The Tamil's Ramayana at Batu Cave, Malaysia. A Comparative Case Study of Thai Ramayana and Valmiki's Ramayana

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ABSTRACT

The focused research issue suggested that Asian countries, including Thai and Malaysia, were greatly impacted by Brahmanism-Hinduism religious beliefs. There had continually been this effect since the Iron Age in pre-historical period, to Sukhothai and Ayutthaya period. The end of Ayutthaya era marked the beginning of Thai and Brahmanism-Hinduism from India's relationship by their water-route trading. It can be concluded that these days influences to Thais and Malaysians are from South India.

The King Rama I's reign was the era of cultural and royal ceremony rehabilitation. Brahmans from the south and all over the country were granted a royal permission to serve under the crown after their escape due to the war. These Brahmans were appointed to be in service at the royal court, to perform royal ceremonies, and to restore art, cultures, tradition, and literature. One of the literary revivals was King Rama I writing Ramayana, King Rama I edition. The edition's overall plot was more similar to the Kampan's Ramayana's, which was written in Tamil language, than to Valmiki's Ramayana's. The Ramayana found at Batu Cave also belonged to the Tamils. Nevertheless, the study on its comparison to Thai Ramayana has never been conducted.

The objective of this research was to analyze the plot of Ramayana, told with the statues and the narration in Tamil and to compare to Valmiki's Ramayana's and Thai Ramayana.

This research scope was only to compare the plot of Tamil Batu Cave's Ramayana to the one of Sanskrit Valmiki edition and Thai King Rama I’s edition, not to Hikayat Seri Rama edition or others Malaysian editions.

The results of other studies found that there had been other sculptures related to Ramayana at Stone Castle, Candi Prambanan in Indonesia, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and Prasat Hin Phimai in Thailand. It was convinced that they were the impacts of Valmiki's Ramayana, which was approaching along with Mahabharat. One of the Asian ancient Ramayana versions, Ramayana in Poetic Language by Java Yo-K-Suan, also derived from Valmiki’s Ramayana.

Kampan's Ramayana's influence in Asia never lost its appeal. The ancient Ramayana was recount with Shadow Show (Nang Talung) or Indian Performances that together came with other nations' performances, e.g. Chinese Opera. The performances were arranged in important festivals. Most of all, there had been a Tamil community in Malaysia which resulted in many Tamil words used in Malaysian language.

Thai Ramayana however was different from Valmiki version in several parts. Instead, it resembled Kampan's Ramayana, a southern Indian edition. Buddha images in Deva attitude, Narai-Sib-Pang attitude, and Narai-Yee-Sib-Pang attitude related to graven image
picture books, and a great numbers of mural paintings. The strongest evidence was that it was stated at the end of the story that it was translated from Ka-Rue-hat characters, which was belonged to southern Indian Tamils. This comparative study on Tamil Ramayana at Batu Cave, Malaysia, indicated that most of the chapters of Ramayana at Batu Cave, Kampan’s Ramayana, and Valmiki’s Ramayana had been portrayed in Thai Ramayana.

1. Introduction

It was vastly acknowledged that "มาเลเซีย" derived from the word "มาลายา", which was Tamil language. meant Malaysian land. To compare to a Tamil grammatical vocabulary descriptions would be conclude that மலை meant mountain, or hill. The word "ยา" or "ยู" (from "มาลายา") may come from "อู" அடுக்கு, which in Tamil meant countryside, community, and dwelling. Hence, the word "มาลายา" would compound with "อู" and become มาลายู. In Tamil language, ர as the last character of a word equaled to a suffix, turning the word in to a noun. ผู้สกัดิศ (not male or female) or plural form for "admiration" was optional to put or not. Finally, it became the word "มาลายู" which meant a city or a community at hillside. (Aciriyar Kulam. 2008: 188) Then add English suffix derived from Latin or Greek "sia" to the word. "อู" or "ยู" in Tamil language are considered a voiceless syllable that can be crossed out. The word consequently became มาเลเซีย Malaysia which meant Malaysian land.

Although there had been an emergence of Hindi language and other Indian groups doing business in Malaysia, Tamil community was supposed to be an ancient Malaysian community that arrived in the beginning of the historical period which were Sriwichai period and Langkasuka period. It started with the Tamils of Chola dynasty who were skillful sea navigators scattered all over Southeast Asian countries. The word 'ship' in Malaysian dictionary was "กาปัล" which was borrowed from the Tamil word "கப்பல்" (Wilkinson, R. J., 1908 : 95). In Thai we use the word "เรือกาปัล" to call a Western ocean liner.

Tamil community was known for remaining the prominent cultures of South India e.g. กัรนาฏิก song (southern Indian temporary song), Bharata natya, a worshipping sermon for Pra Mu Ru Ka or ขันธกุมาร on ไตมาสัม month in South India. The month began at the end of December until the beginning of January. It was called Thaipusam festival தைப்புசம். The festival held by the Tamils in Malaysia at Batu Cave, Kuala Lumpur, in the middle of January or the beginning of February according to southern Indian lunar calendar. This magnificent festival and culture helped Malaysia to earn a great deal of money.

Apart from Batumalai Sri Muruga Perumal Kovil, the shrine of Batu Cave, there was another Hindu shrine in front of Batu Cave called Ramayana Cave or The Tamils’ Rama Cave. The cave is the reflection of the ideas on Rama’s bravery in the eye of Malaysian Tamils in which the story was more intensive and different from Hikayat Seri Rama edition, a native version for Malaysians.

2. Comparison study

2.1 Various Ramayana Editions and Their Influences towards ASEAN
1) Hermit Valmiki's edition

Hermit Valmiki (वाल्मीकि), was one of the characters in Indain Ramayan. According to the story, he wrote the first edition of original Indian Ramayana himself in 400 B.C. (Around 143 B.E.) Although, Ramayana had existed since Buddha period as an oral tradition (oral speech) being called Todasarot Jataka, it was considered a Pali literature.

According to the traditional belief, hermit Valmiki was the composer of the first Kawaya Sa-Lok or an Indian poem. As the inventor of Kawaya poetry, he was recognized as “อาทิกวี” (In Sanskrit, อาทิกวี आदि कवि, means the first poet.) Valmiki became first poet of Sanskrit literature age. (a conventional belief)

Hermit Valmiki or hermit Watchamaruk in Thai Ramayana was Sita's patron after she was exiled by Rama. It was not mentioned in the Thai edition that Valmiki is the author of Ramayana because, according to the text, hermit Watchamaruk did not write the story, but a Thai author did. However, hermit Valmiki wrote Valmiki's Ramayana. Thai Ramayana and Valmiki's Ramayana shared similar story in many chapters, and also differences in some chapters. The examples of differences are as follows.

Sita was exiled in Thai Ramayana because she was deceived by wicked Adul to make a portrait of Ravana which led her and Rama to misunderstanding. In Valmiki's Ramayana, Sita was exiled because Rama was an aristocrat and could not stand hearing Sita's blemish as the gossip of the washers.

The other difference is Rama engaged in a battle with their children, but Mongkut and Lob did not wage war against their father in Valmiki's Ramayana. The scene of father-and-sons battle were in the other Ramayana versions, the most eminent one was Krittivasi Ramayana in Bengali language.

2) Kampan's Ramayana

Kampan was a Southern-Indian Brahman, born in Therazhuntur district (தேரசூர்) of Nagappattinam (நகரப்பட்டினம்) province in Tamil Nadu state. He was also an Ochchan (ஓசசன் or Occhan), a Brahman who worshiped native goddesses during the reign of Chola in the 12th century. It took place in the city of Thanjavur, which was considered the center of Southern-Indian civilization. In the South of India, the Ochchan women might have been Devadasi (religious prostitutes) while the men were responsible to play music in the place of worship, which was called Nattuvan (நட்டுவன்), and also to conduct the dance of Devadasi.

In his youth, Kampan became a highly talented man in poetry as he wrote Ramayana, which is full of Rama Avatar and Vishnu’s magically elegant graces.

Generally, Ramayana that was written by different sectarianisms such as Shivaism (Shiva is regarded as the most worshiped god among all the gods) and Vaishnavism (Vishnu is regarded as the most worshiped god among all the gods) mainly emphasize conflicts and comparison between Shiva’s and Vishnu’s mightiness.
Thus, some certain chapters in Ramayana, which are related to Shivaism are not acceptable in Vaishnavism’s version. In contrary, Kampan’s Ramayana is acknowledged in both sectarianisms. (V. Raghavan. 1978, p 1-3)

2.2 The Story of Ramayana in Batu Cave

The cave that is located near Batu cave was named “Ramayana Cave”. It is also located in the area of Sri Mahamariamman Devasthanam Temple in Kuala Lumpur city.

Rama cave, which is located near Batu cave has been in presence for a long time but some parts were decorated with paths, which were built in order for people to walk up to worship Sayamphushiva Lingam which is a natural lingam. The place was officially open on December 6\(^{th}\) 2013 by Tan Sri Dato R. Nadarajah, an entrepreneur who managed the observation and establishment of the cave in order for it to be regarded as a sanctuary.

Batu cave self-exploration in Malaysia

The findings indicate that existing Ramayanas as statues in Batu cave are the new Ramayana of the Tamils in Malaysia.

They were influenced by Kampan’s Ramayana, Valmiki’s Ramayana, and the traditional folk tales of Rameswaram city in Tamil Nadu state.

The significant chapters are as follows:

1. The first chapter: Ganesha and Valmiki
2. Holy Rice and the Birth of Rama
3. Vishvamittre invited Rama to subdue Tataka
4. Subduing Tataka
5. Rama and Ahalya
6. Rama travelled to Mitila while he captured the eyesights of Sita
7. Rama broke the arrow and Parashurama
8. Sita’s mate selection ceremony
9. Kaikeyi was instigated by Gujya
10. Rama with Sita and Lakshmana crossed the river and walked into the forest
11. Bharata begged Rama to return to the kingdom but was given shoes instead.
12. Sita saw the golden dear
13. Ravana in a hermit’s disguise kidnaped Sita
14. Jatayu fought with Ravana
15. Rama cremated Jatayu
16. Hanuman offered the ring
17. Rama’s Street
18. Angada’s messages
19. Waking Kumbhakarna with elephants, drums, etc.
20. Battling with Ravana
21. Rama venerated Lingam (The Legend of Rameswaram, also found in Telugu version of Andhra Pradesh)
22. Rama was appointed to be King (The same ending as Kampan’s version)
23. Hanuman showed “Pancavaktra” of Shiva
2.2 A comparative table of Tamils Ramayana of Badu cave and Ramayana of Thailand

The content of Badu Cave’s Ramayana consists of several chapters which is similar to Valmiki’s Ramayana and Kampan’s Ramayana. In addition, all the content is also similar to Ramayana of Thailand.

The contents of Ramayana and Ramakien can be compared in this table as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thai Ramakien</th>
<th>Kamba version</th>
<th>Valmiki version</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[First Maya Sita]</td>
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<td>Ramasetu</td>
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<td>[Mahi Ravana died]</td>
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<td>Kumbhakarna’s war</td>
<td>Kumbhakarna’s war</td>
<td>Nagapasa’s war</td>
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<td>Makarkan’s war</td>
<td>Kamba’s death</td>
<td>Sita see battle</td>
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<td>Nagapasa’s war</td>
<td>Nagapasa’s war</td>
<td>Kumbhakarna’s war</td>
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<td>Sita sees battle</td>
<td>Sita sees battle</td>
<td>Kumba’s death</td>
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<td>medicinal Moutain</td>
<td>medicinal Moutain</td>
<td>Makaraksha’s war</td>
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<td>Second Maya Sita</td>
<td>Maya Sita</td>
<td>Maya Sita</td>
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<td>Yoga at Nikbalal</td>
<td>Yoga at Nikbalal</td>
<td>Yoga at Nikbalal</td>
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<td>Indrajit’s death</td>
<td>Indrajit’s death</td>
<td>Indrajit’s death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mulabalam Asura</td>
<td>Mulabalam army</td>
<td>Ravana’s army</td>
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<td>Ravana shoots spear</td>
<td>Ravana shoots spear</td>
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<td>Ravana died</td>
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<td>Ravana died</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This demonstrates that in Malaysia, Tamil’s Ramayana has been passed on from generation to generation since the beginning of Srivijaya Kingdom or Langkasuka Kingdom.

Although the native Malaysian’s version differs from Tamil and Sanskrit’s version, the original Ramayana of Tamils still carries the favor of most Tamils in Malaysia.

3. Result and Discussion

Ramayana in Kampan and Badu Cave’s version have similar contents to some chapters of Thai Ramakien as follows;

1. Impacts and Ideas The characteristics of Ramakien do not consist of conflicts between Vaishnavism and Shivaism.

2. Examples of Impacts

According to the Birth of Rama, Kalikod was invited to perform a ceremony in order to pray for a son for King Thotsarot. In this case, the same name was used.
In Brahma Battle chapter of Kampan, Indrajit assigned his henchman to disguise as Indra and snipe Lakshmana. In Thai version, Indrajit disguised himself as Indra and sniped Lakshmana then.

The Impact of *Vamiki’s Ramayana* and *Kampan’s Ramayana* towards ASEAN

**The Impact of Valmiki’s Ramayana towards ASEAN**

At the beginning of 657 A.D., it was written in the stone inscription Veal Kantel [K.359] that the princess who is a sister to Vilavoraman, a daughter of Pawavoraman worshiped her Brahman husband, Somvoraman for his most brilliant Samaveda reading skills. He also worshipped Phuwanesh with the complete Ramayana and Mahabharata. (Busaba Ruangsri.2005,p. 29)

Moreover, there are Ramayana sculptures found in Candi Prambanan in Indonesia, Angor Wat in Cambodia, and Phimai Historical Park in Thailand. It is believed that this is Valmiki’s Ramayana’s impact approached ASEAN at the same time when *Mahabharata* did. One of ASEAN’s *Ramayana* copies is poetic Jokesuan’s Ramayana of Jawa, which was also influenced by *Valmiki’s Ramayana*.

**The Impact of Kampan’s Ramayana towards ASEAN**

Mayilirawanan Katai, which Satya Vrat Shastri told Phraya Anuman Rajadhon does not appear in *Kampam’s Ramayana*, but it is one of the most significant chapters in Tamil’s *Ramayana* for Nang Talung.

These tales possibly spread into ASEAN since the old age through Nang Talung or Indian performances or those from other nations such as Chinese Opera, which was broadcasted in these areas during important festivals.

More importantly, Tamils settled down and established ancient communities in Malaysia, and that is the reason why Malaysian language consists of various Tamil’s words.

In summary, some chapters of Thai *Ramakien* is somehow related to *Valmiki’s Ramayana* for the reason that Valmiki’s is the main plot of *Ramayana* but additional contents in Thai version are related to the traditional *Ramayana* from several languages in India such as Tamil, Hindi, and Bengali etc. Tamil’s *Ramayana*, especially, is the traditional version, which does not belong to Kampan, yet it has a huge impact on ASEAN literatures which is related to Rama’s stories. It can be concluded that Tamil traditions and literature have been playing a crucial role in these areas since the ancient age.
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