

Revisiting *Devarāja*

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Abstract

This article reviews current understandings of the term devarāja by scholars of ancient Cambodia, with particular attention to recent contributions. Devarāja (god-king or king of the gods) is found in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription (K. 235) of 1053 CE. Among topics discussed in the article are the language of the foundation inscription of Prasat Thom, Koh Ker, 921 CE (K. 184), the images originally installed in East Gopura II of this temple, which are identified as the sun, the moon, and planets, and the relevant tenth-century inscriptions. The devarāja ceremony in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription, it is argued, should be understood as a protective rite described in the Vināśikhatantra, and just one example in a long history of the performance of karman, magical rites. The wording of the Sdok Kak Thom inscription was intended to evoke K. 184, the Prasat Thom text.

Keywords: *devarāja; dīkṣā; karman; Koh Ker; planet worship; Prasat Thom; rājya; Sdok Kak Thom; siddhi.*