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Losing ground: Decline of Angkor's middle-level officials

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We argue in this article that the social and economic conditions in the Angkorian society of the tenth century or earlier contributed to the decline in status of some middle-level officials, as is evident from the mid-eleventh century. Many Angkorian inscriptions written between the late ninth and late twelfth centuries record purchases and donations of lands acquired for religious foundations. The texts often contain details of transactions and disputes seeking to validate title to these holdings. The buyers include middle-ranking loñ *and* vāp*, and increasingly, higher-ranking officials. An analysis of the roles and activities of the officials reveals something of their relative status and helps explain the disappearance of* vāp *from the inscriptions in the eleventh century, and the relegation of* loñ *to temple roles by the twelfth century. The transfer of communal lands and lands owned by these officials to elites is attributed to hierarchical restrictions on land purchases, a reduction in fiscal immunities, and the need for taxes to be paid to the centre with high-value goods in Angkor's moneyless economy.*

With the coalescence of Pre-Angkorian polities from the late eighth century, continuing beyond the nominal date for the declaration of Angkor's independence in 802,[1] both the wealth flowing to the centre as taxes and tribute and the bureaucracy required to administer an enhanced territory were to increase substantially. This is seen in the inscriptions of the early Angkorian period containing new vocabulary

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1 K. 598, Stanza 14. The K number refers to a Khmer inscription listed in Online Appendix A. Where there is a letter after a K number, it refers to an inscription face. Key dates and events are set out as a timeline in Online Appendix B. All dates are CE. Where the date of an event differs from that of the inscription (e.g., land bought 50 years before a text was written), the earlier date is cited and used in the analysis. Undated texts are commonly ascribed to a century, but in this study, we have often refined the range, e.g., where a reigning king or his posthumous name is mentioned. The numerical analyses often require texts to be assigned to a period such as a quarter of a century. Where the date is uncertain, its estimated range is allocated proportionately, e.g., if a text spans 100 years, a quarter of a text is assigned to each 25-year period. The study uses over 500 inscriptions written in Old Khmer and Sanskrit, dated from the beginning of the Angkorian period up to the reign of Jayavarman VII (1181). Where inscriptions consist of two or more distinct parts, having different authors, dates or subjects, they are taken as discrete texts.

for luxury goods, pointing to increased exposure to foreign trade and growing wealth, at least among the elite. There are also new terms for names and titles,[2] indicating a society more hierarchical than before.[3]

The Pre-Angkorian societies which had preceded the Angkorian Empire (802–ca.1430) are judged to have been based on communal ownership of land, with temples fulfilling roles both as centres of economic integration and as components of elite assets justifying accumulation of surpluses.[4] The society already appears to have been stratified.[5] If the claims in the inscriptions written by officials two centuries later are accepted, Jayavarman II rewarded his followers with land, setting off a process of continuing privatisation which extended over three centuries. There developed an 'official' class, whose members owed their positions, directly through patronage or indirectly through inheritance, to the rulers and their associates. Their activities predominate in the Angkorian inscriptions, and while they would have increased in number over time through the inheritance of titles, they must have been relatively small in number.

Within a century and a half, the bureaucracy seems to have become complex and quite unwieldy, with large numbers of officials having a variety of titles and functions.[6] It is often difficult to see a demarcation between the roles of temple administrators, the bureaucratic class, high court officials, and the landowning benefactors of religious foundations,[7] given the temple officials who are buying land, endowing foundations, dealing in high value goods, acting as witnesses and administering levies.

Official titles varied in importance over time. Of note are the disappearance of the Pre-Angkorian *poñ* in the late eighth century, the introduction of the titles *vāp*, *loñ*, *chloñ*, *teṅ*,[8] *teṅ tvan*, *steṅ/ steñ*, *kaṃsteṅ* in the ninth century and the increasing proportion of elite titles in the eleventh century.[9] By the mid-eleventh century,

2 E.J. Lustig, 'Money doesn't make the world go round: Angkor's non-monetisation', in *Economic development, integration, and morality in Asia and the Americas*, ed. Donald C. Wood (Bingley: Emerald, 2009), pp. 184, 186.

3 Sachchidanand Sahai, 'Central administration in ancient Cambodia', *South East Asian Review* 3, 1 (1978): 18; Oliver W. Wolters, *History, culture, and region in Southeast Asian perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1982), p. 19.

4 Michael Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th–8th centuries* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for UNESCO, Toyo Bunko, 1998), pp. 299, 309.

5 Ibid., p. 271.

6 Adhir Chakravarti, *The Sdok Kak Thom Inscription, Part II: Text, translation and commentary* (Calcutta: Sankrit College, 1980), pp. 54–7; Zhou Daguan, *Customs of Cambodia*, trans. Solang Uk and Beling Uk (Phnom Penh: DatASIA, 2016[1297]), p. 32; Sahai, *Central administration*, pp. 18, 26–30.

7 Ian W. Mabbett, 'Kingship in Angkor', *Journal of the Siam Society* 66, 2 (1978): 30–34.

8 *Vāp:* the title for a middle-ranking male, possibly stemming from a Mon-Khmer word for father. *Loñ:* the title for a middle-ranking male and counterpart of *teṅ*. It may be related to the Pre-Angkorian *kloñ* (chief). *Teṅ*: a title for women, often the counterpart of *loñ*, is derived from the Pre-Angkorian *tāṅ*, of similar meaning. *Chloñ*: a male title found in only 15 inscriptions. For *vāp*, *loñ* and *teṅ*, see also Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, pp. 406–8, and Saveros Lewitz, 'Note on words for male and female in Old Khmer and Modern Khmer', in *Austroasiatic Studies*, ed. Philip Jenner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), pp. 763, 768. For *chloñ*, see Vickery, ibid., p. 365.

9 The Pre-Angkorian *mratāṅ/ mratāñ* carried over into the Angkorian period and increased in frequency as *mrateṅ/ mrateñ* (*khloñ*) under Sūryavarman I (1001–1049). *Vraḥ kamratāṅ 'añ (VKA),* which Vickery points out, pertained originally to gods and was then adopted by kings in the Pre-Angkorian period (*Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, pp. 207–8, 406), was given increasingly to high officials in the Angkorian era. In Vickery's *A history of Cambodia:*

chloñ[10] and *vāp* have disappeared from dated texts, and in the early twelfth century, *loñ* appear only as temple servants. The decline of these categories has been attributed to the civil war at the beginning of Sūryavarman's reign, in which the bureaucracy descended from followers of Jayavarman II was weakened,[11] or to later changes following the advent of the Mahīdharapura dynasty in 1080.[12] This article explores an alternative hypothesis, that economic pressures and social constraints, starting before Sūryavarman, led to the downgrading of this middle-ranking section of the society.

Much of our knowledge of Khmer society comes from the inscriptions placed on walls, door jambs and pillars within the precincts of well-endowed temples, and nearly always written by elites. They would have been composed from perspectives different from those of the communities which established the many more village shrines and small temples of the day.[13] The material evidence for this appears so great that Wheatley has described the Khmer landscape as resembling 'one huge oblation'.[14] But since we have little in the way of written or indeed material records from small communities, we are restricted to what we find in the temple inscriptions. These deal to a large extent with temple matters: new foundations; royal edicts; donations; lists of personnel; disputes over property; temple treasure, etc.[15] They are not a compendium of information about the Khmer world, because, as Claude Jacques advises, inscriptions 'must not be asked to provide more than they can deliver: the inscriptions are not history textbooks and only say what matters to them'.[16] Nevertheless, the inscriptions written by elite officials do tell us, albeit often incidentally, about some middle-ranking officials, who are often, though not always, fulfilling roles in events that were primarily of interest to the elite.

Angkorian inscriptions to the end of Yaśovarman I's reign (889–910) were written mainly by kings (fig. 1). Thereafter, and before Jayavarman VII (1181–1218), the majority of texts were non-royal, produced by officials from powerful families and the middle-ranking category of which the *vāp* and *loñ* were part. The number of these texts peaks in the second half of the tenth century, again at the beginning of the eleventh, and then there is a sharp decrease. We investigate whether there is a relationship between this decline and the decline of the *vāp* and *loñ*.

Summary of lectures given at the Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, 2001–2002, Vidya Series (Phnom Penh: Pre-Angkor Studies Society, 2002), p. 99, he also points to a similar process under Udayādityavarman II (1050–1066), where *dhūli jeṅ vraḥ kamrateṅ 'añ*, given to rulers from the 8th century, came to be held by some high officials.

10 *Chloñ*, comprising 2.5 per cent of officials, will not be analysed separately. They are mentioned up to 1049 as landholders, founders and in elevated temple roles. The title appears to have ceased being used, rather than its status having declined as did that of the *loñ*.

11 Vickery, *A history of Cambodia*, p. 82.

12 Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, p. 406.

13 In the late 13th century, the visiting Chinese emissary Zhou Daguan (*Customs*, p. 118) reported that every village had a Buddhist temple or pagoda.

14 Paul Wheatley, 'Satyānṛta in Suvarṇadvīpa: From reciprocity to redistribution in ancient Southeast Asia', in *Ancient civilization and trade*, ed. Jeremy A. Sabloff and C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 252.

15 Some texts are not obviously associated with foundations, but given that the inscriptions were found mainly in temple precincts, and that much of the land in question was given to foundations, they are likely to be foundation-related.

16 Claude Jacques, 'Khmer epigraphy', *Museum International* 54, 1–2 (2002): 3.

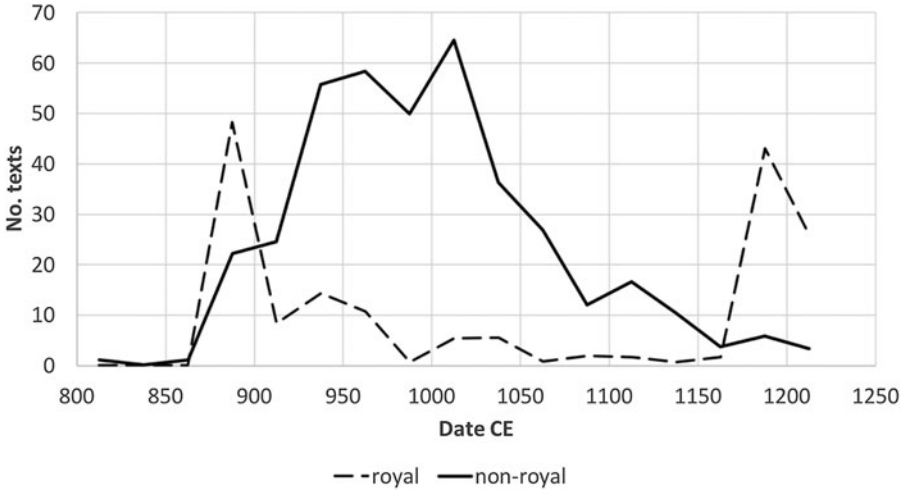

Figure 1. Royal (n = 170) and non-royal (n = 393) texts against time
Note: Inscriptions have been classed as royal if authored by a monarch. (An edict approving the request of an official was presumed to have been recorded by that official.) Inscriptions have been deemed non-royal if the author was known, or if they mention requests to a ruler, royal approvals, transactions, land specifications, productivity, inheritance or disputes. Those in doubt have not been included.

To this end, we assess the relative status of each title, followed by the economic circumstances of the title-holders.

Middle-level officials

In order to elicit factors associated with the changes of fortune of the middle-level officials, we examine their representations in the inscriptions, their occurrences over time, their opportunities for promotion, their activities and roles.

Although *vāp* and *loñ* have not been regarded as high-level titles,[17] this seems not to have always been so. Many *vāp* are said by their descendants to have been associated with or related through marriage to rulers and high-ranking officials, often the followers of Jayavarman II and his immediate successors, but none are descended from royalty. Tenth to eleventh century texts show *vāp* and *loñ* owning foundations, land and slaves.[18] *Loñ*, (and *chloñ*) and their female counterparts *teṅ*, are seen as not only associated with rulers and high-ranking officials, but occasionally as directly

17 Étienne Aymonier, *Le Cambodge: Le groupe d'Angkor et l'histoire, vol. 3* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), pp. 540, 545–6; Merle C. Ricklefs, 'Land and law in the epigraphy of tenth-century Cambodia', *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 26, 3 (1967): 419 (citing Cœdès, pers. comm.).

18 Ian W. Mabbett, 'Varṇas in Angkor and the Indian caste system', *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, 3 (1977): 431; Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, p. 406. For example, K. 1152A (962) concerns the appointment of a *vāp* as *mūla* of pages in the royal chamber of diversions and a *sruk* (village) he receives as a royal benefice. K. 831 (968) records the endowment of a foundation by three *vāp* in 924. A *loñ* in K. 215 (949) builds an *āśrama* on land he has bought and endows it with ricefields and slaves.

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descended from royalty.[19] Some families appear to have had members who were either *vāp*[20] or *loñ*[21] over generations. However, there are instances where *vāp*, seemingly through marriage, are mentioned as relatives of *loñ* or higher-ranking individuals.[22] One explanation is that inheritance was through the female line, and passed often, but not always, from mother's brother to son.[23] We also see them together as residents of a village or belonging to the same *varṇa* or *varga*.[24] *Vāp* are mentioned more than twice as often as *loñ*. Women titled *teṅ*, many being relatives or spouses of *loñ,* are mentioned far less frequently. *Tāñ* (lady; wife) and *me* (mother) are also used, while *teṅ tvan* (women of higher rank), often donors of land and slaves, are seen in texts dated between 978 and 1204.[25] Table 1 summarises the occurrences of these officials in the corpus of Angkorian inscriptions.

Although there are earlier mentions of royal gifts of *teṅ* to temples,[26] it is only between 1107 and ca. 1150, that *loñ* and *teṅ* appear in significant numbers as temple servants, assigned to provide the allowances for the gods, or in columns and allocated to serve in alternate fortnights.[27] They are twice listed ahead of the typical temple servants *si* and *tai*, while in two texts, *teṅ* are in the company of the other commonplace temple personnel, *gho,* and not *loñ*.[28] In one inscription, several *teṅ tvan* are grouped together with *teṅ* and *loñ*.[29] Up to 1129, there are still texts with temple personnel

19 In K. 989: A20 (1008), *loñ* are said to be descended from Jayavarman IV; in K. 91: B1 (1080–1107), from Indravarman II (877–89); in K. 956/2: 9–10 (910–25), *loñ* and *teṅ* are descended from Jayavarman II.

20 See K. 165N (952); K. 158 (1003); K. 693 (1003).

21 See K. 956/2 (post 922); K. 91 (1080–1107); K. 989 (1008). Some ancestors in K. 91 and K. 989 are also titled *chloñ*.

22 In K. 1152A (979) a *mrateñ* is said to be the nephew of a *vāp*; in K. 1229: A47 (979) a *vāp* is the son of a *mratāñ khloñ*, also titled *kaṃsteṅ 'añ*; in K. 958: N30–33 (947) a *teṅ* and 2 *vāp* were the children of a *teṅ*. *Vāp* are also seen in families with *chloñ* in K. 572: 11 (878–977), K. 238: B12 [949], and K. 1152: A12 [962]).

23 Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, p. 270. See also A. Barth and M.A. Bergaigne, *Inscriptions sanscrites de Cāmpa et du Cambodge*, 4 vols. (Paris: Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliotheque nationale, 1885–1893), vol. 27, pt. 1, pp. 124–5; George Cœdès, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968[1964]), p. 291.

24 The Sanskrit term *varṇa* has meanings including 'class', 'group' and 'caste'. These were elite corporations appointed and given property by kings, reportedly from the time of Jayavarman II (K. 989: 9 [1008]) and may once have been associated with ceremony, the palace or certain localities. The corpus of Khmer inscriptions names at least 19 *varṇa*. The Sanskrit term *varga* has similar connotations of 'division' or 'group'. It is first used in this sense in a Pre-Angkorian text, K. 1241: 7 (776). *Varga* appear to have been of lower status than *varṇa*, though the terms are sometimes interchangeable. In K. 1229: C4-21 (977), many land vendors of the Dhruvapura *varga*, mostly *vāp*, are sorted according to their courtly 'function' (*varṇa*). In K. 235: D14, Vijayapattana is a *varṇa*, but in K. 233: A5 (968–1001), it is a *varga*. See also Mabbett, 'Varṇas in Angkor and the Indian caste system', and Adhir Chakravarti, 'Caste system in ancient Cambodia', *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 6, 1–2 (1972–3): 143–58.

25 K. 255: 16 (978); K. 128: 7 (1204).

26 The incomplete K. 61 (912) suggests that six women titled *teṅ* were given or offered themselves to serve a god. In 1029, King Sūryavarman gifted a *chloñ* 'So and a *teṅ* Hyaṅ to the temple at Phnom Chisor (K. 31: 2–6). In 1096, Jayavarman VI (1080–1107) made an offering of a single *teṅ* to a god (K. 814: C3–6).

27 K. 814C (1096); K. 852 (1107); K. 32 (1116); K.383 (1121); K. 194 (1119); K. 34 (1113–49); K. 1036 (1113–1149); K. 366 (1139); K. 200 (1145); K. 850 (1155?).

28 With *si* and *tai*: K. 366: A22–b21; K. 383; with *gho*: K. 200: from A12 (1145). K. 938 (uncertain date).

29 K. 852: 6–10. However, in a contemporaneous text, K. 258, several *teṅ tvan* are vendors of land.

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Table 1: Mentions of *vāp*, *loñ*, *teṅ*, *chloñ* and *teṅ tvan* in dated texts

	Inscriptions	Individuals	Earliest date	Latest date
vāp	80	463	879 (K. 320)	1047 (K. 353)[a]
loñ (official class)	52	222	947[b](K. 958)	1094 (K. 260)
loñ (temple servants)	6	127	1107 (K. 852)	947 (K. 958)
teṅ (official class)	23	53	947 (K. 958)	1077 (K. 258)
teṅ (temple servants)	10	251	1107 (K. 852)	1145 (K. 200)
chloñ (official class)	14	48	932 (K. 99)	1049 (K. 235)
chloñ (temple servants)	1	1	1029 (K. 31)	
teṅ tvan (official class)	25	41	978 (K. 255)	1204 (K. 128)
teṅ tvan (temple servants)	1	7	1107 (K. 852)	1107 (K. 852)

Notes: [a] K. 235: D91 (1052) mentions three *vāp*, but the reference is to an event in 979. A *vāp* mentioned in K. 208 (1049–66) appears to have lived during a previous reign. K. 1074 (10th–11th century?) and K. 1001A (9th–12th century?) have uncertain dates. [b]An earlier date for K. 252: 4 (942?), is uncertain.

who are *gho* or *si* and *tai* only.[30] As temple workers had in the main been *si*, *tai* and *gho* throughout the Angkorian period up to the early twelfth century, the appearance of *loñ* and *teṅ*, seemingly in similar roles, suggests a relative downgrading of the status of these categories. As the titles of *loñ* and *teṅ* appear to be hereditary, it may not be that the titles alone are being devalued over time.

Loñ are placed mostly ahead of *vāp* in lists of officials, indicating a superior standing.[31] Indeed, only *loñ* and people of greater status — not *vāp* — are recorded as having been awarded higher-ranking titles (table 2). About 30 individuals, including high ranking women, were said to have received a higher appellation and/or new name from the early tenth to the mid-eleventh century. Eighteen of these were *loñ*. While the original personal name may have been Khmer (*loñ* + X), the name accompanying the new title was in Sanskrit. Many of the new titles also contain the term *śrī*, an expression of reverence. About half of the promotions recorded are for the reign of Sūryavarman I.

Further disparities in status become apparent when we compare the functions and activities of *vāp*, *loñ* and higher-ranking officials (table 3). Those identified as women are not included in this table, as they constitute only 11 per cent of all individuals and feature almost exclusively as donors and vendors of land and slaves.[32]

Vāp dominate in several fields, notably as village elders, officers of the royal bedchamber, in the office of *jnvāl*, and as pages. Significantly, *vāp* constitute 61 per cent of the 234 vendors of land. Officials with higher titles dominate prestigious roles, as

30 K. 258 (post 1107, but land purchases are ca. 1094); K. 249 (1109); K. 397E (1112); K. 523BD (1118); K. 254BCd (1129).

31 K. 207: 24–7 (1042) illustrates this. The differential status was first noted by Étienne Aymonier, *Le groupe*, p. 545.

32 However, a few women with the more commonly male titles of *steṅ*/ *steñ* and *kaṃsteṅ*, may have been counted as males.

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Table 2: Examples of promotions

K No.	Date	Former title and name	New designation
598B	1006/8	*loñ* Nārāyaṇa	*mratāñ śrī* Kavīndravijaya
1238	1036	*loñ* Je	*mratāñ khloñ*
206	1042	*loñ* Hiraṇya	*kaṃsteṅ* 'So
956	878–977	*teṅ hyaṅ* Narendra	*tāñ kamrateṅ 'añ* Kṣitīndradevī
291S	910	*mratāñ śrī* Satyāśraya	*mratāñ khloñ śrī* Satyādhipativarman
257N	994	*mratāñ khloñ śrī* Narapativīravarman	*kaṃsteṅ śrī* Narapativīravarman
263D	994–7	*mratāñ khloñ* Divākarabhaṭṭa	*vraḥ kamrateṅ 'añ* (*VKA*)
235D	1052	*steṅ 'añ* Sadāśiva	*kaṃsteṅ śrī* Jayendrapaṇḍita *VKA śrī* Jayendrapaṇḍita *dhūli jeṅ VKA śrī* Jayendravarman
353N	1045	*VKA* of Bhadrāspada	*VKA* Vidyeśvarapaṇḍita
782N	1001–49	*VKA* of Vrai Kanloṅ	*VKA śrī* Narapatīndravarman

Table 3: Most frequently mentioned functions of *vāp*, *loñ* and other elites

Role	Total in role	% *vāp*	% *loñ*	% other elites
'nak sañjak	23	0%	0%	100%
ācārya	51	0%	0%	100%
treasury	22	9%	5%	86%
court	95	15%	4%	81%
purohita (chaplain)	24	4%	25%	71%
received royal order	137	20%	3%	76%
witness	316	16%	13%	70%
measure/delimit land	74	45%	8%	46%
donor of land	70	24%	14%	46%
donor of slaves	113	26%	17%	39%
mūla	33	21%	52%	27%
khloñ/trvac vala	17	6%	41%	59%
general	19	0%	26%	74%
jnvāl	17	82%	12%	6%
village elder	35	80%	0%	6%
bed-chamber	30	67%	7%	27%
page/corps of pages	35	63%	11%	23%
vendor of land	234	61%	12%	15%
vendor of slaves	27	48%	26%	7%

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might be expected.[33] Thus while some positions in the royal courts are filled by *loñ* and *vāp*, they are never chief justice or inquisitor. Broadly, where the percentages of *vāp* are high, the percentages of both *loñ* and other elites tend to be low. *Loñ* are found in a wide range of roles, but they are prominent only as *mūla* and *khloñ vala*. Five generals[34] out of nineteen are *loñ*, but none are *vāp*. The rarity of *vāp* in high-ranking positions indicates again that they were of lower socioeconomic standing than *loñ*, who, as we have seen in table 2, could aspire to the roles and titles of the elite class.

Land and the religious foundations

Another way of discerning the status of the officials featured in the texts is to examine their holdings of land, a key resource, and a primary preoccupation of Angkorian inscriptions. Changes in status should be reflected in a capacity to maintain control over landholdings, and we argue, whether land is being acquired or relinquished. Assigning land to one's foundation in the name of a deity promised both an intangible benefit of enhanced merit and material gain from agricultural surplus, particularly if the foundation was granted fiscal or other immunities.

The desire for land

From the ninth century, religious foundations were being established not only by royalty, but also by associates of the rulers, elite families who were gaining possession of lands. We read of donations, purchases, sales and inheritance of land, and the delegation of authority to manage it. The produce of land (mainly rice), the producers attached to the land, and the levies imposed on the land's production are often mentioned. Many texts from the century between 950 and 1050 were written with the purpose of validating title to lands.[35] Several give details of disputes over ownership, which were settled by the courts and ratified by the king.

Figure 2 shows the densities of Khmer temple inscription sites for the Angkorian period. The highest density is in black at Angkor. Given that temples were mostly at population centres, it should follow that the greatest densities would be on favourable land, near water and communication routes.[36] Their desirability would heighten the potential for tensions over ownership, as is seen in the many tenth and eleventh century accounts by officials of grants, purchases, demarcations of land, disputes in court over land, and genealogies going back to the ninth century.[37] We shall argue that

33 These include all *ācārya,'nak sañjak*, most individuals transmitting royal orders, chaplains, treasury officials and functionaries in the royal courts.

34 Not necessarily in the army. See K. 91: B17 (1080–1107) and K. 397: E2 (1109).

35 Michael Vickery, 'The reign of Sūryavarman I and royal factionalism at Angkor', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, 2 (1985): 232.

36 Eileen J. Lustig, 'Using inscription data to investigate power in Angkor's empire', *Aséanie* 27 (June 2011): 48–51.

37 Michael Vickery, in 'The reign of Sūryavarman I' (pp. 232–6, 243) highlighted texts with spurious claims, such as proximity of ancestors to an early ruler, albeit written mainly by rival families more powerful than those of the *vāp* and the *loñ*. One might query whether other aspects of these texts might also be open to scrutiny. We would argue that while some details may be inaccurate, the fact that the same kinds of stories are being repeated in so many of the texts strongly suggests that the concepts were not only feasible, but probable in the society. Thus, land buyers and sellers, disputants, witnesses, court officials and village elders, most probably held titles and fulfilled roles as are seen in the texts.

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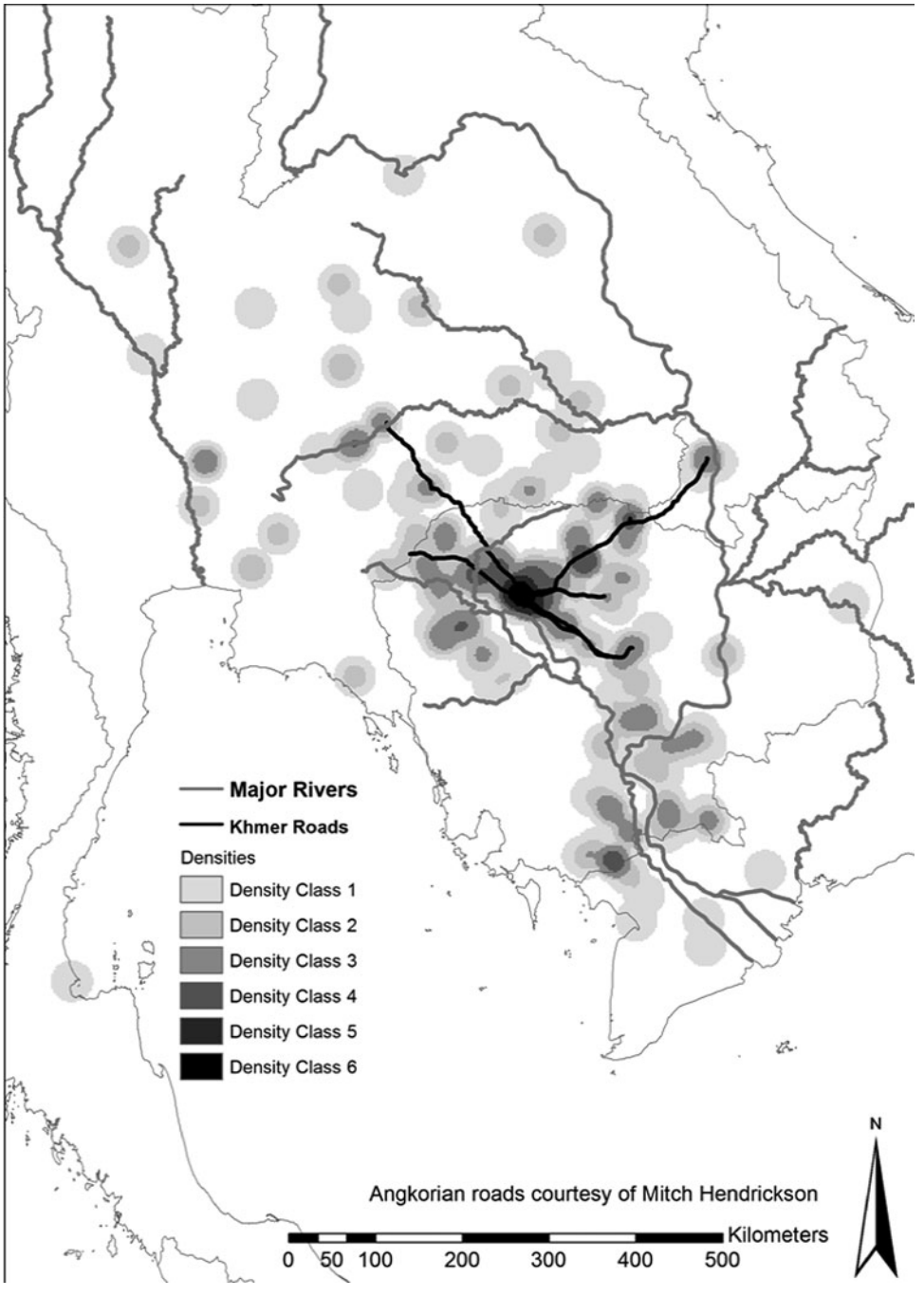

Figure 2. Densities of Angkorian period inscription sites (E.J. Lustig, 'Using inscription data to investigate power in Angkor's Empire', *Aséanie* 27 [June 2011], p. 49).

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there was a crisis over land ownership for the families of middle-level officials from the mid-tenth century linked to the hierarchical structure of the society and the mode of taxation.

Pre-Angkorian inscriptions are unclear about individual ownership of land. Most people were likely living in small communities which consisted of extended kinship groups or religious foundations, growing rice and perhaps specialising in a particular craft or profession.[38] Yet there would have been private ownership by the Angkorian period at the beginning of the ninth century, because we are told that Jayavarman II rewarded some of his supporters with land grants.[39] The recipients and their descendants often acquired additional lands, in order to provide the means of support for religious foundations — temples and *āśrama*.

Merle Ricklefs has reasoned that the right to own land and the protection of tenure by law in tenth-century Cambodia applied to all free people in the society — not only elite officials — on the grounds that many landowners were *vāp*, *loñ* and *me*, who were often not of very high rank. The king's permission does not appear to have been required if land was given, purchased or sold.[40] Nevertheless, the texts mention a large number of land parcels said to have been acquired as *karuṇāprasāda* (royal grace), a royally sanctioned purchase or sometimes a royal gift.[41]

Other grants made by kings were reassignments of lands which were without inheritors or unoccupied.[42] Occasionally, the circumstances of such allocations warrant scrutiny. The land on which Prasat Trapeang Rung was founded,[43] was said initially to be without an owner, and reallocated to a *mratāṅ khloñ śri* Kavīndrapaṇḍita, despite it being under the 'sole' authority of a *vāp* who was a *khloñ jnvāl*. When it transpired that the *vāp* had sold part of it, the buyers had to be compensated with a different tract of land of the same quality. This might suggest that the *vāp* did have some claim to the land from the outset. What may be significant is that the transfer of land from the sole authority of the *vāp jnvāl*, seemingly with little in the way of compensation, appears to have been viewed at the time, 1006, as unremarkable. Three earlier texts[44] report that the villages, with their fields, slaves and livestock given by Jayavarman V (968–1001) to two new *varṇa* were not to be taken back by their previous chiefs. One might wonder how willingly the chiefs had made those lands available. Notwithstanding our modern-day responses to these examples, we need to bear in mind that our understanding of the different kinds of

38 Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia*, pp. 279–81, 295.

39 See for example, K. 449: XVI–VII (1069). Leonid Sedov, in 'Angkor: Society and state', in *The early state*, ed. Henri J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), pp. 114–7, has hypothesised that Jayavarman II began to integrate the population into a unified political system by incorporating ruling elites and clans (*kula*) into *varṇa* and temple communities. As the territorial units of the clans became state administrative divisions, some of these were subdivided into branches and reorganised.

40 Ricklefs, *Land and law*, p. 419.

41 However, there are far fewer contemporaneous than historical epigraphic reports of land gained under *karuṇāprasāda*, raising the question of their veracity.

42 Land without inheritors: K. 208: 45–47 (1050–66); K. 219: 6–13 (1050). Unoccupied land: K. 566: B1–3 (978–1077); K. 598: B6–9 (1006); K. 697: B3–16 (878–977).

43 K. 598B (1006).

44 K. 444: B27; K. 868: A34; K. 175: S12 (974).

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Angkorian land tenure is imperfect.[45] This is highlighted in a text from Wat Damnak,[46] in which tracts of land were 'given' to a *Vraḥ kamratāṅ 'añ* (*VKA*) Vīrendravarman by a *teṅ tvan*. When she died, a certain *VKA* of Vrac bought the land again from her grandson — suggesting that some rights had been retained by the original owner, despite the earlier transaction.[47]

Merit, immunities and other rewards

There were both spiritual and material rewards for providing for a god. Gifts of land and other donations to a foundation are frequently recorded in the inscriptions as 'works of merit', presumably enhancing the donor's status before the gods and helping ensure a comfortable and prosperous afterlife. The value of a foundation's merit was such that it could be apportioned as if it were a commodity,[48] often presented as outweighing material gain and as the prime motive for actions. For example, following a dispute over a ricefield, the winner of a case 'gave' the land in question to Brahma in a ceremony conducted by the loser, who then asked for, and received the same land as an honorarium.[49] Again, in an elaborate ceremony for fixing the boundary markers of a temple's land, poetry was recited, assuring the king of the great merit accruing to him by granting land.[50]

Sometimes, a foundation might be offered as a gift to the king, with a request for it to be a royal foundation (*rājadharma*).[51] The benefits from such a gesture, in the form of privileges granted to the founders and their religious establishments, must have been significant. The founders and their families often also benefited materially from the landholdings,[52] and many texts are quite explicit about the management of a foundation and who should inherit it. Inscriptions sometimes state that the foundation's deity had 'exclusive rights' to the land, its produce and other property,[53] but more often the founders and their descendants claimed these rights.[54] Violators of the specified provisions would be condemned to suffer eternally in the next world. There was sometimes, at best, a fine line between the property of a god and that of temple officials and their families. In one text from Wat Baset,[55] several parcels of land were granted by five officials to a *VKA śrī* Guṇapativarman. Upon offering these to the god, the latter presented the land to his three daughters. In another

45 Ian W. Mabbett, 'Some remarks on the present state of knowledge about slavery in Angkor', in *Slavery, bondage and dependency in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), pp. 45–6.
46 K. 420: 15–9 (1001–49).
47 Georges Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge: Collection de textes et documents sur l'Indochine*, ed. E. de Boccard, 8 vols. (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1937–66) (1952), vol. IV, p. 164.
48 K. 842 (968).
49 K. 353: S17–24 (944–1001).
50 K. 598: B31–2 (1006).
51 See for example, K. 212A (1027); K. 217 (1026); K. 618 (1026?), offered and then 'returned' to the founder as *karuṇāprasāda*; K. 850 (1107–13); K. 1152 (962).
52 Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime trade and state development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), pp. 158–9.
53 For example, K. 1141: B21–4 (972); K. 348: 30–2 (954).
54 For example, K. 572: 8–12 (1011); K. 245: 29–30 (1001–49).
55 K. 205 (936).

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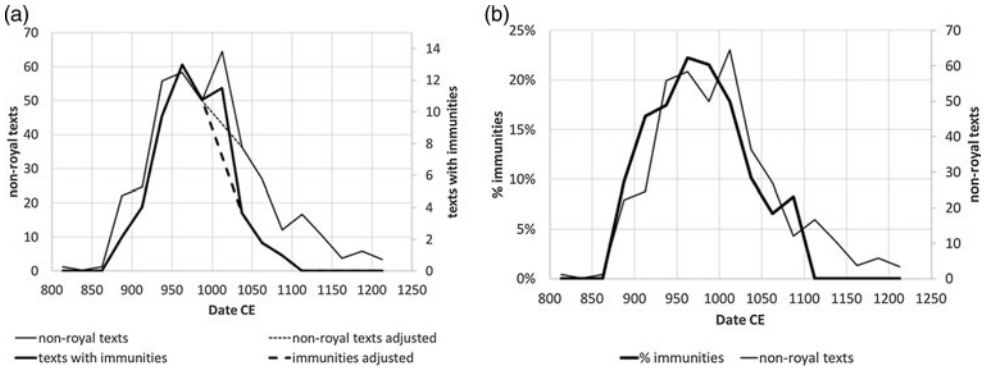

Figure 3. a) Non-royal texts (n = 393) and texts with immunities over time (n = 53); b) Non-royal texts and percentage immunities.

from Phnom Preah Net Preah,[56] the estate of an official to be inherited by his family included the slaves, *sruk* and ricefields of his two foundations.

Rulers might also grant benefits to foundations and their communities in the form of immunities from the demands of local officials. In 52 texts, the authors stipulate that officials representing the state or local agencies[57] must not extract taxes and corvée nor interfere with the running of their foundations.[58] This practice reached a peak in the second half of the tenth century and another at the beginning of the eleventh century, thereafter declining (fig. 3a). The last certain date for an immunity granted was the year 1082.[59]

It should be noted that in the peak period of non-royal texts in figs. 3a and 3b, over half (36) of the 64 texts in the years 1000–1025 were produced in the period 1001–1006. Moreover, this very short interval has three-quarters of the texts recording immunities granted in these 25 years. This was the period of uncertainty and civil war over the throne under Udayādityavarman I (1001–1002), Jayavīravarman (1002–1006) and Sūryavarman. We suggest the heightened production of texts might be linked to an apprehension or desire to demonstrate loyalty to the particular claimant to the throne under whose authority people found themselves. From the perspective of the rival claimants, it could have made sense to grant immunities in order to harness support. The dotted, 'adjusted' lines in fig. 3 suggest how the two curves might have looked without this interlude, with only one peak in the tenth century.

56 K. 216 (1005).

57 The jurisdictions of the officials are not always clear. Some had up to six administrative duties affecting landowners and religious establishments. These included transmitting royal ordinances, arranging for land to be measured and marked out, implementing court rulings, witnessing transactions and ascertaining facts for court cases.

58 Sachchidanand Sahai, 'Fiscal administration in ancient Cambodia', *South East Asian Review* 1, 2 (1977b): 133–4. Inscription K. 957: 16–8 (941) is illustrative: '[The slaves and livestock] are not subject to the authority of the *viṣaya* chief, rice chief, oil chief, [or] the head of the *gāp jnval*. The land under the authority of *K.A. jagat* Liṅgapura is not to be subject to taxes.' (Translated from Cœdès, *Inscriptions*, vol. VII, p. 139.)

59 In K. 391: W37–8 (1082), granted by Jayavarman VI.

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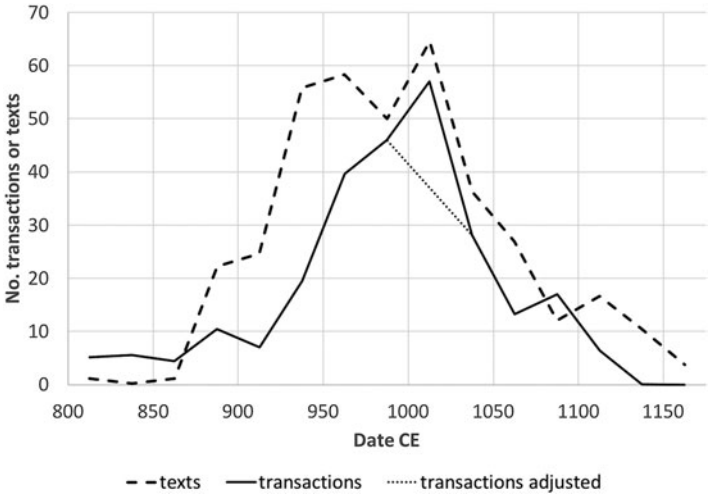

Figure 4. Non-royal texts and land transactions (n = 260)

While the curve for immunities seems to follow that for non-royal texts quite closely in fig. 3a, we can see that there is a significant difference in fig. 3b, which plots the percentage of texts with immunities granted. There, a single maximum of 22 per cent is reached in the mid-tenth century. This indicates that impediments to obtaining immunities were in place before the eleventh century.

Land transactions

In the graph of the frequency of land transactions, fig. 4, we see again that the number in the first quarter of the eleventh century (57) is higher than at any other time. However, 30 of these took place in the troubled years 1001–1006. If we abstract away from the high activity in this period as before, the greatest number of exchanges might otherwise have been in the late tenth century, around the same time as the greatest number of immunities was granted.

We next analyse these transactions in more detail, by examining the categories of people who are buying and selling land, and find a broad transfer to higher elites. Figure 5 shows the predominant buyers of land in each quarter century.[60] The small peak at the end of the eleventh century in fact records many purchases by a single founder in the Samrong inscription.[61] The rise of *vāp* and senior officials[62] as buyers in the mid-tenth century is noteworthy, as is the near absence of *loñ*. Thereafter, *loñ* and senior officials begin to supplant *vāp,* and from the early eleventh century, the majority of buyers have the *VKA* or a higher title.[63] This pattern points to the transfer of land up the line.

60 Where several tracts were bought by a single official, this buyer is counted for each transaction.

61 K. 258. This text is also unusual in detailing the sale of many tracts of land, with many vendors involved, some in the sale of more than one tract.

62 *mratāñ* (*chloñ/ khloñ*); *steṅ* (*ʻañ*); (*vraḥ*) *kaṃsteṅ* (*ʻañ*); *kamrateṅ* (*ʻañ*).

63 The latest certain date for land purchased by a *vāp* is 974 (K. 343: S1), although a *vāp* still inherited land in 1011 (K. 569: 9). The latest mention of land purchased by a *loñ* is ca. 978 (K. 933: B4–6), but another inherited land as late as 1094 (K. 260: S12).

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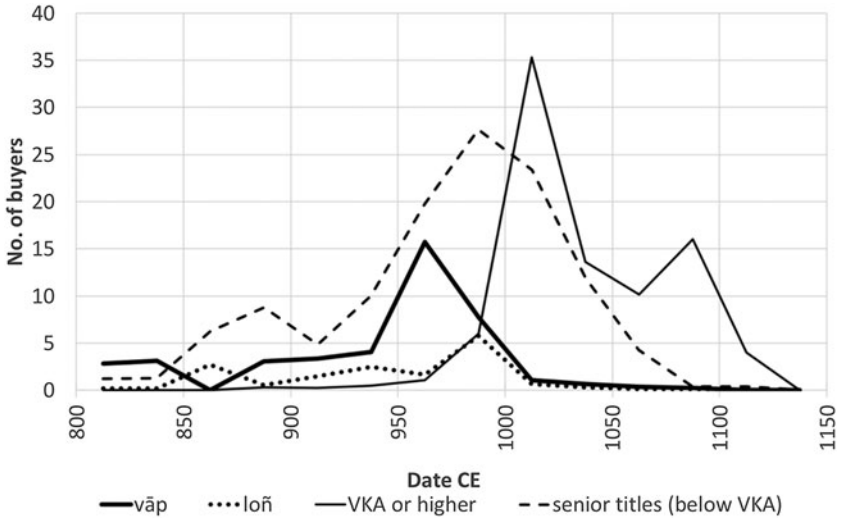

Figure 5. Titles of land buyers over time

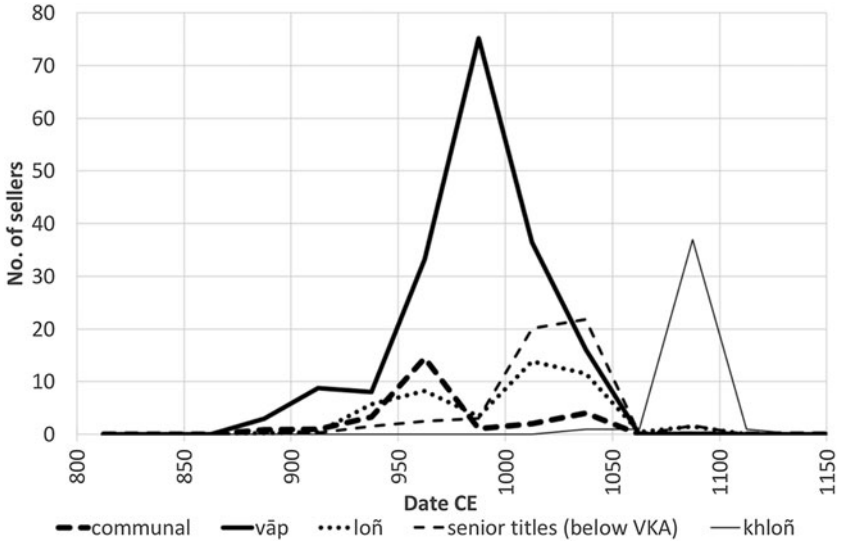

Figure 6. Titles of land vendors over time

Figure 6 similarly depicts the main vendors of land. The predominant sales by *vāp,* peaking in the last quarter of the tenth century, represents a significant transfer from this class at the same time as more senior officials are becoming the principal buyers (fig. 5). At the turn of the eleventh century, sales by *vāp* are falling rapidly. As the purchases by *loñ* and the more senior officials are starting to decline, some

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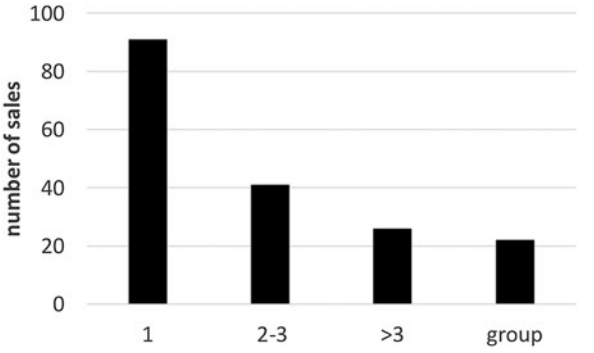

Figure 7. Land vendors per sale, tenth and eleventh centuries (n = 180)

of them are beginning to sell. The many vendors in the late eleventh century titled *khloñ* — something new — are almost all from the Samrong inscription.[64]

At the time when the *vāp* are most active as buyers, the principal vendors are communal entities (*varṇa*, *varga*, kinship groups or villages) or other *vāp*. In fact, we consider that communal sales were more numerous than shown in fig. 6, with many of the individual sellers (fig. 7) representing a number of vendors. In one text,[65] a *loñ* offers up a ricefield which had been purchased by a relative. In another,[66] a *mratāñ khloñ*, a member of the Aninditapura *varṇa*, is only the nominal vendor of some land, since three *vāp*, his relatives, received the payment. It is likely that other sales were of communally held land. We never see groups buying land, only selling it.

We are told little about communal holdings, but in K. 1238 (1036), there are indications that even though land was communal, in that it could be sold communally, it was worked by families in individual tracts. Here we see that a number of *loñ* of the *varṇa* of cooks each required costly goods provided by a *VKA śrī* Narendravarman (of the same *varṇa*) to pay their *rājakāryya* (the royal service tax). The *varṇa* paid for all the goods with a single tract of land. Such a scenario has elements of both communal and individual entitlement, perhaps because the land and property originally owned by a whole *varṇa* was later allocated to individual families.[67] There still seems to have been communal ownership in the late eleventh century, since some of the sellers in the Samrong inscription were part-owners of several different tracts, while some tracts had vendors from different villages.

64 The latest sale by a *vāp* is in 1042 (K. 207) and by a *loñ* is in 1084 (K. 258). Sales by *khloñ* are in the period 1067–96 (K. 258).

65 K. 239: S24 (966).

66 K. 1198: B5–6 (1014).

67 Chakravarti, *Caste system*, p. 147, but see Mabbett, 'Varṇas in Angkor and the Indian caste system', p. 434. Something akin to this is seen in the Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal and India, today, where group members, mostly households, may hold 'permanent or temporary rights to particular resource niches within the common property'. See Kirsten Ewers Andersen, 'Communal tenure and the governance of common property resources in Asia: Lessons from experiences in selected countries' (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2011), http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/am658e/am658e00.pdf (last accessed 18 Sept. 2017), p. 8.

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It is difficult to conceive of the payments for sales as representing equivalent values. Since money was not in use, land was purchased by means of costly goods. In a number of texts, notably the Samrong inscription,[68] any association between the prices paid for particular tracts of land and their size or productivity is not discernible. Nor is it always clear who actually received the exchange goods from communal sales. A Wat Baset text[69] lists a payment of 13 items, including an elephant, which, having first been offered up to the god, were reportedly shared among the family members of the vendors, who were two *loñ* and 13 *vāp*. Unless the shares were unequal, we might presume they were intended for a different destination (perhaps the temple god or the *rājakāryya*). At Banteay Prav,[70] 14 vendors, between them representing several villages (perhaps a *varṇa*), together sold a ricefield to a *kaṃsteṅ*. The price paid was 10 *liṅ* (~60 g)[71] of white silver, about 4 g each. The ricefield might thus be considered a gift to the *kaṃsteṅ*'s foundation, or the merit gained perhaps valued as the greater part of the transaction.

Pressures and constraints

We suggest that transfers of land such as the above were not entirely voluntary, in light of the increasing pressures the middle-ranking landholders were experiencing.

Disputes over land

Of twenty-five disputes resolved by the courts,[72] sixteen had *vāp* either as litigants or defendants. Eighteen of the arguments were over land, and, while ten of these involved *vāp*, *loñ* are only mentioned twice.[73] Both the number of disputes (fig. 8a) and the proportion of texts with disputes (fig. 8b) reach a maximum in the late tenth century. This coincides with the period when the number of *vāp* selling land also peaks (fig. 6).[74] The disputes are testimony to a period of tensions particularly among minor officials.[75] After Jayavīravarman, three of six recorded disputes were over land, two involving *vāp* and *loñ*. The extent of involvement of the *vāp* in these disputes indicates that they were the most under pressure. We also suggest that to challenge actions by those of higher rank could have been viewed as having

68 K. 258 (post 1107).
69 K. 207: 7–29 (1042).
70 K. 221: S7–11 (1011).
71 Dominique Soutif has translated K. 1218 (1007–8) in his 'Organisation religieuse et profane du temple khmer du VIIe au XIIIe siècle' (PhD diss., Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3, 2009), p. 593. This is an inscription on a bronze vase of about 9 kg, inscribed with its weight, 3 *tula* 16 *kattitki*. The Sanskrit *kattiki* is equivalent to 1 *liṅ*, making the value of the *liṅ* 5.9 g.
72 K. 348 (954); K. 165 (957); K. 181 (962); K. 674 (966); K. 885 (968); K. 425 (968); K. 353S (878–977); K. 257S (979); K. 262S (983) [2 cases]; K. 263B (984); K. 344 (985); K. 1116 (992); K. 257N (994); K. 233 (968–1001); K. 158 (1003); K. 598 (1006); K. 720 (1006); K. 1198B (1014); K. 843B (1025) [2 cases]; K. 373 (11th century); K. 588 (11th century); K. 1238 (1036) [case in 1003]; K. 1074 (1078–1277).
73 K. 1238: A39 (1036); K. 885: 6, 10 (968), in which a *loñ* twice withdrew his objections to the placement of boundary markers by a *VKA*.
74 The total number of disputes (25) is small, putting these curves close to the limits of statistical validity. Nevertheless, the fact that the percentage of disputes increases and decreases sharply, while the number of texts is reasonably constant, implies significant social and economic pressures at that time.
75 Vickery assigns the land disputes more generally to the first part of the 11th century in 'The reign of Sūryavarman I', p. 232.

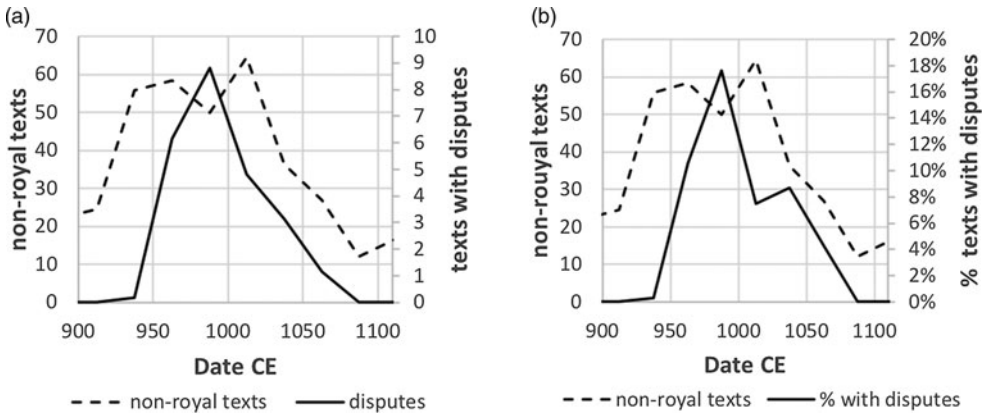

Figure 8. a) Non-royal texts (n = 359) and texts with disputes (n = 25) over time; b) Non-royal texts and percent texts with disputes over time.

little point, in that people with greater resources may sometimes have stood a better chance of prevailing in a court case.[76] Not only were these middle-level officials in litigation, they seem also to have had limitations imposed upon them.

Hierarchical constraints on land acquisition

The significantly high number of sales by *vāp*, already apparent in table 3, and their involvement in disputes, might be better understood when we look at who the buyers and who the sellers were for each transaction. Here we see something of a hierarchical pattern, exemplified by the examples in table 4, whereby *vāp* purchase land only from *vāp*, *loñ* buy from *loñ* and *vāp*, while people designated by higher titles buy from all categories. This pattern both highlights the distinction between *loñ* and *vāp,* and underscores the idea that land was being transferred into elite ownership.[77]

We have no evidence that restrictions on land purchases based on hierarchical status were codified.[78] Even so, status and hierarchy are evident throughout the inscriptions: in the order of titles in lists of witnesses or temple servants; in payments for land or services such as boundary marking; and in the severity of fines prescribed for violation of a monastery's regulations. In one inscription,[79] officials titled *VKA* were paid more for their share of a land parcel than were *kaṃsteṅ*. The transaction also included payment to the god, who seems to have received the most.

We suggest that the hierarchical structure of the society contributed to a declining ownership of land by the *vāp*. We have seen that they were particularly prominent as vendors in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, alone or on behalf of communities. Towards the end of the reign of Sūryavarman I, they may have had little

76 There are at least two accounts of disputes in which witnesses had been paid by the ultimate winner to corroborate evidence. See K. 257: N11–5 (994); K. 1198: B38 (1009–15).

77 We might infer too that one benefit for *loñ* who had been promoted was that they could purchase land with fewer restrictions.

78 Zhou Daguan noted in his *Customs*, p. 29, that there were strict rules about the type of floral design permitted to be worn, based on the status of the wearer.

79 K. 374: 12–23 (1042).

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Table 4: Land sales: Titles of buyers and vendors

Inscription K No.	Sale date	Buyer	Vendor
720	955	*vāp* Śaṃkarātmā & *vāp* śrī (brothers)	1 *vāp* & his family
1152A	962	*vāp* Ās	6 *vāp*
693	889–910	*loñ* Dharmādhipati	2 *vāp*
933B	1013	*loñ* Varmaśiva	3 *vap* (of the Mīnapracaṇḍa *varṇṇa*)
352	944–966	steñ Mahendrāṇī	2 *loñ*
33(2)	1017	*steñ* Śivācārya	*mratāñ*
349	954	*steñ ʾañ* Śivācārya	2 *vāp* & *ʾme* (mother of one *vāp*)
843	1018	*steṅ ʾañ* of Stuk Ciñcāñ	8 *vāp*
843	1018	*steṅ ʾañ* of Stuk Ciñcāñ	the parasol-bearers of Sruk Thmi
1229C	979	*mratāñ khloñ* Kālidāsa	29 *vāp*, 1 *steñ* & 2 *mrateñ ʾañ* (of Dhruvapura *vargga*)
221S	1011	*kaṃsteṅ śrī* Narapatīndravarman	1 *mratāñ khloñ śrī*, 3 *steṅ*, 2 *mratāñ śrī*, 4 *loñ*, 3 *vāp*
1198	1009	*vraḥ kaṃsteṅ ʾañ śrī* Lakṣmipativarman	4 *vāp*
207	1042	*VKA śrī* Kaṇṭhpaṇḍita	2 *loñ*, 12 *vāp* (residents of 2 villages)

quality land left to sell, so that they were simply less relevant to the elites who were writing the inscriptions. Other middle-ranking officials, many of these being *loñ*, would have been affected in turn, and faced with the same impediments as the *vāp*. Once there was little land available to them, their options were also constrained.

Demand for high value goods: tax and other payments

A further constraint affecting the minor officials likely stems from the mode of paying taxes. The prime means of producing wealth for Angkor was growing rice, and since Angkor did not use money, this would have been the taxation commodity available to most of the population. We infer from the inscriptions that taxes paid by non-elites were normally in rice, livestock and corvée, managed locally. To avoid the costs of transporting bulky goods over long distances to the centre, it would have been pragmatic to encourage, or even specify payment of levies such as the *rājakāryya* in high value goods. Where these were acquired in exchange for rice, land, animals or slaves, we suggest that the purchaser had to pay a premium for this.[80]

There are several instances where the transaction of obtaining goods for paying the *rājakāryya* is currently translated as having been borrowed at high interest, the

80 We see another example of a premium required for an exchange in the Ta Prohm inscription, K. 273: LII (1186), where it is specified that if unhulled rice is supplied, the quantity needs to be four times that required for hulled rice.

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Old Khmer word being *pul*. In modern Khmer, *pul* has the meaning of 'borrowing at 100 per cent interest',[81] and we see in several Angkorian inscriptions that the *guṇa*, currently translated as 'interest', is 100 per cent. We propose that the old meaning of *pul* may have been more along the lines of 'trading up to high-value goods, for which one had to pay double'.[82] One meaning of the Sanskrit word *guṇa*, which could fit the contexts better, is 'a multiplier or co-efficient in algebra',[83] always equal to two in the Khmer texts. In an inscription from O Smach, a *vāp* owed 2 *liṅ* of gold for the *rājakāryya*. This was given to him by a *vraḥ kaṃsteṅ 'añ* in exchange for a tract of land valued at 4 *liṅ* of gold.[84] In another such exchange,[85] some dignitaries and villagers acquired a number of cult objects from the sanctuary belonging to an official. A tract of land was made over to the official, declared a royal benefice from the king and offered to the god. In this, we see a temple playing an economic role in providing high value goods. Between the reigns of Jayavarman V and Sūryavarman I, of nine inscriptions which contain *pul,* four also have *guṇa*.[86] In at least three cases, the stated reason for requiring the goods was to pay *rājakāryya*. It is feasible that two further mentions, to acquire materials, were also in the cause of the *rājakāryya*.[87] The buyers were *vāp* in five of the instances of *pul* and in two they were *loñ*. Many seem to have had little choice but to part with land.

Decline

We do not consider that the decline of the middle-ranking officials stems from the civil war and their opposition to Sūryavarman I, whose claim to the throne was based on his descent from Indravarman II (877–889).[88] Sūryavarman may well have moved to disestablish some of the supporters of Jayavīravarman.[89] It is also understandable that he appointed members of his family, the Saptadevakula, to important positions to strengthen his support base.[90] He may even have started to

81 Philip N. Jenner, *A dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*, ed. Doug Cooper (Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2009).

82 Once money was introduced into Khmer society, around the 16th century, the need for such conversions would have fallen away. The idea of paying double could have remained.

83 Monier-Williams, *Cologne digital Sanskrit lexicon* (Cologne: Institute of Indology and Tamil Studies, University of Cologne, 2005), http://webapps.uni-koeln.de/tamil/; http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/indexcaller.php (last accessed 25 Nov. 2014).

84 K. 1198: B28 (1014).

85 K. 353N (1046).

86 K. 233: A15 (968–1001); K. 165: N39 (952); K. 105: 19 (968); K. 257: N4 (994); K. 153: 8, 11 (1001); K. 1198: B28 (1014); K. 353: N6 (1046); K. 420: 5, 7, 12, 19 (1001–1049): K. 1238: A11 (1036).

87 In K. 105:19 (968) the *pul* was to acquire some buffaloes to exchange for laterite to build a sanctuary and in K. 257: N4 (994) it was to purchase goods to buy a *mandira*.

88 Vickery, in his chapter 'Some remarks on early state formation in Cambodia', in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. D.G. Hall and A.C Milner (Singapore: ISEAS, 1986), pp. 102–9, draws upon anthropological studies to propose a 'conical clan' structure in which people and gods are ranked in a hierarchy according to their proximity in descent from a common ancestor, in this case Indravarman II, rather than under the system of primogeniture, where the throne passes from father to son. This line of descent from Indravarman is mentioned in K. 253: B III (1005); K. 125: A10 (1007); K. 380: W17 (1037); and somewhat ambiguously in K. 136AB (1066–80).

89 K. 420: 32–4 (1001–49) records the gift to a foundation of settlements confiscated by the king from two individuals who had risen up against him.

90 This may have been the rationale for his Oath of Allegiance, K. 292 (1011).

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move against some of the very powerful families who had been close to the previous rulers, filling the highest offices, those of *purohita*, *hotar*, *ācārya* and *guru*,[91] and who, as Lawrence Palmer Briggs observes, 'one by one carved their swan-songs and disappeared from history'.[92] Yet authors of inscriptions during Sūryavarman's reign continued to refer to Jayavarman II, providing genealogies commencing at the time of this ruler, or claiming that their ancestors were granted land or began their careers under him. Perhaps the legitimacy of Sūryavarman's claim to the throne was not such an issue.[93] Nor are we inclined to the alternative hypothesis mentioned earlier that changes brought about when the Mahīdharapura dynasty came to power were an important factor in the decline of the *loñ* and *teṅ*, since these had all but ceased to sell their land 30 years earlier.

We argue that the changes in status that have been observed in and beyond Sūryavarman I's reign were set in train earlier, around the time of the concurrent peak numbers of texts, immunities, land transactions, and disputes towards the end of the tenth century. If there were a continual requirement for *vāp* to make payments in high value goods, coupled with social constraints on whom they could buy land from, they would have become net vendors of land within a short period. The large number of sales by *vāp* at that time suggests they were under stress, and it is not surprising that there were many disputes. The declining production of texts towards the end of the century — temporarily reversed during the troubled period 1001–1006 — is consistent with a reduced availability of land. *Loñ* and *teṅ* were also victims of this land transfer, but, insofar as they were closer to the elite, their decline may have been buffered. An option may have been for them to be taken into wealthy temples and *āśrama* as a solution acceptable to the elite.[94]

The reduction in new inscriptions and land transactions from the end of the tenth century may have been exacerbated by other constraints. We suggest that the tax immunities previously enjoyed by many private foundations and their founders were being curtailed by the late tenth century, leaving fewer incentives to establish new ones.[95] Reversing a strategy employed by rulers for more than a century could indicate an emerging concern, known for other states, that tax immunities were becoming a drain on revenue.[96] Such an action would have most affected those

91 Lawrence Palmer Briggs, *The ancient Khmer empire* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999[1951]), pp. 134, 140, 145. These roles, religious in origin, had become largely secular in India. See Vickery, 'The reign of Sūryavarman I', pp. 229–30.

92 Lawrence Palmer Briggs, 'The genealogy and successors or Śivāchārya: Suppression of the great sacerdotal families by Sūryavarman I', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 46, I (1946): 184.

93 Genealogies commencing with Jayavarman II: K. 989 (1008); K. 235 (1052); K. 449 (1069), genealogy from Jayavarman II to Harṣavarman III); K. 91 (1080–1107), genealogy likely from Jayavarman II to Jayavarman VI. Land or careers starting with Jayavarman II: K. 253B; K. 278 (1007); K. 92 (1028); K. 1238 (1036); K. 661 (1050–1066); K. 289 (1066); K. 275; K. 1036 (1113–1149); K. 834.

94 Mabbett, 'Some remarks on the present state of knowledge about slavery in Angkor', p. 53, finds no direct Angkorian evidence for debt slavery in temples. Debt servitude existed in 19th century Cambodia. See Étienne Aymonier, *Le Cambodge: Le royaume actuel, vol. 1* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), pp. 98–9.

95 E. Lustig had previously suggested in 'Using inscription data to investigate power in Angkor's Empire' (p. 57), that this process ceased some time after Sūryavarman I (1002–1050).

96 For example, in Bagan, the temples and clergy became extremely wealthy and powerful, largely through fiscal immunities. Periodically, their lands and property were confiscated by the rulers in an exercise described as 'purification' of the saṅgha. See Michael Aung Thwin, *Pagan: The origins of modern*

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with limited resources, and served to enhance the power wielded by influential families through their increasingly great landholdings and the revenues these delivered. Indeed, most founders from Sūryavarman's reign were of the elite. From the reign of Udayādityavarman II (1049–1066), texts, though fewer, still record pious works, with the authors still seeking merit by offering their foundations to the reigning king. However, there were far fewer disputes and only four texts referring to land transactions.[97]

Conclusion

The development of the state of Angkor altered an existing system of land ownership, to the extent that prime communal and family-held lands were broken up and transferred to elites. Many of the vendors were caught up in the interconnected affairs of the officials and the religious foundations and were obliged one way or another to support the temples, the local elites and the state. The transfers seem to have been engendered by existing social and economic mores, namely, the need for tax and other payments to be in high value goods, and hierarchical restrictions on land acquisitions.

Vāp may have been traditional landholders, living in kinship or other communal groups, who were granted title to lands at the time of Jayavarman II, and whose descendants acquired bureaucratic positions and more land during the next two centuries. At least up to the late tenth century, they were not unempowered. We suggest that their seemingly abrupt disappearance from the inscriptions resulted from the depletion of their landholdings through having to make payments with articles of high value (*pul*), and from the hierarchical restrictions on their land purchases. The disputes predominantly in the tenth century may have been a symptom of the reduced availability of favourable land, which they had been seeking to hold on to, unsuccessfully.

The class to which *loñ* and *teṅ* belonged had sometimes claimed descent from royalty or from the cohorts of Jayavarman II and were socially superior to *vāp*. We have proposed that the avenues open to this class were eventually restricted too, for much the same reasons. Their capacity to remain property owners having been reduced, many were left with few options but to place themselves or be given to serve in temple roles.

Whatever actions may have been taken by rulers from the mid-tenth century — we suggest restricting some of the privileges that had been enjoyed, in particular the fiscal immunities — there would now have been fewer incentives to establish foundations. This in turn would have slowed the production of texts, except, as it seems, during the period of conflict at the beginning of the eleventh century.

Burma (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), pp. 169–209. In Java, the *sīma* grants to religious communities were curtailed in the 11th and 12th centuries and replaced by titles and other status symbols, as rulers attempted to gain more control over their income. See Jan Wisseman Christie, 'Javanese markets and the Asian sea trade boom of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries A.D.', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, 4 (1998): 354.

97 K. 258ABC (1107–13); K. 850: 3 (1150–6?); K. 397: E3–4 (1108); and K. 383: B15 (1121).

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The disappearance of the *vāp* and the drawn-out demotion of the *loñ* could be seen as markers of a shift in the balance of power between some of the mid-level officials and elites. In Angkor's hierarchical and moneyless society, this may have been almost inevitable.

Supplementary Material

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463419000365.