

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

Waradet Mesangrutdharakul
Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University

— Review of —
**Integrative
Business &
Economics**
— Research —

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. Brahmins 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 Brahmins 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 recounted 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 "มลายา", which was Tamil language. meant Malaysian land. To compare to a Tamil grammatical vocabulary descriptions would be conclude that **புல** meant mountain, or hill. The word "ยา" or "ยู" (from "มลายู") may come from "อรั" **அரர்**, which in Tamil meant countryside, community, and dwelling. Hence, the word "มะไล" would compound with "อรั" and become **มลายู**. In Tamil language, **ர்** as the last character of a word equaled to a suffix, turning the word in to a noun. **นปงสกลิงค์** (not male or female) or plural form for "admiration" was optional to put or not. Finally, it became the word "มลายู" 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. "อุ" or "อู" 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 "กัปัล" (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 **ไตมาสัสม** month in South India. The month began at the end of December until the beginning of January. It was called Thaipusam festival **தைபுசம்**. 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 Baturalai 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 Todsarot Jataka, it was considered a Pali literature.

According to the traditional belief, hermit Valmiki was the composer of the first Kaway Sa-Lok or an Indian poem. As the inventor of Kaway poetry, he was recognized as “वाणीकवि” (In Sanskrit, वाणीकवि आदिकवि, 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 (தேரமுந்தூர்) of Nagappattinam (நாகப்பட்டினம்) province in Tamil Nadu state. He was also an Ochchan (ஓச்சன் 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 6th 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 deer
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 "Pancavakra" of Shiva

24.

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;

The continuity plots of Ramayana Stories [A]

Thai Ramakien	Kamba version	Valmiki version
[First Maya Sita]		
Ramasetu	Ramsetu	Ramsetu
[Mahi Ravana died]		
Kumbhakarna's war	Kumbhakarna's war	Nagapasa's war
Makarakan's war	Kamban's death	Sita see battle
Nagapasa's war	Nagapasa's war	Kumbhakarna's war
Kampan's death	Makarakanan's war	Brahmasatra's war
Brahmasatra's war	Brahmasatra's war	medicinal Moutain
Sita sees battle	Sita sees battle	Kumba's death
medicinal Moutain	medicinal Moutain	Makaraksha's war
Second Maya Sita	Maya Sita	Maya Sita
Yoga at Nikumbalai	Yoga at Nikumbalai	Yoga at Nikumbalai
Indrajit's death	Indrajit's death	Indrajit's death
Mulabalam Asura	Mulabalam army	Ravana's army
Ravana shoots spear	Ravana shoots spear	
Ravana died	Ravana died	Ravana died

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, Angkor 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

Ta(Talung(. தோற்பாவை நிழற்கூத்து Rāmāyaṇam Thorpāvai nilazhkūththu). Mayilirawanan and Matchanu's stories is widely known in ASEAN for example, in Laos; there is a story of Luyi (Matchanu) in Rama Jataka tales, in Jawa or Melayu; there is a story of Tamnatkhongka. (Anumanratchathon, Phraya. The1988, p.23

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.

REFERENCES

- Aciriyar Kulam. 2008 .Tamil-Tamil-English ‘Akharathi’. Published by Sura books . Chennai.
- Anumanratchathon, Phraya. (1988). The works of literatures,vol.1, “The stories of Ramakien”. the archaeology official of Thai government. Bangkok: Gurusabha.
- Anwar Ridhwan and Lai Choy. 2010.Kamus Kembangan. Selangor: United publishing house.
- A.S. Gnanasambandam and D. Gnanasundram [Edit.] (2009). Kambaramayana Vol. 1-2 . Chennai :Gangai Puthaka Nilayam.
- Busaba Ruangsri. (2005).The literary art and the reflection of khmer culture in Ramakerti, L’ Institut bouddhique vol.1-10,Thesis Major Khmer language,Silpkorn University.Bangkok: Silpkorn University.
- Chidabaranatha Chettiar ,A. 1991. English-Tamil Dictionary. University of Madras, Chennai: University.
- Daud Baharum. 2013. Kamus Dwibahasa Kontemporari. Selangor Darul Ehsan: Vivar Printing.
- John Samuel, [Edit.] (2006). The story of Kusalavan. Institute of Asian Studies. Chennai: IAS.
- Kamala Subramaniam . (1983).Ramayana, Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhava.
- Kapila Vatsyayan.(1975).Ramayana in the arts of Asia,Asian Cultural Documention Center for Unesco,Tehran: Unesco.
- Kenti Sharma, (1967).Tulasidas Ramayana.Chennai: Higgin bothams.
- PhidylabhPhritiyakar, KromMien [write&trans.]. (1961). Rama Story &The Regions of South Ocean of Dr. Jorcs Se De, Bangkok:MakutKshatriyaram Wat [print for the commemoration to Mrs. Neul PunyaSiriphanthu in her cremation, March ,2nd 1961]
- Ramaswami, M. [Edit.](2000). Ramayanam Thorpavai Nlarkuththu . International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai: IITS.
- Srimad Valmiki Ramayana.(2008). Gorkhpur: Gita Press.
- Venkatachalan,M.S. [Eng Trans.] (2003).Concise Kambaramayana, Varthamann Pathippagam, Chennai: Parameswari Graphics.