

‘The iconography of the deities in the Devyamata (Nisvasakhyamahatantra)’

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Epigraphic research has revealed that unpublished Indian Shaiva texts that were recently found in Nepal were known in Cambodia during the 9th to 12th century A.D. These texts not only play an important role in the study of the development of Shaivism, but they are important for the study of the introduction and development of Shaiva iconography in Cambodia during this period. It should also be stressed that the only textual sources that have been taken into consideration to date when discussing Shaiva iconography in general are passages of post-12th-century A.D. South Indian scriptures of the Shaiva Siddhanta branch of Shaivism (*agama*). Rao utilized many such passages in his groundbreaking “Elements of Hindu Iconography” (1914). Since then, no scholar has examined and made available the demonstrably earlier Shaiva scriptures of the Shaiva Siddhanta school that survive in early (9th- to 12th-century) Nepalese manuscripts. Hence, these texts are of crucial importance not only for the study of Shaiva iconography in Cambodia, but also for a better understanding of the iconography of Hindu deities in India itself.

Devyamata (Nisvasakhyamahatantra) is an early unpublished work of the Shaiva Siddhanta and a part of the Nisvasa-corpus that, as shown by epigraphic records, was known in Cambodia. The text survived in two early Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts, both written in variants of Old Newari script. The text deals, among other topics, with the iconography of the deities of the Hindu pantheon with the main focus on the Shaiva imagery. The present paper discusses the iconography of the deities as given by the Devyamata, and compares them with the descriptions in other Sanskrit iconographic texts that survived on the Indian Subcontinent and with the chosen examples of temple sculptures from India and Cambodia.