

Politics, Government, and Religious Beliefs: The reign of King Rājendravarman II (944-968 AD) as reflected in the East Mebon Inscription k.528¹

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Abstract:

This paper explores the East Mebon Inscription k.528, an archaeological artifact from the 10th century Khmer civilization, to examine the reflections of politics, government, and religious beliefs within its content. The inscription sheds light on the political organization and governance under the reign of King Rājendravarman II (944-968 AD), emphasizing the role of the king as a central figure with divine attributes. It also reveals insights into the religious practices and beliefs, highlighting the association between the ruler and Hindu deities, particularly Lord Śiva. Furthermore, the inscription offers glimpses into the social hierarchy and the elevated status of the ruling elite. By analyzing the East Mebon Inscription k.528, this paper elucidates the intricate interplay between politics, government, and religious beliefs within the empire society, under the reign of the king who brought the protector of the royalty back to Angkor (Yaśodharapura), and attempted to reunite again the Khmer empire.

Keywords: East Mebon Inscription k.528, King Rājendravarman II, politics, government, religious beliefs

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Introduction:

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 is a significant historical artifact from the Khmer civilization, which thrived in present-day Cambodia from the 9th to the 15th century CE (Finot, 1925, pp.289-409). The inscription is carved on the walls of the East Mebon, a temple located on the eastern side of the East Baray, a massive reservoir built during the reign of King Yasovarman I (889-910 CE).

The Khmer civilization, with its capital at Angkor, was known for its sophisticated political and religious institutions, impressive architectural achievements, and intricate belief systems. The East Mebon Inscription k.528 provides valuable insights into the political and religious aspects of Khmer society during the reign of King Rājendravarman II (944-968 AD).

King Rājendravarman II was one of the significant rulers of the Khmer empire. He wrestled the power away from Harshavarman II and bought the royalty back to Angkor (Yaśodharapura). Rajendravarman II was known for his military campaigns and the construction of several religious monuments, including the East Mebon. The temple was dedicated to the Hindu deity Śiva and served as a place of worship and religious ceremonies.

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 is believed to have been created to commemorate the construction of the temple and to highlight the religious and political achievements of King Rājendravarman II (Mahesh Kumar Sharan, 1974, p.103). The inscription is written in ancient Khmer script and provides valuable historical information about the king's reign, his religious patronage, and his efforts to consolidate political power as one of the main ideas.

The inscription contains detailed descriptions of the temple's construction, including the involvement of the king, his officials, and the resources allocated for the project. It also mentions the rituals and ceremonies performed during the temple's consecration, emphasizing the religious significance of the site, until recent archaeological excavation and field research began to reveal the region's dynamic development (Higham, 1989).

Additionally, the East Mebon Inscription k.528 references the king's devotion to the Hindu deities and his role as a patron of religious activities. It reflects the belief in the divine mandate of the king and his responsibility to ensure the well-being of the kingdom and his subjects.

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 serves as a valuable historical source for understanding the reign of King Rājendravarman II: his accession to royalty and efforts to consolidate the political power after restoring Yaśodharapura as capital again. It provides insights into the governance, religious beliefs, and architectural endeavors of King Rājendravarman II, offering a glimpse into the social, cultural, and political complexities of the Khmer society during that period.

Objective :

1. To examine the reflections of politics, government, and religious beliefs within its content in the East Mebon Inscription k.528 on the political organization and governance of the time.
2. To place the East Mebon Inscription k.528 in the political contexts of Rājendravarman II's reign.

1. The East Mebon temple and the The East Mebon Inscription k.528:

The East Mebon temple, a distinguished Khmer architectural masterpiece constructed in 952 AD during the reign of King Rājendravarman II, stands as a testament to the intricate interweaving of religious devotion and political authority in ancient Cambodia. The purpose behind the creation of the East Mebon was dual-fold, serving both as a center for religious worship and a functional component in the kingdom's water management system. Dedicated to the Hindu god Śiva, the temple exemplifies the Khmer architectural style (Aktor 2017, pp.503-519), with towering prasats and intricately carved lintels. The temple, located on an artificial island in the East Baray reservoir, served both religious and functional purposes. Accompanying the temple's physical grandeur is the East Mebon Inscription k.528, composed in Sanskrit, written in ancient Khmer script, this inscription consists of two parts with 218 verses, each carved on one of the temple's door jambs, which is the second longest Sanskrit inscription in the Cambodia. The inscription provides a detailed account of King Rājendravarman II's reign, emphasizing his military prowess, religious patronage, and contributions to temple construction. In the political context, the East Mebon and its inscription served as symbolic representations of the king's divine legitimacy and authority, linking his rule with cosmic order and the prosperity of the Khmer kingdom. The temple, with its religious and utilitarian facets, encapsulates the nuanced relationship between politics and religion during the Angkor period.

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 reveals intriguing aspects of the political organization and governance during the Khmer empire. It highlights the prominence of the king as the central figure, emphasizing the divine attributes associated with the monarchy. The inscription refers to the king's power, authority, and responsibilities, symbolizing his role as a just ruler who upholds the welfare of his subjects. This reflects the belief in a centralized political system where the king held immense power and served as a crucial link between the divine and earthly realms.

The role of the king: The inscription highlights the importance of the king as a central figure with divine attributes. It highlights the king's power, authority, and responsibilities. The association of the king with the divine realm symbolized his role as a just ruler, responsible for upholding the welfare of his subjects.

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 highlights the pivotal role of the king in the political organization and governance of the Khmer society. The inscription verse CXLVII.(147) to verse CXLIX.(149) emphasizes the king's authority, power, and responsibilities and his good governance, depicting him as a just ruler who upholds the welfare of his subjects.

CXLVII.(147)

vivarṇau caraṇau yasya nṛpamaulimanītvīṣā /
sarvvavarṇānuraktā tu nirmmalorvī bhujoddhṛtā //

Translation:

His feet were without colors due to the fact that they were illuminated with the luster of jewels on the crowns of the kings (that bowed down to salute them) whereas the earth being borne with his arm became purified and beloved of the people of all castes.

CXLVIII.(148)

kalir ekāntavāmo 'pi dakṣiṇo yasya śāsane /
drutārīn anududrāva tejonalabhayād iva //

Translation:

During his able reign, Kali (devil of Kaliyuga), despite his being absolutely in opposition, fled behind his (king's) fleeing enemies' armies as if for fear of the fire of his majesty.

CXLIX.(149)

tathā nīranidher yyena kṣoṇī niṣkaṇṭakī kṛtā /
nādyāpi skhalitā kīrttir yathaikā sarvvato gatā //

Translation:

He completely made the earth free from hostility up to the ocean so that his glory could smoothly go anywhere alone even now.

In the inscription, the king is referred to with great reverence and is associated with divine attributes. His power is portrayed as stemming from a divine mandate, solidifying his position as the central figure in the political system. The language used in the inscription suggests a sense of awe and reverence towards the king, signifying the high regard in which he was held.

The inscription also alludes to the responsibilities of the king towards his subjects. It suggests that the king's role encompassed not only the exercise of power but also the protection and well-being of the kingdom and its inhabitants. This implies a sense of duty and responsibility on the part of the king, who was expected to ensure the welfare and prosperity of the people under his rule.

Moreover, the East Mebon inscription k.528 hints at the king's involvement in the construction and maintenance of significant religious structures, such as the East Mebon temple itself. The inscription reveals the king's commitment to religious patronage and the flourishing of Hindu culture in the Khmer realm. Furthermore, the inscription underscores the monarch's dedication to the preservation and restoration of existing religious monuments, showcasing a profound sense of responsibility toward the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Khmer people. The construction and maintenance of religious structures, as documented in the inscription, not only demonstrate the king's piety and reverence for Hindu deities but also serve as a political instrument to consolidate his authority by aligning it with divine favor and cosmic order. In verse CCV.(205) He installed Śaurī, Gaurī, Īśa and a liṅga south of the Yaśodharataṭāka. This demonstrates the king's patronage of religious activities, which further solidified his position as a central figure in both political and religious spheres.

He made rich donations to Bhadreśvara in verse CCIII.(203). It details the elaborate ceremonies and rituals associated with the consecration of the East Mebon temple, emphasizing the king's direct engagement in these religious activities. By undertaking these religious endeavors, the king sought to secure divine favor and blessings for the kingdom, reinforcing the interconnectedness of politics and religion in the Khmer society. By actively participating in religious rituals and ceremonies, Rājendravarman II sought to secure divine favor and blessings

for the kingdom. This intentional intertwining of religious and political realms underscored a belief system wherein the ruler's legitimacy and the prosperity of the kingdom were deeply connected to celestial approval. The sacred structures erected under his patronage were not only architectural marvels but tangible representations of his commitment to the divine order, emphasizing the role of the king as a spiritual leader whose actions in the religious sphere were integral to the political governance of the Khmer realm. In the East Mebon inscription k.528, Rājendravarman II's endeavors illuminate the sophisticated relationship between politics and religion, illustrating how the ruler's piety was strategically aligned with the broader well-being and stability of the kingdom.

CCV.(205)

yaśodharataṭākasya dakṣiṇenāpi dakṣiṇaḥ /
yaś śaurigaurīśanimāḥ śambhor llingam atiṣṭhipat //

Translation:

To the south of Yaśodharatāka, the skillful king also erected the images of Viṣṇu, Umā and Śiva and a Śiva-liṅga.

CCIII.(203)

yadupakramamāseva śrībhadreśvaraśūlinah /
bhogo ‘nyatrāpi devān yaḥ pūjābhir udamīmilat //

Translation:

In the coming month (?) the wealth for Bhadreśvara Śiva (was established?). He inaugurated the gods together with offerings elsewhere also.

The portrayal of the king as a just ruler in the East Mebon Inscription k.528 reflects the hierarchical nature of the political organization and governance of the Khmer civilization. It highlights the concentration of power and authority in the hands of the king, with the expectation that he would govern with fairness and benevolence. The inscription serves as a testament to the central role of the king in the political structure and the strong belief in his divine legitimacy.

This example demonstrates how the East Mebon Inscription k.528 provides insights into the political organization and governance of the Khmer society, emphasizing the significance of the king as a just ruler responsible for the welfare of his subjects. It offers a glimpse into the hierarchical structure and the interconnectedness of politics and religion in the ancient Khmer civilization.

2. Religious Beliefs and Practices:

Religion held paramount importance in the Khmer society, and the East Mebon Inscription k.528 provides valuable insights into the religious beliefs and practices of the time. The inscription highlights the close association between the king and the deities, Rājendravarman II's reign presents a fascinating intersection of religious diversity and tolerance within the Khmer kingdom (Kaewna, 2016, pp.9-36). While the king himself was a fervent Saivite, as evidenced by his extensive patronage of Hindu temples and his affiliation with the worship of Śiva, the presence of ministers like Kavindrarimathna, who was a Buddhist, adds a layer of complexity to the religious

landscape of the era. This coexistence of diverse religious practices within the royal court highlights Rājendravarman II's inclusive approach to governance. The fact that a prominent minister and architect like Kavindrarimathna held Buddhist beliefs suggests a certain level of religious pluralism and tolerance at the highest echelons of the Khmer administration. This syncretic environment likely contributed to the architectural richness of the kingdom, where both Hindu and Buddhist influences coalesced in the construction and embellishment of monumental structures like the East Mebon. Thus, Rājendravarman II's reign emerges not only as a period of religious patronage but also as an era characterized by a pragmatic and inclusive approach to diverse religious practices, reflecting a ruler who recognized and respected the pluralistic nature of his realm.

The accession of Rājendravarman marked a pivotal juncture in the religious trajectory of his kingdom, ushering in essential changes that left an indelible impact on the spiritual landscape. Under his reign, the Khmer religious milieu experienced a profound transformation, as Rājendravarman actively engaged in religious patronage and undertook monumental construction projects. The establishment and embellishment of significant Hindu temples, notably the East Mebon, served not only as architectural marvels but as expressions of the king's deep religious fervor. The kingdom witnessed an era of heightened devotion to Hindu deities, particularly Śiva, reflecting Rajendravarman's personal beliefs and the wider societal embrace of these religious ideals. This shift in religious emphasis was not merely a personal pursuit but a deliberate strategy employed by the king to consolidate his rule. By aligning himself with the divine through monumental religious constructions, Rājendravarman sought not only to secure spiritual merit but also to fortify his political legitimacy, reinforcing the interconnectedness of politics and religion in the fabric of Khmer society. The accession of Rājendravarman thus became a transformative epoch, shaping the religious ethos and leaving an enduring legacy etched in the sanctuaries he dedicated to the divine. In Verse CIII.(103) and CXXX.(130) shows that the religious life of his realm saw significant alterations with Rājendravarman 's ruling. While Rājendravarman had prioritized Śiva worship in his religious policy out of concern for his victory.

CIII.(103)

vihāya saṅgam̄ paradevatāsu śraddhā ca bhaktiś ca parā yadīyā /
śrīkaṇṭham utkaṇṭhatayā prapanne gaṅgābhavānyāv iva devadevam //

Translation:

Having stopped coming to other gods, his faith and devotion turned zealously towards Śrīkaṇṭha (Viṣṇu) like Gaṅgā and Bhavānī towards the god of the gods (Śiva).

CXXX.(130)

śūlinādhyāsitām bhaktigāmbhīrām yasya hṛdguhām /
tannetrānalabhītyeva viviśur nānyadevatāḥ //

Translation:

The other gods did not enter the cave in the form of his heart which was deeply full of devotion and was inhabited by Śiva due to fear of the fire from his eye, as it were.

In religious policy, as reflected in the East Mebon Inscription k.528, the efforts of Rājendreśvara were obviously intended to enlarge the social basis of his rule by religious ideology, that supported all the local cults among the population of the kingdom. The divine figures in the four outer sanctuary towers of the quincunx reverses reflect the religious ideas and policy of the king Rājendreśvara.

In Verse 218, The content describes the quincunx-shaped structure was built by King Rājendravarman to house a statue of the deity liṅga of Śiva, also known as Rājendreśvara, in the center and statues of Viṣṇu, Pārvatī, Giriśa (Śiva) and Brahmā in each of the four outer sanctuary towers. This quincunx-shaped structure has precedents in India and is sometimes referred to as reflecting a pañcāyatana⁴ system of worship.

CCXVIII.(218)

śākābde ganyamāne kṛtanagavasubhir māghamāsasya puṇye śuklasyaikādaśāhe nimiśam
api bhave yāti varṣārddham indau /

arccābhiś śaurigaurīgiriśakajabhvuvām sārddham arddhendumauleś śrīrājendreśvarākhyām
sthitim akṛta parām liṅgam atredam ābhiḥ //

Translation:

In the Śaka year counted by Krta (4), Naga (7) and Vasu (8) =874, on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Māgha, when the moon is in the Bhava constellation and in the middle of the zodiacal sign Taurus, this Śivaliṅga named Śrī-Rājendreśvara made this place its perfect and firm abode together with these images of Viṣṇu, Pārvatī, Śiva and Brahmā.

Nonetheless, the importance of India and the Indian religions, especially the worship of Śiva, remained unchanged. Rājendravarman has a reverse type representing Śiva with the Śivalinga and image as well as identifying the god divine patrons which represent primarily the dynastic pantheon of the king, to the worship of which the Shrine of Śiva was dedicated. He installed liṅgas and images at Sivapura on the mountain for his forefathers in Verse CCI.(201) and Verse CCII.(202).

CCI.(201)

śrīmatsiddheśvaram liṅgam siddhaśivapure girau /
varddhayām āsa yo bhogair apūrvvaiḥ śivikādibhiḥ //

Translation:

He bestowed, on the celebrated Siddheśvara liṅga on the mountain at Siddhaśivapura, unprecedented wealth namely palanquins etc.

⁴ The Hindu pañcāyatanaśūpā is the worship of five deities that can be in the form of five stones collected from various locations in South Asia. Each of these stones has visual properties which form points of reference to the iconography of the same gods' anthropomorphic forms. See Aktor, M. (2017, April 19).

The Hindupañcāyatanaśūpā in the aniconism spectrum. Religion, 47(3), 503–519.

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CCII.(202)

tatrāpi liṅgam śarvvasya śarvvāṇīpratime śubhe /
yas samyak sthāpayām āsa pitṛṇān dharmmavṛddhaye //

Translation:

He also properly erected there (Siddhasivapura) a Śiva- linga and two beautiful images of Śiva's wives for the increase of his ancestors' merit.

The genealogy of Rājendravarman II, as documented in the East Mebon Inscription k.528, holds paramount importance in understanding not only the lineage of this Khmer monarch but also the intricate interplay between political legitimacy and divine right. The inscription meticulously delineates the king's ancestry, tracing his lineage back to divine and historical figures. This genealogical emphasis serves to reinforce the monarch's legitimacy by establishing a direct connection with revered predecessors, thereby grounding his rule in a divine and cosmic order. The reference to the Soma lineage in the East Mebon Inscription k.528 carries profound significance within the context of the myths surrounding the origin of Kambuja kings and their dynasties. The Soma lineage, deeply ingrained in Hindu cosmology and mythology, is associated with the divine elixir Soma, symbolizing immortality and celestial blessings. In the genealogy of Rājendravarman II, the invocation of the Soma lineage serves to mythologize the king's ancestry, connecting it to a sacred and celestial origin. This mythic association not only bestows an aura of divine legitimacy upon the ruler but also aligns him with the cosmic order, reinforcing the belief in the transcendent nature of Khmer kingship. The Soma lineage, thus, becomes a symbolic thread weaving through the historical narrative, intertwining the mortal realm of political governance with the celestial realms of Hindu mythology. This genealogical precision not only strengthens the king's political authority but also enhances the religious significance of his reign, underlining the belief in a sacred and predetermined lineage governing the Khmer kingdom. Thus Rājendravarman II installed and endowed a linga and deities for his parents here from verse CCVI.(206) to verse CCX.(210).

CCVI.(206)

sa somavarīśāmbarabhbhāskaraś śrīrājendravarīmmā tad idan nṛpendrah /
Svargāpavarggādhigamasya lingam lingam pratiṣṭhāpitavān smarāreh //

Translation:

This king Rājendravarman, the sun in the sky in the form of Soma lineage, erected the linga of Smarāri (Śiva) as a symbol for the attainment of heaven and salvation.

CCVII.(207)

samprāptayoh prāptayaśās svapitror bhuvaḥ patis so ‘pi bhavodbhavena /
samsthānatām sthāpitavān sthitijñō nime ime dve śivayoś śivāya //

Translation:

The king, who had obtained glory, the knower of preservation, when his parents died, erected the (images) of Śiva and Pārvatī, together with Bhavodbhava (Śivalinga?) for their final emancipation.

CCVIII.(208)

mahābhujas so ‘pi caturbhujasya nimām imām ambujajanmanaś ca /
atiṣṭhipan niṣṭhitarājakraṭyo liṅgān yathāṣṭāvapi cāṣṭamūrtteḥ //

Translation:

The great-armed king also erected these images of Viṣṇu and Brahmā. He, who had done his royal duty, erected eight lingas of the eight-formed god (Śiva) as well.

CCIX.(209)

ratnollasadbhogasahasradīptam sa cāpy ahīnam dravīṇasya rāśim /
aśeṣam apy eṣv aditeva śeṣarī deveṣu devendrasamānavīryyah //

Translation:

He, whose heroism was equal to that of the king of gods (Indra), bestowed on these gods the heap of his best wealth, shining with thousands of the objects of enjoyment which were brilliant with jewels, of which nothing was left over.

CCX.(210)

sa kalpayām āsa mahendrakalpas sadā sadācāravidhim vidheyam /
śaivaśrutismṛtyuditām saparyyām paryyāptamāsām iha devatānām //

Translation:

He, who was like Mahendra (Indra) prescribed the code of good conduct and rituals to be practiced always towards the gods here. These were mentioned in the Śruti and Smṛtis of the Śaiva sect and were to be observed for the whole month including the worship of gods.

Furthermore, the inscription suggests the existence of a priestly class responsible for conducting rituals and ceremonies in verse CXXV.(125) and CXXVI.(126) . These religious ceremonies, mentioned in the inscription, reflect the social and cultural fabric of the society, as they brought people together, fostered a sense of community, and reinforced the prevailing religious beliefs.

CXXV.(125)

sāndrair yyasyādhvare dhūmair ūrdhvagaruddhadṛṣṭibhiḥ /
vraddhno ‘dhunāpi digbhrāntais svadhuryyair bhrāmyate dhruvam //

Translation:

On account of the thick smoke at his sacrifice which was going upwards and which had blocked the eye-sights, the sun must surely have been wondering about due to the fact that his horses got lost.

CXXVI.(126)

sa.....ya dhāmayo dvīṣamidbhīs saminmakhe /
akṣīṇān dakṣīṇām kīrttim digdvijebhyas samādiśat //

Translation:

....power...., he, at the sacrifice of faggots that had the enemies as its fire woods, bestowed on (the Brāhmaṇas the inexhaustible sacrificial fees in the form of his glory through his conquest in the ten directions.

The inscription reveals the close association between the king and brahmins. He was generous to brahmins showed in verse CXLII.(142).

CXLII.(142)

madonmatto ‘pi tungo ‘pi niyojyo dharmmasādhane /
itibhendragaṇo yena dvijebhyo ‘dāyi bhūriśah /

Translation:

For the fulfillment of his Dharma (religious duty), he bestowed, on the Brahmanas, several times the host of great elephants, which were furious with rut, tall and suitable for work.

3. Social Hierarchy and Role of the Elite:

The East Mebon Inscription k.528 hints at the hierarchical structure of Khmer society and the elevated status of the ruling elite. It mentions the contributions made by the king and the nobles towards the construction of the temple, highlighting their wealth, power, and patronage of religious activities. This reinforces the notion of a social hierarchy, where the ruling class held significant influence and enjoyed privileges, while the common people likely played subordinate roles (Coedes, 1964: 97-109).

The three Vedas, three societal divisions (varnas), three life stages (ashramas), and three "goals of a man" (purusharthas) were the initial divisions of Hinduism's worldly component. Women's wants or aspirations were rarely addressed in the ancient literature. The earliest three social classes— Brāhmaṇa, or priestly; Kṣatra, or warrior; and Vaiśya, or ordinary populace— were drawn from the three-part structure of prehistoric Indian society.

The historical construct known as "caste" is essentially a synthesis of the jāti biological lineage and the varṇa intellectual categories. The caste system and the svadharma ("one's own dharma") ideology that it supports were created in accordance with the ways of the world. Svadharma includes the convictions that it is preferable to follow one's own dharma than to follow the dharma of others, and that each individual is born to carry out a certain task, marry a particular person, eat a certain food, and produce offspring to do the same. A worldly Hindu's main objective

is to have and nurture a son who will make sacrifices to the ancestors (the shraddha ceremony). The concept of varṇa, as articulated in ancient Cambodia, did share similarities with the foundational ideas found in the Indian caste system, both systems shared the fundamental principle of organizing society based on occupation and social roles, illustrating the diffusion and adaptation of Hindu concepts in the Southeast Asian cultural tapestry.

Inscriptions often provide information about great figures of ancient philosophy. So we can find that Rājendravarman II's claim in Verse X.(10) that he is vrahma-kṣatra, a mixture of brahmin and ksatriya, also comes from his mother, presumably because her ancestor Sarasvatī married the brahmin Viśvarūpa (the claim that Somā married Kauinya, presumably another brahmin, does not seem to have been raised as relevant). By showcasing his familial ties with esteemed ancestors and mythic beings, the inscription constructs a narrative that positions Rajendravarman II as a rightful heir to a storied legacy. Rajendravarman II's claim of being a Brahma-kṣatra in the East Mebon Inscription is a strategic articulation aimed at reinforcing his political and divine legitimacy within the societal context of ancient Cambodia.

X.(10)

vrahmakṣatraparamparodayakarī tadbhāgineyī satī
 punyām nāma sarasvatītī dadhatī khyātā jagatpāvanī /
 nānāmnāyagirām gabhīram adhikām pātrām dvijānām varam
 sindhūnām iva sindhurājam agamad yā viśvarūpam priyam //

Translation:

His niece, who was the originator of continuity rising of family of Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas, who was the faithful wife and having the auspicious name as Sarasvatī, who was well-known as the purifier of the world, went to her husband named Viśvarūpa, the best among the Brāhmaṇas and who was the deep and great receptacle of various sacred texts, who (Sarasvatī) was, as it were, the best of rivers went to the ocean.

Additionally, the inscription alludes to the importance of the temple as a place of pilgrimage and devotion for the Khmer people. It suggests that the temple complex, including the East Mebon, served as a center of cultural and social activities, fostering a sense of identity and community cohesion among the populace.

Conclusion:

The East Mebon temple stands as a remarkable testament to the grandeur and cultural richness of the Khmer civilization during the Angkor period in Cambodia. Erected under the patronage of King Rājendravarman II, this temple complex, dating back to the 10th century, holds not only architectural significance but also bears the weight of historical narratives encapsulated in the East Mebon Inscription K.528. This inscription is a vital historical document, offering insights into the intricate dynamics of Khmer political and religious ideologies during the 10th century.

The East Mebon Inscription K.528 is a crucial historical artifact shedding light on the political and religious context of the era. Composed in ancient Khmer script and Sanskrit language, providing a detailed account of King Rājendravarman II's reign, his military campaigns, religious

patronage, and contributions to temple construction. It serves as a historical record, offering insights into the political and cultural dynamics of the time. The content highlights the king's devotion to Hindu deities, particularly Śiva, and underscores his role in the construction and restoration of religious structures, including the East Mebon temple.

In spite of the evidence in many respects, we can draw some general conclusions about religious life throughout the territory of the Rājendravarman II. It was highly developed. The religious thought of Śivaism is consistently presented in the East Mebon Inscription. Rājendravarman II, through his deliberate engagement in religious endeavors, demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of politics and religion in Khmer society. The inscriptions suggest that his pursuit of the construction and maintenance of significant religious structures, notably the East Mebon temple, was not solely driven by spiritual devotion but intricately linked to political strategy. Rājendravarman II's affirmation as a Saivite, therefore, takes on particular significance. It served not only as a personal declaration of religious adherence but also as a political and cultural statement. His devotion to Śiva, evidenced by the grandeur of structures like the East Mebon, contributed to the rich tapestry of Khmer religious identity. However, the recognition of diverse religious beliefs within the kingdom, in contrast to a rigid imposition of a single faith, highlights the king's pragmatic and inclusive approach to governance. This approach differed from previous reigns where a more homogeneous religious atmosphere might have prevailed, demonstrating the nuanced religious dynamics under Rājendravarman II.

The importance of the East Mebon inscription k.528 lies in what we learn from it for the history of the King Rājendravarman II in ancient Cambodia. In short, we have here a unique Inscription of Cambodia's cultural history, for the place of the Indian tradition in this history, and simultaneously a valuable Inscription along with religious and philological commentary. The inscription not only glorifies the king's military achievements but also showcases his commitment to the preservation and propagation of Hindu culture. The construction of religious sites like the East Mebon played a crucial role in solidifying the king's political legitimacy, connecting his rule with divine favor and cosmic order.

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