“Navagraha” in Ancient Cambodia

In Khmer and English by Chhum Meng Hong

Friday, June 8, 2018, 5:30pm at RUFA (behind the National Museum)
edBy Chhum Meng Hong

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This talk will examine the series of stone panels depicting the image of nine divinities, normally referred to as navagraha or 9 planet deities. In fact, this subject is a controversial topic over its terminology as well as the individual identification of the deities and the order in which they appeared.

Via re-examining the Khmer panels by comparing them with Indian iconographic representation, the oldest panel found in Cambodia dates back to the 7th century A.D. Subsequently, it is likely that the combination of 4 planets and 5 lokapāla flourished in Khmer culture during the Angkor period.

In general, navagraha panel was installed in the southeast shrine of the temple complex or above doorway, which is one of the traditions found in India. Navagraha was strongly connected with cosmological concept, related to the Visnu cult, lokapāla, and the seven ascetics.

This talk will focus on three main points, (1) Identification and typology of the ensemble of navagraha (2) Iconography of the navagraha, (3) Function of the navagraha panels.