used and constructed in the form of rock cut cave as in India. The Khao Khuha caves, Songkla province, are only cave in Southern Thailand that its form and function still survived. Khao Khuha was Saivite rock-cut cave temple excavated as two simple halls, dating around 6th-8th century A.D. There is a natural water resource located nearby the cave where the purify water could be used for performing ritual. According to excavation report, the fragments of Vishnu images and Siva linga were discovered in front of the caves. Inside the cave the painted symbol of “Om” is written on the southern wall indicating the principle position of Siva in this sacred place (Limvichitrawongsa and Thongaram 2003).

![Fig. 10. The Khuha caves, Songkla province (Courtesy, Phasook Indrawooth)](image)

The evidence of early Brahmanical architectures provides such valuable information on the rising of Brahmanism in Thailand. Similar to the other parts of Southeast Asian, the Brahmanical sects may have been developed and getting well accepted from the 5th century A.D. The early temples are generally located at religious centers, costal port sites or ancient site settlements. In fact, the form and architectural remains of Brahmanical temples in Thailand are comparable to other early Southeast Asian monuments found from Baikthano (Burma), Vaisnavite sanctuary at Tjibuaja of western Java and Kota Kapur at Malay Peninsula. The similarity in architectural development is an important evidence of early trade connection that brought Brahmanism along the way and spread it to the places that were in close contact. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the Indian merchants and priests were the most important contributors in the expansion of Brahmanism during this beginning phase.
Fig. 11. The shrine at Bujung valley (Malaysia), (Right) Candi Blandogan (Indonesia)

Fig. 12. (Top left) Thung Tuk (Thailand), the temple at Khao Kha and Saivite related artifacts (Yoni pedestal and Svayambhu linga)

Fig. 13. The temples at Khao Srivijaya, Suratthani (Thailand)
The Brahmanical monuments in Thailand after 8th century A.D.

The rising of Khmer Kingdom in mainland Southeast Asia not only brought to light an important period of Southeast Asian history, but also its arts and cultures. Most of Mainland Southeast Asian architecture dated after 9th century A.D. was getting an influence from Khmer art. It can be seen from the architectural structures and its sculptures. In case of Thailand, many of the Khmer monuments were established as Brahmanical temple, constructed by using local materials such as laterite, sandstone or bricks. The architectural plans also vary from single temple to the group of temples orderly built on the same basement generally following Khmer tradition. Since the first surveys conducted by Etienne Aymonier (1901) and Lunet de Lajonquiere (1902-1907), some 300 Khmer sites have been discovered in Thailand, dating from 7th-13th century A.D. Most of these are located in the southern part of the Khorat plateau in northeast Thailand, an integral part of the Khmer empire. A few other sites have been found in the north, in the west as far as Three Pagodas Pass on the Burmese border and in the Chao Phraya valley.

Fig. 14. The location of Khmer Brahmanical monuments in northeastern Thailand (courtesy, Fine Art authority department, Thailand)
However, most of the sites outside the northeast region appear to have undergone constant renovation and are now substantially different from the authentic Khmer style. Perhaps, it was happened as result of less in cultural contacts as they were far distance from Angkorean Kingdom.

In fact, the development of Khmer architectures in Thailand is very similar to the authentic Khmer style. The rough dating of stone monuments can be provided by examining on the general form of architectural plan. It is reasonable enough to state that the earliest form of Khmer temple should be started from single sanctuary, but later on the number of temple construction gradually increased. After 9th-10th century A.D., the group of Khmer temples was built and extended on the same platform.

In Thailand, the group of early Khmer Brahmanical monuments is located in northeastern and central regions. The earliest one is single brick temple known as Prasat Phum Pon, Surin province, dated around 7th-8th century A.D. It resemble to Prei Khmeng style in authentic Khmer art base on the style of architectures. It was possibly Siva temple as proved by the linga found nearby area. Though the major structure has been in totally decayed condition, the lintel and decorative floral design door frame are still be available for dating. This single brick temple can be dated to the middle of 7th century A.D. (Diskul 1967:5).

![Fig. 15. Prasat Phum Pon temple, Sankha district, Surin province (middle of 7th century A.D.)](image)

The site of Sri Tep, Petchaburi province, is considered as one of the early Brahmanical group of monuments dated around 7th-8th century A.D. The archaeological remains at Sri Tep has yielded valuable sources related to the Brahmanical worship of various sects in this region.

The group of remains located inside ancient town consists of three main brick temples known as Prang Sri Tep and Prang Song Pi Nong (twin temples), and surrounding architectural remains such as Khao Klang Nai, Kutii Rishi and Sra Khwan water tank. According to excavation at Khao Klang Nai, the settlement at Sri Tep might be started at around the 7th century A.D. and continued up
to 12th century A.D. The brick temples were constructed after 10th century, or perhaps during the 11th century A.D. (Charoensupasakul 1979; Fine Art authority 1995).

In addition to having strong evidences related to Vaisanavite sect, the Saivite and Surya worships also shared the religious activities at this site. The Khmer style Siva linga carved in large size, and four stone images of Surya are reported from site excavation. These sculptures, especially the Krishna Govardhana and Surya, have represented such distinctive art on their appearance and iconographic character. They are not completely influenced by pre-Angkorean Khmer art, the salient feature of authentic Sri Tep style evidently reflects through the delicate costume, ornaments and craving technique.

Fig.16. The Prang Sri Tep and Prang Song Pi Nong temples (above)

Fig.17. The view of Khao Khlang Nai mound, (Courtesy, Sri Tep heritage site office)

Besides single brick monument of earlier period, there are also presented the group temples managed in the row of three temples and double row of five temples on the same platform. Most of these are constructed on ground. Normally, they are facing to east direction. The grouped temples consist of one principle shrine and associated shrined housing minor Gods as Ganesha, Vishnu and Devi. These temples are surrounded by large enclosure, another important Khmer temple architectural style. The examples are provided from Ku Suan Tang temple and Prasat Muang Tum at
Buriram province, *Sra Kam Phang Yai* at Sri Saket province and *Sri Kharabhumi* temple at Surin province.

**Fig. 18. Prasat Muang Tam, Buriram province (11th century A.D.)**

**Fig.19. Prasat Sri Kharabhumi, Surin province and Sra Kamphang Yai temple, Sri saket province (12th century A.D.)**

There is important evidence suggesting the medieval Indian art influence on Khmer architecture especially of those temples dated from 11th-12th century A.D, as if the group temple order is comparable in general form and sequence. This splendid character is always seen in large and important sanctuary dated from the 11th-12th century A.D. like *Phanom Rung, Khao Prah Vihar* and *Pimai*. These groups of temples were set in sequent, laid on the line mostly in eastward direction and ended with main sanctuary and its surrounding enclosures. The making of axial plan architecture was meant to adjust the row of monuments for being suitable with the hilly location.
Fig. 20. The Phanom Rung sanctuary, Buriram province and Prasat Pimai temple, Nakon Ratchsima province (11th-12th century A.D.)

Fig. 21. The Prasat Phanom Rung sanctuary and axial plan, Buriram province: Thailand (11th-12th century A.D.), (Coutersy: Fine Art authority office, Bangkok)

Fig. 22. Darasuram temple, Tamilnadu (11th-12th century A.D.) (Courtesy: ASI.)

Fig. 23. Kandariya Mahadeva Temple: Khajuraho (10th-11th century A.D.)
Phanom Rung sanctuary is dedicated to Saivite sect as well as the other Brahmanical temples in this region. It has other important aspect which indicates the existence of “Pasupati” cult in Thailand. According to the inscriptions, the hill sanctuary had been the abode of Saivite Pasupatas (rishis) contributed by former royal members of King Suryavarman II court, Narendraditya, who devoted himself as Pasupatas. The rishis and his followers definitely practiced Pasupatas and Tantric rituals as there are evidences of small lingas worship as well as the depiction of Siva Dakshinamurti carved on the eastern pediment, implied the well practicing of Tantric cult.

This inscription mentioning about an important role in religious aspect of this Saivite sanctuary is narrated in the inscriptions found from the site and its surrounding area as royal grants given such as golden image of Gods and linga, lands and labors (Suksawasti 1994: 19). The grand donation of great Vaisnavite King, Suryavarman II, affirms on the significant feature of Khmer Brahmanism as the equal worship of different sectarians Gods in the same shrine. This specific character is also noticed from early Pasupatas-Kalamukhas temples dated around the 11th-12th century A.D. in Karnataka (Filiozart 2001: 85-86).

The sectarian toleration in Khmer religious tradition is found not only between Brahmanism sects, but also in Buddhhist Mahayanism. Prasat Pimai, Nakon Ratchasima province, is an example of being Buddhist monument that has shown strong influence of Brahmanical arts. The Pimai, also known as Vimaya, is considered as an important Khmer Mayahanism religious center in northeastern Thailand. According to the inscriptions, Pimai was established under the patronage of Mahidharapura dynasty, probably during the region of King Suryavarman I.

Though the King declared himself as Saivism devotee, his patronage was also highly given to Pimai temple. It suggests an important position of Pimai city as the originate place of Mahidharapura dynast. Its location was beneficial for the trade connection with central region of Thailand. Additionally, majority of people in this region might have belonged to Buddhism that was well settled in northern plateau of Thailand from the time of Dvaravati culture. The King, perhaps likely to receive loyalty and acceptance from his people, had supported the Buddhist activities as well as did to Saivism.

The iconographic features at Prasat Pimai temple has shown an interesting point on the puranic and epic stories of Brahmanical along with the depiction of Bodhisattvas, standing Buddha and his life story. This significant feature of religious assimilation possibly had given an influence back to authentic Khmer art of Bayon style (Suksawasti 1994: 43).
The flourishing of Buddhist Mahayanism patronized by King Jayavarman VII might cause the gradual decrease of Brahmaical sanctuary construction from the middle of 12th century A.D. Therefore, it can be state that the Royal religious tradition and their grand patronages was the fundamental element in Khmer temples construction. Because most of social and economic supports were merely contributed by the royals and elite groups.

The Khmer Brahmanical monuments not only functioned as religious center, but also being served for the growth of social and economic aspects in ancient Khmer Kingdom. The establishment of Khmer temples during per Angkorean period, before 9th century A.D, was built mainly for promoting worship at sacred places and not as political centers (Kulke 1986). The early temple construction was initially followed the tirtha or sacred pilgrimage places as practiced in Malay peninsular and coastal region of Thailand during the 5th-8th century A.D.

In fact, the propose of temple construction with the administrative and economic benefits might be started clearly from the 11th-12th century A.D., as the land grants and grand royal donation including labors generally recorded in the inscriptions. The ancient Khmer Kingdom during the 10th-13th century A.D. was possibly been developed urbanization with complicate administrative and political functions, governed by the Kings whom ritually legitimized in concept of Devaraja cult. Besides Kings, there were elite groups classified from social hierarchy which the level was identified by the land governing position and their capability in religious activities (Sahai 1970: Ricklefs 1967).

Hall (1975, 1979, 1985), has attempted to understand the economic organization of Khmer state by interpreting the detail collected from inscription. He explained the form of three-tier hierarchy of temples levels; central, regional and village. These temples functioned social and economic of the Khmer Kingdom. While the central temple was associated with royal cult, the regional and village levels temples played an important role in bringing isolated agricultural communities together.

As Khmer Kings legitimized their sovereign by promising the prosperity of society, they recognized that the establishment and endowment of temples as the foremost means of ensuring state prosperity (Wolter 1982). Khmer Kings rewarded their loyal and successful followers by granting lands or slaves from the conquered territory. Thus, temples became local storage, redistribution centers and also provided a sanctioned means by which resources and capital could be accumulated and labor mobilized, permitting the development of utilized lands and thus expanding production to other drought regions. The similar form of social administration was also commonly practiced in South Indian model, but it seemed to be more complicated as well as its high developed social context.
Hall (1985) has stated that in Southeast Asia, the temples were likely to have religious content, but there were political and economic reasons behind the establishment of those temples which mainly motivated by royals class and priests. In South Indian temples, especially during the time of Cholas, the regional chiefs and rich merchants were incorporated in the role of religious activities and supporting the temples by their products. In case of medieval Karnataka during the 11th-12th century A.D., the role of wealthy patronage groups in religious activities was not limited only donating precious gifts, fund and lands to temples, they also contributed temples and proudly assigned the God under their personified names (Hegde 2006: 25). Perhaps, the right of naming God with the personified name is corrected in the agamas, as the texts says “…One who built Siva temple will become the God himself...” (Chidanandamurthy 1968: 174). The same tradition was also well practiced in mediaeval Andhra pradesh during the Kakatiya and Yadavas dynasties as the temples establishment and religious donation were also supported social and political aspects (Talbot 1991; 2001).

The administrative information derived from epigraphic sources has been attested by archaeological evidence. David Welch (1997: 69-78) conducted systematic survey at Pimai region, northeastern Thailand which was integrated to Khmer Kingdom after 11th century A.D, in order to find out the functional role of Khmer temple establishment in administrative and political aspects. His research yielded such valuable result that explains on the location of Khmer temples dated after 11th century A.D. These temples are mostly situated in fertilized area and nearby the ancient settlements or early historical sites. And the large temple like Prasat Pimai and Phanom Rung sanctuary is surrounded by minor temples and numbers of ancient towns. Thus, it is possible to state that the Khmer temple construction in Thailand had well supported on the religion promoting as well as political administration.
Fig. 24. Map showing the location of major Khmer temples (Prasat Pimai and surrounding monuments) with other archaeological sites. Phimai is located at Nakon Ratchasima province, northeastern Thailand.
Fig. 25. Map showing the location of Phanom Ruang sanctuary and its surrounding archaeological sites in Buriram province, northeastern Thailand

Similarly, if the religious monuments had contributed the growth of social and economic in ancient Khmer Kingdom, the divine images housed inside might be involved in this aspect. According to the sacred idols visually representing the divine character through their iconographic feature, it was leading to the concept of Royal personal Gods or Devaraja cult as the Kings wished to get high respects from his people and became the “God among men”. To establish himself as God, the sacred ritual performed by particular Brahmanin families was required as well as the symbolized form of his divinity.
In Khmer Brahmanism, the Siva linga was the most common form of royal sovereign and the eight arms Vishnu images from Phanom Da known as “Hari Kambujendras” was also related to the concept of great divine protector (Bhattacharya 1964: 72; Coedes 1942 (II): 155; Dupont 1955: 28). The affiliation of Brahmanical Gods or Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara as the representation of King divine power is noticed from the Khmer word, kamraten jagat, which respectively used in the inscriptions in order to mention the sacred principle image of royal temples, has general meaning related to the overlordship (Jacques 1985: 270). In the view of social context, the construction of Khmer temples in distant region certainly functioned as administrative and economic centers. Thus the divine principle image or linga established by royal orders might be the symbol of Kings, reflecting in the iconic form of God.

Hence, the development of Brahmanical Gods worship in Southeast Asian temples might be similarly practiced. Initially, they would be worshiped in the highest position as principle image of their shrines with the basic form of ritual conducted by Brahmanis, either Indians or locals. At the beginning, Brahmanism and its cults seemed to be introduced by the Indians merchants and priests who traveled along the maritime trade route sand settled their communities in ports or major towns, spreading their religious cultures to the natives and their chiefs. Regarding the epigraphic and archeological sources, early Brahmanism and its practices seemed to be getting special attention in port sites where inhabited Indian communities and religious centers, it was likely being limited in compared with Buddhism that broadly accepted in the major parts of country.

However, the role of Brahmanical cults and the divines worship had been highly valued among Southeast Asian local rulers, leading to an assimilation of Brahmanical philosophy in state administrative concepts which successfully helped the Kings expanding his royal powers over political and religious spheres. The Brahmanism, especially Saivism, was well patronized in ancient Cambodian Kingdom due to this matter and it was certainly worked as administrative control behind the sacred religious aspect. Since the Kings and Brahmanical priests supported each other for sustaining their social aspects, the sacred rituals, merits and temple construction were always being used as important instrument of this process. Finally, the worship of Brahmanical images as connecting directly to the Gods of early period was reformed into the elaborated concept of “God-Kings”, representing the Kings who governed their Kingdoms by his divine legitimation