‘The Buddhist pantheon of the Bàyon of Angkor: an historical and art historical reconstruction of the Bàyon temple and its religious and political roots’

A dissertation submitted in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) [99,100 words]

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Abstract

This dissertation marshals a range of new evidence to reconstruct the 12th to 13th century Buddhism and sacred art of king Jayavarman VII. It traces political and cultural roots reaching back to the rise of Tantric Buddhism in eighth century Pāla India. It links developments in peninsular pre-Thailand and across the Korat plateau with 10th century temple art and inscriptions in Cambodia, where a Buddhist revival was influenced by the *yogatantras,* the first Tantras opening the 'path of vajra' or Vajrayāna. The evidence for Tantric Khmer Buddhism is gleaned from a new translation of a key Sanskrit inscription and from sacred relief carvings. An analysis of the 11-12th century sacred art of Phimai, a major foundation in modern Northeast Thailand, evinces the arrival of the mature Vajrayānist *yoginītantras* sustaining a Buddhist dynasty, which had seized power in Angkor and would later invest its religious beliefs in the Bàyon. The phased building plan of Jayavarman VII's many temples and the iconography of the Bàyon-style are reassessed, bringing to bear previously unpublished data from the king's large temple of Bantéay Chmàr northwest of Angkor. The reign of Jayavarman VII is substantially reconfigured, presenting his methodical introduction of new doctrine and consequent political dominance via carefully orchestrated stages which subjected the entrenched Brahmanical elite to politico-religious campaigns of consecrations to Lokeśvara and ultimately to Hevajra and Vajrasattva. Throughout this thesis, exhaustive analysis is made of existing scholarship, which is confronted with a substantial body of new epigraphic and iconographic data.

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Introduction

The massive scale and astonishingly original design of the Bàyon temple of ancient Angkor at once arrest and move us. On entering it, we are taken by the enigma enshrouding its gods and rituals. With virtually no texts to guide us, we must turn, as Jean Boisselier puts it, to 'the smallest scroll of foliage' to recount its history and capture the politico-religious messages of its builder. King Jayavarman VII was Cambodia's first Buddhist king and its most successful. He expanded the state into one of the largest empires on earth at the end of the 12th century and erected the monumental Bàyon at the heart of a reconstructed and massively fortified capital. This dissertation attempts to penetrate the Bàyon enigma.

The approach adopted here can be called 'coherentist' (Appendix I), for while remaining attentive to hard, material evidence, it explores the politico-religious horizon as a *valid and necessary* complementary source of evidence. Signs of coherence with the material record are sought in both local and nonlocal contexts; for though a narrowly materialist approach would resist bringing any 'exotic' and asynchronous elements into the argument, the peripatetic and missionary nature of Buddhism, in that it opened and maintained broad functioning networks across Asia from the early years of the first millennium, compels us to remain alert to the international picture. And indeed, we find the messages on these networks to be as eloquent as the scrolls of foliage.

Before turning to an analysis of key elements of Jayavarman's sacred art, the thesis first explores the early roots of Khmer Buddhism. At two crucial moments, in the seventh and 10th centuries, Khmer Buddhists were in direct contact with the at first nascent, then later fully expanded third wave of Tantric Buddhism that spread from of Pāla Bengal throutgh the courts of Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan and Śrīvijaya. These Tantric roots of Khmer Buddhism have received little attention by scholars, who have generally seen Khmer Buddhism as a normative Mahāyāna with a doctrinal base in 4th/5th century *yogācāra*.

Chapter 1 substantiates the claim for seeing Buddhist Tantrism in Cambodia and defines the style of Buddhism which emerges from a close textual analysis of one of the most illuminating religious texts of all Khmer epigraphy: the inscription of Wàt Sithor K.111 (Appendix II). Whereas the previous translation had obscured this, the text can now be seen to recount how the Cambodian Buddhists received and propagated the *sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha* (*STTS)*, the root *yoga-tantra* that became a motor for the 'state-protection' Esoteric Buddhism in China and East Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries.

With this significant new light thrown on the 10th century, Chapter 2 then revisits the whole Buddhist epigraphic and iconic record from the seventh century to Jayavarman's reign and assembles a host of indicators of a durable Tantric strand forming the core of Khmer Buddhist beliefs throughout this period. Here, another important and hardly noticed event comes into focus: in the third quarter of the seventh century when Punyodaya, one of the great early Indian Tantric Buddhist scholars to travel to China, spent 15 years in the Buddhist community of pre-Angkorian 'Zhen-la'. This early exposure to the emergent Tantric form of Buddhism is shown to have had a lasting effect on the Khmers, for although Buddhism was suppressed and deprived of patronage for 150 years, while a Śaiva state was forged in Angkor, we can discern clear Tantric traits when it re-emerges in the 10th century.

I argue that Khmer Buddhism entered its period of glory when it made two giant strides in the late 11th century: first, in the directing gurus' progression from the *yoga-tantras* to the mature *yoginī-tantras,* and second in their political leader's usurpation in Angkor. The result of these two moves was that for the first time in history, the Khmer Buddhists were in a position to challenge the tradition of Brahmanical rule long symbolised in monolithic state temples. Their response was to build a vast new temple complex at Phimai, in modern Northeast Thailand. The new Mahīdhara dynasty thus laid the foundation for Khmer state Buddhism that was achieved within a century by king Jayavarman VII, builder of the Bàyon.

Chapters three, four and five focus on the evolution of key architectural and iconic themes in Jayavarman's temples, which can now be seen as defining and propagating a distinct, new Khmer regal creed. Chapter three detects a significant change in the decoration of Jayavarman's temples in the sudden proliferation of dancing goddesses whose fiery eyes resemble those of the Tantric Yoginīs of Phimai. They are shown to belong to the same cult as Khmer bronze and sandstone icons of the 'wrathful' supreme dancing Buddha Hevajra. Chapter four then assembles evidence of a widespread campaign of conversion to the new state creed, through Hevajra consecrations. This campaign to broadly implant the new Buddhist-led state creed is found to be conducted under the celestial agency of Vajrapāṇi, a key Tantric deity who disguises himself in Garuda icons to protect converts. Chapter five finds more clues for defining Jayavarman's late royal cult in the remote and little studied temple of Bantéay Chmàr.

Although the 'Bàyon-style' icons and motifs have been extensively recorded, their true significance has remained difficult to discern because of the prevailing uncertainty about the deities presiding in the Bàyon. Chapter 6 then addresses the Bàyon enigma in a comprehensive review of the conflicting interpretations of its imposing towers, whose giant faces stare out in all directions from the heart of the capital. It concludes that the Bàyon is the maṇḍala of Jayavarman's royal cult of the supreme Tantric deities, Vajrasattva and Hevajra.

Chapter 1

Kīrtipaṇḍita and the Tantras

There are few surviving texts that illuminate the doctrines and rituals of the religions of ancient Cambodia. Temple inscriptions focus on invocations of the gods, eulogies of patrons and maintenance provision, not doctrine, and no other texts have survived. The Khmer version of Śaivism dominated as the state religion from at least the seventh century to the 11th century. There are far fewer inscriptions offering clues to the Khmer version of Buddhism, which was a minority creed until the 12th century. One shining exception to the general obscurity enwrapping the Buddhists' beliefs has strangely not received the attention it deserves. From the time after Buddhism was allowed to revive in the mid-10th century, under Śaiva king Rājendravarman, one temple engraving provides rare and revealing insights into the Buddhists' beliefs and practices. The stone (K.111) honours the Buddhist *purohita* or royal officiant Kīrtipaṇḍita ('renowned teacher') at the temple of Wàt Sithor in Kompong Cam province; it leaves little doubt that the 10th century platform for reviving Khmer Buddhism was the Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayāna[1] of the *Yoga Tantras* (in the Tibetan classification).[2]

Wat Sithor praises Rājendravarman's son Jayavarman V (r. 968-1001 A.D.) as the ruling monarch, but refers back to a period during which Kīrtipaṇḍita

[1] [See Appendix III] Vajrayāna and Tantric Buddhism are used as synonyms here; the second is normally treated as broader, because it includes the earlier Mantrayāna or Mantranāya ('path of mantras'), whose practitioners before the seventh century saw themselves as indistinct from Mahāyāna. Davidson uses 'esoteric Buddhism' (Chinese: *mi chiao*) as a third synonym, though other writers reserve this term for the Vajrayāna of East Asia. (Ronald M. Davidson (2002:367n.2) *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: a social history of the Tantric movement* Columbia University Press, New York). Later I look at Williams distinction between the way Mantranāya as a 'cause-path' addressing the causes for remaining in the saṃsāra and the 'result-path' of Vajrayāna that sees itself as efficacious in attaining Buddhahood in one lifetime. (Paul Williams with Anthony Tribe (2000:220) *Buddhist thought* Routledge, London). 'Vajrayāna' is already used in the seventh century classic *guhyasamāja-tantra XVIII.52*. Davidson calls Vajrasattva in this context 'eros embodied'. He translates the stanza as: '[We speak of] ignorance, anger, desire; but desire always is found in the vajra [penis]. Thus the skilful means of the Buddhas is understood as Vajrayāna.' Davidson (2002:197).

[2] The Wat Sithor inscription praises Jayavarman V (r. 968-1001) as the ruling monarch, but refers back some years to a period during which Kīrtipaṇḍita went abroad to find texts of Buddhism and returned to propagate them, with wealth amassed through royal and other patronage, through building a network of monasteries and sanctuaries across the country. Although we do not have more specific dates for Kīrtipaṇḍita, it is likely that he was active from the beginning of the Buddhist revival with the dedication of the first Buddhist temple called Bàt Čum in 953 A.D.

either sent for or went abroad to find texts of Buddhism and propagated them. With wealth amassed through royal patronage, he had built a network of monasteries and sanctuaries across the country by the time the inscription was written, probably in the 970s. Although we do not have more specific dates for Kīrtipaṇḍita, it seems likely that he was active from the beginning of the Buddhist revival with the dedication of the first Buddhist temple called Bàt Čum in 953 A.D.

Ancient Cambodia's Buddhism has generally been seen as normative Mahāyānist; a minority view is represented in François Bizot's phrase 'Mahāyāna tantrisant'.[3] This chapter argues that the Wàt Sithor inscription supports neither the consensus nor this minority view. The inscription is seen instead as throwing an unusually clear epigraphic light on the Buddhism re-introduced under Rājendravarman that clearly shows that Cambodian Buddhism, at least from 950 A.D., followed the 'way of the vajra', as this is expressed in two classic *Yoga Tantric* texts.

The scholar who comes closest to this reading of K.111 is Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, who worked for many years in Paris with George Coedès, translator of the inscription. Bhattacharya and Coedès thought Kīrtipaṇḍita brought home 'two classical texts of Buddhism'– the *madhyāntavibhāga* ('Discerning the Middle from the extremes') by 'Maitreyanātha' and usually taken to be written by Asanga, the fourth century founder of the Yogācāra school[4], and Kamalaśīla's eighth century commentary on Śāntarakṣita's compendium of Mahāyānist doctrines, the *tattvasaógraha*. David Snellgrove also reads Wàt Sithor as referring to Kamalaśīla's commentary[5]; so does Jean Boisselier.[6] But Bhattacharya added a significant further comment, saying

[3] François Bizot (1993:25) *Le bouddhisme des Thaïs* EFEO Bangkok
[4] Williams, Paul (1989:81) *Mahayana Buddhism* Routledge, London
[5] Snellgrove 2001:147n45 *Khmer civilization and Angkor* Orchid press, Bangkok).
[6] 'On a déjà souligné que le commentaire cité était l'oeuvre d'un Vijñānavadin du VIIIe siècle, qui contribua, entre autres, à la réforme du bouddhisme tibétain...' Jean Boisselier (1992:259) 'Rôle du nord-est dans la renaissance du Buddhism khmer du X^{ieme} siècle' in *Studies on historic cities in lower northeast Thailand A.D. 8th – 13th centuries* Sophia University, Tokyo

Kīrtipaṇdita also brought home a number of unidentified but apparently 'Tantric texts':

> Apart from the two classic texts of Buddhism, the inscription of Kīrtipaṇḍita at Wàt Sithor mentions texts that have not yet been identified. They are, it seems, 'Tantric' texts. In any case, in accordance with the tendency of his time, the pure doctrines Kīrtipaṇḍita professed of negation of the self (*nairātmyā*) and 'nothing-but-thought' (*cittamātra*), fitted in very well with 'Tantric' ritual, mixed as it is with Hinduism. Among other things, it should be noted that the inscription of Wàt Sithor mentions 'formulas' (*mantra*) and 'gestures' (*mudrā*), the thunderbolt (*vajra*) and the bell (*ghaṇṭā*).[7]

Bhattacharya notes the references to the trappings and paraphernalia of Tantric rituals in the inscription. Such things are emphatically not the kind of matter addressed by Asanga or by the academic texts of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, whose scholarly, historical works record the minute doctrinal distinctions reached in centuries of Mahāyāna exegesis of the Buddha's teaching. These academic works are not the stuff of revolution and they do not promote the dramatic politico-military metaphors that Buddhism's third great vehicle offered, with extraordinary success, to Asian political courts from the eighth century onwards. The successful tantrikas were those who propagated the *Yoga Tantras*, which mushroomed out of the northern Indian monastery-universities of Nālandā, Vikramaśila and Odantapurī and directly engaged the rulers of Sri Lanka, Śrīvijaya, China and Japan.[8] Tibetan historian Tāranātha says that Southeast Asian states participated in this movement and that in the 10th century, under the 'Four Senas' of Bengal, half the monks studying in Magadha came from 'Ko-ki', a Tibetan word for the

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[7] Bhattacharya K. (1997:45) 'Les religions du Cambodge ancien et l'epigraphie sanskrite' in *Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer* eds. Jessop and Zephir, Edition de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris (my translation).

[8] The first widely-influential wave of Vajrayāna was presided over by the *Yoga Tantra* pantheon led by Vairocana and Vajrapāni-Trailokyavijaya in the 8th to 10th centuries. A later wave, from the 11th to 13th centuries, featuring the cult of Herukas like Hevajra and later Kālacakra, is described in the following way by Rob Linrothe: 'The timing of the spread of Hevajra is worth noting. Surviving images from eastern India date to the 12th century. Khmer and Thai examples are nearly coeval, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries. Tibetan images survive from at least the 13th to the present…It appears that despite the earlier origin of the texts and the ideas behind the Hevajra imagery, they were not influential enough to generate a lasting impact until the late 11th or early 12th century. By that time, however, the ideas and images quickly flowed in eastern, southern and northern directions. Islam alone proved an impenetrable barrier.' (R. Linrothe 1999:274 *Ruthless compassion* Serindia, London)

area which includes Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and probably Čampā.[9] I will propose that a correct reading of Wàt Sithor fully support's Tāranātha's view.

1. Vajrayāna

Williams makes a valuable distinction between the early attempts to give new impetus to Mahāyāna in the 'Mantrayāna' or vehicle of spells, and the mature Vajrayāna. The first form, propagated only through secret transmissions between master and pupil in the monasteries, was a slow 'cause-path' to perfection that still relied on the Bodhisattva ideal of attacking the causes that hold people in the cycle of repeated lives in the saṃsāra by cultivating the six or 10 perfections. On the way to gradually reaching the highest realisations through many lives and many eons, adepts acquired growing powers over for example health, the weather and opponents. The dramatic acceleration brought by the later Vajrayāna was the fruit of it being what Williams calls a 'result-path' (*phalayāna*) that saw itself as capable of attaining Buddhahood in one lifetime.[10] The acceleration was achieved not through scholastic hair-splitting but through empowering rituals, using ritual devices like those Bhattacharya notes in Wàt Sithor, and through narration of the exploits of such holders of the thunderbolt (vajra) as the former *yakṣa* turned Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. The emphasis on cosmic power and the rapid access to it soon gave Buddhism a radically new allure. A new Buddhist pantheon was quickly robed and armed like kings, while kings sought apotheosis. According to Davidson's research into the Tantric movement in India, this was the Buddhist survival strategy in the face of a revived Hinduism where pan-Indic deities enjoyed the same powers. Davidson sees the development of the vehicle of the Tantras as a response to the collapse of the golden age of the Gupta empire in India and the decline of the social coalitions of long-settled Buddhist populations. The monasteries had no choice but to engage their ancient, contemplative, non-violent creed in new politico-military strategies that would gain them access to the courts of new competing kings and to the patronage of belligerent feudal barons:

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[9] Lama Chimpa Alaka Chattopadhyaya (1990:330) *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India* Motilal Banarsidass, Dehli

[10] Paul Williams with Anthony Tribe (2000:220) *Buddhist thought* Routledge, London

> For esoteric Buddhists…have seen how princes decimated the guilds, moved much of the population to the countryside, erected castles and fortifications, and brought in Śaiva ascetic orders to legitimize their self-obsessed actions. Monks understood that others in the religious landscape supported in ritual and literature the apotheosis of the king and the sāmantization [making feudal lords] of the gods.[11]

It is against the international backdrop of successful expansions of Tantric Buddhism inside and outside India from the eighth century onwards that we have to evaluate Kīrtipandita's revival of Buddhism in Angkor, then the capital of the most powerful empire in Indochina. Was Cambodia among the states that opened itself to the powers of the 'result-path' of the *Yoga Tantras*; or did a liberal, Renaissance-style Khmer Śaiva court suddenly decide to patronise the construction of Buddhist temples and monasteries to boost neglected, classical Mahāyānist studies to enrich the national intellectual life, as the current consensus would seem to imply? A more plausible construal of the evidence would seem to be that Rājendravarman recognised the growing power of the Buddhists, with their politicised Tantric vehicle, and led by his own general, chief minister and architect Kavīndrārimathana and decided to move to accommodate them in a balance of power that left him in control. Davidson's view of feudal India is that syncretism should be seen as an instrument of realpolitik rather than any spirit of ecumenism:

> …the patronage of many kings towards multiple religious traditions could be viewed in part as an attempt to keep them all beholden to the ruler – and divided from one another – rather than a dedicated catholicity among Indian monarchs.[12]

The inscription of Prasat Ben Vien (K.872) shows that the Buddhists had as Coedès puts it 'penetrated the royal family'.[13] It identifies the donor of a Buddhist tower as the brother-in-law of the king. The Buddhists had even greater success with Rājendravarman's son Jayavarman V, who commissioned Kīrtipaṇḍita to perform the *homa* fire rites daily in the palace, took a personal interest in the guru's construction of a network of Buddhist institutions and who, though he was enthroned in Śaiva rituals, took the posthumous Buddhist name Paramavīraloka.

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[11] Davidson (2002 :163)

[12] Davidson 2002:192

[13] Coedes (1953:98) 'Inscriptions de Prasat Ben Vien' *IC* V

Furthermore, the surprising fact that emerges from retranslating Wàt Sithor is that the inscription explicitly states that the politicised *Yoga Tantras* reached Cambodia, but this got obscured by the translation into French.

2. Wàt Sithor

The Wàt Sithor inscription, from the reign of Jayavarman V, who succeeded his father in 968, was first recorded in modern times in 1882 by L. de Lajonquière and paraphrased in 1883 by E. Sénart. George Coedès translated the text in 1942 and published slight modifications in 1954 after studying the stampings in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.[14] Coedès published the Romanized Sanskrit of the crucial stanza which establishes the presence of the Tantras in Cambodia as:

B7-8	lakṣagrantham abhiprajñam	yo nveṣya pararāṣṭrataḥ
	tattvasaṃgrahaṭīkādi-	tantrañ cādhyāpayad yamī //

and translated it as:

> Ayant recherché en pays étranger une foule de livres philosophiques et les traités tels que le commentaire du Tattvasangraha, ce sage en répandit l'étude.
>
> [Having searched in a foreign country for a great number of philosophical books and treatises, such as the Tattvasaṇgraha commentary, this sage then spread the study of them].

Whereas a more literal translation gives:

> Having searched from/in a foreign kingdom for one hundred thousand books of higher wisdom,[15] and for the *tattvasaṃgraha-ṭīkā* and Tantra(s) etc.[16], the self-restrained one [sage] taught (them).[17]

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[14] Coedès, G. (1954:195-211) *Inscriptions du Cambodge* VI EFEO Paris

[15] *Lakṣa* or 100,000 was conventionally used for large indistinct numbers. In the Chinese canon, for example, the *STTS* and the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* are all said to have consisted of 100,000 gāthās or ślokas of 32 syllables (Kwon 2002:27). In an article published after this passage was written, Sanderson indeed reads this as '…sought from abroad the *Lakṣagraṇṭha Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* and the *tattvasaṃgrahaṭīkāditantram*... Coedès took the *Tattvasaṃgrahaṭīkā* mentioned here to be Kamaśīla's commentary on Śāntaraksita's *Tattvasaṃgraha*. It appears more probable that having mentioned sources of the teo major branches of the Sūtra tradition of the Mahāyāna he now speaks of the complementary Way of the Mantras, saying that Kīrtipaṇḍita "taught the Tantra teachings (tantram) of such texts as the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and its commentary", that title being an abbreviation, as commonly used in Indian sources, for the *Sarvatathagatatattvasaṃgraha*, the principal scripture of the Yogatantras. This combination of the exoteric and esoteric divisions of the mature Mahāyāna is also refered to in v.42…' Sanderson (2004:427n284)

[16] 'etc' is Peter Skilling's translation of adi in 'Buddhist sealings' 2007.

[17] This is from a new selective translation of the Wàt Sithor inscription, contained in Appendix I, for which I am beholden to Dr Tadeusz Skorupski, Reader in the Study of Religions, SOAS.

The root of 'Tantra' is √*tan,* stretch or weave, and it can be used to describe chapters in texts; Coedès translates the word 'Tantra(s)'[18] in the broad sense of 'traités' (treatises). Having rendered *abhiprajñam* ('higher wisdom') as 'philosophiques', he goes on to define the doctrinal basis of line B27-28 as typical of 'le Mayāhāna'[19]:

> B27-8 advayānuttaram yānam anyeṣāṃ svam ivārjjayan
> yo diśan munaye hainaṃ rājataÿ śivikādvayam //
>
> Procuring for others as if for himself the nondual (advaya) and supreme (anuttara) vehicle (yāna), he produced for the Sage (muni) a pair of golden and silver palanquins (śivikā).

[Coedès: Procurant aux autres, comme à lui-même le véhicule suprême et sans second, il consacra au Muni deux litières en or et d'argent].

Coedès' evaluation of this Buddhism has naturally been influential and his translation has not been challenged. Yet the opening Sanskrit compound *advaya-anuttara-yāna* (nondual-supreme-vehicle) point rather to a mature version of the third Buddhist vehicle, the Vajrayāna. Furthermore, as Bhattacharya indicates, the inscription shows Kīrtipaṇḍita to be an exponent of mantra, mudrā and yoga, who used the ritual instruments of vajra and ghaṇṭā, which are essential for Tantric rituals and are carried by most Vajrayānist deities. So far we can see several reasons for instead calling Kīrtipaṇḍita's Buddhism 'le Vajrayāna'; so what do the texts indicate? Coedès left no footnote on the *ṭīkā*, or traditional scholarly commentary, which the inscription says was imported with the Tantras; we will see that this word turns out to be the key to identifying the texts.

In the stanza preceding the one about Kīrtipaṇḍita's seeking texts abroad, Asanga's *madhyāntavibhāga* is mentioned as a favourite text of the guru. However the mention of the idealist 'nothing-but-thought' (*cittamātra*) philosophy earlier in the same passage is a reference to a slightly earlier phase of Mahāyāna thinking, seen in works like the *lankāvatāra-sūtra.*[20] The

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[18] The uncertainty about whether Tantra is singular or plural arises from the final ñ read in the Old Khmer script on the stone.
[19] Footnote (3) p.206 IC VI.
[20] The Yogācāra school held an idealist doctrine of *vijñāptimātra* ('nothing-but-perception') which, according to Suzuki took them from 'idealistic realism' to 'pure idealism'. This was a

K.111 hagiographer's ranging between two schools in this way seems to suggest the passage is referring back to Kīrtipaṇḍita's grounding in Mahāyāna doctrines before he went abroad in search of new texts, rather than identifying his own school of thought. It should therefore not be taken as identifying him as a fourth-sixth century Yogācārin, as Bhattacharya and Boisselier appear to.[21] Furthermore, we should note that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were in fact both Tantric masters in Nālandā[22], the monastery in the Gangetic plain that was then a world centre of the rapidly expanding Buddhist Tantrism, and both played active roles in bringing Tantric Buddhism to Tibet.[23] Yogācāra and earlier Mādhyamika doctrines were adopted wholesale by the later followers of Vajrayāna,[24] who focused their innovations on rituals and the acquisition of

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step beyond 'the *cittamātra*, which belongs to the *Lankā*…The difference is this: according to the *vijñāptimātra,* the world is nothing but ideas, there are no realities behind them; but the *cittamātra* states that there is nothing but Citta, Mind, in the world and that the world is the objectification of Mind. The one is pure idealism and the other idealistic realism.' Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1932:xl) *The Lankavatara Sūtra, a Mahāyāna text translated for the first time from the original Sanskrit* Routledge, London.

[21] 'Les texts de notre inscription cite – le *Madhyavibhāga-śāstra* et la *Tattvasaógraha-ìīkā* – appartiennent à cette école.' Bhattacharya, K. (1961:34) *Les religions brahmaniques dans l'ancien Cambodge d'apres l'épigraphie et l'iconographie* PEFEO, Paris. See Boisselier in note 6 above.

[22] Śāntarakṣita was the high priest of Nālandā when the *STTS* was at its apogee there in the late 8th century (Krishnamacharya, Embar (1926:6) *Tattvasaṃgraha of Śāntarakṣita with Commentary by Kamalaśīla* Central Library, Calcutta); Kamalaśīla was Professor of Tantras in Nālandā before moving to Tibet (see Vidyābhūsana, Satis Chandra (1920:327) *A History of Indian Logic* Motilal Banarsidass, Dehli/Patna).

[23] Śāntarakṣita's compendium of doctrines and Kamalaśīla's defence of them won the Lhasa debate in the Tibetan court before king Khri-srong-lde-bstan (r. 755-797) and gave Indian Tantric Buddhism access to Tibet, excluding their Chinese opponents represented by the sage Mahāyāna Hoshang.

[24] For Tucci, the masters of the Vajrayāna considered doctrine secondary: 'This is not the place for details on Vajrayāna dogmatics, which are extremely difficult because they are based, above all, on direct experiences and immediate realizations, and do not lay great store by doctrinal speculations. The latter are borrowed from the various Mahāyāna schools, either Mādhyamika or Yogācāra; they represent the premises from which the Vajrayāna masters started and upon which they built the psychological subtleties of their liturgies and of their yoga practices.' (Tucci 1949:233) Dutch scholars point to the same Yogācāra doctrinal base in the Javanese Vajrayāna. Bernet Kempers cites Krom with approval: 'The Javanese Mahāyāna, from the Çailendras, who erected Kalasan, to the downfall of the Majapahit, is one and the same thing; it is the Yogācāra creed imbued with the spirit of Tantrism.' Bernet Kempers A.J. (1933:4) *The bronzes of Nālandā and Hindu-Javanese art* E.J. Brill, Leiden. See also Dasgupta, Shashi Bhusan (1950:1) *An introduction to Tantric Buddhism* University of Calcutta. Étienne Lamotte sees the two major streams of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra converging in the notion of the supreme Buddha Vajrasattva of Vajrayāna:
'Les Vajrayānistes, dont les porte-paroles principaux furent Śubhakarasimha (637-735), Vajrabodhi (671-741) et Amoghavajra (705-774), ramènent à l'unité la Śūnyatā des Mādhyamika et la Cittamātratā des Yogācāra en postulant un Vajra-sattva "Diamant-Essence" qui les combine étroitement:

vajrena sunyatā proktā sattvena jñānamātratā,
tādāmyam anayoḥ siddham vajrasattvasvabhāvataḥ

supernatural powers, rather than further refinement of doctrine; so the great doctrinal texts of the Mahāyāna remained current in the monasteries.

Another element in the confusion over what kind of texts Kīrtipaṇḍita brought to Cambodia arises from the fact that the short name '*tattvasaógraha'* used to identify one of the texts named in the inscription can refer to more than one text, and everyone seems to have picked the wrong one.

2.1 Pañjikā or ṭīkā

Three major works are known by the short name *tattvasaógraha* 'compendium of truth'. Kamalaśīla's commentary is called the *tattvasaógraha-pañjikā,* but the commentary brought in by Kīrtipaṇḍita, according to the Wàt Sithor stone, was the '*tattvasaógraha-ṭīkā',* a very different work. Tibet's 17th century historian Tāranātha and several modern scholars identify the *Tattvasaógraha-ṭīkā* as the short name for the *kosalālamkāra-tattvasaógraha-ṭīkā*,[25] which is not a commentary on Śāntarakṣita's manual of Mahāyāna doctrines but a leading commentary on the *tattvasaógraha-tantra* itself.[26] The Tantra is the third work which shares the same short name, and this work, containing the principal scripture of the *Yoga Tantras*, is usually referred to with this abbreviated title in Indian sources.[27] The author of the *ṭīkā*, which is extant only in its Tibetan translation,[28] was the later of two Śākyamitras

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> "Par *Vajra* on entend la Śūnyatā; par *Sattva*, le Savoir sans plus;
> leur identité résulte de la nature meme du *Vajra-sattva*."'

Advayavajrasaógraha dans S.B. Dasgupta 1950:87n2 *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* Calcutta). Lamotte, Étienne (1966:150) 'Vajrapani en Inde' in *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville* PUF Paris.

[25] Chattopadhyaya, Lama Chimpa Alaka (1990:270) *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India* Motilal Banarsidass, Dehli; Mkhas-grub-rje, *Rgyud-sde-spyi'i-rnam-par-gzhag-pa-rgyas-par-brjod* translated by F.D. Lessing and A. Wayman (1968:25) as *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, The Hague. Do-Kyun Kwon (2002:25) *STTS a study of its origin, structure and teachings* PhD thesis, SOAS, who also cites Matsūnaga Yukei's *Mikkyō Rekishi* p. 68

[26] The Tantra's full name is *sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saógraha-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra (STTS)*

[27] Alexis Sanderson (2003-4:427) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers; Part I' *BEFEO* Paris

[28] The mid-9th century Tibetan translation is by Dharmaśrībhadra and Rin-chen-bzang-po (TTP. No. 3326, Vol. 70 pp.190-305 & Vol. 71 pp.2-94-2-6)

identified by Tāranātha. The second Śākyamitra lived in the 9th century[29] and, according to Tāranātha, composed the *kosalālamkāra ('ornament of Kosala')-tattvasaógraha-ṭīkā* in his home town of Kosala during the reign of Indian king Devapāla, the successor of the usurper Gopāla who founded the eighth century Pāla dynasty.[30] Śākyamitra's brief biographical sketch at the opening of his enormous commentary makes him one of the few intellectuals of Vajrayāna whose identity we have some sense of.[31] In Kīrtipaṇḍita's time, Śākyamitra's *ṭīkā* was a major work of recent scholarship – indeed the current scholarly classic for elucidating the principal *Yoga Tantra*, which was playing the pre-eminent role in advancing Vajrayāna throughout South, East and Southeast Asia.

The upshot of this small textual clarification is significant. It means that Wàt Sithor's Sanskrit compound *'tattvasaògrahaṭīkādi-tantram'* identifies the root *Yoga Tantra* and its major commentary as the central textual platform for the Khmer Buddhist revival. In Kīrtipaṇḍita's day, these were *the* international Vajrayāna classics. If we think of Kīrtipaṇḍita taking the *tattvasaógraha-tantra* and Śākyamitra's *ṭīkā* as well as many other texts into Cambodia to re-launch Buddhism, we envisage a mission invested with the political vigour and ambition that made the Tantric Buddhism of the *Yoga Tantras* such a spectacular success in T'ang China and elsewhere. This is a far cry from the kind of scholastic enterprise based on detailed and laborious textbooks of Mahāyānist doctrines written by Śāntarakṣita and elucidated by Kamalaśīla that Coedès and subsequent art historians seem committed to.[32]

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[29] Kwon 2002:25; Winternitz, M. (1932:396) *A History of Indian Literature* University of Calcutta
La Vallée Poussin agrees the mid-ninth century date and notes Śākyamitra appears to have added a (signed) chapter to the *Pañcakrama* attributed to Nāgārjuna. Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1896:IX) *Etudes et textes tantriques Pañcakrama* Engelcke, Gand
[30] Tāranātha (1608:274-83) *History of Buddhism in India.*
[31] Davidson (2002:159)
[32] Boisselier speculates that the early *Yoga Tantra karāṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (*āryāvalokitesvaragunakāraṇḍavyūha-nāma-mahāyānasūtrarāja*), which he associates with some of the Lokeśvaras on the walls of Bantéay Chmàr, may have been among the texts imported by Kīrtipaṇḍita because the Pràsàt Cikren inscription (K.417) dated 970 refers to Lokeśvara as transforming the fire of the Avīci hell into water, which is the central scene

Since writing these pages, I have found my interpretation of the Wàt Sithor texts reinforced by Alexis Sanderson, who has recently been assessing the impact of Śaiva scripture on Cambodian religious experience in a partially published article in the *BEFEO*.[33] Sanderson goes into how deeply and rapidly the ancient Khmers absorbed evolving Śaiva scripture, and notes how this also affected kings with Buddhist convictions like Jayavarman V, who chose the posthumous Buddhist title Paramavīraloka.[34] In passing, Sanderson notes that Kīrtipaṇḍita, 'an expert in the esoteric Mantra rites of the Yogatantra, was adopted by the royal family [of Jayavarman V] as their Guru…' He too suggests adjusting Coedès' assessment of the textual base of Kīrtipaṇḍita's Buddhism:

> Coedès took the *tattvasaógrahaṭīkā* mentioned here to be Kamalaśīla's commentary on Śāntarakàita's *Tattvasaógraha.* It appears more probable that having mentioned sources of the two great branches of the Sūtra tradition of the Mahāyāna he now speaks of the complementary Way of the Mantras, saying that Kīrtipaṇḍita 'taught the Tantra teachings (*tantram*) of such texts as the Tattvasamgraha and its commentary', that title being an abbreviation, as commonly used in Indian sources, for the *Sarvatathagatatattvasaógraha*, the principal scripture of the Yogatantras.[35]

The extraordinary success of Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra at the T'ang court was probably still the model of international conduct for ambitious 10th century Buddhists. These Indian monks became immensely influential advisors to three T'ang emperors – indeed they were China's first mandarins.[36] The Wàt

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recounted in the text. Boisselier, J. (1964:82) 'Précisions sur quelques images khmeres d'Avalokiteshvara, les bas-reliefs de Bantéay Chmar' *Arts asiatiques* 11.1

[33] Alexis Sanderson (2004:349-462) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers' Part I *BEFEO* Paris

[34] Sanderson considers the name 'must be Buddhist, since *vīraḥ* is a common epithet for the Buddha and is not found in the Saiddhāntika Śaiva, Pāñcarātrika or brahmanical usage in any appropriate sense that would allow an alternative interpretation. I propose, therefore, that it is equivalent to Paramabuddhaloka and so testifies to the king's personal devotion as opposed to what may have been no more than religious obligations imposed by his position.' Sanderson (2004:429)

[35] Sanderson (2004:427n284)

[36] Michel Strickmann notes 'mandarin' has the same Sanskrit root as mantra or mantrin ('possessor of mantras'): '…"mandarin" originally meant *mantrin*, councillor or the king in possession of powerful *mantra.*' Strickmann, Michel (1996:10) *Mantras et mandarins: le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* Gallimard, Paris. Davidson points to it Indian origin: '…it is noteworthy that the king's counselors are identified as mantrins in Indian political nomenclature. Thus the secretaries associated with peace and war, the counselors of state,

Sithor inscription, when it mentions Kīrtipaṇḍita's foreign search for Tantric texts, may refer, in background mode, to the great Buddhist tradition of gifted Chinese pilgrims and Indian gurus undertaking hazardous journeys between India and China bearing copies of the Sūtras and Tantras. It must be considered likely that Kīrtipaṇḍita was versed in the success of Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra in creating 'state protection' Buddhism in China, based on their translations of the Tantric texts they imported from India and Sri Lanka. The Wàt Sithor inscription is disappointingly lapidary in describing Kīrtipaṇḍita's mission abroad. Nandana Chutiwongs hazards that his destination was 'probably Java'[37] but India, or even the Buddhist centre (Śrī Canāśā?) of Isān, northeast Thailand, that produced the 300 eighth century bronze Bodhisattvas found at Prakhon Chai and the later 'Bengali-influenced bronzes' of Vajradhara could have supplied the texts:

> Having searched from/in a foreign kingdom for one hundred thousand book(s) of higher wisdom, and for the *tattvasaógraha-ṭīkā* and Tantra(s), the self-restrained one [sage] taught (them).

We should not conclude from this that the international outlook of the Khmer Buddhists was limited. Tucci, on the contrary, makes an eloquent case for seeing internationalism as of the essence of the growth of Vajrayāna:

> The Tantras may in fact be best defined as the expression of Indian gnosis, slowly elaborated, by a spontaneous ripening of indigenous currents of thought and under occasional influences from outside, in one of those periods when the ups and downs of history and commercial relations brought India closer to the Roman-Hellenistic, Iranian and Chinese civilizations. This process is slow and unfolds through those centuries which saw deep changes in the ancient religions and philosophies; foreign ideas planted the seeds of new urges and doubts, the development of vast empires united people, hitherto isolated and hostile…the beliefs of barbarians and primitive populations were investigated with keen curiosity.[38]

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and many of the royal inner circle were designated mantrins. The topic was important enough for Lakṣmīdhara to devote a chapter to secret counsel in his compendium of Kingly Duty (*Rājadharma*), where he assembled quotations from the legal and epic literature on the importance of the security of state secrets, including Yājñavalkya's affirmation that the kingdom has its basis in secret state policy (*mantramūlaṃ rājtaṃ*).' Davidson (2002:143).

[37] Nandana Chutiwongs (2005:81) 'Le bouddhisme du Champa' *Trésors d'art du Vietnam, la sculpture du Champa* Eds Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, Paris

[38] Tucci, G. (1949:210) *Tibetan painted scrolls* La Libreria dello Stato, Roma

In this world of slow and simple but effective communications, Amoghavajra's life's work of proselytising court-backed dissemination of the Tantras could indeed have been a model for Kīrtipaṇḍita.[39] In his last testament, Amoghavajra describes how he set sail after the death of his master Vajrabodhi to collect Tantras in Sri Lanka, while visiting the Buddhist communities in 20 countries along the maritime trade route between China and India.[40] Only after personally experiencing the status and scholarship of the world's major Buddhist communities did this brilliant man of humble manner return to China to build a position of exceptional influence as the guru of three emperors.[41]For Amoghavajra and his master, the Buddhist texts they studied and translated were objects of veneration in their own right.[42]

Although Vajrabodhi had begun translating the *tattvasaógraha-tantra* into Chinese in 723, and Amoghavajra completed the first part containing five chapters in 753, the continuing importance of the *STTS* at the end of the 10th century is signalled in the fact that the entire 26 chapters were at that time being translated into Chinese and re-translated into Tibetan.[43]

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[39] Amoghavajra's biography draws attention to the meticulousness with which he studied, after receiving a royal welcome to his imperial mission to Sri Lanka, following the death of his master Vajrabodhi in 741: 'He sought everywhere for the scriptures of the Esoteric Sect and [obtained] more than five hundred sūtras and commentaries. There was nothing he did not go into thoroughly, as, for example, the samaya (attribute), the various deities' secret mudrās, forms, colors, arrangements of altars, banners, and the literal and intrinsic meanings of the texts.' Chou Yi-liang (1945:291) 'Tantrism in China' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 Cambridge Mass.

[40] Orlando 1981:108.

[41] Amoghavajra, in his will, assigned his large holdings of land to the monasteries and refused even a simple grave for himself: 'You should not waste money on a great and elaborate funeral ceremony, nor should you build a grave and only waste human effort. Just take a bed and carry me to the outskirts of the city; cremate my body according to the Buddhist Law; then take out the ashes and use them in rituals, and then immediately scatter them. You certainly must not set up a funeral plaque with my picture on it.' Orlando 1981:128

[42] In his final testament, Amoghavajra is indifferent to the storehouses of wealth he accumulated from imperial patronage, but his wishes concerning the Tantras are expressed forcefully: 'On behalf of the empire, you [monks] must incessantly pray [for these scriptures], recite sūtras and offer incense [for them], and venerate and protect them. They must not be lost or scattered. I have asked the Emperor to build a pavilion in which to put [the statue of] Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva downstairs, and to put Chinese and Sanskrit texts for safekeeping upstairs, in eternal veneration for the state as field of merit.' *The Testament of Amoghavajra* translated by Orlando 1981:125

[43] The Chinese version by Dānapāla was completed between 1012 and 1015 and the new Tibetan version by Rinchen Zangpo and Śraddhakāravarma appeared at about the same time. (Linrothe 1999:155)

The new Khmer Buddhism would be shaped around the initiations, consecrations and maṇḍalas described in this Tantra, which were thought capable of both propelling humans to Buddhahood in one lifetime, and of conferring supernatural powers on worldly rulers building and defending their states.

3. The Tantra

The full name of the Tantra most favoured by Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra and Kīrtipaṇḍita is *sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saógraha-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra (STTS)*, which is translated as '*Mahāyāna Sūtra called the Compendium of Truth of all the Tathāgatas'*. It amounts to an in-depth exposition of a large number of meditation exercises and rituals based on 28 maṇḍalas. It includes descriptions of the 37 deities grouped in *kula* or families around Vairocana and the four directional Buddhas in the pre-eminent *Vajradhatu Mahāmaṇḍala.* The text also contains one of the best known of the violent narratives devised by the Indian Tantric masters to enable Buddhism, weakened by the collapse of the Gupta empire, to compete with a politicised and invigorated Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. This is a stirring account of Vajrapāṇi's battle with Śiva using arsenals of magical weapons. Vajrapāṇi, in his wrathful *Trailokyavijaya* or 'conqueror of the three worlds' form, trade insults and intimidating displays with Śiva until Vajrapāṇi kills the pan-Indic Hindu god and revives him in the Vajradhatu maṇḍala as the *Tathāgata-bhasmeśvara-nirghosa* ('Buddha soundless lord of ashes'). In the 9th century this Tantra established Trailokyavijaya as the principal deity of the expansion of international Tantric Buddhism.[44]

In modern times, the *STTS* text was known only in Chinese and Tibetan translations until Lokesh Chandra and David Snellgrove in 1981 published a facsimile reproduction of a 10th century Nepalese bamboo MS in devanāgarī in the Nepalese National Archive. The full title of the Tantra includes the potentially misleading tag *mahāyāna-sūtra,* but the epilogue modifies this and

[44] Linrothe 1999:178

calls the text a 'Vajrayāna sūtra'.[45] The etymology of Sūtra is also 'thread' or 'continuous line' but during the succeeding centuries in which Vajrayāna defined itself as distinct from Mahāyāna, 'Sūtra' and 'Tantra' became markers that delineated the new vehicle from the old. The Vajrayāna from the outset moved away from, but did not abandon, the doctrinal complexity and hair-splitting logic of the early Mahāyāna. In the seventh century, when the new vehicle was being definitively fashioned by the masters of Nālandā, this monastery remained the main centre of Yogācāra studies.[46] But rather than attempting further refinements to the epistemology of the Mādhyamikas or the Vijnāñavādins of the Yogācāra, it focused on rituals, spells and yogic exercises as practical techniques for achieving Buddhahood rapidly. Thus in Wàt Sithor Kīrtipaṇḍita is said to be a brilliant exponent of both the Madyāmika and Yogācāra:

> B3-4 In him the sun of the nairātmya, cittamātra and other doctrines (darśana), eclipsed by the night of erroneous views (mithyādrṣṭi), shone stronger than the day.

The Sūtras and Tantras share many literary conventions but whereas Sūtras take the form of orations and dialogues between the historical Buddha and his followers at named sites in northern India, the Tantras describe proclamations, initiations, discussions and dramas unfolding in some celestial location before hosts of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and gods. In Snellgrove's words:

> In the *Tattvasaǫ́graha-tantra* the standard Mahāyāna formula of Śākyamuni preaching to monks and bodhisattvas on a mountain in Bihar, is replaced by the fifth universal Buddha Mahāvairocana preaching in his vast celestial paradise before a myriad Bodhisattvas and other heavenly beings.[47]

The recorder and dramatised listener in the enacted verbal interactions is no longer a disciple of the Buddha. Japanese 17th century commentator Donjaku

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[45] Entitling the work a sūtra is seen by some scholars as an attempt by the author to attach the authority of the whole Mahāyāna tradition to the new text. (Kwon 2002:32) The epilogue nevertheless clearly calls itself a 'Vajrayāna Sūtra'. 'Well recited was this supreme Vajrayāna Sūtra.' Snellgrove, D. (1981:67) 'Introduction' S*arva-tathāgata-tattva-saógraha: Facsimile reproduction of a Tenth Century Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal* edited by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove pp. 5-67 New Delhi.
[46] Orlando 1981:8
[47] Snellgrove, D (1981:15)

identifies the 'I' of the *STTS* as the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi and sees the interaction as a kind of transcendental heuristic monologue:

> Mahāvairocana is the main speaker and Vajrapāṇi the listener. Since Vairocana is Vajrapāṇi, Vajrapāṇi's listening means Mahāvairocana listening to himself.[48]

The cosmic location of the events of the *STTS*, with a celestial Bodhisattva as 'I' in discourse with a transcendent Buddha provides the setting for the Vajrayāna's version of how ultimate enlightenment is achieved; it also provides the key metaphor for application in human political empowerment. The *STTS* opens with Śākyamuni under the bodhi tree in Bodhgayā prior to achieving his ultimate transformation. Śākyamitra holds that Śākyamuni's maturation or illusory body (*vipāka-kāya*) remained on the bank of the Nairañjanā River, while his mental body (*manomaya-kāya*) ascended to the Akaniṣṭha heaven.[49] The Tantra describes how Śākyamuni is instructed by Vairocana and the celestial host of *tathāgatas* on how to achieve the *pañca abhisaṃbodhi* – the five ultimate 'enlightenment-revelation' stages to becoming a perfectly enlightened Buddha in the *saṃbhoga-kāya* sphere. Having achieved these steps, the Buddha proceeds to the summit of Mount Sumeru and pronounces the *STTS*, before returning to his earthly body to *simulate* his celestial achievement under the bodhi tree. The Tantra's enactment of the achievement of the five 'revelation-enlightenment' stages discloses the Vajrayāna's ritual framework for achieving Buddhahood in one lifetime. The ultimate goal of *Yoga Tantra*, as defined in the *STTS,* is attaining perfect enlightenment by experiencing precisely these five Wisdoms of Vairocana. The Tantra elaborates a method of meditational visualization of large numbers of related transcendent deities in maṇḍalas. This is reinforced with uttering magical formulas (*mantras*) and sealing each ritual with prescribed hand positions or *mudrās*. This method of bringing the transcendent Buddhas into direct, yogic contact with a kind of 'astral'[50] body

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[48] TSD Vol. 61 No. 2225 pp.125-6 cited in Kwon 2002:42

[49] Mkhas-grub-rje's analysis in Lessing and Wayman 1968:27-9.Another commentator, Ānandagarbha, interprets the text as implying that the Buddha had achieved enlightenment in time immemorial and merely projected an illusory body as Śākyamuni to live out that Buddha's life on earth. See Tucci, Giuseppe (1949:221) *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* La Libreria dello Stato, Roma

[50] 'Astral' is Williams' word (1989:186) *Mahāyāna Buddhism* Routledge, London

within the physical human body – nourishing the growth of the Buddhas of the macrocosm within the human microcosm – is seen as the key to transformation of the individual into a transcendent state. Outside the monastery the explicit descriptions of rituals opens the way to exoteric ceremonies of state in the political arena, in which a king may be transformed into a cakravartin or universal ruler or even a god:

> Monks understood that others in the religious landscape supported in ritual and literature the apotheosis of the king and the sāmantization [making feudal lords] of the gods.[51]

Apart from the literary clues to Kīrtipaṇḍita's Buddhism there are two other things to consider: the indications of a Tantric ritual culture that Bhattacharya points to and the iconic evidence from the temples where this was enacted.

4. The rituals

K.111 yields some information on the doctrines and ritual techniques taught in the Kīrtipaṇḍita's foundations. Kīrtipaṇḍita was proficient in the 'three m's' -- *maṇḍalas, mantras* and *mudrās:*

> C37-8 The one who is skilled in the quintessences of deities (hṛts)[52], mudrās, mantras, vidyās and the homa rite, and who is knowledgeable in the secret (rahasya) of the vajra and the ghaṇṭā, is a purohita worthy of his fees.

Vajras and ghaṇṭās are used to clear the ritual space of earth spirits and then to summon Buddhist deities to enter a maṇḍala. The invoked deities are experienced within the body of the meditator who is slowly transformed into Buddhahood. People held the powers of Kīrtipaṇḍita's followers in awe:

> B11-12 yadīyaśiṣyanāmāpi vādikarnṇapute patat
> Santrāsañ janayām āsa mantravat sarppamandale //
>
> Someone engaged in debate had only to hear it whispered that he was dealing with a pupil of Kīrtipaṇḍita to be seized with fear like a nest of serpents scattered by a mantra.

The guru made special provision for secret initiations when setting up *aśrams* for monks and the laity:

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[51] Davidson (2002:163)
[52] Hṛṭs = hṛdaya: quintessence of deities, like bīja or seed syllables.

> B33-4 Having established the outer (bāhya) and secret (guhya) Sad-Dharma, for worship (pūja) he made separate āśrama for his Saṃgha and guests (atithi).

Secrecy was enjoined with dire warnings after the key moments of each consecration, as in the pupil's rite for entry into the *Vajradhatu* mandala in part one section c.2 of the *STTS*:

> I shall generate within you the *vajra*-knowledge…but you should not tell anyone who has not seen the (Vajradhatu) Mahāmaṇḍala, otherwise your pledge will fail…'This is your pledge-*vajra*. If you divulge it to anyone, it will split open your head.'[53]

'Seeing' the maṇḍala here means experiencing it with more vividness than the existential world; 'visualization' was a consubstantiation with visualised deities in an 'astral' body deep within the physical body.[54] This technique seems to be indicated where Wàt Sithor talks of 'grasping' Buddhas:

> A9-10 yathābhūmipraviṣṭanaÿ pṛthakprajñānuvarttinam
>
> Dharmmaṃ sāmboginirddiṣṭaṃ dhyānagrāhyan namatāmy aham //
>
> I salute the Law that accords with the Wisdoms of the (Buddhas) in their (Buddha)-fields and is proclaimed by the (Buddhas) in their enjoyment bodies which allow them to be grasped in meditation.

[Maxwell thought dharmam were grasped, not bodies, so unrelated to visualization. Check with Skorupski].

Vedic *homa* fire rituals were absorbed by the Buddhists and are prescribed in several Tantras.[55] Wàt Sithor records Kīrtipaṇḍita was appointed to perform at

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[53] Sanskrit p.80, 11-12 translated by Kwon 2002:77

[54] Willams describes the process thus: 'In Tantric practice from the beginning – after necessary initiation, for Tantric Buddhism is strictly esoteric – the practitioner tries to see himself as the appropriate Buddha, and the world as a divine, magical realm. Gradually this becomes more real; gradually the meditator brings into play a subtle physiology, a subtle (astral?) body usually dormant or semi-dormant in the gross material body. This subtle body (owing something, I suspect, to ancient Indian medical theories) really becomes a divine body, it is transmuted into that of a Buddha. Gradually also the hold of the gross world of inherently existing separate objects is loosened, and the mediator develops an ability to transform the world, to perform miracles.' Williams J. (1989:186) *Mahāyāna Buddhism* Routledge, London:

[55] Snellgrove says: 'Religious experts, whether monks or non-celibate yogins, are expected to be proficient in what are generally referred to as the "Four Rites" (Sanskrit *catuḥ karmani*, Tibetan *las bzhi*), namely tranquilizing, prospering, subduing and destroying. Grouped under such headings the appropriate ceremonies are described in the Yoga Tantra *durgatipariśodhana* …The practice of making such an offering to the gods was taken up by the Buddhists during the Mahāyāna period, and it was mentioned…in connection with the consecration ceremony as performed according to the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. Snellgrove D. (1987:156) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* reprint 2004 Orchid Press, Bangkok

least two, and probably all four, *homa* rites permanently in king Jayavarman V's palace[56]:

> B21-2 He was honoured and appointed by the king to perform inside the palace the peaceful (śānti), enriching (puṣṭi) and other rites (karma) in order to protect the territory of the kingdom (rāstra-maṇḍala).

Under the influence of the *Yoga Tantras*, the Buddhists of China and Japan built elaborate altars for *homa* rites, which were the formal framework for daily *samādhi* ('concentration' = meditation). Vedic *homa* rites are therefore acknowledged in the outer sections of the two major maṇḍalas of Japanese Shingon and Tendai Tantric Buddhism. In the Tendai 'Goma' (*homa*) fire rite, the sixth offering is made to 'the spirits of the Vedic religion, Taoism, and Shinto deities, which occupy the outer rims of the Lotus and Vajra mandala.'[57]

5. Brahmans

Wàt Sithor offers no indication of how the new prominence of Buddhism into the Brahmanical Khmer empire was received by the Brahmans, who had been accumulating wealth and power for centuries, but a degree of resentment seems likely, particularly, as Snellgrove implies, in Angkor:

> From this [Wàt Sithor]…one can deduce a few ideas concerning the state of Buddhism in the Khmer empire in the 10th and 11th centuries. Just like the many Brahmanical foundations, it depended on the munificence of wealthy prelates who had won the monarch's or some local ruler's favour. But Buddhism was clearly at a disadvantage, especially within the confines of the capital city of Angkor…[T]he lineages of influential Brahmans, often related to the leading aristocratic families, formed an essential part of the structure of the state at least from the time of Jayavarman II onwards.[58]

This admonition to monks in K.111 hints at a sensitive interface between monks and Brahmans:

> C35-6 Unless specially assigned, the Buddhist community should not attend [Brahmanical] sacrificial ceremonies. Those who go on their own account, even with good intentions, are guilty of an offence.

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[56] These are two of the four principal Vedic fire or 'homa' rights of kśānti (śānti), puṣṭi, vaśya (subduing), abhicāra (destruction) which are performed with different shaped hearths, facing a different direction at morning, noon, early evening and dusk. A common Buddhist version of the four, plus a fifth variant, are described in Chou Yi-liang (1945:287n16) 'Tantrism in China' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 Cambridge Mass.

[57] Saso, Michael (1991:35) *Homa rites and Mandala Meditation in Tendai Buddhism* Aditya Prakashan, Dehli

[58] Snellgrove, D (2001:54) *Khmer civilization and Angkor* Orchid press, Bangkok

Tucci makes the point that similarities between Tantric Śaivism and Vajrayāna stopped at blood sacrifice:

> The cult of the Tantric Buddhas and Bodhisattvas does not differ in any manner from that by which Hindu devotees honoured their deities, to the exclusion, of course, of the bloody sacrifice, which Buddhism, as well as Vishnuism, always condemns as a sinful practice.[59]

Both were part of the Khmer Tantric culture.

6. The temple art

Signs of the Yoga Tantras can also be found in the Khmer temple art from the late 10th century. The French called the art of the final quarter of the 10th century 'Khleang' ('shops'), after two elegant and somewhat mysterious sandstone halls erected opposite the Royal palace in Angkor. Khleang-style sculpture is rare, refined, exquisitely finished and predominantly Śaiva. The Musée Guimet has an exceptional group of Buddhist Khleang Buddhist pieces standing together that warrants particular attention. One is a large sandstone caitya from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, near Phnom Srok, an area where inscriptions and icons indicate the presence of an old Buddhist community living beside the road heading northwest from Angkor to Īśān, which eventually became the imperial highway to Lopburi and the sea. **[Plate 1 Kbal Sre Yeay Yin caitya Vajrapāni, Guimet]** I visited Phnom Srok in January 2005 and found two main sacred mounds in the village. One chunk of the pink-red sandstone used in the caityas lies on the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin mound, carved with the sculpted base of a Nāga Buddha. **[Plate 2 Phnom Srok back of Nāga Buddha query 01.05]** The thick walls of a tiny sanctuary remain embedded in a larger mound in the grounds of Srah Chik primary school. The teachers say the site is a sacred '*prasat*' occupied by local territorial *neak ta* who are propitiated with offerings to solve family problems and illness. They said the monks from Wàt Siset in the village used to hold Buddhist festivals there in former Lon Nol's time (early 1970s) but these were stopped by the Khmers Rouges and never revived.

[59] Tucci, Giuseppe (1949:219) *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* La Libreria dello Stato, Roma

The Kbal Sre Yeay Yin caitya has a remarkable place in the history of Khmer Buddhism for three reasons. First, the three-metre sandstone pillar bears the first known Khmer representation of the five cosmic Buddhas of the *Vajradhatu Mahāmaṇḍala,* first defined in the *STTS*. The Vajradhatu Pentad appears in a manner closely linked with the text of the Tantra. On the crowns of Vajrapāṇi's four heads (three visible), on one side of the caitya, are mounted the four directional Tathāgatas and Vairocana, all in the meditation mudrā. Such a headdress of Buddhas, unique in Khmer iconography, exists in different form in Nepal and Tibet where it is called the *pañcabuddhamukuta* ('the five Buddhas in the crown') and is tied on in standard initiation rituals and homa rites.[60] **[Plate 3 Tibetan homa ritual]** On the Phnom Srok caitya the special headdress seems to depict Vairocana's final warning to the still arrogant Śiva that 'Vajrapāṇi is the overlord of all the Tathāgatas.'[61]

> His eyebrows tremble with rage, with a frowning face and protruding fangs; he has a great krodha appearance. He holds the vajra, ankuśa-hook, sharp sword, a pāśa-noose and other āyudha.[62]

The caitya also bears one of the earliest known Khmer Buddhas seated on the coils of a giant Nāga, whose multiple heads rise above him in a hood. **[Plate 4 Phnom Srok Buddha]** This distinctive image was to become the supreme icon of Khmer Buddhism for three centuries – from these early caityas to the main icon in the central sanctuary of Cambodia's first Buddhist temple of state, the Bàyon.

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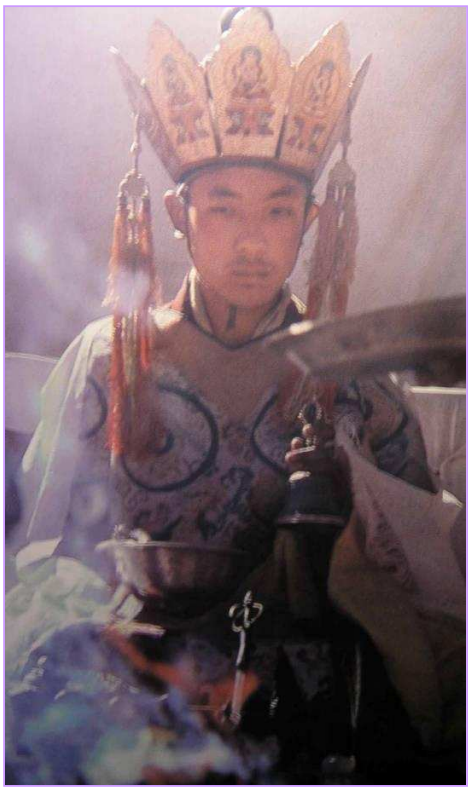
[60] De Mallmann describes Mahākāla, for example, as 'couronné des Cinq Buddha' (*pañcabuddhamukutinam)* Mallmann, Marie-Therese de (1986:238) *Introduction à l'iconographie du tânstrisme bouddique* Maisonneuve, Paris

[61] In what may be a similar symbolic representation, a Shingon Vajrasattva ritual '…is concerned with visualizing the Five Buddhas atop one's head, as a kind of variation on the uṣnīṣa. In this sense they would thus be a crown, insofar as they cover the whole crown of one's head.' (Astley-Kristensen, Ian 1991:50 *The Rishukyō: The Sino-Japanese Tantric Prajñāpāramitā in 150 Verses (Amoghavajra's Version)* Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring).

[62] *STTS* 18.882.369b-373b

Pl. 1. Kbal Sre Yeay, Phnom Srok caitya Vajrapāṇi, Musée Guimet

Pl. 2. Phnom Srok: back of Nāga Buddha?



Pl. 3. Tibetan homa ritual (after Snellgrove 1959:212)

Pl. 4. Phnom Srok Nāga Buddha

The meaning of the Nāga Buddha remains mysterious, but there is nothing in the material or epigraphic record to support a frequently proposed link with the Mucalinda legend of the later Theravāda.[63] It is conceivable that the Khmer Nāga Buddha is Vairocana. Wàt Sithor uses Vairocana's title 'Sarvavid' (the all-knowing) and makes him the head of an ancient and august lineage:

> B37-38 tatsthāne sthāpitā sthityai sarvvavidvaòśabhāsvataḥ
> prajñāpāramitā tāri jananī yena tāyinām //
>
> For the continuity (sthiti) and splendour (bhāsva) of the lineage (vamśa) of Sarvavid, he erected in this place the saviouress (?tāri) Prajñāpāramitā, the mother (jananī) of the protectors (tāyin, Buddhas).

[Coèdes again preferred a slightly less specific translation: Il érigea en cet endroit, pour perpetuer la lumière de la famille des Omniscients, une Prajñāpāramitā, mère des (Buddha) protecteurs].[64]

The name of the fifth Buddha of the Vajradhātu Pentad also appears in the name of a Khmer sage honoured in a similar inscribed and dated caitya from the nearby village of Thma Puok. Inscription K.255, dated 989 A.D., praises the sage 'called Padmavairocana, who was the sun for the lotus of the earth' in a play on Vairocana's root meaning of 'sun-disk'.[65] Śākyamuni is transformed into Vairocana in the *sarvadurgatiśodana-tantra,* which, like the *STTS*, features a maṇḍala with 37 deities.[66] One of Vairocana's mudrās is the meditational *dhyāna mudrā* with both hands in the lap, which is characteristic of the Khmer Nāga Buddha.[67] Further, although Vairocana's vehicle is usually

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[63] One scholar who resists the consensus view that the Khmer Nāga Buddha represented the Mucalinda story is Hiram Woodward. His view is that the Khmer icon 'should be interpreted not so much as Śākyamuni, sheltered by Muçalinda subsequent to the enlightenment, as a supreme Buddha in the embrace of an autochthonous spirit of the waters.' Woodward, H (1997) *The sacred sculpture of Thailand* Thames & Hudson, London. Despite the large number of art historians who refer to the Khmer Nāga Buddha as Śakyamuni sheltered from a storm by the serpent Mucalinda shortly after his enlightenment, no inscription or other evidence has been found to substantiate such a link. David Snellgrove also suggests separation: 'Although [Buddha Muçalinda is] well known in all other Buddhist traditions, only in Cambodia is this [Nāga Buddha] envisaged as representing the supreme manifestation of buddhahood.' Snellgrove, D. (2001:59) *Khmer civilization and Angkor* Orchid Press, Bangkok.
[64] Here again Coedès went for a slightly less specific translation.
[65] Coedès (1951:68) IC III K. 225.
[66] Huntington archive http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/studypages/internal/213slides/JCH/Lecture7/index07.html
[67] Vairocana is seen in three principal mudrās: the *bodhyagrī-mudrā* (with the index of the left hand seized by the fist of the right before the chest), the meditational mudrā and the dharmacakra mudrā. In the two great mandalas of Japan's Tantric Shingon and Tendai sects

a lion, he is sometimes given as a dragon or Nāga.[68] If the *STTS* was the major text of the Khmer Buddhist revival, it is reasonable to expect some representation of Vairocana as well as Vajrapāṇi.

6.1 Bàt Čum and its *yantra*

The Khmer Buddhist Renaissance was launched with the dedication (possibly officiated by Kīrtipaṇḍita, though the inscriptions do not say so[69]) in 953 A.D. of the modest triple sanctuary brick temple of Bàt Čum in the new capital – set 'in the middle of a multitude of charming palaces.'[70] **[Plate 5 Bàt Čum 02.04]** For anyone but a king to erect a temple to the gods in the capital is rare indeed in Cambodia. The 'eminent Buddhist' who did so is identified in the inscription as the royal minister, general, architect and poet Kavīndrārimathana. Śaiva King Rājendravarman was beholden to this exceptional Buddhist for several foreign military victories as well as for constructing the temples and palaces that welcomed the court back to Angkor after more than a decade's absence in Koḥ Ker. Bàt Čum's door-jamb inscriptions dedicate the foundation to the Buddha, Vajrapāṇi and Prajñāpāramitā (here named Divyadevi or celestial goddess). The design of the Bàt Čŭm towers and the decoration of its lintels are similar, on a much smaller scale, to that of Rājendravarman's first Brahmanical temple the East Mebon.

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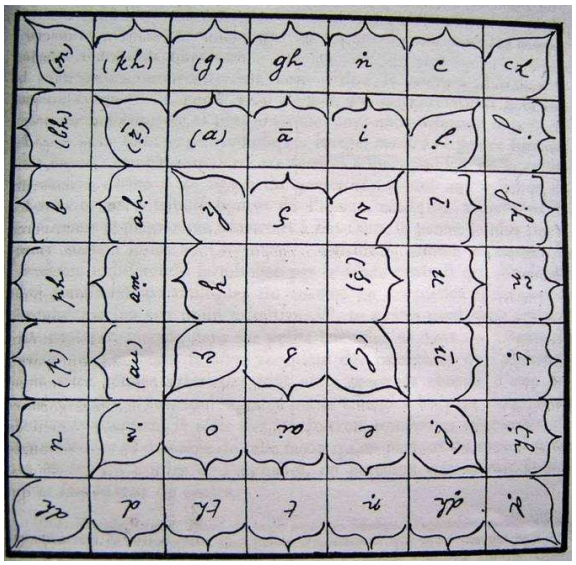
he appears in *bodhyagrī-mudrā* in the *vajradhatu* mandala and in meditational mudrā in the *garbhadhatu* mandala. Tajima, R (1959) 'Les deux grands mandalas et la doctrine de l'esoterisisme Shingon' in *Bulletin de la Maison Franco-Japonaise* VI Tokyo/Paris. Saso, Michael (1991) *Homa rites and Mandala Meditation in Tendai Buddhism* Aditya Prakashan, Dehli.

[68] Bhattacharyya, B. (1949:16) *Nispannayogāvalī of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākaragupta* Oriental Institute, Baroda. See also the Javanese horned lion/dragon (with lion's feet!) emerging from the throne under the late 10th century Mahāvairocana of the Nganjuk mandala in Leiden (Scheurleer, Pauline Lunsingh & Klokke, Marijke J. 1988:33 *Divine Bronze: ancient Indonesian bronzes from A.D. 600- 1600* E.J. Brill, Leiden).

[69] Kīrtipaṇḍita was certainly active from the opening years of Rājendravarman's reign because the Wàt Sithor inscription records him as erecting images in 947 at the village of Rmapattana (stanzas B47,8).

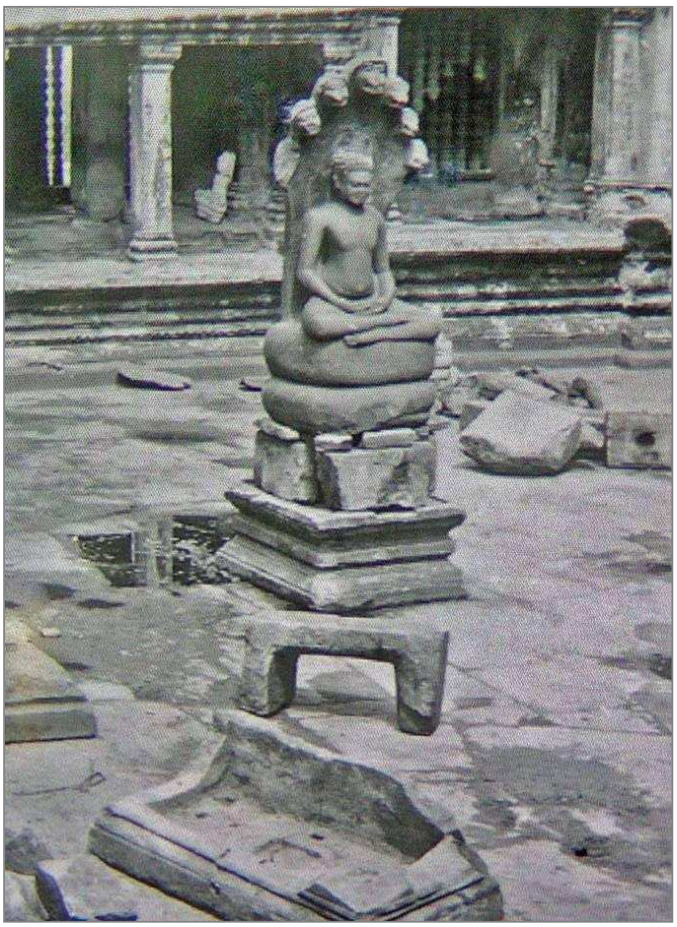
[70] 'In eight-mountains-arrows [875 saka = 953 AD), this eminent Buddhist [Kavīndrārimathana] erected here with devotion a great image of the Jina, a Diyadevī [Prajnāpāramitā] with a Śrīvajrapāṇi, in the middle of a multitude of charming palaces, as if this had been in his divine heart.' Stanza XIX of the Bàt Čum inscription in Coedès, G (1908:240) 'Les inscriptions de Čum (Cambodge)' *Journal Asiatique* 10

Pl. 5. Bàt Cum



Pl. 6. Bàt Cum yantra (after Coedès 1952:469)

Pl. 7. Kuk Trong crested Nāga Buddha
Roluos, Siemreap depot



Pl. 8. Nāga Buddha, G. Trouvé, in Angkor Wàt
tank (EFEO archive)

Another unique feature of Bàt Čŭm, apart from being dedicated to Buddhist deities, is that tiles from Tantric Buddhist *yantras*, or diagrams using the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet – the visual equivalent of mantras -- were excavated from the sanctuaries. One tile bears the incised image of a vajra.[71] Coedès reconstructed the probable configuration of the tiles, following the engraved marks of a lotus petal design, and concluded that the central eight petals (*astadala*) formed a 'lotus of the heart' (*hṛdaya-pundarīka*).[72] **[Plate 6 Bàt Cum Yantra Coedès'52:469]** In *kuṇḍalinī* yoga the *cakra* or nerve centre of the heart opens the adept to achieve conjunction with the divine nature of the Buddhas. The three Bàt Čŭm inscriptions all describe the Bàt Čum towers erected by Kavīndrārimathana as poor, material reflections of the lotus of his heart:

> Ayant réalisé l'union caractérisée par l'identité de son propre esprit avec la nature divine du Buddha, il a acquis la science des yogin.[73]

Kundalinī yoga, both Hindu and Buddhist, aims to connect the astral or subtle body of the yogin with the gods by inciting the serpent *kundalinī* to rise as a white fluid up through the four (Buddhist) or six (Hindu) nerve plexuses of the body which are conceived as *yantras* with Sanskrit characters. The implication is that Kavīndrārimathana was himself an accomplished yogin and his Buddhism Tantric.

The Buddha image of Bàt Čŭm is lost, but a number of statues found in Angkor and Roluos and attributed to the 10th century have Nāga heads similar to those of the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin caitya, with long, separated necks and head crests. **[Plate 7 Kuk Trong crested Nāga Buddha Siemreap depot 0205]** The largest of these was recovered from one of the tanks on the third level of Angkor Wàt. **[Plate 8 Nāga Buddha G. Trouvé in Angkor Wat tank]** Wibke Lobo sees the Nāga rising behind the Buddha as a rendering of the rising of *kundalinī* during yogic meditation. She suggests the three serpent coils invoke the three worlds (*dharmakāya, saṃboghakāya, nirmāṇakāya*) conquered by

[71] I am grateful to Christophe Pottier of the EFEO, Siemreap for bringing this to my attention.
[72] Coedès, G. (1952:474) 'Un *Yantra* récemment découvert à Angkor' *Journal Asiatique* Paris
[73] Coedès (1908:39)

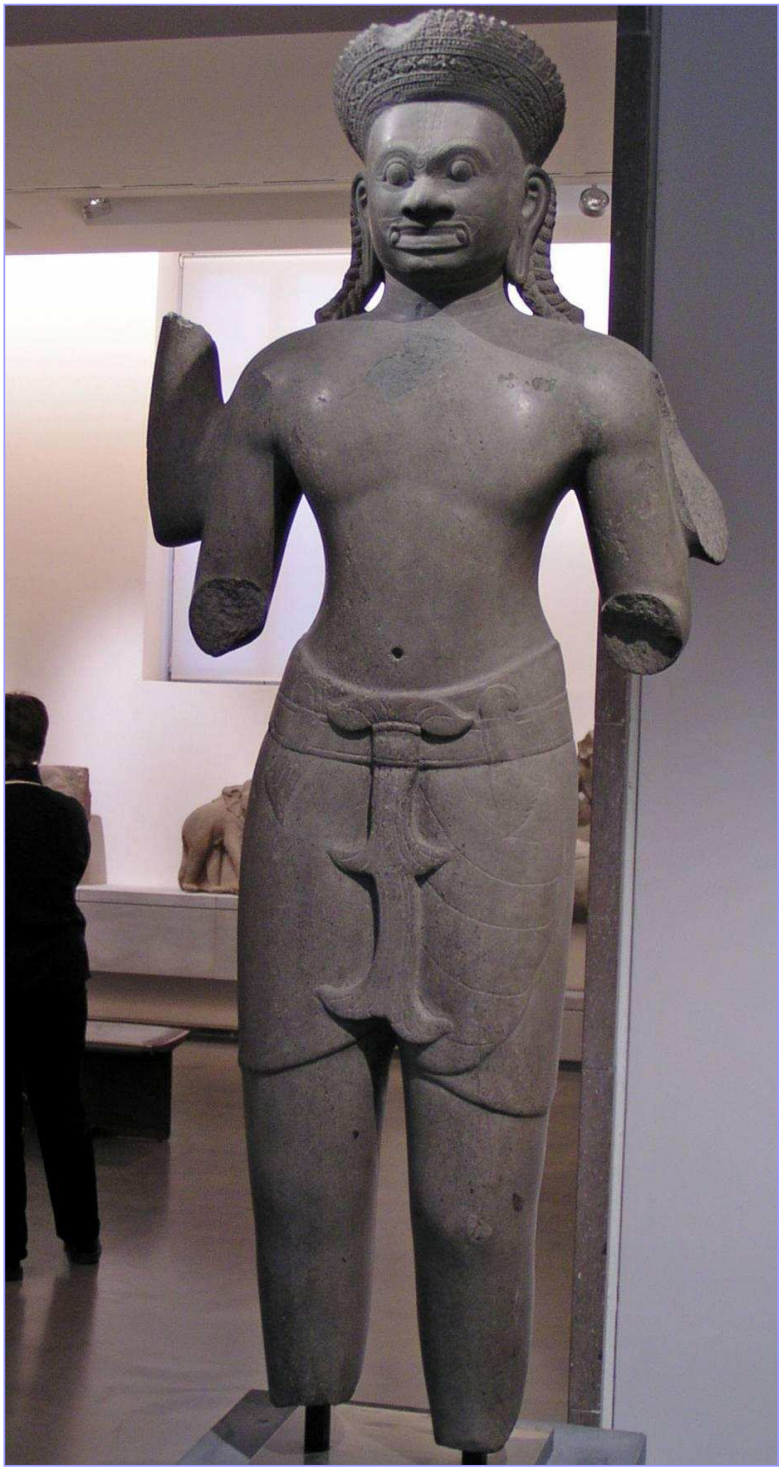
the Buddha as 'Trailokyavijaya.'[74] Lobo's interpretation may be supported by both the Bàt Čŭm *yantra* and the references to Kavīndrārimathana's 'lotus of the heart.' I also note the Nāgas that enthrone the Khmer Buddhas mostly have cakras inscribed on their throats.

The Vajrapāṇi of Bàt Čum is also lost, but the Musée Guimet has a Khleang-style image of Vajrapāṇi in Trailokyavijaya mode which may have resembled it. **[Plate 9 Guimet's Vajrapāṇi]** In the *STTS,* Vajrapāṇi takes centre stage and at times eclipses Vairocana. We know that Vajrapāṇi was long honoured in the Kompong Čam region, because Wàt Sithor says Kīrtipaṇḍita re-erected several collapsed icons of Vajrin (Vajrapāṇi) and Lokeśvara whose pedestals had crumbled:

> B39-40 He re-erected more than 10 images of Vajrin and Lokeśa, which were raised by Śrī Satyavarman on the eastern hill, whose pedestals were damaged.

The Vajrapāṇi from Tûol Či Tép (Bathéay District, Kompong Cam) is life-size and the quality of carving and the fine-grained stone suggest it is a product of the royal workshop. Although Śaivism remained in place as the state religion under Jayavarman V, Kīrtipaṇḍita's Buddhism was in the palace and in the royal workshop.

[74] Lobo, W. (1997:273) 'Buddha pare protégé par le nāga' in *Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer* eds. Jessop and Zephir, Réunion de Musées Nationaux, Paris



Pl. 9. Vajrapāṇi Musée Guimet

Chapter 2

The phases of Jayavarman VII's Buddhism

Buddhism was mostly a secondary religion in ancient Cambodia and it deserves more attention. The manner in which king Jayavarman VII eventually imposed it as the state creed, at the final highpoint of the ancient empire, is especially worthy of study. This chapter challenges the consensus view that Cambodian Buddhism, from the seventh century until its elevation to religion of state in the 12th century, followed the earlier mainstream, normative Mahāyāna. This view is seen as a misapprehension of ancient Khmer culture, for it can be shown that the Buddhism absorbed by the Khmers was predominantly Tantric throughout the ancient period. The consensus view fails to take cognizance of the profound reshaping of Buddhism in the Tantras that accommodated the political and military exigencies of building a Buddhist state – in Bihar, Tibet, China and many other countries – which, it is argued here, was the strategy of the Mahīdhara Buddhist Khmers in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The first trace of Buddhism in the Khmer-speaking zone is found in the Nan Qishu of China's southern Qi dynasty (479-501), which reports on an Indian Buddhist monk, Nāgasena, being sent by the king of the pre-Angkorian polity of 'Funan' to the Chinese court in 484 to seek military aid against Campā (Linyi). The annal says the monk attested the practice of Buddhism in Funan but said worship of Śiva was dominant.[75] As tribute he brought an ivory stūpa and a solid gold Nāgarāja ('king of the dragons'), which Boisselier thought may have been the Khmer palladium.[76] Śaivism was to remain the dominant creed of the Khmer kings until the 12th century, but the Buddhists survived, despite sporadic repression and limited patronage, and kept in touch with the evolution of Buddhism in India. Khmer temple inscriptions demonstrate the literacy of the Khmer elite and some monasteries were built, although these

[75] Sanderson, A. (2004:402) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers; Part I' *BEFEO* Paris
[76] Boisselier, J. (1997:292) 'Le Nāgarāja de Mi Son et les debuts de l'hinduisation du Campa' *Studies & reflections on Asian art history and archaeology: essays in honour of H.S.H. Professor Subhadradis Diskul* Bangkok

had limited independence and were all royal foundations. Khmer state Śaivism manifested itself in large, magnificently carved stone temples surrounded by moats. These dazzling but earthly palaces of the gods contained chambers for fire rites, buildings for priestly vestments and probably libraries, and little other space for anything but the rituals the court Brahmans conducted exclusively for the royal house. The Khmers adopted some elements of the Brahmanical class system but it was a flexible application and the elitist state religion only directly affected the court and the land-owning aristocracy. [77] Outside the political class the Khmer adaptation of Indic cosmological conceptions hardly impacted the ancestral beliefs of the people, who grew rice and fished with their local gods, as they do today, while providing periodic corvée labour for royal construction projects or military campaigns. But the soteriology of Buddhism entailed other, more popular ambitions. Perhaps this contributed to the sudden spurts of growth and drastic suppression that Buddhism underwent, before it definitively put down popular roots, alongside those of the ancestral religion, after Jayavarman VII instituted it as his regal creed in 1181. Jayavarman appears to have introduced the new state religion in careful phases. The reasons for this unusual, phased approach should perhaps be sought in the historical context of the uneven reception of Buddhism across Asia in the Middle Ages, and in the dynamics of the Khmer regime, where a major religious shift would threaten the vested interests of the court Brahmans and challenge the king's Brahmanical rivals. Jayavarman came to power through battle. Usurpation in Cambodia, as in most states with a harem court and many claimants to the throne, had long been a common mode of regime change. His move to assert his own creed as supreme over the Śaivism of the Brahmanical aristocracy entailed a blend of conviction, contingency and adventurism. He inherited a mix of religious

[77] The classes (*varṇas*) were well enough established for Jayavarman VII to feel obliged to declare in his hospital stelae that 'the four classes are treated here' (*cikitsyā atra catvāro varṇā*) Finot (1903:25). But crossing the class divides was common. Sanderson comments: 'As for caste, adherence to which is so central an element of brahmanical orthopraxy in India, our [Khmer] sources use its language to distinguish between brahmins and the 'kṣatriya' rulers they served; but marriage between brahmin men and women of the Khmer royal families was common, as it was in the neighbouring principalities of the Chams, kings of both peoples boasting of brahmin-kṣatriya descent; and most of the rest of society is referred to without caste-differentiation as the 'common people' (*sāmāyajanah, sāmāyāh*). Sanderson, A. (2004:349-462) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers'; Part I *BEFEO* Paris

traditions and sought a balance of power among them that gave him ultimate control. Syncretism should be seen in this context as an instrument of realpolitik rather than any spirit of ecumenism, as Davidson observes in feudal India:

> …the patronage of many kings towards multiple religious traditions could be viewed in part as an attempt to keep them all beholden to the ruler – and divided from one another – rather than a dedicated catholicity among Indian monarchs.[78]

The prudence of Jayavarman's phased approach to imposing the new religious underpinning of the state appears to have been warranted some decades after his death when his temples were desecrated and converted to Śaivism.

The Buddhists' lack of favour at court before Jayavarman's reign kept their profile low and left only a faint trace of their cult in the material record. This record is itself severely limited and the only surviving written records are dedication stelae and engravings on temple walls. Before exploring Jayavarman's gradual public disclosure of his creed, this chapter pulls together the known strands of evidence of the long and uneven history of Buddhism in Cambodia and reaches a new evaluation of it.

1. Seventh century

Khmer speakers' earliest experience of Buddhism came probably in the first centuries of the first millennium A.D. From the first icons we can say it was probably linked to the Hīnayāna tradition of the Mon-Khmers, who were grouped in the nebulous neighbouring pre-Thai polity we now call Dvāravatī. A fifth or sixth century head of a Buddha, in Gupta Style but with distinctly Khmer characteristics, found in the same region, implies the first local implantation of the Indic faith. By the end of the sixth century, emissaries from China's Sui dynasty (589-618) noted that Buddhism was being practised alongside a local religion in the state they then identified as Zhen-la.[79] one

[78] Davidson 2002:192

[79] The first traces of Buddhism in Cambodia in Chinese annals are from the (pre-Tang) Sui dynasty (589-618) (*Sui Shi* j.82) and coincide with the first Chinese use of Zhen-la and Jia bo for Cambodia. 'Près de la capitale est une mausolée Jia bo po (ou Kia-po-p'o) qui a la forme d'une butte. Sur son sommet se trouve un temple toujours gardé par cinq mille soldats.' Coedès suggested this was Wat Phu. The *Sui Shi* mentions Buddhist funeral rites conducted

icon from this cult is the seventh century Buddha from Tuol Praḥ Theat, Kompong Speu, now in the Musée Guimet, which has the Pāli creed 'ye dhamma…' inscribed (K.820) on his shoulder. The earliest series of standing Buddhas, some in double vitarka mudrā, convey a simple, compassionate charge of feeling. **[Plate 10 Buddha of Tuol reah Theat, Guimet]** Nancy Dowling has just credibly dated the icons to 610-65.[80] The Buddhas come mostly from the region around the old Funanese centre of Angkor Borei in southern Zhen-la, west of the Mekong, but similar wooden icons have been found further south in the Mekong Delta.

We also find irrefutable evidence from Zhen-la for the presence of Mahāyāna. This tradition, descended from the Mahāsamghika group of early Buddhists, is attested in a large and impressive image of the crowned Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara unearthed at Tan Long in Rach Gia on the coast of what is now Vietnam. **[Plate 11 Prei Kmeng Avalokiteśvara]** Mirielle Bénisti dates the Musée Guimet's Bodhisattva to 650-720 from a band of alternating round and rectangular jewel settings at the base of the crown, which appears on temple colonettes in these years.[81] The size, sculptural cohesion and expressive tension of this exceptional icon owe something to the sixth century Khmer tradition for sculpting huge 'Phnom Da' style Viṣṇus. **[Plate 12 C6-7 Phnom Da 8-armed Viṣṇu]** Another fine, smaller, stone Avalokiteśvara was also found in the Delta and is now in the Saigon History Museum. **[Plate 13 C7-8 Avalokiteśvara Tra Vinh, Ho Chi Minh Museum]** Again the sculpting suggests a royal workshop skilled in carving Viṣṇus. The early Khmer Buddhas are mostly from the region around the old Funanese centre of Angkor Borei. These icons are of a quality and on a scale normally associated with a ruling court, but the material record yields little further information on the status of this Buddhist community. We do know however, from a Chinese

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at Y-chö-na (Iśanapura). Hoshino, Tatsuo (1986:24-5) *Pour une histoire médiévale du moyen Mékong* Editions Duang Kamol, Bangkok

[80] Nancy Dowling (2000:122-55) 'New light on early Cambodian Buddhism' in *The Journal of the Siam Society* vol. 88.

[81] Mirielle Bénisti (1969:109) 'Recherches sur le premier art khmer:«la bande a chatons», critère chronologique?' *Arts asiatiques* XX.
Jean Boisselier reached a similar date by analysing the centre-folded dhoti. Jean Boisselier (1957:272) 'A propos d'un bronze cham inédit d'Avalokiteçvara' *Arts asiatiques* IV

record, that they had an international outlook, perhaps not unlike the Chinese Buddhist communities that had been sending pilgrims to India for some centuries in search of Buddhist texts and icons.

1.1 Direct influence from India

In the seventh century, pre-Angkorian Cambodia was exposed to the early propagation of what was to become the third Buddhist vehicle, the nondual Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism, which was to eventually spread from Bihar through Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan and much of Southeast Asia. Lin Li-Kouang traces to the period between 650 and 750 the evolution of exoteric Buddhist Tantrism out of secret monastery rituals into the mature, politicised, Yoga class of Tantras.[82] He does this by comparing Punyodaya's 663 translation of the *astamandalaka-sūtra* (T.486), containing instructions on forming the mandala of eight Bodhisattvas, and a later version which was made in *ca* 770 by Amoghavajra, the most eminent Tantric Buddhist guru of the T'ang court.[83] Li-Kouang holds that the earlier translation 'atteste un stade du tantrisme bouddhique antérieur aux grands ouvrages classiques traduits par Amoghavajra et Śubhakarasiṃha.' Davidson narrows the definitive emergence of Vajrayāna to the second half of the seventh century from such facts as the ca 630 A.D. Gilgit manuscript of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, Atikūṭa's 653-4 composition of the *Dhāranīsaṃgraha* and the Ch'an monk Wu-hsing's 680 observation of the recent popularity of Vajrayāna while he was in India.[84]

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[82] Williams is in agreement with Lin Li-Kouang's chronology, noting that with the appearance of 'Vajrayāna' in the late seventh century 'Vajrayāna Buddhism has the speedy attainment of Buddhahood as a goal [while] this is not the case for Tantric Buddhism overall, which had no such goal for perhaps its first four hundred years.' Williams (2000:196). Snellgrove believes that the eighth century on,' with Vajrapāṇi and the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* moving to the fore 'one may correctly speak of Vajrayāna as distinct in many ways from the Mahāyāna.' Snellgrove, D. (1987B:142) 'Celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas' *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 3 Ed. Mircea Eliade Macmillan, New York

[83] Lin Li-Kouang (1935:83-100) 'Punyodaya (N'ati), un propagateur du Tantrisme en Chine et au Cambodge à l'époque de Hsüan-Tsang' *Journal Asiatique* Juillet-Septembre 1935. Li-Kouang says that according to the Chinese annals Punyodaya brought several hundred texts to the Chinese capital Chang-ngan, which included Vinayas, Sūtras, and Śastras of both the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. He was largely thwarted in his mission to translate them into Chinese by Hsüan Tsang, who removed the texts to a far off monastery while Punyodaya was absent on his imperial mission to collect medicinal herbs in Zhen-la.

[84] Davidson (2002:118)

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Pl. 10. Buddha of Tuol Reah Theat, Musée Guimet

Pl. 11. Prei Khmeng style Avalokiteśvara, Musée Guimet

Pl. 12. Eight-armed Viṣṇu Hari Kambujendra, Phnom Penh Museum (after Jessop 1997:fig.1)

Pl. 13. Tra Vinh Avalokiteśvara, Ho Chi Minh Museum

Zhen-la's encounter with the new Buddhist vehicle belongs to exactly this period and was early indeed. The evidence for this is found in the official T'ang dynasty biography of Punyodaya, one of the first Indian Tantric masters recorded as travelling abroad. Shortly after arriving in the T'ang capital and translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese, Punyodaya was sent on an imperial mission to Zhen-la. He was a contemporary and a rival of the more conservative but high profile Yogācārin Chinese pilgrim and translator Hsüan-tsang. Like Amoghavajra a century later, Punyodaya was sent on a Chinese imperial mission to gather Tantras.[85] He also studied, as Amoghavajra did, in the Tantric institutions of Sri Lanka, then a major centre of the new Buddhim.[86] Possibly at the instigation of Hsüan-Tsang, who seems to have taken the opportunity to appropriate Punyodaya's cart loads of imported Sanskrit manuscripts, Punyodaya was sent to Zhen-la in the mid-seventh century. His mission there was to gather rare medicinal herbs. According to the official biography, he was well received by local rulers and stayed for four years and greatly strengthened Buddhism. 'When he arrived in the Southern Seas, the kings paid homage to him and built religious foundations especially for him.' His teachings and skills made such an impact that after he returned to China a Zhen-la delegation of Buddhist elders travelled to the T'ang capital in 663 to plead for his return. The emperor permitted his departure by decree and the Indian Tantric master spent the rest of his days in Zhen-la.[87] With the expert help of Punyodaya, the ancient Khmers thus gained the access they sought to the evolution of Tantric Buddhism in the Ganges valley and Sri Lanka. Seeing this period through a Chinese official text about an Indian sage naturally leaves us dependent on evidence skewed by looking at the Khmers from the outside. To counter this bias, we should perhaps assume, for example, in the absence of any independent source, that the Khmers were already experts in medicinal herbs and that this had come to the notice of the Chinese, probably via trade. Why otherwise would they send Punyodaya to Zhen-la? The high level of enterprise and international awareness of the

[85] Leon Wieger (1922:536) *Histoire des croyances religieuses et des opinions philosophiques en Chine* Beijing
[86] Lin Li-Kouang (1935:83)
[87] Lin Li-Kouang (1935:89).

Khmer group that journeyed to China to petition for the sage's return cannot be doubted. This is the first historical account we have of Khmers travelling abroad. On the basis of this event alone, we might assume that this early experience of Tantric Buddhism was the result of a Khmer initiative. It is the first record we have of the Khmer Buddhists' enterprise and international outlook, which keep them in contact with the innovations of the Buddhists of India throughout the centuries that followed.

The presence of Punyodaya may be attested in a small (12cm) unpublished bronze of Vajrasattva that I was recently allowed to photograph (for the first time?) at the Phnom Penh National Museum. **[Plate 14 Barong Lovea Em, Kandal Vajrasattva]** This icon from Barong Lovea Em in modern Kandal province is a seated Buddha in the unmistakable *mudrā* of Vajrasattva with a *vajra* poised against his chest on the middle finger of his right hand and a *ghantā* on his left thigh. Vajrasattva's diaphanous upper robe ends in delicate turns at the wrist, above fine hands. The *uṣnīṣa* is almost as high as a Phnom Da Viṣṇu's mitre and has similar shape and overall proportions as the Avalokiteśvara's crown with protruding Amitābha. The Khmer casting is technically accomplished, picking out the details of the jewellery, the delicate hands and the tiny hair curls. The joined eyebrows, snub nose, broad lips and powerful neck of the bronze Vajrasattva are all found in 6th and 7th century Dvāravatī Buddhas. It is surprising to find an icon of Vajrasattva as early as the late seventh century[88], but it is not alone -- a seventh century stone relief in the Sarnath Museum, in an almost identical posture, is one of the earliest known Indian icon of this supreme Buddha. **[Plate 15 Vajrasattva C7 Sarnath Museum]** With a Tantric Indian master like Punyodaya resident, a rapid cultural transmission from India is a possibility. The Sarnath and Zhen-la icons also share the innovation of showing the Vajradhātu Pentad of Buddhas in the hair of Vajrasattva -- two in front (Vairocana in dharmacakra mudrā set above Akṣobhya in *bhumisparśa mudrā*), one on each side and one behind. The regal dress of the Khmer figure is unusual with jewelled epaulettes, two thin necklaces looping below the navel and with earrings resting on the collar bone. Some of these details are however reminiscent of the large stone 'Prei Kmeng'[89] style Avalokiteśvara from Rach Gia. This Avalokiteśvara, whose size and quality of carving suggests the patronage of a court, also has its earrings resting on the collar-bone. Another unusual feature of both figures are the four large oval medallions, unknown elsewhere in Cambodia, that appear beside the high *usnīsa* of the Lovea Em Buddha and in the Tan Long Avalokiteśvara's crown. The diadem of the Rach Gia Bodhisattva may derive from either Chinese models of the Qi dynasty (550-77) or from the crowns on the first fifth century Mathura icons of Viṣṇu Viśvapūra. In both the Avalokiteśvara and Vajrasattva images – although Vajrasattva is sitting – there is a very slight *tribhanga*. As this dating of the Vajrasattva icon to the

[88] The museum label says 'Funan 5th-6th century' but officials were unable to account for this.
[89] Pierre Dupont (1952:19) 'La statuaire préangkorienne' *Arts asiatiques* XV

seventh century would make it the the earliest Khmer icon that is clearly Tantric, it seems more appropriate to link it to the years of Punyodaya's influence in the country in the mid-to-late seventh century. And indeed the Wàt Tuol Chan Buddha head dated about 650 has facial traits that are close to those of the Lovea Em bronze: both have joined swallow-wing eyebrows, clearly sculpted tear ducts around the eyes, a slight smile in the curving upper lip, a strong jaw and powerful neck. **[Plate 16 Wàt Tuol Chan 650]**

Interestingly, it is in the second half of the seventh century that the first Tantric Buddhist inscription appears in Śrīvijaya (and indeed all Southeast Asia)[90] and it appears to be emphasising the supreme role of Vajrasattva. The Talang Tuwo inscription dated 684 and found five km west of Palembang, in which a king named Jayanāśa urges his subjects to hold firm opinions and have 'the body of diamond of the great being…and achieve the supreme wisdom of perfect enlightenment' (*mahāsattva vajraśarīra …anuttarābhisamyaksaṃbodhi*).[91] Coedès comments:

> This transports us fully into Tantrism. The vajrakāya is an essential attribute of Vajrasattva, the supreme and transcendent Buddha of the Tantric schools, and the kāyavākcittavajrasādhana ('of the diamond body, voice and thought') appears to M. de La Vallee Poussin (1898:146 *Bouddhisme, Etudes et matériaux*, London) 'as the capital rite of Tantric Buddhism.'

The Buddhists of Zhen-la were apparently engaged in the Tantrism that had reached Sri Lanka and was then entering Sumatra and T'ang China.

However, Punyodaya's work to establish early Tantric Buddhism in Zhen-la in the mid-seventh century suffered a rapid reversal. By the time Yijing travelled through just before the turn of the century, he was told that Buddhism had

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[90] In 1930 Coedes summed up the early epigraphic evidence of the arrival of the Mahāyāna as follows: 'L'inscription de Talang Tuwo est actuellement le plus ancien témoinage daté concernant l'existence du Mahāyāna en Indonésie, et même en Indochine. A Java, il n'est pas attesté avant 778, date de l'inscription de Kalasan. Au Cambodge, la première mention datée du bouddhisme se trouve dans une inscription de Vat Prei Vār de 665 (K 49) qui parle seulement de deux *bhiksu*. Celles de Bo Ika (K400) et de Hin Khon (K388), peut-être plus anciennes, semblent également bouddhiques, mais n'appartiennent pas nécessairement au Mahāyāna. La belle statue d'Avalokiteçvara, d'art khmèr préangkoréen et provenant de Rach-giá n'est pas datée, pas plus que l'inscription d'Ampil Rolum (K163) qui relate des donations d'esclaves au Buddha (*Çāstar*), à Maitreya et à Avalokitesçvara. Ce n'est qu'en 791, que nous avons dans l'inscription de Prasat Ta Kam (K244) un témoignage daté du culte d'Avalokiteçvara. Au Champa l'apparition du Mahāyāna est encore plus tardive et nous ne possédons è cet égard aucun document certain avant la charte de fondation du monastère de Đông-dừờng en 873 (C66).' G. Coedès (1930:40) 'Les inscriptions malaises de Çrīvijaya' *BEFEO* 30

[91] G. Coedès (1930:40)

flourished but had been suppressed by 'a wicked king'.[92] As the reigning Śaiva king of Zhen-la in this period was Jayavarman I (r.657-90+: K95 v.5), who married a daughter to an Indian Brahmin Agastya of Aryadeśa,[93] it is generally assumed that he was responsible. The suppression seems to have been thorough, for virtually no trace of Buddhism has been found from eighth century Zhen-la. The Buddhists no doubt survived, but not with the wealth or status required to erect durable monuments. Yet the Khmer Buddhists' neighbours in Īśān, today's northeast Thailand, were in this period producing some of the finest Buddhist bronzes ever created. We can only assume that at this period the Mon-Khmers of Īśān, whose culture we only know from their magnificent bronze Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, were fully independent of the rapidly growing young Khmer Śaiva state in Kulen-Angkor.

[92] Yijing reported that Buddhism had entered the territory after Hinduism and had flourished alongside it until the monks were expelled or killed by 'a wicked king'. Yijing (1896:12) trans. J Takakusu *A record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)* Clarendon, Oxford. Nancy Dowling concludes this king was Jayavarman I (r. 657-681) Dowling, Nancy (2000:129) 'New light on early Cambodian Buddhism' in *The Journal of the Siam Society* vol.88 Bangkok.
[93] Sanderson (2005:401)

Pl. 14. Vajrasattva, Barong Lovea Em, Kandal, Phnom Penh Museum

Pl. 15. Vajrasattva, Sarnath Museum (after Sharma 2004:54)

Pl. 17. Prakhon Chai Maitreya, Buriram, Rockerfeller collection (after Jessop 1997:cat.12)

Pl. 16. Buddha of Wàt Tuol Chan 650 A.D. (after Dowling *JSS* 2000)

2. Eighth century

Outside Zhen-la, the eighth century saw Vajrayāna extend across East and Southeast Asia from the northern Indian monasteries. George Coedès indeed calls the arrival of Vajrayāna on the world stage the dominant fact of the eighth century.[94] The advent of the Pāla dynasty in Bengal in mid-century had an exceptional impact, and, through the possibly connected Śailendras (c.750-850), there was a surge of Tantric Buddhist temple building in Java and the Malay Peninsula (Chaiya).[95] Sri Lanka was at the height of its Vajrayānist period when the heterodox Abhayagiri monastery became rich and powerful as the rival and usually dominant orthodox Mahāvihāra monastery for a time all but disappeared.[96]

The great Indian translator Amoghavajra narrowly survived shipwreck in 719 as he accompanied Nālandā's former abbot Vajrabodhi (670-741)[97] to China to translate the tantras into Chinese for the T'ang emperor.[98] After Vajrabodhi's death in 741, Amoghavajra returned on an imperial mission to Sri Lanka to fulfil his master's dying wish that he bring to China the

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[94] Coedès, G (1968:96) *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia* trans. S Dowling University of Hawaii

[95] Chaiya in the 8th century flourished on the maritime trade network taxed and policed by a federation of Śrīvijayan ports. Three brick temples were erected there by the King of Śrīvijaya, according to the 'Ligor' inscription of 775 AD. Mahāyāna Buddhist masterpiece bronzes were excavated at Chaiya. As there was no prior bronze-casting tradition on this isthmus tract, the bronzes may have been imported from Java, where one very similar Bodhisattva has been found from this period.

[96] According to the Ratu Baka inscription in Java of 792-3 AD the Abhayagiri consecrated a monastery in Java for training Sinhala monks. This followed a dispute over Vinaya rules about frequenting lay families that led Sanghamitta of Abayagiri to seek king Sanghamitta's withdrawal of royal patronage from the rival Mahāvihāra monastery. The Mahāvamsa chronicle (33.95), which projects the island's dominant Theravāda view on history, records: 'It is noteworthy that no accusation of heretical doctrine was professed. Soon it became impossible for the monks to continue to live in the Mahāvihāra, and after it had been deserted for nine years, its building material was removed to enrich the Abhayagiri-vihāra.' Van Zeyst adds: 'Some 364 colleges and temples were destroyed and the spoils gathered to enrich the home of heresy, the Abhayagiri, which, now splendid in ornaments and rich in possessions, stood pre-eminent over all as the greatest and wealthiest monastery in Lanka.' (Chandra, L. 1986:39 'Cultural contacts of Indonesia and Śrī Lanka in the 8th century and their bearing on Barabudur' *Journal of the Asiatic Society* vol.XXVIII.1

[97] Vajrabodhi left Nālandā to study in south India for seven years at the feet of the Tantric master Nāgabodhi (Tajima 1936:22).

[98] In 719 A.D. he spent 5 months in Java, waiting for the monsoon to turn to take him to China, and perhaps lodging at the Abhayagiri-oriented foundation established near Borobudur. He was received with great honour by the king and met a 14-year old Sri Lankan monk (Jnāngarbha?), who took the name Amoghavajra and who was to remain at his side as his pupil until his death in 741 A.D. in the most fruitful translation duo known in Buddhist history.

sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahanamamahayanasūtra (STTS) and other large works they had been forced to throw overboard in the earlier storm. On his return to China the emperor Hiuan-tsong had an altar erected in his palace where he received the Tantric consecration (abhiṣeka). 'In consequence all classes of society adopted the cult. This was the most prosperous era of Esoteric Buddhism in China.'[99] For a time it replaced Taoism at court.

At the end of the eighth century, with Tantric Buddhism still at its height in China, under the guidance of Amoghavajra's pupil Houei-kouo, Kōbō Daishi (774-835) arrived from Japan for two years instruction by this master before returning in 806 to found the Shingon sect that held great sway at court and that still prospers today. The two great texts of Shingon Buddhism are the *Dainichikyō* (*Mahāvairocana-sūtra*) and the *Kongōchōgyo* or *STTS,* which had been translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra. Reviewing the prominence achieved by the Tantric Buddhists in the T'ang court under the Tai-tsung emperor (762-779) and of the Shingon sect in Japan, Ronald Davidson concludes:

> There appears no exception to the rule that, when the Mantrayāna becomes culturally important outside India, it is principally through the agency of official patronage, either aristocratic or imperial.[100]

In Cambodia the rule also held because its active and advanced Buddhists had to await the Mahīdhara seizure of power and the patronage of Jayavarman VI and Jayavarman VII.

Several of these Tantric Buddhist communities suffered setbacks like that reported by Yijing in seventh century Cambodia. In eighth century Tibet, for example, the Lhasa debate decided in favour of importing Tantric Buddhism from India rather than China, after Kamalaśila won the battle of arguments at court with Chinese sage Mahāyāna Hoshang. Buddhism then declined before the second, successful diffusion of into Tibet the 10th century. Other setbacks include the sudden departure of the Śailendras from Java, the closure of

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[99] Tajima, R (1936:23) *Étude sur le Mahavairocan-sūtra (Dainichikyō)* Librarie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Paris
[100] Davidson (2002:115)

4,000 monasteries in ninth century China and the purging of Mahāyāna from Sri Lanka and Burma.

Closer to Zhen-la in the eighth and ninth centuries, indeed next door in Īśān, a hoard of 300 superbly modelled and cast Bodhisattvas found recently at Prakhon Chai attests to a regal cult of Bodhisattvayāna, perhaps in the shadowy state of 'Śrī Canāśā' that is sporadically mentioned in inscriptions. **[Plate 17 Prakhon Chai C8 Maitreya Buriram]** Hoshino thinks there could have been an overland link between this Mon-Khmer community of Īśān (and Siemreap in northwest Cambodia where the first inscription to the erection of a Bodhisattva is dated 791 A.D.: Finot, M.L. (1925:235) 'Lokeśvara en Indochine' *Etudes asiatiques*) and the *Bodhisattvayāna* developing at this time in Yunnan during the Nan Zhao kingdom. Nothing more is yet known of this civilisation that suddenly re-entered our history with the discovery of a hoard of 300 buried bronze masterpieces.

In southern Thailand at Chaiya (short for Siwichaiya = Śrīvijaya) another magnificent series of bronze Bodhisattvas appears that seems closely related to images from Tekaran, Wonogiri, Central Java[101] – suggesting these were the northern and southern extremes of the Śailendra territories now known under the name Śrīvijaya.

In pre-Angkorian Cambodia, the historical record of the eighth century is thin and Buddhism has all but disappeared from it. Jayavarman II left no inscriptions but is credited by succeeding kings with founding Cambodia and asserting its independence in a Tantric Śaiva '*devarāja'* cult in 802. For the next 150 years the remnant Khmer Buddhist community left almost no sign of its existence.[102] The Vedantic theologian Śaṇkara was travelling throughout

[101] Fontein, J. (1990 :211) *The sculpture of Indonesia* National Gallery of Art, Washington, Abrams New York

[102] Pierre Dupont comments: 'La première partie de l'époque angkorienne, qui débute en 802, est marquée par le déclin, voire la disparition du bouddhisme. Tout au plus le roi Yoçovarman (889-900) réglemente-t-il le fonctionnement d'un couvent dans la région d'Angkor...Nous n'avons aucune idée de ce que pouvaient être en ce temps les images du Buddha. C'est un demi-siècle plus tard que le bouddhisme prend in développement nouveau, sous les rois Rājendravarman (944-968) et Jayavarman V (968-1001).' 'Les Buddha sur Nāga dans l'art khmer' (1950:39) in *Artibus Asiae* 13

India preaching against Buddhism at this time and his influence may have been felt in Cambodia, for Śivasoma, a cousin of Jayavarman II, studied the *śāstras* under him before becoming chief minister to Indravarman I.[103] But when the Khmers first moved to the Angkor region around the Bakheng hill and named their city Yaśodharapura after king Yaśovarman I, the survival of a Mahāyāna community is attested in a small inscribed (K.1154) early 10th century relief carved with the image of a Bodhisattva, in a distinctively Bakheng-style sampot, which also cites Avalokiteśvara's mantra *'oṃ maṇipadme hūm'*.[104]

Knowledge of Buddhist events in the outside world – notably the rapid spread of Vajrayāna -- would have reached Cambodia primarily along its trade corridor from the Indian Ocean, along the pre-Thai peninsula. The trade route passed through Śrī Canāśā and a string of linked Mahāyāna communities which created very distinct icons of Buddhas mounted on giant Nāgas. The Khmer Buddhist stronghold, from the epigraphic record, was in northwest Cambodia and Īśān, home territory of the future Mahīdhara dynasty.

3. Ninth century

In the ninth century Īśān and the pre-Thai peninsular communities produced a series of bronze Tantric deities seated on large lotus thrones with round moon-disk backs. The sculpting and the execution of the casting show that the technology of the Prakhon Chai Bodhisattvas was conserved from some decades earlier. Similar icons were produced in Pāla Bengal and Java at this time and Hiram Woodward calls the ninth century Īśān icons 'the Bengali-influenced bronzes'.[105] They were found at Lopburi, Nakhon Ratchasima, Maha Sarakham (Khon Kaen) in the northeast and at Chaiya in the peninsula – all along the external trade route to Cambodia. The Buddhas sit in *vajrasana* with their ankles crossed on their thighs. One is a heavily adorned 4-faced, 6-armed Vajradhara in prajñā-embrace mudrā; one is Vairocana in

[103] Briggs, L.P. (1951B:234) 'The syncretism of religions in Southeast Asia, especially in the Khmer empire' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 71, Yale University Press, New Haven Connecticut
[104] Saveros, P. (2001:129) 'Une statue de la collection Griswold K.1154' *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge* II & III EFEO, Paris
[105] Ref?

dharmacakra mudrā and a third, peninsular icon represents Cundā, the consort of the supreme Buddha Vajrasattva. All sit beneath similar garlanded umbrellas over a circular, moon-disk throne-back, which is reminiscent of Javanese Buddha thrones. The thrones have similar, high, double lotus seats mounted on animals with a rounded front drape. These bronzes appear to be of local manufacture but they seem close to icons from the Tantric Buddhism then found in both Bengal and Java.

In Cambodia, a ninth century Buddhist patron and guru named Śrī Satyavarman is identified in two Tantric inscriptions as the creator of a foundation at Sak Bāk village near Phimai, and one at Wàt Sithor temple southeast of Angkor. This pioneering Buddhist appears to have been active in the ninth century in the eastern and western wings of the area dominated by the Buddhist 'Mahīdhara' families, which eventually came to power in 1080 A.D. through the usurpation of Jayavarman VI. The dynasty retained power until the death of Jayavarman VII's son Indravarman II in 1243 A.D.

4. 10th century

The Khmer Buddhists received a major boost in the 10th century at the Renaissance-style court of king Rājendravarman. He permitted the building of a Buddhist shrine when he began reconstructing the capital in 953 A.D., after 16 years of neglect, during which his predecessor Jayavarman IV ruled from Koḥ Ker. Rājendravarman's syncretic court contained communities of Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas and Buddhists.[106]

Woody March 2011 paper on 10th century Khmer Buddhism:
One of the historically most important tenth-century Buddhist inscriptions is that of Prasat Beng Vien (K. 872), set up in 946 or after by King Rājendravarman, who came to the throne in 944. Rājendravarman's main temples were all Śaiva, yet his East Mebon inscription (952 CE) declares that he understood Buddhist doctrine (K. 528, st. 172).25 In the Beng Vien inscription he is said to have conquered Rāmaṇya (Mon land, i. e., Dvāravatī) and Champa (K. 872, st. 7), and it is possible that Buddhist monks or adepts were brought to the capital.26 Beng Vien stands about 32 kms southeast of Angkor, and other Buddhist temples were established nearby.

[106] Rājendravarman is not only credited with restoring the capital and restructuring the state into provinces he is referred in inscription K.806 v.143 as being expert in the 18 Śaiva topics of legal business (*vyavahārah*) (*astādaśapadajñena*). Alexis Sanderson (2003-4:381n.113) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers; Part I' *BEFEO* Paris

He reorganised the state into provincial departments for the first time. The king allowed his senior minister, general and architect Kavīndrārimathana to build the small, moated, Buddhist temple of Bat Čum, amid the palaces and villas of the regenerated city. **[see Plate 5 Bàt Cum 02.04]** The small, elegant brick and stone temple is dedicated to the Buddha, Vajrapāni and Prajñāpāramitā[107] and appears to establish a Tantric Buddhist cult based on the root *yoga-tantra*, the *STTS*. The icons of Bàt Čum are lost but the only Buddha icons known from this time are of a Buddha seated on a multi-headed giant Nāga, which appears in Khmer religious art for the first time in this period. The early Khmer Nāga Buddhas, of which a dozen survive, bear striking similarities (notably in the long separated Nāga necks and crested heads) to the icons found in the Mahāyāna communities that dot the Khmer foreign trade route to the peninsula. The Khmer Buddha in meditational *dhyāna mudrā* may be a form of Vairocana, the supreme Buddha of China and Japan. No known Khmer evidence comforts the widely held view that this image is connected with the Mucalinda myth of early Buddhism. From the 10th century on, a meditative Buddha protected by a Nāga became the central icon of Khmer Buddhism. The cult of Bàt Čum is clarified in an inscription a few years later that recounts the mission of the principal Buddhist scholar at court, Kīrtipaṇḍita, who travelled abroad to bring in texts. In Chapter 1.2.1, I argue that these texts were Tantric and included the *STTS*. Under Rājendravarman's son and successor, Jayavarman V, Kīrtipanḍita performed the *homa* rites daily in the palace and built a network of ashrams across the country.

5. 11th century

In the 11th century, king Sūryavarman I fought his way to the throne (r.1011-50) and extended Khmer control westwards across Īśān. He constructed Hindu-dominated syncretic temples (Phanom Rung, Praḥ Vihear) and built a palace in Angkor. His posthumous title 'Nirvaṇapādā' is more likely to be Buddhist than Śaiva but from the inscriptions of his reign he was not only a

[107] In the Bàt Čum inscription she is also referred to as Divyadevi ('heavenly/divine/celestial goddess') and Devi.

devout Śaiva king he was also one of the most learned and capable of composing rituals derived from scripture:

> And being a born devotee of Śiva (*śivāmśasya*) he was able by virtue of his intelligence to compose a fully appropriate [manual for] an excellent ritual of Śiva worship taught in [Śaiva] scripture as soon as he had heard it [expounded in that source].[108]

Suryavarman is however known to have spent time in the traditionally Buddhist region around Praḥ Khan of Kompong Svāy, homeland of Jayavarman VII and his father king Dharanindravarman II. The recently discovered inscription at Sak Bāk village near Phimai appears to affirm the link between Phimai and Kompong Svāy branches of the Mahīdhara families. The huge Buddhist temple of Praḥ Khan at Kompong Svāy, northeast of Angkor, was built by Sūryavarman I and extended by Dharanindravarman II and Jayavarman VII, who is assumed to have been born on the family estate there in approximately 1145. The Sab Bāk stone (K.1158), dated 1066, recounts that a local Siddha (Tantric guru) had left to work for the lord of *sthalā-svāy,* probably Kompong Svāy.[109]

Sūryavarman I was succeeded by Udayadityavarman (r.1050-66) who built the last Śaiva state temple in Angkor, the Bàphûon, but shared his predecessor's respect for the Buddhists. He also presided over the creation of one of the city's great artistic styles. The Bàphûon style long outlasted Udayadityavarman's reign and the elegant, slim-waisted bronzes of a supreme Tantric deity, Hevajra, which appear first in the 'Bàphûon style' -- with a deep 'u' shape in the sampot below the navel and a large bow behind – in fact probably date to after the 1080 A.D. usurpation of Jayavarman VI. The advanced technology and artistic refinement of their casting signals the arrival among the landed Buddhist elite of the empire of the late *yoginī-tantras,* to which the *hevajra-tantra* belongs. These images were still apparently venerated in Jayavarman VII's time, for one was discovered buried in the floor

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[108] This is Sanderson's translation of K.661 v.61
śivapūjāviśeso pi śāstroktaś śrutamātrakah
dhiyā viracito yasya śivānśasyākhilocitah
Alexis Sanderson (2004:354) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers; Part I' *BEFEO* Paris
[109] Prapandvidya, Chirapat (1990:12) 'The Sab Bāk inscription: evidence of an early Vajrayāna Buddhist presence in Thailand' *Journal of the Siam Society*, Bangkok

of a chapel in Bantéay Kdei temple.[110] They mark the arrival of a more overtly Tantric Buddhism that began to challenge the centuries-old state Śaivism of the Khmer kings. A new dynasty from the northwestern Khmer city of Mahīdhara – somewhere as yet unidentified in Īśān – was to reign, with only brief interruptions, until the mid-13th century and included Angkor's greatest builders of temples and empires.

Mahīdharapura was presumably somewhere near Phimai where a vast temple complex was constructed by King Jayavarman VI in the last two decades of the century. Although the state religious calendar in Angkor was presumably still honoured at the pyramidal Bàphûon temple (dedicated to Śiva) the centre of political power had unmistakably moved north to Phimai. The Mahīdharas built a temple complex on an unprecedented scale that was to set the standard for Angkor's greatest builders, kings Sūryavarman II and Jayavarman VII. **[Plate 18 Prasat Phimai 02.04]** The central sanctuary at Pràsàt Phimai leaves no doubt about the Tantrism of the Buddhist Mahīdharas. Although the central icon is not known, around the inner sanctum of the temple are deeply-carved reliefs of the Tantric Heruka Saṃvara, a crowned (Pāla-derived) Buddha and the Vajradhātu Pentad. An inscription from Phimai honours Trailokyavijaya. This is either the Vajrapāṇi of the famous *STTS* duel with Śiva, or possibly the Saṃvara of the sanctum pediment, whose hand gesture is halfway between the *prajñā-embrace* of Saṃvara and the vajrahumkara of Trailokyavijaya, who was the 10th century precursor of the Herukas and multi-headed, multi-armed, life-size image so impressed Alfred Foucher in the Brahmanical convent at Bodh-Gaya.[111] From the Phimai area, bronze icons have been found of the Tantric deities Hevajra and his Yoginīs, Trailokyavijaya, Prajñāpāramitā (with 20 arms) and, for the first time in 300 years, Vajrasattva. **[Plate 19 Vajrasattva, Nāga Buddha Bangkok Museum]**

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[110] Dalsheimer (2001 :247)

[111] Foucher, A. (1900:57) *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde, d'après des documents nouveaux* Leroux, Paris. Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann later expressed her astonishment that despite the fact this deity is trampling Śiva and Ūma it is venerated in the Brahmanical convent. Mallmann, Marie-Thérèse de (1964:73) 'Divinités hindoues dans le tântrisme bouddhique' *Arts asiatiques* 10

6. 12th century

Phimai was dedicated in 1108 and no doubt remained a powerful religious foundation for many years. The enduring importance of the Phimai Buddha to the dynasty is reflected, for example, in the prominent place it was afforded 80 years later in Jayavarman VII's spring court festival. It was also singled out for offerings by his chief queen Jayarājadevī, when she set up a Buddhist foundation for abandoned girls. Jayavarman himself enlarged Phimai and built a chapel for his own portrait statue facing the central sanctuary.

But within a decade of the completion of the Phimai complex, Sūryavarman II came to power in a coup against his own kinsmen and began the construction of the extraordinary Vaiṣṇava shrine we now know as Angkor Wàt. Sūryavarman's devotion to Viṣṇu, whose role in Khmer religious art had been relatively minor since pre-Angkorian times,[112] remains a mystery. It is worth noting that Vaiṣṇavism, boosted by reforming guru Rāmānuja, bloomed in India in the early 12th century and the great Jagannātha temple rose at Puri, Orissa, exactly when Angkor Wàt was being built. Suryavarman's attitude to the Buddhist roots of his own Mahīdhara dynasty is unknown, but the Mahīdharas all developed syncretic systems and many of the finest Nāga Buddhas and standing crowned Buddhas are modelled in the heavily-jewelled, sharp-featured 'Angkor Wàt style' so lavishly elaborated under his rule. Phimai itself is of course heavily syncretic, with Hindu themes dominating the outer decoration of the main sanctuary and Buddhist icons the inner. Although some of the Angkor Wàt-style Buddhas may have been created for his successor Dharanindravarman II, Jayavarman VII's father, who maintained the dynasty's tradition by building the huge Buddhist complex at Beng Mealea, northeast of Angkor, others were presumably commissioned by Sūryavarman II himself.

[112] Apart from Sūryavarman II, who took the posthumous title Paramaviṣṇuloka ('gone to the paradise of Viṣṇu'), only one other Khmer king is known to have been a Viṣṇu devotee – Jayavarman III (r.835- before 877) – who took the posthumous title Viṣṇuloka (K.256A v.6).

Pl. 18. Prasat Phimai

Pl. 19. Vajrasattva and Nāga Buddha, Bangkok Museum (after Moore 1997:70)

Pl. 20. Bàyon Nāga Buddha in bits (EFEO archive)

Jayavarman VII must have watched the construction of Beng Mealea as a boy because he was raised on the family estate in this area. The one major sculpture from Beng Mealea is a finely-carved seated Lokeśvara with four arms and richly adorned in 'Angkor Wàt style' crown and necklace with head inclined downwards in a gesture of regal compassion. Dharanindravarman is identified in the Praḥ Khan stela as a man 'who found his satisfaction in this nectar that is the religion of Śākyamuni',[113] but he left the apparatus of state Śaivism in place. In Angkor itself during Dharanindravarman's reign the most active religious foundations were presumably the Vaiṣṇava Angkor Wàt and the Śaiva Bàphûon. Only with the accession of Jayavarman were new Buddhist foundations inaugurated to extend the Buddhist infrastructure of the capital – previously restricted to the modest Bàt Čum.

7. The Buddhism of Jayavarman VII

Although this survey attests the presence of Buddhism in Cambodia for seven centuries before he came to power, Jayavarman VII made a major break with tradition when he made Buddhism the state cult for the first time. The decision probably owed as much to the extraordinary political circumstances of his coming to power, as to the personal convictions of the sovereign, who chose the posthumous title Mahāparamasaugatapada ('who has attained the domain of those who are supremely devoted to the Buddha').[114] The record is far from clear, but Angkor appears to have been attacked by a Čam army and the usurper Tribhūvanādityavarman, who had overthrown Jayavarman's relative Yośavarman II in 1167, killed. Never before had a foreign army penetrated the military and spiritual defences of the Khmer capital. The large revamp of the city defences undertaken by the new general-king Jayavarman included massive defensive earthworks, moats and walled compounds. Even though Jayavarman's cult was syncretic – like that of Phimai – with large sections of his huge temple complexes dedicated to Brahmanical rites for Śiva and Viṣṇu, the central sanctuaries were emphatically Buddhist, a return to the classic Mahīdhara model. Given his religious descent and the extensive Buddhist learning of the king and his two principal wives – one of whom headed a

[113] Coedès, G. (1941:285) 'Le stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor' *BEFEO* 41
[114] Sanderson (2004:429)

convent and wrote one of the king's Sanskrit inscriptions -- Jayavarman must have known the disastrous fate of Tantric Buddhism in its first propagation in Tibet and in ninth century China.

7.1 Socio-religious reengineering

In taking the significant risk of reducing the power of the court Brahmans and putting in question the status quo of the entrenched Brahmanical aristocracy in shifting the central state cult to Buddhism, Jayavarman appears to have gambled first on dividing the aristocracy that had risen in civil war after the Čam attack on Angkor[115], and by winning popular support by engaging and defending the interests of the people in a large socio-engineering plan. A network of walled complexes directed by monks and officials with guaranteed supplies, water, transport and artisans was constructed in Angkor, and across the empire, within a decade. Louis Finot describes these multi-purpose communities as 'complex establishments …which were at the same time temples, convents, universities, and no doubt fortresses when needed, capable of protecting the population and withstanding a siege.'[116] All access to the huge compounds was by large guarded gates – a measure of deterrence and assurance rather like second millennium security checks before boarding aircraft. Later there are signs that he sought to embed the Buddhist root through mass conversions and consecrations.

The king's strategy for restoring confidence, after Angkor had become a battleground and possibly known chaotic civil war conditions, was based on the twin pillars of Buddhist proselytising and high protective walls. The dedication stelae of Jayavarman's temples show they were set up as semi-autonomous communities with spiritual leaders, management structures, ritual vestments and all the paraphernalia required to engage the people in the annual cycle of ceremonies. The largest community of all was presumably lodged around the new Bàyon state temple, behind the massive earth

[115] The Phiméanakas stela (K.485 s.XXVI), written by Jayavarman's second wife, says 'Under the preceding reign, the earth suffered from extreme heat, despite being shaded by numerous parasols; but under his reign, where his single parasol remained, the earth, strangely enough, was delivered from all suffering'. Several parasols is code for contending pretenders to the throne in Khmer and Čam inscriptions in this period.

[116] Finot, M.L. (1925:239) 'Lokeśvara en Indochine' *Etudes Asiatiques publiées a l'occasion du 25eme anniversaire de l'EFEO*, EFEO, Paris

ramparts of Angkor Thom. The temples were equipped with dance troupes and musicians and were powerful cultural centres for propagating the new royal creed. Compared with the remote exclusiveness of the Vaiṣṇava rituals performed on the small, elevated, third-level platforms deep within the palatial walls of Angkor Wàt, the new Buddhist temples were a departure into open architecture. Paul Mus contrasts the remote and 'ordered splendour of Angkor Wàt, evoking Versailles', with the massive presence of the Bàyon open to the heart of the city -- not separated from the people by moat and enclosure wall:

> …the time for religious and artistic academism had passed. The most audacious forms from the mystical experience and the sculptural and architectural expressionism appropriate to the Great Vehicle of Buddhism had taken hold of Cambodia and were refashioning it in announcing – fallaciously in fact – a worthy destiny…Now [the sovereign's] portrait breaks out everywhere. He throws himself before his people, he exposes himself to defend them, risking all…hence this art with a difference, in the service of a new creed, because the politics have changed, in a disastrous and revolutionary situation that had to be faced.[117]

These large, temple-centred people complexes were the base units of an ambitious politico-religious re-engineering programme implemented with great energy, resource and meticulous planning. As a politico-religious move, Jayavarman's campaign was possibly as momentous as the declaration of an independent Khmer state in 802 by Jayavarman II, for it definitively turned Cambodia into a Buddhist land.

7.2 Tantric Buddhism and the military

Tantric Buddhism evolved in India by applying the doctrines of Mahāyāna to the belligerence of the catastrophic feudal disruptions that followed the breakdown of the golden age of the Gupta empire. The old, ascetic, contemplative creed thus adapted to military-political situations not unsimilar to that faced by Jayavarman as he attempted to assert his power over the old Brahmanical aristocracy and the power vacuum left by the Čam attack on Angkor. Davidson considers the first Tantric Buddhists in India branched out into politico-military strategies in order to survive:

[117] Mus, P. (1964:31-2) 'Un cinéma solide: l'intégration du temps dans l'art de l'Inde at dans l'art contemporain: pouquoi?' *Arts Asiatiques* X, A. Maisonneuve, Paris

> …from the seventh century forward…India fragmented politically and saw the rise of regional centres in a manner unprecedented and unexpected after the stable gravity of the Imperial Guptas and the Vākāṭakas (c.320-550 C.E.). Pressed by military adventurism, populations moved across the subcontinent, while Buddhist coalitions sustained crippling setbacks in various parts of South Asia…[E]soteric Buddhism is a direct Buddhist response to the feudalization of Indian society in the early medieval period, a response that involves the sacralization of much of that period's social world…[T]he monk, or yogin, in the esoteric system configures his practice through the metaphor of becoming the overlord of a maṇḍala of vassals, and issues of scripture, language, and community reflect the political and social models employed in the surrounding feudal society.[118]

This accounts for the proliferation of Tantric Buddhist ritual terms with political and military significance noted by Davidson:

> It is astonishing to realize that so many significant terms found in the standard esoteric ritual manuals and the Buddhist tantras have political and military significance as well as religious, and the bivalence or paronomasia of these terms in aggregate is extraordinary.[119]

The very existence of Buddhism was threatened by the erosion of its social and economic base. The weaving together of a new Tantric canon from heterogeneous threads derived from realpolitik, violence justified in defence of the Dharma, newly crafted narratives of power, new metaphysical doctrine embracing such narratives, momentous personal commitments in ritual, cemetery rites, eroticism and spirit possession, can only have been accomplished by the great creative gurus of the monasteries. The realities the monks confronted in the post-Gupta feudal world posed the challenge that Davidson sententiously calls taking 'the poison of belligerence and transmut[ing] it into the nectar of welfare. They attempted to transform power and hierarchy into community and congregation.' Williams couches the dilemma in different terms:

> The world is full of malevolent forces according to the Brahmins, who declare these forces impure in order to control them. Tantrikas approach the impure in a ritual way to procure access to these powers (*siddhi*). *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa-tantra* (vii 14-5) says eating unclean things is like feeding a fruit tree with manure.[120]

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[118] Davidson (2002:2)
[119] Davidson, R. 2002:121
[120] Williams 2000:237

7.3 The 'sack' of Angkor

The effectiveness of Jayavarman's reconstruction of the state rested on the psychological imperative of restoring confidence after the Čam attack on Angkor. The evidence for the 'sack' of Angkor by the Cams remains tenuous. The Pràsàt Chrung inscription K.288, high on the ramparts of Angkor Thom, contains three stanzas that are generally taken to refer to it, albeit in allusive poetic style. The first says:

> Īśa created this king [Jayavarman VII], who wore his heroism like a jewel, out of a desire to restore the ornament of the three worlds [Angkor] which, having suffered the same misfortune as the god whose weapons are flowers [Eros was burnt to ashes by a beam from Śiva's third eye], was burnt by fire, abandoned and reduced to a symbol of weakness.[121]

The second is taken to refer to Angkor being sullied by the Čam king's attack on -- '[Mount Kailāsa] having the brilliance of the moon, but now soiled by the mud thrown up by Rāvaṇā's [the leader of the demons whose name usually refers to Čam king Jaya Indravaman] shaking the mountain…'[122] The third makes it explicit that Jaya Indravarman dethroned Tribhūvanāditya, the mandarin who had deposed Jayavarman VII's kinsman Yośavarman II:

> Some time ago, śrī Sūryavarman took the defenceless kingdom from śrī Dharanīndravarman in a one-day battle; Tribhuvanāditya [did the same] to his protector king Yaśovarman, who was returning from Lavodaya; he in turn, though proud of his power, had it taken by the king of the Cams named Jaya Indravarman.[123]

The Phiméanakas stela (K.485) has a line that also supports the notion of a large external attack on Cambodia in a period of weakness; at the same time it contradicts Chinese accounts of an attack up the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers: 'Śrī Jaya Indravarman, king of Campā, presumptuous like Rāvaṇā, moving his army on chariots, went to fight Kambudeśa, equal to heaven.'[124] K.485 also says the future king Jayavarman VII, rather than rising against Tribhūvanāditya, waited a decade – and presumably after Jaya Indravarman

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[121] *IC* IV v.XIX
[122] *IC* IV v.XXX
[123] *IC* IV v. CVIII
[124] George Coedès (1927:389) 'Phimãnàkàs' *BEFEO* 27

attacked and deposed the usurper – before he 'saw the moment come, and rose up to save the land heavy with crimes.'[125]

Michael Vickery has recently questioned the account proposed early last century by Maspero and Finot and followed by Coedès, of 'a great Cam conquest of Angkor in 1177.'[126] The Čam inscriptions so far found make no mention of so momentous an event and Vickery proposes instead that 'the real conquest of Angkor was by Jayavarman VII and his Cham allies, probably in the 1170s, at least before 1181, and that the subordination of central and southern Champa to him dated from that time…' Vickery draws attention to the fact that the future Jayavarman VII spent many of his early adult years (perhaps between c.1160 and c.1180, when he was probably aged 16-36) in Vijaya, Čampā presumably as some kind of Khmer envoy. During these key formative years, during which his father then his cousin was on the throne in Angkor, Jayavarman was no doubt deeply enmeshed in the turbulent politics and internal wars of Čampā. When Jayavarman eventually came to the throne of Angkor through battle, he showed his continuing attachment to the Cams by making generous use of talented Čam princes in his own internal and international military campaigns. This suggests deep ties of trust with Čam lineages that were probably unprecedented in a Khmer monarch. Čampā had presumably been a formative experience for him and the extent of his control over parts of the neighbouring loose confederation of competing kingdoms seems to have been a major concern throughout his long reign. Jayavarman's intimate, complex and often difficult relationship with the Cams seems to be reflected in the biographical reliefs of the Bàyon state temple, where there are several scenes showing Čam forces winning battles or accompanying Khmer solders into battle. At times what appear to be Čam generals ride on elephants with the Khmer army. The Bàyon reliefs have proven difficult to interpret but one of these scenes could well depict Jayavarman's victory in Angkor – either over forces left behind by Čam rival Jaya Indravarman or over whoever else was then occupying the city. The Pràsàt Chrung inscription

[125] Coedès (1927:389)
[126] M. Vickery (2004:31) *Champa revised*, a paper delivered to a conference on Čampā held in Singapore in July 2004.

K.288 v. XIX, already cited, is our principal source on the state of Angkor at this moment when it says the city was burned and abandoned. The extent of the damage is unclear; archaeological digs have shown that the palace was burned down but the city's temples appear to have survived unscathed and no signs have yet been found of a large conflagration. But if Jaya Indravarman attacked, killed the king, burned the palace, looted and withdrew, the city presumably suffered several years of anarchy until Jayavarman's return.

Given Jayavarman's intimate prior engagement in Čam politics, Vickery makes the reasonable conjecture that Jayavarman used Čam allies to capture Angkor and establish his reign in Cambodia. This seems reasonable because by 1181 we may surmise that he had closer direct links with Čam than with Cambodian, politicians and generals. Vickery also tends to downplay the importance of Čam king Jaya Indravarman's intrusion into Khmer affairs, despite the fact that he is named in the role of villain and wrecker in Khmer inscriptions, and despite the fact that the Čam king deposed Tribhūvanāditya, the usurper of Jayavarman's kinsman, an act Jayavarman hesitated over for a decade. Vickery's phrase 'the real conquest of Angkor was by Jayavarman VII and his Cham allies' suggests a scenario where Jaya Indravarman deposed Tribhūvanāditya in a brief attack on Angkor, but Jayavarman restored order to the city, perhaps some years later, with a Cam army. If Jayavarman left the detail of the Cam identity of his soldiers out of his subsequent inscriptions, this would be understandable, but it throws a whole new light on the circumstances of his accession to the Khmer throne.

Vickery's probing paper thus invites scholarly enquiry into two areas so far unexplored -- the state of the city that Jayavarman took possession of, and Jayavarman's use of Cam allies. He also challenges the standard Maspero/Coedès version of the situation in central and southern Campā in the 1980s in a way which adds support for the idea that Jayavarman could command significant Cam military force in these years. The Maspero and Coedès construal of Čam inscription C.92B, C of Mĩ Sơn was that a Čam aggression by a king called Jaya Indravarman ong Vatuv provoked a Khmer invasion led by a Čam prince Vidyānandana, who had been raised like a son

in Angkor by Jayavarman VII. Years of battles and rebellions ensued – including some caused by Vidyānandana betraying his benefactor and proclaiming himself king of all Čam territories – that ended only with the annexation of most of the multiple Čam kingships as vassals of Angkor. But, as Vickery points out, C.92B, C in fact says ong Vatuv rose in rebellion ('adhama di')[127] against the king of Cambodia in 1190 in the Čam city of Vijaya. This clearly implies that Jayavarman VII was already in control of the Vijaya, where he had spent his early adult years. Prince Vidyānandana was therefore sent to restore Khmer control at the head of a Khmer army, and was not beginning a lengthy invasion, as in the Maspero/Coedès account. Vidyānandana installed a relative of the Jayavarman in Vijaya and himself 'returned to rule' (without having to fight) as vassal to Jayavarman in the southern Čam city of Rājapura, implying that Rājapura, capital of the southern polity of Panduranga, was also therefore presumably controlled by Jayavarman VII. If Jayavarman was indeed ruling -- in a way no known inscription has yet explained -- central and southern Čam polities throughout the 1180s, he would most probably have been capable of bringing a Čam force to take decisive control of Angkor by 1181.

Once Jayavarman controlled Angkor and set about containing provincial rebellions like that C.92B, C mentions at Malyang (western Cambodia?), we would expect to find his inscriptions stressing his Khmer credentials and letting the grass grow over any earlier dependence on Čam troops. Vickery's new reading of Jayavarman's command of Čam armies and cities in the 1980s also offers a more cogent explanation for why and how Prince Vidyānandana (and other Čam princes) went to Angkor in 1182 to be taught the scriptures and martial arts like a son of the king at the Khmer court (C.92B, C).[128] Jayavarman's bringing a talented young prince to Angkor from his dependency of Panduranga seems self-explanatory, whereas under the previous view of the history, it would have to have been some kind of exile from a supposedly hostile Čampā.

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[127] Finot, M.L. (1904 :168) 'Les inscriptions' *Le cirque de Mĩ-Sơn (Quảng-Nam)* Henri Parmentier & Louis Finot EFEO, F.-H. Schneider, Hanoi
[128] Finot (1904:170)

7.4 Restoring stability

For the argument in this chapter, however, the question of which armies inflicted battle on Angkor and when, is subordinate to the fact that the consequence was a major need to restore the confidence of the residents of the capital as well as the Khmer people's assurance that their king was allied in their defence with the supernatural. If he was indeed a Khmer prince absent from Angkor during his early adulthood, who rose to considerable power in Čampā and used his Čam connections to restore order to Cambodia, then a major confidence-building campaign would have been an imperative. This is what Jayavarman's vast capital reconstruction project addressed. And the reengineering worked. On the religious level he achieved the permanent movement of Cambodia out of centuries of an elitist state-sponsored Śaivism into the camp of nations where Buddhism enjoys a large popular base. The Buddhism of Cambodia's future was not Jayavarman's own, and its penetration of the grass roots would never displace – but grow intertwined with -- the ancestral *neak ta* territorial gods still universally present in Cambodia today. Nor did Jayavarman abandon the pan-Indic Hindu gods, who were assigned significant secondary devotional areas in all his temples, somewhat as his forbears did in Phimai. But he did engineer the crucial historical shift from an aloof state Śaivism to a much broader-based state Buddhism. Popular acceptance of such a momentous religious change usually takes centuries. David Snellgrove has compared the slow absorption of Buddhism over five centuries by the people of Tibet with the prolonged conversion of England to Christianity.[129] But Cambodia seems to have

[129] 'It is fairly well known that Srong-tsen-gam-po, the first king of a powerful, united Tibet, who died in about 650, was the first Tibetan king to encourage infiltrating Buddhists in any way…However Tibet was no more Buddhist in this and the immediately following centuries than England was Christian as the immediate result of the mission in 597 of Augustine, that Roman monk, who was duly consecrated the first Archbishop of Canterbury. In this case too a Christian queen of French origin prevailed upon a pagan husband, Aelthelberth King of Kent, to give the new religion a favourable reception. But in England, as much as in Tibet, several centuries of self-sacrificing proselytizing and arduous scholarly work were necessary before either country could really be said to be converted to the new faith. Thus it was probably true to claim Tibet as generally Buddhist by the end of the 13th century, and scarcely before, although politically the success of the new religion was already probably assured by the end of the 10th century.' D. Snellgrove (1971:37) 'Indo-Tibetan liturgy and its relationship to iconography' *Mahāyānist Art after A.D. 900: Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia No. 2* SOAS, London

absorbed the change relatively rapidly. Although there had been a Buddhist presence in Cambodia from perhaps the fourth century, its impact was limited outside areas like northwest Cambodia and Īśān in modern northeast Thailand. And yet, as a result of the policies of Jayavarman and his successors, the Khmers appear to have turned to Buddhism in large numbers by about the year 1300. For when Chinese envoy Zhou daguan visited the country in 1296-7 he recorded that the Buddhists, albeit of the Theravāda vehicle regenerating in the Mon-speaking areas of former Dvāravatī, had a pagoda in every village.[130] The prime mover of this tectonic shift, despite the fact that his own temples were later desecrated, presumably by a Śaiva successor, was Jayavarman VII.

7.5 Three phases

An unusual feature of Jayavarman VII's state Buddhism is that it was not imposed at a stroke, but rather was allowed to evolve slowly throughout his long reign. This probably resulted from a mix of far-sighted prudence and vigorous response to contingencies. Jayavarman was a soldier and a Buddhist who modelled a radical new strategy of Buddhist supremacy in a state fragmented (not unlike feudal, post-Gupta India) by successive usurpations, ongoing internal strife and regional wars. His state Buddhism was required to supersede the embedded state Śaivism and legitimize the usurpation. Although the Buddhist messages and practices evolved slowly, they were at each point propagated with great energy and organisation. The instabilities of the takeover period were addressed with the massive religious-military-political temple building programme. In more stable times, towards the end of the reign, there are still signs that imposition of an overtly Tantric Buddhist pantheon, over a 'maṇḍala of vassals' made up of a traditional mix of Hindu and chthonic gods, was achieved through a major propagandist effort of large-scale consecrations to the Buddhist deities, that were presumably designed as demonstrations of loyalty to the regime – much as had been done in the imposition of 'state protection' Tantric Buddhism in eighth century T'ang China.

[130] Pelliot, Paul (1902) trans. Gilman d'Arcy Paul 2nd edition (1992:11, 65) *The customs of Cambodia by Chou Ta-kuan* The Siam Society, Bangkok

> …the patronage of many kings towards multiple religious traditions could be viewed in part as an attempt to keep them all beholden to the ruler – and divided from one another – rather than a dedicated catholicity among Indian monarchs.[131]

In religion Jayavarman was both circumspect and adventurous. Although he took the risk of making Buddhism the state religion for the first time, he first chose a conservative form based on the Bodhisattvas of the old, respected normative Mahāyāna. For the time being he left aside the fierce Tantric deities of his Mahīdhara dynasty. And yet I share Thai historian Piriya's view that the initial Buddhist triad of the Nāga Buddha, Lokeśvara and Prajñāpāramitā was also Tantric:

> The king espoused Tantrayāna Buddhism and propagated it throughout his vast kingdom which stretched form the coast of Champa to the Tenasserim range. The king had temples built of laterite to house images of the Tantric Trinity, which consisted of the nāga-protected Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, and Prajñāpāramitā…[132]

Piriya's view of the Tantric meaning of this triad was pioneered by Coedès in 1923 when he preferred comparison with Tibetan representations of the Ādi-Buddha – 'primordial Buddha, supreme intelligence and absolute truth'[133] -- to Thai legends of Jambupati to account for the Buddha of the Khmer triad. Paul Mus endorsed Coedès' judgement five years later,[134] and Hiram Woodward recently elaborated further:

> The idea is an ancient one, and, in the art and architecture of Jayavarman VII, the triad of Prajñā-Buddha-Lokeśvara makes the goddess and the Bodhisattva the mother and father, respectively, of the Buddha. Put another way, wisdom and compassion together produce Buddhahood. In the statues, a Tantric adaptation along the lines of Kundalinī-yoga is implied: the Bodhisattva can call up the goddess within his own body and through meditative exercises can unite wisdom and compassion, achieving a state equivalent to Buddhahood. The worship of the Prajñā-Buddha-Lokeśvara triad had an esoteric aspect during this period, and the radiating Lokeśvara should be understood as another element on this esoteric side, for it suggests practices that were probably restricted.[135]

The imposition of these somewhat suppressed Tantric icons was also mitigated in large measure for the Khmer Brahmanical elite by the syncretism

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[131] Davidson 2002:192
[132] Piriya Krairiksh (1984:11) *Das zeitlose Bildnis* Köln
[133] Coedès, G. (1923:39) *Bronzes khmèrs* Ars Asiatica, Paris
[134] Mus, Paul (1928:155) 'Le Buddha paré. Son origine Indienne' *BEFEO* 28
[135] Hiram Woodward (1994:106-8) 'The Jayabuddhamahānātha Images of Cambodia' *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 52/3 (1994/5)

that allocated large spaces in all his new temples to the rituals of the Brahmans, who had controlled the religion of court since at least 802. Given his religious descent, Jayavarman must have known, and wanted to avoid, the disastrous fate of the Buddhists of Zhen-la and the setbacks of the kind suffered by Tantric Buddhist communities in other countries. As an acute reminder of the risks Buddhists faced, during Jayavarman's second decade in power, Moslem armies conducted a terrible onslaught on the great monastery universities of northeast India. The astonishing success of Tantric Buddhism across Asia in the eighth to 12th centuries had to be set against this fatal attack in India and crushing reversals elsewhere. When, in middle age, Jayavarman battled his way to the throne, his Buddhism was given a defensive, compassionate face, which played down the more extreme methods and aggressive doctrines of Tantric Buddhism. But despite his caution, Jayavarman's own temples would face systematic desecration after his death, in a reaction presumably supervised by the Brahmans when Śaivism was briefly restored under one of his successors.

When we look at the detail of the evolution of the king's temple art the standard account of a binary division of the reign into early and late soon looks inadequate. Most scholars have found somewhat baffling the Tantric bronze and stone icons in Jayavarman's 'Bàyon style', but these elements are coherent with architectural developments late in the reign, and they invite us to further divide the reign into three distinct, roughly decade-long phases from 1181-1210.

7.6 Phase I

The first decade of Jayavarman VII's reign was focused on healing the national psyche and rebuilding Angkor after the attack. The damage to the city seems to have been primarily psychological and political, for most of the capital's great monuments seem to have survived unscathed. Jayavarman's response was to double the temple infrastructure of the city and make it, in Briggs' words, 'more spacious than any of the walled medieval cities of

Europe […it] could easily have contained the Rome of Nero's day.'[136] The needs of the people were further addressed with the construction of canals and irrigation systems, roads and hospitals. According to the Ta Prohm stela 102 hospitals were apparently already built and logistically supported some five years into the reign.[137] The final number of centres in the distribution of this medical wing of the technological expanse of the empire may have been much larger. In this first period the hospitals were not placed under the protection of Lokeśvara, the curer of all illnesses,[138] but under Bhaiṣajyaguru the Buddha of medicine, who is also frequently depicted seated on a Nāga holding a medicinal fruit or container.[139] Lokeśvara's day was yet to come, and it eventually came like a tidal wave.

No extant text explains the significance of Jayavarman's Buddhist triad that pervaded the first decade of the reign. The Nāga Buddha emerged from the corridor of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism that extended from Sri Lanka, through the Thai Peninsula to Īśān and into 10th century Cambodia. Prajñāpāramitā made a quiet debut in the triad, but advanced to an exceptional and still largely mysterious Cambodian career.

7. 7 Prajñāpāramitā

The Bodhisattva Prajñāpāramitā ('perfection of insight') of the triad has only two arms and therefore presumably limited special powers. The sūtras of Prajñāpāramitā are the most important texts of classical Mahāyāna for they set the stages of perfection Bodhisattvas had to reach. Edward Conze elucidated the other ramifications of the word: '(a) a perfection, (b) a sacred book, (c) a deity, (d) an image and (e) a mantra.'[140] In Jayavarman's early triads, Prajñāpāramitā seems to be the *Dharma* of the three jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṇgha. Iconic representations of

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[136] Briggs L. P. (1951:219) *The Ancient Khmer Empire* in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* New Series Vol. 41, part 1, reprinted 1999 White Lotus press Bangkok
[137] 798 divinities had been consecrated in the hospitals, which were staffed by 838 medical specialists and 81,640 male and female support staff. The institutions had an annual budget of 117,200 *kharika* of rice.(Coedes 1906:72)
[138] According to the *karandavyuha* panegyric of Avalokiteshvara translated into Chinese in 980 and 1001 (Finot 1925:228n3)
[139] Finot 1925:237
[140] Conze E. (1948:10) 'Remarks on a Pāla MS. in the Bodleian Library' *Oriental Art* London

Prajñāpāramitā proliferated in the late middle ages, when the great vehicle expanded across China, Korea and Japan, but no early images of her exist, though Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien recorded seeing statues of the deity in India as early as 400 A.D. The earliest surviving images emerge in the Tantric evolution of Buddhism in the eighth century. By the 10th century Prajñāpāramitā has a major place in many Buddhist cultures – in Pāla Bihar, Śrīvijaya, Nepal, Tibet, Shingon Japan and – although considered 'outside the main stream' by Conze – in Cambodia.[141]

In the 10th century, caityas from Phnom Srok in northwest Cambodia portray her with 10 arms and five heads. By the end of Jayavarman VII's reign, her Tantric form has 22 arms and 11 heads – a form that is unique to Cambodia and is not accounted for in the texts, leading Conze to speculate that a major, late Prajñāpāramitā text has been lost. Boisselier notes that no model has been found for the Khmer goddess either in the iconography of the neighbouring Mahāyānist Mons or elsewhere.[142] Khmer inscriptions often call her 'mother of all Jinas (Buddhas)'[143], which seems to confer the sense of a primeval female, but also refers to the sixth and final perfection achieved by Bodhisattvas before they become Buddhas. A similar role was created in Esoteric Buddhism in late eighth century T'ang China, when Mañjuśrī was redefined as a Buddha who assumed the form of a Bodhisattva out of compassion for the needs of unenlightened beings and took up residence on Mount Wutai in Shanxi province.[144] The Tantric Buddhist 'mandarin' Amoghavajra developed a vast national cult of Mañjuśrī (in Chinese 'Wen-shu') as the patron Bodhisattva of China. Mañjuśrī is unknown in Khmer Buddhism, and the crucial role of the symbolising *śūnyata* (emptiness) may have devolved to Prajñāpāramitā.

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[141] Conze, Edward (1949:47-51) 'The Iconography of Prajñāpāramitā' Part I Oriental Art Ed. William Cohn Vol.II The oriental art magazine, London

[142] Jean Boisselier (1992:261) 'Rôle du nord-est dans la renaissance du Buddhism khmer du Xieme siècle' in *Studies on historic cities in lower northeast Thailand A.D. 8th – 13th centuries* Sophia University, Tokyo

[143] This title probably originates from the *Bhagavatī-Prajñā-pāramitā-sarva-tathāgata-māta-ekāsarī* (Sacred Prajñā-pāramitā of one syllable, of the mother of all Tathāgatas). Maurice Winternitz (1932:315) *A history of Indian Literature* University of Calcutta vol. 2

[144] Stanley Weinstein (1987:81) *Buddhism under the T'ang* Cambridge University Press; Berger 1994:92

Vairocana and his Prajñā appear as a combined Ādi-Buddha on ninth century Pāla reliefs used as the centre-pieces for powder or sand mandalas in Tantric rituals.[145] In Cambodia no surviving text elucidates her special cult, but if the Nāga Buddha is associated with Vairocana, then she may have a privileged relationship with him, as in the sacred art of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, where she sometimes appears seated on the left knee of Sarvavid (omniscient) Vairocana. Late in Jayavarman's reign Prajñāpāramitā appears seated in *ekādaśamukha* form with 22 arms. The two most powerful of these late Khmer Prajñāpāramitās are a 12cm bronze from Koḥ Kong province, which resolves the 11 heads brilliantly into a single plane, and an elegant 36cm image with a tower of heads from Buriram. Recent scholarship proposes that the first Indian Avalokiteśvara with 11 heads piled up vertically represents Vairocana and the Jinas in the three Buddha 'bodies'surrounded by the eight great Bodhisattvas or *mahāsattvas*.[146] It is conceivable that because of her primeval mother status as the *prajñā* of Vairocana, the Cambodians modelled an *ekādaśamukha* Prajñāpāramitā as a representative of Vairocana and the great Bodhisattvas, but this is pure speculation in the absence of any text. In the Prasat Ben Vien inscription from Rājendravarman II's reign, for example, lines 7/8 are translated by Coedès as:

> Resplendissante est la Prajñāpāramitā qui enfante la lignée des Jina, et dont l'aspect est semblable à celui de la substance originelle donnant l'existence aux trois mondes.[147]

Such a primordial role for Prajñāpāramitā may also be referred to in one of the Bàt Čum inscriptions where she clearly shares the strong association Vairocana enjoys with the sun:

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[145] Vairocana, in bodhiagri mudrā, is seated beside his Prajñā in what is probably a late 10th century Javanese Nganjuk hoard-style bronze in the Rijksmuseum. Schleurleer says the Prajñā, who is in the same mudrā, could be Locana, Vajradhavisvara or Prajñāpāramitā (Scheurleer, Pauline Lunsingh & Klokke, Marijke J. 1988:99 *Divine Bronze: ancient Indonesian bronzes from A.D. 600- 1600* E.J. Brill, Leiden)

[146] The earliest known 11-headed Avalokiteśvara is an eighth century high relief carving in a cave at Kanheri in west central India. The first mandala of Vairocana and the eight great bodhisattvas is believed to be a c.700 AD mural in a cave at Ellora, also in west central India. See Neville, Tove (1998:17) *Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara* Munshiram Manoharlal, Dehli. Vairocana within a ring of the eight great Bodhisattvas is one of the most common 9th-10th century clay votive tablets made by the peninsula Buddhists who were linked with Cambodia by the trade route.

[147] IC V page 101

> La prajnaparamita resplendit, faisant la Fortune – l'épanouissement – de la terre – du lotus –, détruisant la grande obscurité –, et conaissant les besoins des Créatures; manifestant le charme de son disque, soleil (qui éclaire) la route du Nirvana, elle répand jour et nuit sans vaciller son éclat brillant et favourable.[148]

Such Tantric forms of Prajñāpāramitā belong to the third phase of Jayavarman's reign; Lokeśvara, the third member of the triad, dominates the second.

7.8 Phase II: 'Lokeçvarisation'

In the second decade of Jayavarman's reign, with the national defences secured against the Cams and internal rebellions quelled, Jayavarman committed himself to foreign expansion. For this he chose the all-powerful and compassionate Lokeśvara. This expansion phase halted only at the border of the Đai Việt, Burma and the Malay Peninsula. During this period the homely triads made way for a broadly-disseminated iconographic campaign in which the temples and the empire underwent what Philippe Stern called 'Lokeçvarisation'. Large eight-armed sandstone and bronze image of Lokeśvara radiating Buddhas from all the pores of his body were distributed to the religious power centres in the major cities. Some 121 'houses of fire' relay stations with Lokeśvara's image were built with high military value along the strategic highways to Campā and Phimai – equipped with water pools spaced at a day's march by elephants. Praḥ Khan temple, which Jayavarman called Jayaśrīnagarī, was planned around a central shrine where 238 deities were subject to *ārya-avalokiteśvara jayavameśvara,* the king's personal deity.[149] Stern was so impressed by the evidence of the scale and speed of the Lokeśvara dissemination, he called it a 'brutal blow which would give "Lokeśvara" first place at the transition to the second period.'[150] The powerful-limbed yet contemplative Khmer image of the 'Lord who looks down' became paramount in religious art seemingly overnight and was reproduced in more icons than the Buddha. The change of direction, including connotations of

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[148] Coedès, G. (1908:213-52) 'Les inscriptions de Bàt Čum (Cambodge)' *Journal Asiatique* 10
[149] K.908 v.35 *āryāvalokiteśasya mahyamasya samantaḥ / satadvayan trayośītis tena devāḥ pratisthitāḥ*.
[150] Stern, Philippe (1965:134) *Les monuments khmers du style du Bàyon et Jayavarman VII* Universitaires de France, Paris

controlling the empire militarily, may have been aggressive, but not the images. Although the torsos are braced and powerful, these Lokeśvaras are an artistic breakthrough in rendering a new naturalism and quietism in a vigorous human frame. Boisselier memorably describes the powerful new icons with lowered eyelids and rapt smiles:

> An impassive ideal of superhuman beauty is replaced by a highly sensitive search for human truth. The Buddha, like the Mahāyāna or Brahmanical divinities of the time, ceases to be supernatural. Overflowing with compassion, he reverts to the human state and appears in the form of a Khmer.[151]

The lowered eyelids are an innovation that gives the images an arresting human presence that became the hallmark of 'Lokeçvarisation'.

In the capital, the king moved from his headquarters at Jayaśrīnagarī, the site of his victory over the Cams on the northern edge of the city, to his reconstructed palace within the fortified ramparts of Angkor Thom. At Jayaśrīnagarī the temple of Praḥ Khan was completed at the centre of an elaborate temple complex dedicated to the king's father. Praḥ Khan's stela also announced that 23 images called *jayabuddhamahānatha* ('Buddha great lord of victory') had been sent to the cities of the empire. The stela orders all of these images, along with those of other specified major provincial deities, to be brought to the capital for an empire-wide celebration every spring. Hiram Woodward has challenged Coedes' association of *jayabuddhamahānatha* with the uncrowned, 'adorant' portrait statue of the king[152] and credibly proposes that the distributed images were more likely to be the more numerous 'radiant' Lokeśvara images with eight arms and covered with small Buddha images.[153] The paramount importance of Lokeśvara is conveyed in the multiple images of the Buddhas that radiate from the pores of the

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[151] Boisselier, J (1978:327) 'Cambodia' in *The Image of the Buddha* ed. D. Snellgrove, UNESCO

[152] See Hiram Woodward's interpretation of the 'radiant' Lokeśvaras as the Jayabuddhamahānātha of the inscriptions (1994:105-110) 'The Jayabuddhamahānātha Images of Cambodia' *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 52/3

[153] "The body and the head radiate a multitude of small Buddhas seated in the *samadhi* position, together with some larger images of divinities; thus this type of image has been called 'radiant'. It would seem to illustrate a passage from the *karandavyuha-sutra*…which emphasises that each of the pores of the Bodhisattva's skin, being a true microcosm, contains the whole universe." (Boisselier 1978:326)

Bodhisattva's body, with each Buddha representing a universe contained within the cosmic Bodhisattva. In the microcosm, the equivalent of Buddhas radiating from the pores were possibly the cities of the earthly empire, which all now held images of the great Bodhisattva. The eight arms suggest this image is also Avalokiteśvara the great protector who Eliminates the Eight Great Dangers (*astamahābhayaprabañjakaḥ*) to whom queen Jayarājadevī made a special gift when she founded a Buddhist nunnery for abandoned girls (K.485 v.80-6).

As the tempo of empire-extending expeditions increased, a fifth 'Gate of Victory', leading straight to the royal palace, was opened in the east wall of Angkor Thom to receive conquering armies.[154] The programme of distributing the *jayabuddhamahānāthas* and the portrait statues of the king has no known precedent in Cambodia. It is possible that the king was inspired by the example of Aśoka, Buddhism's equivalent of Constantine, the Roman emperor who converted to Christianity and disseminated it throughout the Roman empire. The 1186 Ta Prohm stela may even refer to Aśoka when it says Jayavarman VI, founder of the Mahīdhara dynasty 'planted pillars of glory in all directions as far as the sea.'[155] Jayavarman's use of religious icons and portrait statues to propagate messages of victory also bears comparison with Octavian's flooding the empire with his own image when he became Augustus.[156]

7.9 Phase III: 'Yoginification'

Reference has already been made to how the icons of Prajñāpāramitā took on multi-armed and multi-headed forms that represent a complex of Tantric deities. Most guide book accounts of Jayavarman's reign see a Lokeśvara

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[154] Dagens, B. (1988:189) 'Les tours a visages du Bàyon d'Angkor et le nombre 108' in *Bulletin d'études des Fondations Indiennes* 6

[155] Coedès, George (1906:72) 'La stèle de Ta-Prohm' *BEFEO* 6

[156] A less august comparison would be Hitler's imposition of the paraphernalia of the Third Reich. For an account of Augustus's innovative propaganda, see Zanker, P (1984) *Auguste ou le pouvoir des images.* Boisselier specifically makes the German comparison by comparing Jayavarman's hasty temple construction programme (after the slow and single project of Angkor Wàt) with the poor quality of Third Reich building. Boisselier, J (1952:7) 'Reflexions sur l'art du regne de Jayavarman VII' in *Bulletin de la Societe des Etudes Indochinoises* vol. XXVII.1, Saigon

period emerging from the early triad phase and continuing through to the opening of the Bàyon, when Lokeśvara is identified as the deity in the giant face towers. Such accounts usually ignore or occasionally express puzzlement over such Tantric elements as the late multi-armed Prajñāpāramitās and the late proliferation of Hevajra images. In order to give due weight to these elements, this thesis argues that we should consider distinguishing a third phase in Jayavarman's public disclosure of his Buddhism.

This highly effective king and extraordinary builder ordered late and major changes to the Bàyon, the vast construction project at the heart of his rebuilt and reinforced city. The occasion for formally dedicating the Bàyon to the gods may have been a second coronation or *indrābhiṣeka* to consecrate him cakravartin following the restoration of Khmer power in central and southern Čampā by 1203. [Chapter 6.3.7] The late changes included extending a 4.5m. high platform around the Bàyon's central sanctuary. The platform unceremoniously covered over large Lokeśvara pediments that seem to have been carved as the principal icons in the previous plan. The abrupt change signals the end of 'Lokeçvarisation' as abruptly as it was started.

Lokeśvara's role in the large medical network may also have ended abruptly. The healing Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, whose image is close to that of the Khmer Nāga Buddha, except that he holds a myrobalan fruit or medicine container in one hand, is mentioned in the king's hospital stelae and was presumably erected at each foundation. Bhaiṣajyaguru's name is mentioned 10 times in the 41 small inscriptions left legible in the Bàyon. The only other name that appears more than once is that 'Jayabuddhamahānātha'. Lokeśvara's image was left dominating the medical Neak Paen spa through to the end of the reign, but a series of sandstone images of the Tantric Buddha Vajradhara, with vajra and bell held before the chest in his distinctive prajñā-embrace mudrā, began to appear at some point at hospital chapels. These images of Vajradhara have the peaceful lowered eyes of the middle Bàyon period, the heyday of the Bodhisattva Lokeśvara in the 1190s. This could either be an iconographic indicator that they belong to this second phase, or a

marker of the transition to the third, late Bàyon style. The simple dress and the lack of regal jewellery of these Vajradharas (except one of those in Angkor and the three in Īśān with simple crowns), along with the single head and two arms of all these images, is typical of the second Bayon period.

When the Khmers in the late Bàyon period associate Vajradhara with their hospitals, this may be an allusion to the Tantric version of the *bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra* translated by Yijing in the T'ang capital in 707. In this text, the *Bodhisattva* Vajradhara is given prominence when he utters a concluding *dhāranī* for protection against all diseases. Although Vajradhara eventually became a name for the supreme Buddha of Vajrayāna, he earlier achieved eminence in the Esoteric Buddhist communities of Tibet, China and Japan as a Bodhisattva associated with the Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha.[157] [Chapter 6.5.4] In Angkor, at the East Chapel hospital complex near the Takeo temple, a headless image of Vajradhara was still in place on a vajra-decorated pedestal when Victor Goloubew wrote about it in 1937.[158] In addition, new evidence has been published that substantiates this Vajradhara link with the hospitals; three statues of a crowned Vajradhara have been found in the grounds of chapels of hospitals or rest houses in Īśān, at Nang Rong of Buriram, Prang Ku of Sisaket and Na Dun of Maha Sarakham.[159]

Apart from Vajradhara, which other deities made up the new Buddhist pantheon of the Bàyon and the other foundations active in the final phase of the reign? The main Buddhist icons of the Bàyon may have been destroyed when the temple was later converted into a Hindu foundation, like the large Nāga Buddha image found in pieces in a cleaning operation in the pit below the Bàyon central sanctuary tower. [160] **[Plate 20 Bàyon Nāga Buddha in bits EFEO archive]** The dedication stela that once addressed and identified the principal Bàyon gods has not been found and may also have been destroyed. The other two major sets of surviving icons of Jayavarman's final pantheon

[157] Paul Pelliot (1903:33) 'Le Bhaisajyaguru' *BEFEO* III
[158] Goloubew, Victor (1937:97-104) 'Sur quelques images khmèrs de Vajradhara' *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 5
[159] Woodward, H (2003:208) *The art and architecture of Thailand* Brill, Leiden
[160] The icon now stands restored on a Buddhist platform close to the Bayon.

are several thousand Yoginīs carved to dominate all the entrances to the Bàyon, and the giant face towers. [Chapter 3.2.2] These Yoginīs dance in their unmistakeable *ardhaparyanka* pose, with one knee bent and the other leg retracted to touch the thigh of the other, which is the standard posture of Hevajra and of many of the Yoginīs who achieved solitary status at the centre of their own mandalas.[161] It projects a powerful message which summons up the primacy of meditation and visualization in Tantric ritual developed in the sādhanas of the 12th century *guhyasamayasādhana*, as well as the cosmic import of Śiva's wild final *tandāva* dance that marks the end of each universal aeon.

Outside the Bàyon we find a series of indications that the king was reverting to Vajrayāna in the mainstream Mahīdhara style. Yoginī dancers in the *ardhaparyanka* posture dominate the large new halls inserted into the king's earlier temples. Their collective impact on the extension of ritual performance space in the temples towards the end of the reign is so great that, extending Stern's model, we could call it 'Yoginīfication'. Furthermore, Yoginīs in the same posture whirl around Hevajra in bronzes that are three dimensional maṇḍalas as prescribed in the *hevajra-tantra*. The large number of bronze lustration conches and other paraphernalia created for this kind of ceremony -- bearing Hevajra's embossed image – certainly support this thesis. Hevajra also appears in stone. There are three large surviving sandstone icons of Hevajra. One is a relief and is still intact with eight heads, 20 arms and four feet[162], and other is a larger and finer but heavily damaged one, without arms or legs, whose bust is now in the New York Metropolitan Museum. A third stone Hevajra appears on a pediment at Bantéay Chmàr, in the middle of a large Yoginī hall that measures 35m x 15m and was probably the largest covered (corbelled) temple hall in the kingdom. The Yoginīs that populate a one metre frieze around this double room are distinctive for their size and for having legs of eagles. Bantéay Chmàr, which was built in parallel with the

[161] Elizabeth English renders the *Nispannayogāvalī* definition of Hevajra's pose as: '[Hevajra] is in the *ardhaparyanka*, having placed the tip of his right foot on his left thigh.' Elizabeth English (2002:400n81) *Vajrayoginī: her visualizations, rituals and forms* Wisdom Publications, Boston

[162] In the Siemreap Conservation.

Bàyon and shares many characteristics with it – including face towers and outer gallery walls with long reliefs of the king's military campaigns – was perhaps never officially opened as the dedication stelae were found polished for inscriptions but with only one bearing a few opening lines. The remoteness of the temple, beyond the economic reach of the modern tourist market, has meant that it remains a complete and unrestored ruin. Yet there is a special reason for restoring it: Bantéay Chmàr for some reason escaped the destructive attention of the Brahmans who desecrated Jayavarman's other temples, so it probably contains the most complete record of Jayavarman's last state pantheon. One celebrated feature of Bantéay Chmàr is a section of the outer gallery walls which bear a unique series of eight images of Lokeśvara in the third, Tantric phase of the king's Buddhism. The Khmer version of the 11-headed, thousand-armed Avalokeśvara elsewhere called *Mahākarunika* ('supremely compassionate')[163] that was widely venerated in China, Japan and Vietnam, mostly have 11 heads and up to 32 arms, many of them carry the vajra. This deity is said to aid innumerable beings towards enlightenment simultaneously through mystical dances, song and gestures.

7.9.1 Jayavarman *siddha*

A late[164] inscription on one of the small temples set high at the corners of Angkor Thom's great ramparts, twice describes Jayavarman as a king capable of personally reciting the mantras. Jayavarman was learned in scripture and Sanskrit and is lauded as being from his youth a veritable Pāṇini, the medieval Sanskrit grammarian.[165] The late inscription on the Prasat Chrung temple at the Southwest corner of Angkor Thom (K.288) first describes the king as 'firm in his knowledge of the magical formulas' (*dhruvam mantravidām*) and later shows him reciting a mantra in person [Maxwell challenges this translation and says mantra here means advice – confirmed with K. Bhattacharya on 15.12.2006, who agreed Coedès was wrong and the

[163] Roerich, George N., trans. 1949-53 (reprint 1995 Dehli, Motilal Barnarsidass) *The Blue Annals* by 'Gos Lotsawa, Calcutta, Royal Asiatic society of Bengal
[164] Coedès, G. (1952:208) *Inscriptions du Cambodge* vol. IV: 'On doit donc considerer les inscriptions des angles de la muraille d' Angkor Thom comme la dernière production épigraphique du règne de Jayavarman VII, interrompue de sa mort.'
[165] Coedès (1941:286) 'La stele du Praḥ Khan d'Angkor' BEFEO

text should read that the king received the advice of the sages. Check with Skorupski]:

> After having brought a blazing flame to the earth and after spreading a white canopy as brilliant as the moon, this lord of the world filled it with sages and proceeded himself to perform the mantra. [166]

It is perhaps the only place in Khmer epigraphy that a reigning monarch is shown performing such an esoteric role in what appears to have been a public ritual before battle. The most complete account we have of Jayavarman's pantheon is contained in 10 cm. votive tablets held in the Phnom Penh and Bangkok museums. These show Hevajra and Saṃvara, another fierce Heruka deity like Hevajra, dancing wildly on each side of a six-armed seated Buddha. [Chapter 6.5.5]

All these elements coalesce into a substantial body of evidence for asserting the existence of a late royal Vajrayāna cult, focused on Hevajra and Vajrasattva. The evidence is scattered, broken and incomplete because of a determined campaign at some later date to purge Angkor of Jayavarman's Buddhism, but its cumulative effect is significant. Indeed, in my research I have found little evidence from Jayavarman's third decade in power which resists the argument for seeing Vajrayāna as the active creed of the old monarch, who was by then entering his 70s. The absence of such evidence puts in question the current consensus, according to which there are Tantric elements in Jayavarman's Mahāyāna, but they are peripheral to his core, normative Mahāyānist creed. In order to challenge this consensus, I propose that the Hevajras, Yoginīs, Prajñāpāramitās, Vajrasattvas, Vajradharas and Mahākarunikas be taken as occupying centre stage in the third and last phase

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[166] 17 *bhūmaṇḍalan dīptataraḥpradīpam*
induprabhāgaurayaśovitānam
18 *jagadvibhūtyai sumanovikīrṇaṃ*
kṛtvā kṛtī mantram upācarad yaḥ
IC IV (1952:212) K.288 B 17, 18
Coedès renders this as:

> Après avoir, en vue de la prospérité des creatures, placé sur la terre le flambeau de son énergie, après y avoir installé le dais de sa gloire blanche et brillante comme la lune, et l'avoir remplie de sages, ce roi habile procéda à la récitation des formules magiques.

of the reign, as the dominant surviving material record of a royal cult of Hevajra and the Yoginīs.

Chapter 3

Hevajra and the Yoginīs

> Judging by the number of images of Hevajra found around Angkor and on various sites on the Khorat Plateau in Thailand…it would seem that a cult of this important Tantric divinity was practised from the 11th century onwards. Since no relevant literature is available, not even a stray reference on a carved inscription, nothing of certainty can be said regarding this cult.
>
> David Snellgrove (2001:57) *Khmer civilization and Angkor*

This chapter argues that Khmer icons of Hevajra and Yoginīs, contra Snellgrove's admonition above, constitute the major material evidence for discerning a state cult of Tantric Buddhism at the end of the 12th century at the court of king Jayavarman VII. With one notable exception[167], the small numbers of scholars who have studied these icons of what I will call the late, Khmer Vajrayāna, have judged them to be puzzling, marginal elements arisen from some sub-cult at the fringes of a syncretic court, which are incapable of elucidation in the absence of textual support. But I find multiple interlocking strands of evidence in the Khmer temple art, along with some circumstantial evidence from the international medieval Buddhist scene, combine in favour of interpreting a Tantric cult of Hevajra as the supreme creed of the Angkorian court at the height of empire under this king. The main body of material evidence is a large series of bronze statuettes of Hevajra, a wrathful emanation of a supreme Tantric Buddha with eight heads and 16 arms, represented in a unique and beautiful iconic form in ancient Cambodia. These ritual bronzes, some of which (for example in the Phnom Penh and Sydney museums) have Hevajra dancing in a pillared palace in characteristic

[167] The exception is Hiram Woodward, who has given the most penetrating account of Tantric Buddhism at Angkor. In 1979 he judged that '…in Jayavarman's Buddhism there were indeed Tantric elements that probably came from Phimai, but their precise relationship to his (Buddhist) triad remains to be defined' ('The Bàyon-period Buddha image in the Kimbell Art Museum' *Archives of Asian Art* XXXII). Two years later he extended his research in a complex, ground-breaking paper without which this dissertation would have been impossible. His seminal paper is entitled 'Tantric Buddhism at Angkor Thom' and was published in *Ars Orientalis* 12, in 1981. Many years after he reaffirmed his view that: 'Tantric Buddhism was established at Phimai in the late 11th century. Under Jayavarman VII at Angkor a hundred years later, Tantric elements were incorporated into the royal Buddhist synthesis.' (*The sacred sculpture of Thailand* 1997:92 Thames and Hudson)

ardhaparyanka (half cross-legged) posture, with one knee bent and the other leg retracted to touch the thigh of the other, and surrounded by a circle of eight Yoginīs.

A maṇḍala in precisely this form is defined in the *hevajra-tantra*, a major text of mature Vajrayāna; the bronzes therefore leave no possible doubt that the principal Yoginī Tantra reached Angkor. But are we dealing here with the centre of the royal cult or the fringe; how high up the royal agenda would we expect to find Hevajra rituals? This chapter will find a surprising degree of commonality among the icons, as well as the ornamentation of bronze libation conches, vajras and bells and other Tantric ritual paraphernalia embellished with Hevajra's image. These precious, portable, sacred bronzes, after no doubt passing through many hands, are now to be found scattered among museum and private collections across the world, and they have little or no provenance. If we are to persuade those who, like Snellgrove, remain sceptical that a Hevajra cult held a central position, we will require some incontrovertible link in stone and *in situ* within the walls of the temples where the ritual bronzes once served their cultic purpose.

I believe that such further evidence can be uncovered by looking again at sections of Jayavarman's temple reliefs that have hitherto received only cursory attention. These are the large entablature friezes and pillar engravings of thousands of vigorous, wide-eyed dancers which monopolize the entrances to the Bàyon. **[Plate 21 Bàyon Yoginī entablature frieze, faces S. wall June 2003]** It has always been assumed that these dancers are *Apsaras* or celestial nymphs that bear no special significance beyond embellishing the palaces of the gods on earth. The Sanskrit word 'Apsaras', or 'Apsarases', has been used as a vague designator for various groups of female divinities. Dancing, flying or standing nymphs are standard Khmer decorative architectural elements for indicating the presence of gods in their temples or for delineating sacred from profane areas. But at the Bàyon they are different. The Bàyon dancing goddesses are large and appear in great numbers, crowding all entrances to the massive temple. Why is the Bàyon

suddenly wrapped in female deities in a way unprecedented in Khmer temple architecture?

An abundance of female deities would be appropriate to a Hevajra cult. The *hevajra-tantra* was among the first of a new class of Tantras that gave a strong female orientation to its maṇḍalas and therefore became known in Tibet as the 'Mother' Tantras[168], as distinguished from the earlier, male-dominated 'Father' Tantras, such as the *sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṇgraha-tantra (STTS)* and the *guhya-samaja-tantra (GST)*. [169] Maṇḍalas are cosmic diagrams that define order among the myriad celestial beings of the Mahāyāna Buddhist, and especially Tantric Buddhist cosmos, in order to fulfil directing roles in initiation ceremonies. If we can link the thousands of dancing goddesses of the Bàyon's outer gallery to the Yoginīs that surround Hevajra in the sacred bronzes, this would provide a foundation for making the case that consecration rites to Hevajra were central to the ritual and liturgy of the Bayon.

1. Contemporary evidence

From two Chinese reports written in the 13th century, after the Bàyon was dedicated, we glean a picture of a period when women were for a time prominent in the temple rituals in Angkor, only to be possibly excluded shortly thereafter. The earlier of the Chinese sources indicates that Jayavarman's temples were particularly known for their focus on female officiants. The 1225 chronicle of [Chau Ju-kua] Zhao Ru-gua, the Chinese Superintendent of Maritime Trade in Canton, was based on hearsay rather than visits to the countries whose goods he taxed at the northern end of the maritime trade route, but his testimony contains a unique indication of what was taking place in Jayavarman's temples:

> [In Zhen-la, i.e. Cambodia] the people are devout Buddhists. In the temples there are 300 foreign women [*fan nu* 番女 is literally 'foreign women' but Peter Harris in translating *Zhou Daguan* in 2007 Silkworm Books says this means non-Chinese and so translates it 'local women']; they dance and offer food to the Buddha. They are called a-

[168] 'The *Hevajra-tantra*, to the contrary, is characterized chiefly by female deities. All of the fifteen deities composing its basic mandala structure are feminine beings.' Ray, R (1973:372) *'Maṇḍala' symbolism in Tantric Buddhism* Chicago University

[169] The dates of the major Tantras are unknown and scholars have stepped back from earlier estimates as being unhistorical. See Davidson, Ronald M. (1981:4) 'The litany of the names of Mañjuśrī' *Tantric and Taoist studies in honour of R.A. Stein* Ed M. Strickmann vol 1 Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Bruxelles: 'To my mind attempts to attach dates to Buddhist Tantras without reference to historically localizable commentators or citations by datable authors is premature, at least until the literature has been systematically exploited for such references.'

> nan [Skt. ānanda (bliss)]. …The incantations of the Buddhist and Taoist [Śaiva yogin] priests have magical powers.[170]

[Chau's] Zhau's choosing the term 'a-nan' (blisses) probably indicates the use of the word in Bàyon rituals. The *hevajra-tantra*, for example, defines four 'blisses' that an adept strives for in executing a four-stage consecration cycle (*caturabhiṣekas*). Women trained as 'Tantric assistants'[171] help sādhakas achieve the four blisses of spiritual emancipation through meditational and yogic-sexual initiations. The four rituals (*ācārya, guhya, prajñājñāna, caturtha*) generate four different blisses (*ānanda* = bliss, *paramānada* = perfect bliss, *viramānanda* = bliss of cessation, *sahajānanda* = innate bliss or natural ecstasy):[172]

> With the [third] insight/gnosis consecration, the disciple copulated with the female partner under the master's tutelage. This sexual act is for the purpose of obtaining the proper method of the 'centers of the internal maṇḍala' (*maṇḍalacakra*) to realize the four joys (*ānanda*) during the four moments of ritual orgasm. Finally, the fourth consecration varied considerably, involving either a symbolic revelation in a highly-charged charismatic environment or, more frequently, lengthy instruction about the nature of reality in which the experiences of the previous two sexual consecrations were to be integrated into a larger Buddhist philosophical context.[173]

English describes the third consecration as an erotico-yogic practice in which the initiate 'excites the goddess' but retains his semen in a yogic self-consecration (*svādhiṣṭhānakrama*) that was to become the motor of the Tantric vehicle for achieving the highest realisation.[174] This is how Tucci places the four blisses in ritual context of the new cosmology:

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[170] Translated by F. Hirth and W.Rockhill (1911:53) *Chau Ju-kua: his work on the Chinese and Arab trade in the 12th and 13th centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi* [Zhu fan zhi] Imperial Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, with inserted notes by Hirth.

[171] Ariane Macdonald (1962:69) *Le Mandala du Mañjuśrīmulakalpa* Collection Jean Przyluski, Paris

[172] Snellgrove (1959:134)

[173] Davidson (2002b:198)

[174] Elizabeth English (2002:92) *Vajrayoginī, her visualizations, rituals and forms* Wisdom Publications, Boston. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya would probably still hold that this was not physical: 'It is ānanda ("bliss") not in any empirical sense, because it transcends all the antimonies (*dvandva*) of the empirical world.' Kamaleswar Bhattacharya (1966:9) 'Linga-kośa' *Essays offered to G.H. Luce by his colleagues and friends in honour of his seventy-fifth birthday* Artibus Asiae, Ascona. Robert van Gulik puts the majority of texts on the side of the physical woman: 'The decisive stage of the process is the first, namely the formation of the *bindu*, effected through the stimulus received from the woman partner. Some texts represent her as an image evoked by concentrated meditation, and the union with her as a spiritual one. Most texts, however, state that she must be a real woman, plainly stating that "Buddha-hood abides in the female organ" *buddhatvam yosit-yoni-samāśritam*, and that the uterus is in fact

> [The four states of purification in the Upaniṣads]… is received into Vajrayāna and applied to its soteriology: the states of wakefulness (*jūgrata*), sleep (*svapna*), deep sleep (*susupta*), ineffable fourth state (*turiya*), are in parallel with the four *ānanda*, four blisses which progressively intensify: *prathamānanda, viramānanda, paramāndanda, sahajānanda*. In this symbology, which allows the initiate to realize the purity of divine experience, they correspond to the four bodies of the Buddha: *nirmāna, saṃbhoga, dharma* and *sahaja*, each of them adequate to the four planes of reality: physical, verbal, spiritual and intellective (*kāya, vāc, citta, jñāna. sekoddeśaṭīkā* p.27.) [175]

The highest bliss *sahajānanda,* whether achieved through sexual yoga or in visualization, is insistently present in ritual systems derivative of the *hevajra-tantra*[176], which Davidson is surely right to assume, arose from Buddhism's collision with 'iconology from rural, tribal and Śaiva contexts.'[177] This Buddhist engagement in Śaiva-style erotic soteriology is truly remarkable, given Buddhism's historical withdrawal into monastic seclusion to achieve release from bondage to the phenomenal world. It was a extreme homeopathic strategy for attaining enlightenment, albeit in a severely controlled environment, as Davidson goes on to comment:

> …the advent of sexual meditative behaviours in Buddhism…must constitute one of the most extraordinary developments in the history of Indian Buddhism. Few activities could be more in conflict with the fundamental values displayed in the prior history of Buddhist monasticism, even if we can see that the standards espoused were not always actually practised.[178]

In the absence of any other account of the ritual or liturgy practised in Jayavarman's Buddhism, Chau's brief chronicled report does appear to reinforce the message about Hevajra initiations borne by conches and other Hevajra-dedicated ritual paraphernalia. It is reasonable to assume that some system of mature Tantric consecrations was deployed in Jayavarman's temples. How central these were to the new state Buddhist cult remains to be determined.

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prajñā.' Gulik, R.H. van (1961:342) *Sexual life in ancient China: a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca.1500BC till 1644 AD* Appendix I 'Indian and Chinese sexual mysticism' Brill, Leiden

[175] Tucci (1949:243)

[176] Davidson, R. (2002b:72) 'Reframing sahaja: genre, representation, ritual and lineage' *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30 Kluwer, Netherlands

[177] Davidson (2002a:58)

[178] Davidson (2002a:57)

By the time a second Chinese report appeared 70 years later, from imperial envoy Chou Ta-kuan, the sacred role of women officiants is no longer mentioned. Chou's report shows the Khmer Buddhists were still numerous but gives no clear indication of whether they continued to conduct their rites in Jayavarman's series of massive stone temples. Here we cannot read much into his not mentioning the large temples, for *argumentum ex silencio* is the weakest historical argument. The envoy only records that he saw a large network of *bhikṣus* in Theravdin-style robes in the villages, who occupied humble buildings with simple, painted-clay Theravādin-style Buddhas. He is also categorical about the pagodas being male preserves:

> The Buddhist monks shave the head, wear yellow robes, bare the right shoulder, knot a strip of yellow cloth around the waist and go barefoot. Their temples, which are often roofed with tiles, contain only one statue, closely resembling the Buddha Śākyamuni, which is called Po-lai [= Praḥ, 'sacred']. Moulded from clay, it is painted in various colours and draped in red. On the other hand, the Buddhas on the towers [of Angkor Thom] are of bronze. There are no bells, no drums, no cymbals, no banners. …There are no Buddhist nuns.[179]

The Buddhists were nevertheless better endowed than the Śaivas:

> The *pa-sseu-wei* [*tapasvi*]…also have their monasteries, but they are smaller than the temples of the Buddhists; the Taoists [Śaiva yogins] do not enjoy the same prosperity as the bonzes.[180]

Whatever later occurred in Angkor to drive the Buddhists from the powerful position they attained under Jayavarman, we can conclude that women probably held a uniquely important position in the state religion during the greatest period of Buddhist temple building in Cambodian history.

2. Yoginīs

To substantiate a link between the Bàyon's dancer friezes and Hevajra, we need to clarify the differences between *Yoginīs*[181] and their cousins, the

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[179] Pelliot, Paul (1902) trans. Gilman d'Arcy Paul 2nd edition (1992:11) *The customs of Cambodia by Chou Ta-kuan* The Siam Society, Bangkok

[180] Pelliot, P. (1951:15) *Mémoires sur les coutumes du Cambodge de Tcheou Ta-Kouan: version nouvelle* Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Paris

[181] I use the shorter form 'Yoginī' throughout for economy, but in Buddhism the more correct form is 'Vajrayoginī', according to Elizabeth English: 'The way in which Buddhist Yoginīs are differentiated from female spirits of other Tantric systems is by the characteristic tag *vajra*, the distinguishing mark of nondual Vajrayāna Buddhism. They thus became known as *vajra*-yoginīs and *vajra*-ḍākiṇīs. A commentarial text in the *Guhyasamayasādhanamālā* opens by

Apsaras of Cambodia's temples. Yoginī cults are ancient, obscure, occult and little studied. In Indic religions Yoginīs and Ḍākiṇīs[182] have for millennia been associated with tree spirits, the Vedic eight Matṛkas or Mothers, and witchcraft. They seem to have originated as Indian village goddesses. Their power must have been exceptional, for they were eventually (probably in the ninth century in northern India) elevated to the status of minor goddesses in the orthodox Brahmanical and Buddhist folds, under Tantric rubrics.[183]

Tantric cults had been developing at court level long before this. Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-Tsang described seeing non-Buddhists carrying bones, covered in ash, or naked but for peacock feathers, during his journeys in India from 630-44. Lorenzen puts Hsüan-Tsang's account alongside that of the contemporary court biographer Bānbhatta who gave a detailed description of the religious life under king Harsa-vardhana of Sthānvīśvara (r. 606-47), which shows '…that both primitive and developed types of Tantric worship were already widespread in the seventh century.' Members of sects in the cities and at court began researching the rituals and beliefs of forest dwellers. The most archaic form then known was considered to be that practised by the Śabara tribe of the Vindhya forest, discussed below, which gave its name to one of Hevajra's Yoginīs Śavarī.[184] This question takes us into the modern dispute about whether medieval kuṇḍalini yogic sex rituals were primarily conceptual or physical. Robert Van Gulik, noting that at least three of the leading four pīṭha, or sacred sites of Vajrayāna, named in the Sādhanamālā are in the far northeast and northwest of India, believed physical sexual yogic rites had Taoist origins and migrated with Chinese medical notions of the body into Indian yoga. He sees the Taoist ho-ch'i ritual becoming in India the gana-cakra ('mass circle') in which '…men and women gather in the deep of

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explaining the word *vajra* in *vajrayoginī* in just these terms: "[The word] *vajra* serves to exclude (*nirākaranam*) the yoginīs of the heretics and so forth."' (English 2002:44)

[182] Benoytosh Battacharyya defines a Ḍākiṇī is 'any goddess who may be associated with the gods in yab-yum.' (1932:139) *An introduction to Buddhist Esotericism* OUP. Other scholars associate them with flying from the Sanskrit √dī = 'soar' and therefore with witches. (Snellgrove 1959:142 *The Hevajra Tantra* vol.2).

[183] This is one of the conclusions of Vidya Dehejia's study of Tantric Hindu texts and temple sites in her 1986 *Yogini cult and temples, a Tantric tradition* National Museum, New Delhi.

[184] David Lorenzen (1972:16) *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas, two lost Śaivite sects* Thomson Press, New Dehli

night…with a naked woman in centre of the circle… [T]hereafter all present engage in sexual intercourse…[I]n Himalaya where the practice survives, the breast cloths of the women are drawn as lots to select partners'.[185]

> The fact that two centres [of Vajrayāna] were situated on India's NE border, and one – a very important one – on the NW frontier, in my opinion suggests a plausible theory concerning the origin of the Vajrayāna. Since sexual mysticism based on the coitus reservatus flourished in China since the beginning of our era, whereas it was unknown in India [undetected by Fa-Hsien, Hsüan-Tsang or Yijing], it seems obvious that this particular feature of the Vajrayāna was imported into India from China, probably via Assam.[186]

Later scholars, noting versions of anatomical links between brain, spine marrow and semen in ancient Greece and the Persian empire, have sought its origins in the Indus Valley or Sumerian cultures.[187] Whatever the ultimate origin of this anatomy, Gulik gives an extended account of how early Chinese medical handbooks promulgated the key idea that if a man's semen (*ching*) and a woman's blood (*hsüeh*) were mixed and retained in *coitus reservatus* these 'power substances' were translated into the elixir of life that rises to the brain and nurtures a kind of hermaphrodite state that wards off disease and produces longevity. The evidence for such beliefs developing socially into large seasonal orgies appears to be thin and heavily dependent on repeated and less than objective denunciations by the emerging Buddhist hierarchy.[188] Yet even when the Buddhists supplanted the Taoists at court in the eighth century, under several T'ang emperors, the Taoists remained highly influential. One of the best known exponents of Taoist ideas was physician Sun Szû-mo who especially recommended promiscuity:

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[185] Gulik, Robert Hans van (1961:346) *Sexual life in ancient China: a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca.1500 BC till 1644 AD.* Appendix I 'Indian and Chinese sexual mysticism' Brill, Leiden

[186] Gulik (1961:351). Gulik confines his use of 'Tantric' to 'schools of Hindu and Buddhist thought that consider sexual congress as the main means for reaching salvation.' Gulik (1961:339) He further suggests the proximity of Sylhet to the Burmese border may account for both the eighth century practices of the Ari sect in pre-Theravāda Pagan, and the frescoes of the Nandamaññā temple, which Charles Duroiselle described as 'so vulgarly erotic and revolting, that they can neither be reproduced nor described.' Charles Duroiselle (1918:82) 'The Arī of Burma and Tantric Buddhism' *Archaeological survey of India* Calcutta

[187] See Thomas McEvilley (2002:93-113) 'The Spinal Serpent' *The Roots of Tantra* Eds Harper, K.A. Brown R.L. SUNY

[188] Henri Maspero (1937:409) 'Les procédéd de "nourrir le principe vital" dans la religion Taoïste ancienne' *Journal asiatique*

> If a man continually has intercourse with one and the same woman her Yin essence will become weak and she will be of little advantage to the man…If one can copulate with 12 women without once emitting semen, one will remain young and handsome for ever. If a man can copulate with 93 women and still control himself, he will attain immortality.[189]

The first extended study of the Indian Hindu cult of Yoginīs was conducted by Vidya Dehejia, who toured India's provincial museums to decipher difficult texts written in cryptic language (*sandhyābhāsā*). Unravelling the mysteries of the Hindu Yoginīs proved difficult, not only because of the rarity and obscurity of the texts, but also because it was an insistent part of the tradition that the Tantras be *performed* and transmitted *orally* from guru to initiate.[190] The Hindu Yoginī cults of India were practised in unroofed, circular stone temples on the edge of towns or villages from at least the ninth century. **[Plate 22 Yoginī shrine]** They drew on the prehistoric Vedic cult of the Mothers (Matṛkas) who are described in the *Mahābharātā* (4th century BC to 4th AD) as youthful and beautiful but with sharp teeth and nails and protruding lips. They originated in some way in the Vedic gods of power -- Agni, Yama, Rudra, Varuna, Indra and Brahmā.

The main text devoted to Buddhist Vajrayoginī cults is the *guhyasamayasādhanamālā* (*GSS*), a group of 33 sādhanas probably written by several hands between the eighth and 12th centuries and gathered into a collection in the 12th century.[191] Dehejia says the Yoginīs resemble Apsaras in form, but not in substance, because they inhabit the earth not the heavens.[192] The Apsara-like beauty of the Yoginīs or Matṛkas only veils their earth-bound

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[189] 'Healthy sex life' section of Sun Szû-mo's *Priceless recipes* translated Gulik (1961:194)

[190] Dehejia relates that she decided against being initiated into an extant cult because she would have been prevented from publishing the resulting occult knowledge. 'While I considered the possibility of taking such a step, I soon realised that this would not be a practicable solution, since in north India (in contrast to the south) such initiation would involve not only participation in rites of a decidedly dubious nature, but also the swearing of an oath of secrecy regarding all information imparted after initiation.' (Dehejia 1986:ii)

[191] The Yoginī cult appears to have drawn in such eminent writers as king Indrabhuti of Oddiyāna, his daughter Lakṣminkarā, her pupil Virūpa and Advayavajra. The last of these studied orthodox Buddhist disciplies at Vikramaśila before learning Tantric Buddhism at Nālandā under Nāropa. The Tibetan account holds that he was expelled from the monastery for keeping liquor and a woman in his cell. See English (2002:15)

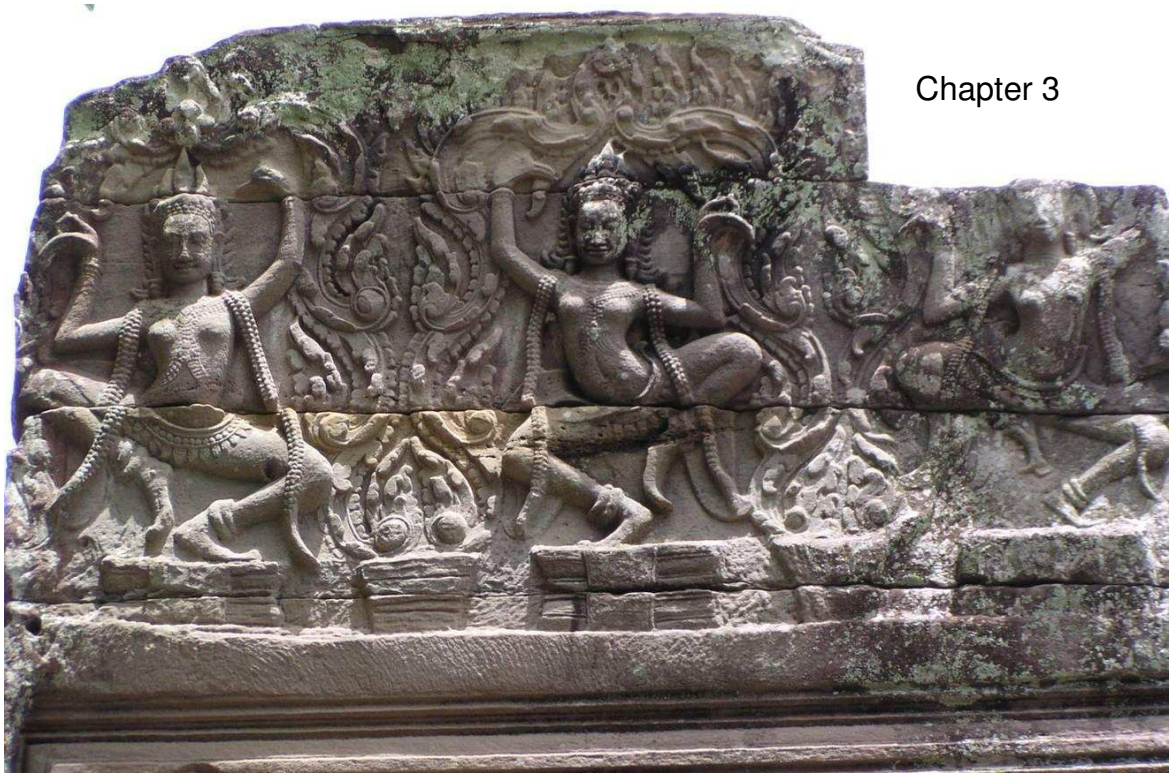
[192] 'In form they are said to resemble the apsaras, those beautiful celestial maidens; in speed like Vayu, god of the wind; in their lustre like Agni, god of fire; in strength like Indra. But the Matṛkas dwell in the trees, at crossroads, in caves, in the cemetery, on mountains. They are described as having melodious voices and speaking different languages, indicating their varied tribal origin.' Dehejia 1986:67

ferocity, a quality often visible in Yoginī images. **[Plate 23 royal Yoginī Bheraghat]** Indeed, Dehejia found in the Hindu *śri matotara-tantra* that a preliminary to 'corpse meditation' *śava-sādhana* (in which ritual *maithuna* or copulation takes place naked on a corpse surrounded by a circle of Matṛkas), was the enthused beheading of the corpse.[193] Cannibalism followed. In Dehejia's photograph of the beautiful and perhaps only royal Yoginī temple at Shadol, the Yoginī Śri Bhānavī ('Lustrous One') holds a severed head by its hair in one hand and a knife in the other. **[Plate 24 Sri Bhānavī, Shahdol]** Her attendants gnaw on a human hand. In Nepal and Tibet, icons of the naked Tantric Buddhist goddesses have fangs and bloodied mouths and trample on corpses. The trampled corpses of Tantric Buddhism represent the ties of passion and upbringing (normally Hindu) that block *tantrikas* from attaining Buddhahood. The trampling gesture first appeared, however, in the Śaiva Tantras when Kālī showed her supremacy by subjugating her former consort by trampling him underfoot.[194] By the 11th century, in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī,* the Tantric Buddhists had borrowed this iconographical device and were portraying their own deities as trampling the Śaiva pan-Indic gods underfoot.[195]

[193] 'The corpse must be a beautiful one, not injured in any way, and not defaced or marked in any manner. All its limbs must be intact and it should be sweet-smelling…Bathe the corpse to the accompaniment of *mantras* and smear it with Kashmir sandalwood paste. Then establish the *śava* in the centre of the *maṇḍala* and recite the Bhairava *mantra*. All this must be done in the middle of the night. Oh *sādhaka* performing this rite, be strong-minded, courageous and free from all doubts. Hold the head of the corpse and, with enthusiasm and disregarding the protruding tongue, cut off the head in one single stroke so that it falls to the ground.' Dehejia 1986:68

[194] English (2002:40)

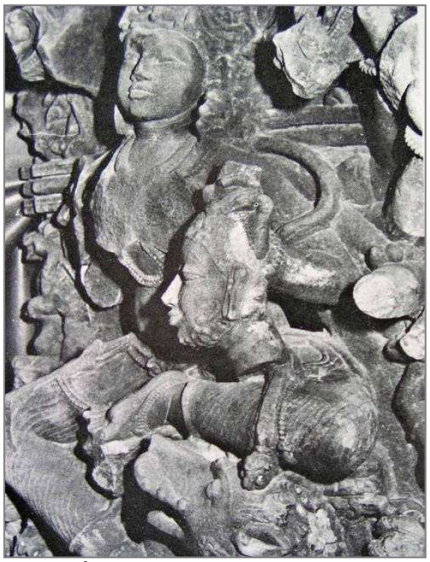
[195] Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann (1964:72) 'Divinités hindoues dans le tantrisme bouddhique' *Arts asiatiques* 10



Pl. 21. Bàyon southeast gallery Yoginī frieze

Pl. 22. Yoginī temple Mitauli, Gwalior (after Dehejia 1986:121)

Pl. 23. Royal Yoginī Bherghat
(after Dehejia 1986:131)



Pl. 24. Śrī Bhanavī, Shahdol (after Dehejia 1986:58)

Conceptually then, the difference between a Yoginī and an Apsara is large, but detecting this difference through iconic conventions in temples is far from obvious. Madeleine Giteau describes Cambodian Vajrayoginīs as having 'energy which is both terrible and frenetic',[196] but nobody would say Cambodian Yoginīs are as frenetic and terrible as those of Tibet. In comparison with the Yoginīs of Tibet, the Khmer Yoginīs dancing around Hevajra are vigorous, with expressively charged faces, but restrained; for such is the reserved nature of Khmer religious art conventions. We do not find in Angkor the explicit sexuality and gore of the Indic traditions that flowed uncensored into Nepal and Tibet. Whereas in the Tibetan tradition a wild and ferocious Hevajra is normally depicted at the centre of his maṇḍala in sexual union with his partner Nairātmyā ('she who is the absence of the notion of selfhood'), in Cambodia Hevajra almost always dances alone,[197] within his circle of Yoginīs and fangs and blood are rare. In Khmer temples the signs of a ferocious god can be subtle. Hiram Woodward points to one of the Hevajras in the Bangkok Museum as demonstrating that in Khmer art 'there need be no greater facial indication of Hevajra's fierce aspect than open eyes.'[198] **[Plate 25 Bangkok Śastradhara Hevajra]** This iconographic restraint in Cambodia contributes to the difficulty in distinguishing between Yoginīs and Apsaras. Jean Boisselier noted they were often confused at Phimai, 300 km northwest of Angkor, but still part of the Khmer empire:

> The *yoginī*, ḍakiṇi and yogin appear …in the lintels and pilasters of Phimai and as statues and bronzes, where they are often mistaken, despite their characteristic gestures, for Apsaras.[199]

We need a clearer taxonomy of Khmer Apsaras and Yoginīs.

2.1 Yoginīs in Phimai: Apsara wallpaper in Angkor Wàt

Fortunately, benchmarks for distinguishing between these Khmer goddesses were set in the two great 12th century temples built before the Bàyon – the temple at Phimai, opened in 1108, which provides a benchmark for Yoginīs,

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[196] Giteau, M (1997:121) *Khmer art, the civilisation of Angkor* Somogy, Paris
[197] In only one extant Khmer bronze does Nairātmyā appear in yab-yum (see Spink catalogue 1998 p.16 no. 25)
[198] Woodward 1981:57
[199] Boisselier (1966:305) *Asie du Sud-est: le Cambodge* Picard, Paris)

and the temple of Angkor Wàt, built shortly afterwards, which sets standards for Apsaras.

First we turn to the Tantric images of Phimai. One of the lintels of Phimai's central sanctuary features Yoginīs holding aloft their identifying attributes. They join musicians beside Saṃvara, another version of Hevajra, who dances on two corpses with an elephant hide extended behind him as a cape. The Yoginīs dancing with Saṃvara in Phimai have a springing stride and wide-open and assertive eyes. **[Plate 26 Phimai Saṃvara Yoginī]** These Phimai goddesses are by no means a mere decorative accompaniment to the ceremonies; they are part of the principal deity. In the Tantric texts, their role is defined as that of the key intercessors for adherents of cults. The principal deities in the central sanctuary of Phimai, are Saṃvara, Vairocana, a crowned Buddha and Vajrapāṇi. Phimai bronzes attest the additional presence of Hevajra and Vajrasattva. In initiations designed to help *tantrikas* tear themselves from the phenomenal world, deities like these lead them through extremes of terrifying imagined experiences, so that their vision of the universe is expanded to the omniscience of a supreme Buddha. Each initiate identifies closely with a particular Yoginī, distinguished by the animals, fish or instruments they carry. Like Saṃvara[200] they trample on the corpses of Buddhist demons or Hindu and Vedic deities that symbolise the ego, the passions, the prejudices and misconceptions that cult adherents strive to abandon. The power of the Phimai dancers is portrayed in their regal dress, their staring, hypnotic eyes and their tautly-braced bodies. As an iconographic code, this is of course muted compared with the severed heads and cannibalism of Indian and Tibetan icons of Yoginīs.

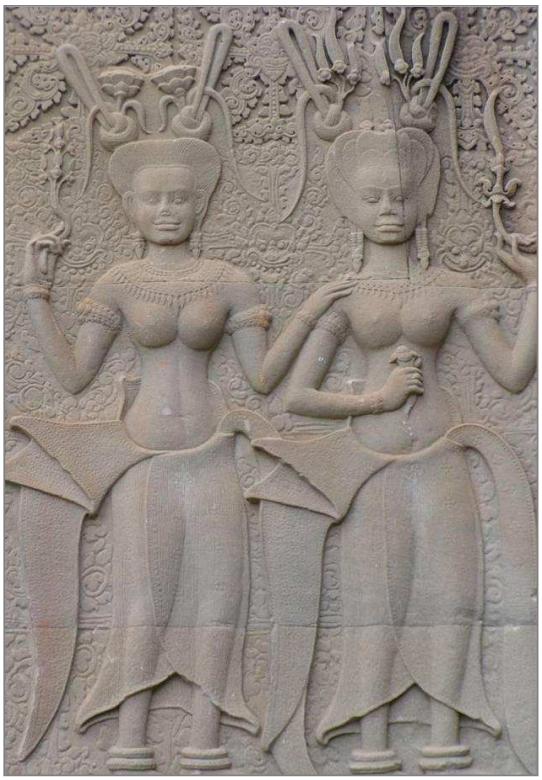
Next we turn to the Apsaras of Angkor Wàt. This Hindu foundation dedicated to Viṣṇu houses three different kinds of goddesses, which were called Apsaras by the French. The first group is that of the renowned standing *Devatās* that embellish the temple's palatial walls and sanctuary towers with

[200] Sir John Woodroffe has Cakrasaṃvara dancing on the corpses of Kālarātrī ('Night of time') and Bhairava ('representing the extremity of saṃsāra'). Cited from *Tantric Texts* vol.VII by Snellgrove (1987:154) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* reprint 2004 Orchid Press, Bangkok.

their physical beauty, courtly dress and exotic hairstyles. **[Plate 27 Angkor Wat devatas]**

Pl. 25. Śastradhara Hevajra Bangkok Museum (after Piriya 1979:62)

Pl. 26. Phimai Saṃvara Yoginī



Pl. 27. Angkor Wàt Devatas

Pl. 28. Angkor Wàt 'Churning' Apsara

Their meaning and function in the temple remain obscure. J. Boulbet, who notes a small number of the Angkor Wàt Devatās wear the G-strings (*ntroony*) of the *Bu Dih* ethnic group and no arm or ankle bracelets, and hypothesises that they are more earthly, giving the temple a centripetal role as a representative the peoples of the provinces,[201] an idea recently supported by Dagens.[202] The Devatās' long dresses, elaborate courtly hair and serene, static postures clearly differentiate them from the second group of goddesses in Angkor Wàt, the *flying Apsaras*. The flying nymphs wear short sampots and glide above the Devas and Asuras of the famous Churning of the Ocean of Milk bas-relief in the eastern gallery. **[Slide 28 Angkor Wat churning Apsara]** These appear to be the Khmer version of the original Apsaras, whose name ('water that moves') may recall their birth during the original Churning.[203] These Apsaras have their trailing foot facing upwards in the convention that indicates flight.

The third kind of Apsara found in Angkor Wàt is one which may have added to the prevailing confusion about Apsaras and Yoginīs. These last Apsaras are dressed in minimal sampots like the flying nymph of the Churning, but they are dancing on the ground. They play a background role. With their demure, downcast eyes they quietly dance in a kind of heavenly wallpaper close to the ceiling of high inner halls, or set in the swirling floral swirls of supporting columns. **[Plate 29 Angkor Wàt Apsara wallpaper]** Visually they are mostly lost in the palatial central galleries of the vast temple.

The reason they may have added to the prevailing confusion about goddess iconography in Angkor is that their dance posture appears to have been inherited from the Yoginīs of Phimai, which was dedicated less than a decade

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[201] Boulbet, J. (1968:209-18) 'Des femmes Bu Dih à quelques apsaras originales d'Angkor Wat' *Arts Asiatiques* 17, Paris

[202] Bruno Dagens (2003:209) *Les Khmers* Éditions les belles letters, Paris.

[203] V.M Bedekar (1967:46) 'The legend of the Churning of the Ocean in the epics and the Purānas: a comparative study' *Purāna* vol.9.1 All-India Kashiraj Trust, Varanasi, lists the several versions of the myth in the epics and Purānas and finds seven texts in which the appearance of Apsarah from the waters agitated by the churning occurs 34 times.' Coedès, G. (1923:30) 'Bronzes khmèrs' *Artibus Asiae* Paris.

before the construction of Angkor Wàt began. But although the Yoginī *form* created in Phimai may have been in fashion, the powerful burden of meaning in the Tantric icon does not seem to have been transmitted to the Vaiṣṇava foundation in Angkor. Whereas the glaring Yoginīs of Phimai are at the hub of the cult alongside the major deity of the central sanctuary, the Angkor Wàt dancers lower their eyes to the ground and dance hardly noticed as periodic motifs in the floral displays on columns, on dado panels beside the gate through the outer enclosure or suspended like wallpaper close to the ceiling of the inner cruciform sanctuary. The differences in demeanour and placement between the temple dancers of Phimai and Angkor Wàt are the key to their different iconography. The Phimai Tantric dancers express a force, purpose and intensity in their demeanour that is absent in the Angkor Wàt figures. Phimai inherited its Tantric dance position, with its air of wild but masterful Dionysian abandon, from the eighth century Tantric Buddhist tradition of Pāla Bengal, which reached Java in the same century. A similar posture to the one in Phimai, powered with a wild yet focused intensity, is found in an early 10th century relief on the Hindu Candi Loro Jonggrang of the Prambanan plain of Java. W.F. Stutterheim calls this Javanese dancer 'typically Tantric, as we see it performed in the Buddhist representations of Ḍakiṇī'.[204] **[Plate 30 Tantric dancer Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan]**

So far, we have distinguished three kinds of goddesses in Angkor Wàt. The goddesses called 'Apsaras' in are (1) airborne Apsaras from the milk churning myth, (2) standing Devatās who may have territorial tutelary significance, and (3) demure groups of background 'dancing and softly singing women.'

2.2 Back to the Bàyon

The goddesses that enwrap in large numbers the outer approaches to the Bàyon however share affinities with the Phimai and Prambanan figures. The Bàyon goddesses dominated the temple entrances with their posture and demeanour. They confront visitors with their stares and their sensuality. **[Plate 31 Bayon Yoginī]** The Bàyon alone, in its pristine state, had some 6,250 of

[204] W.F. Stutterheim (1925:153) *Rāma-legenden und Rāma-reliefs in Indonesian* Georg Müller, Munich

these challenging goddesses on the pillars and gopuras that led to its sacred spaces, according to my calculations at the site. Many of the entablature friezes in the entrances have collapsed with time, and the sandstone blocks bearing many of the Yoginī images lie scattered around the temple or in the 'Commaille piles' of stone inside the gallery walls, which are named after the first curator of Angkor, who cleared the site. **[Plate 32 Yoginīs on ground]** The original total of dancers can be calculated from their positions in the eight gopuras and from the two rows of pillars outside the outer gallery, as well as on internal friezes. **[Plate 33 Bayon Yoginī lintel Guimet]** This significant presence of imposing, dancing goddesses is an innovation in Khmer temple decoration. In their dance of violent energy, which Stutterheim calls 'typically Tantric' in Java, they have one foot landing on, or about to leap from, the ground or a lotus flower, and the other foot pulled up against the opposite thigh or the groin. This is the *ardhaparyanka* pose that is the standard iconographic posture of Hevajra and of the Yoginīs who, like Vajravārāhī, the consort of Cakrasaṃvara, achieved *ekadvīrā* ('solitary heroine') status at the centre of their own mandalas. It is a strange mixture of dance and meditation for *paryanka* ('cross-legged') is the classic seated meditation position developed in Sri Lanka and southern India; the *ardhaparyanka* posture elevates this into a wild, but physically impossible dance of meditation.[205] The wildness derives from the *tāndava* dance performed by Śiva at the end of an era, in which he is conceived as bowling down a cosmic mountainside.[206] Visually, the posture of the Bàyon goddesses projects some kind of urgent and powerful message about the temple and its rituals. The *ardhaparyanka* summons the world of meditation, visualization and release as it was

[205] The paryanka or half-lotus position is the standard pose of Khmer Naga Buddhas. This is Pierre Dupont's comment on one of the earliest Nāga Buddhas which was found under the central sanctuary of Angkor Wàt: 'Mais les jambes sont croisées en paryankasana, conformément à la tradtion de l'Inde du sud et spécialement de Ceylan, alors que le vajrasana paraît d'emploi constant pour les Buddha assis du Bengale et de Java. C'est cependent un rapprochement avec ces dernières images qui semble le plus plausible, compte tenu aussi du genre de bouddhisme tantrique pratiqué au Cambodge dans la second moitié du Xe siècle.' Pierre Dupont (1950) 'Les Buddha sur Nāga dans l'art khmer' *Artibus Asiae*

[206] English (2002:50): '…in the Tāndava dance he careers down the mountain-side frenzied, like a madman or a drunkard, surrounded by a rout of half-human, half-animal creatures who urge him \on in his mad career. This dance represents the destruction of the world.' R.C Zaehner (1962:85) *Hinduism* OUP, Oxford

developed in the sādhanas of the *GSS* over four centuries. And it may indeed be felt to transmit some of the cosmic import of Śiva's final dance.

Louis Frédéric cites the dancers on the pillars of the Bàyon as *the* classical Khmer demonstration of Hevajra's *ardhaparyanka*, where one leg takes the full weight of the body in what Frédéric calls more like "fierce trampling" than dancing.[207] Coedès' eye was also caught by the distinct similarities and, for him lack of grace, between the bronze Khmer Yoginī statuettes in Bangkok collections and the Bàyon dancers; but he went on to blur the taxonomy by calling all the temple dancers in Angkor Apsaras:

> Apsaras: les nymphes célestes, nées du barattement de l'océan de lait, sont abondamment représentées sur les monuments, soit debout, dans des poses qui veulent être gracieuses, soit dansant. C'est cette dernière attitude qu'elles prennent quand elles sont traitées en bronze (pl. XIX).**[Plate 35 Apsaras Coedès 1923 Pl. 19]** On notera la resemblance entre ces statuettes et les Apsaras des bas-reliefs (Bàyon, Galeries intérieures, n°s 21, 49; Galeries extérieures, n° 12.)[208]

2.3 Apsara or Yoginī?

J.J. Boeles, in his analysis of two bronze Yoginīs found in Thailand, defined criteria for identifying Yoginīs. They usually have (1) a third eye, (2) special attributes or *mudrās*, (3) an angry expression and (4) they dance on corpses.[209] The female presences that 'badge' the pillars of the Bàyon, Praḥ Khan and Bantéay Kdei hold no attributes, sometimes have a third eye, do not smile but have challenging open eyes, and dance on the ground or on lotus flowers, not on corpses. So according to Boeles' definition, the goddesses on the Bàyon walls are not the named Yoginīs with specific powers, roles and

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[207] 'Ardhaparyanka: this is a much more common dancing attitude, especially in Tibet and in Khmer art. It is typical in Tibet and China of certain goddesses or Dakini such as Vajravarahi, Simhavaktra, of Hevajra and, especially in Cambodia, of certain Apsaras (note: pillars of the Bàyon, Angkor).' (Frédéric, L. 1995:57 *Buddhism* Flammarion, Paris)

[208] Coedès 1923:30.

[209] "Quite a number of other bronze figures of *yoginīs* from Cambodia and Thailand have been published. All of them, as well as those we have been studying, have characteristics to distinguish them from that other class of heavenly dancers, the *Apsaras*. It may be a third eye, or a specific attribute or *mudra*, or something else. The *Apsaras* may wear some sort of ornaments, but most often they wear rather different ones: they never have an angry expression; and they never dance on corpses." Boeles, J.J. (1966:29) 'Two Yoginis of Hevajra from Thailand' *Essays offered to G.H. Luce* Eds. Ba Shin and Boisselier, Artibus Asiae, Ascona

attributes, who inhabit the central palace of the Hevajra maṇḍala. And yet their *ardhaparyanka* posture and confrontational stare, along with their third eyes, seem to align them with the Yoginīs rather than with the Apsaras. **[Plate 34 Bàyon pillar Yoginī with third eye]** So let us press the analysis further by applying Boeles' criteria to the Khmer icons. The 'Bàyon-style' Yoginīs that are indubitably identifiable as Tantric Buddhist goddesses are those which dance in the Hevajra maṇḍala bronzes. Their principal attributes are that they (a) wear five of the six Yoginī insignia or symbolic adornments prescribed in the *hevajra-tantra* (tiara, earrings, necklace, bracelets, girdle but not the 'apron of bones', which is unknown in Cambodian art) -- but so too do the flying Angkor Wàt Apsaras. Like Hevajra, the Yoginīs who dance around him (b) usually have a third 'vajra' eye, though this is always a variable in Hindu and Buddhist Yoginīs.[210] The bodies of the Khmer Hevajra Yoginīs (c) are braced with the vigour of a ritual dance that signifies transformational meditation; with a bearing that is concentrated and alert, their shoulders pulled back, their breasts thrust forward and their eyes staring back at those who participate. The *hevajra-tantra* says 'the dance symbolises meditation'[211] -- one that has become both dangerous and violent. The power of the icon is further concentrated in the explosive tension of the legs -- the *ardhaparyankasana* in an extreme spring. The Yoginīs' eyes, whether two or three, (d) are staring and challenging and seem charged with special knowledge[212]; when (e) they smile their smiles are assertive, not decorative or submissive.

These bronze Yoginīs are far removed from the paradigm of powerful stillness in meditation, behind lowered eyelids, that characterises the principal deities of the earlier phase of Jayavarman's Buddhism. This change in the pose of meditation between Jayavarman's early Bodhisattvas and Buddhas with lowered eyes, to these fiery, open-eyed goddesses of meditation is striking and evinces a new iconographic standard in Angkor.

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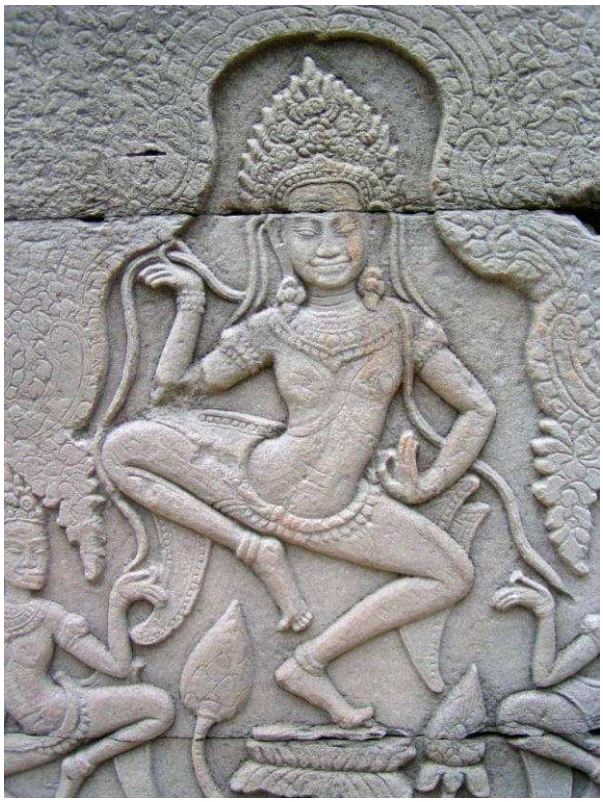
[210] Many, but not all, of the Bàyon dancers have third eyes.
[211] *Hevajra-tantra* I.vi.11
[212] The *hevajra-tantra* describes the Yoginīs' eyes as 'wide-open' (II.vi. 5) and 'inflamed' (I.viii.16).

Pl. 29. Angkor Wàt Apsara wallpaper

Pl. 30. Tantric dancer Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan (after Jourdaan 1996:94)



Pl. 32. Bàyon Yoginīs on the ground outside the outer enclosure

Pl. 31. Bàyon pillar Yoginī

It may indicate a shift in ritual. In the *ardhaparyanka* position, Hevajra and the Yoginīs spiral upwards from the corpses representing the *saṃsāric* passions and inculcated attachments of the phenomenal world in a dance of symbolic detachment and transfiguration. The appearance of such icons of radical transformation leads us to ask what new ritual events this iconographic change betokened. Strickmann's study of East Asian Buddhist Tantrism reaches the conclusion that the three basic components of Tantric Buddhist rites are *abhiṣeka*, *homa* and *āveśa* (spirit possession); the last being the most accessible to outsiders because it requires an audience.[213] We have clear evidence of Buddhist *abhiṣeka* and *homa* from the 10th century (Chapter 1.4). The probably 11th century *sekoddeśaṭīkā* commentary, attributed to Nāropā, on the *abhiṣeka* section of the *kālacakra-tantra,* dated later than the *hevajra-tantra*, elaborates on spirit possession experienced in Tantric initiations. In his introduction to the *sekoddeśaṭīkā,* Mario Carelli says that when Vajrapāṇi takes possession of the adept, '…the disciple is struck with an excess of furious madness… [which] breaks the unconscious ties present within him and surrounding him, and which might otherwise be an insurmountable hindrance to the mystic realization.'[214] The disciple possessed by Vajrapāṇi, dances and sings with the wild gestures of the wrathful deity and may race through the ritual arena with weapon in hand.[215] The earlier *hevajra-tantra*, whose presence in Angkor is certain, instructs the women who perform the Yoginī role to 'perform the vajra-song 'and dance. They partake of the sacrament of five kinds of flesh [animal and human] and consecrated wine. The Yogin embraces each member of the circle and finally unites with his partner at the centre.'[216]

Is this the kind of ritual experience signalled by the dancers in Tantric posture that suddenly dominated the entrances of the Bàyon and guided the Khmer

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[213] Michel Strickmann (1996:50-3) *Mantras et mandarins: le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* Gallimard, Paris

[214] Carelli, Mario E. (1941:29) *Sekoddeśaṭīkā of Naḍapāda (Nāropā): being a commentary of the Sekoddeśa Section of the Kālacakra Tantra* Oriental Institute, Baroda

[215] «Par ce rite, les forces de l'inconscient envahissent le disciple, qui, en les affrontant, 'brûle' toute peur et toute timidité. Il invoque ensuite, surtout au moyen des mudrā, les cinq divinités paisible, les Shakti des cinq Tathâgata, et retrouve le calme.» Mircea Eliade (1954:228) *Le Yoga: immortalité et liberté.*

[216] Snellgrove 1957:206

elite into the inner sanctuaries of the king's new state temple? Their concerted appearance, in the Bàyon, Bantéay Chmàr, Praḥ Khan, Tà Prohm and Bantéay Kdei is emphatic enough to convey a cultic shift, which we have hitherto collectively missed in Jayavarman's Buddhism. The restrained and elegant world of Khmer iconography admits a sudden intrusion of confrontational, bejewelled dancers with blazing eyes, which seem internally linked with the contemporary 'wrathful' multi-headed Hevajra icons in sandstone and bronze. The centre of Angkor must have felt changed by the shift away from the lowered eyes and compassion of the Lokeśvara icons that dominated the 1190s to the ornate figures with wide open eyes and third vajra eyes, often in a powerful dance posture, that became the hallmark of the last Bàyon period.

2.4 Cult projectors

The almost total absence of documents from ancient Cambodia makes the identification of deities far less precise than for example in Tibet. The dedication stela of the Bàyon, which may have answered many of the questions still left open about the inauguration and cult of the temple, has not been found. The walls of the temple ruin are left to tell their own story.

As in the major new architectural motif of giant faces in the Bàyon towers, there is little variation between goddesses whose form embellishes the Bàyon's entrance halls. Rather than standing as central, individual goddesses, with specific attributes and specific functions, the dancers of the Bàyon are placed in groups of varying numbers. They are perhaps more like the unnamed Yoginīs who are the consorts of the gods in the outer circles of Tantric maṇḍalas, or the unnamed 16 Yoginīs who surround Nairātmyā in her mandal, or the 64 who surround the eight Mothers.[217] But they do seem to anticipate engagement in the temple rituals. When the Bàyon goddesses appear with musicians in two panels in the southeast corner pavilion of the temple, **[Plate 36 Bayon outer gallery dancers & musicians]** as in the Prambanan relief, instead of holding attributes, they snap their fingers in the

[217] De Mallmann 1986:471

dance. It is possible that this gesture bears another meaning, for the Yoginīs of the *cakrasaṃvara-tantra* snap their fingers to symbolise cutting the ties of evil passions.[218] Around the necks of the Bàyon goddesses are draped flower garlands of the kind Yoginīs present to Hevajra or Saṃvara initiands as they approach the maṇḍala of their deity. The first of the six standard Tantric consecrations defined in the *kriyā* and *caryā* Tantras, as well as in the *hevajra-tantra,*[219] is the garland consecration (*mālābhiṣeka*). Yoginīs lead adepts into the maṇḍala blindfolded, where they throw a flower onto the mandala and a vajra-bond is formed between the initiand and the deity of the sector where the flower falls (*puṣpamālābhiṣeka)*.[220] The other consecrations identified by medieval Tibetan commentators are those of water (*udakābhiṣeka*), crown (*mukutābhiṣeka*), vajra (*vajrābhiṣeka*), bell (*ghantābhiṣeka*) and name (*nāmābhiṣeka*).[221] In India and Tibet, Yoginīs brought the garlands for the ceremonies and scooped up the coloured powder used to trace the finely detailed maṇḍalas after consecrations.[222] The presence of Yoginīs was indispensable to a Hevajra cult. Snellgrove said women capable of playing the sacred role 'congregated at the great places of pilgrimage.'[223] It is perhaps this drawing in of skilled and consecrated women that Chau picks up when he says '… [i]n the temples there are 300 foreign women'.

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[218] 'They repeat a syllable of the *mantra* of the four-faced deity and as each *Pada* [syllable] is repeated they make a snapping sound with the finger and thumb of the left hand.' Dawa Samdup, Lama Kazi (1923:12-13) *Cakraśaṃvara-tantra.* Some of the hand gestures may be in the secret sign language (*chomā*) they use at gathering places for rituals. Farrow G.W. and Menon, I. (1992:xxxviii) *The concealed essence of the Hevajra Tantra: with the commentary Yogaratnamālā* Motilal Barnaraidaasa, Dehli

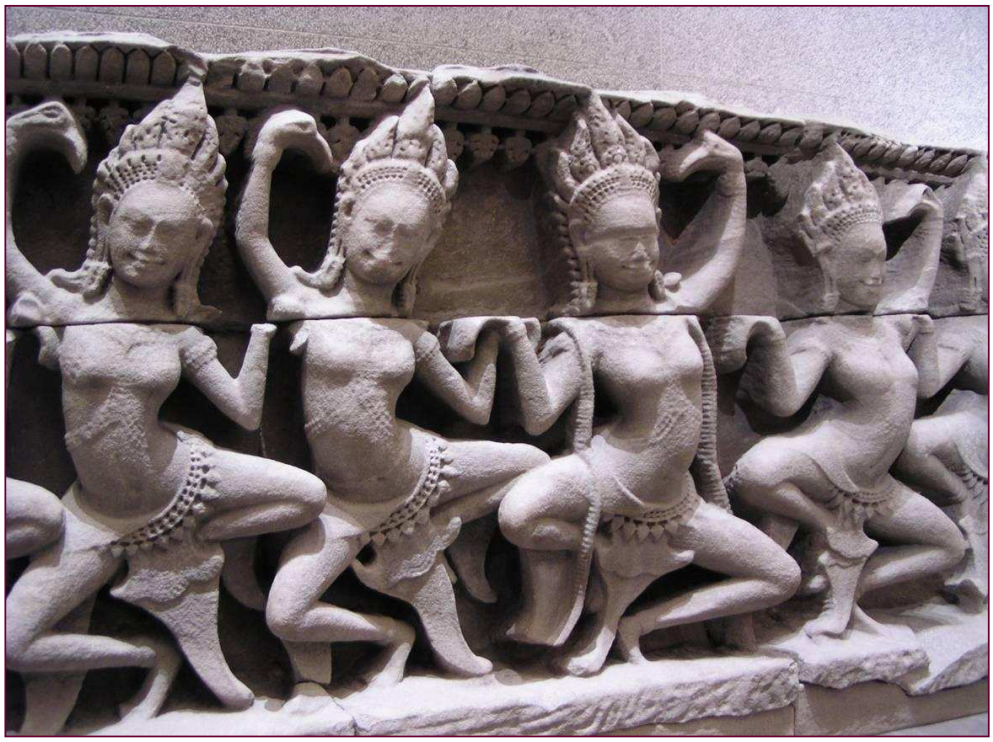
[219] Snellgrove, D 1957:73 *Buddhist Himālaya* Cassirer Oxford
Dasgupta lists incense, lamps, conch-shells, bells, perfumes, flowers and garlands as typical articles of Vajrayānist rites. (Dasgupta 1950:81)

[220] Alexis Sanderson (1994:88) 'Vajrayāna: Origin and Function' *Buddhism into the year 2000* Dhammakaya Foundation, Bangkok

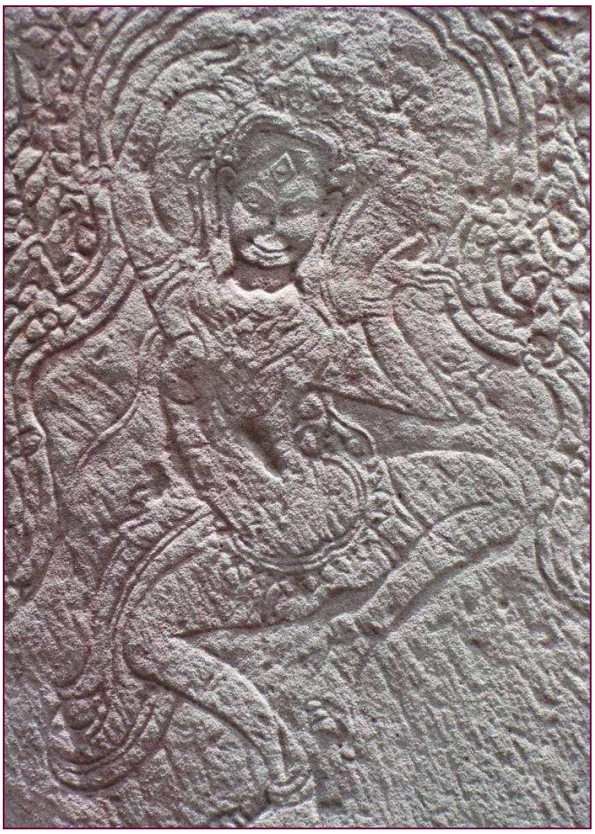
[221] Master Abhayākara (Tjur, Rgyud-'grel, LXX, 1) cited in Ariane Macdonald (1962:65) *Le Mandala du Mañjuśrīmulakalpa* Collection Jean Przyluski, Paris

[222] Yoginīs also have a role in the dismantling of the large and elaborate mandalas at the heart of most ritual consecrations. The *Kriyāsaṃgraha* describes how the coloured powders of the mandala are gathered into a vase, held by a Yoginī, and carried on an elephant to the nearest river, where they are thrown to the Nāgas who take them with reverence to their underworld abode (*pātālatala*). (Skorupski, T. 2002:174 *Kriyāsaṃgraha* IBS Tring)

[223] At the Sakya Monastery where Hevajra was first introduced to Tibet in 1073, the great Yogin Nāropā was said to have eight consorts as well as his wife so he always had on hand the entourage needed to perform this Tantra. (Snellgrove 1957:200)



Pl. 33 Bàyon Yoginī lintel, Musée Guimet



Pl. 34. Bàyon pillar 3rd eye

Pl. 35. Apsaras (after Coedès 1923 pl.19)

Pl. 36. Bàyon outer gallery dancers and musicians

John Blofeld records from his research among today's Tibetan community in North India that 'it is usual for an adept to take to himself one of the Ḍākiṇīs as his personal symbol of communication with divine wisdom; by uniting with her, he penetrates to the true meaning of doctrines too profound to yield their secrets at the everyday level of consciousness….In metaphysical terms, a man's Ḍākiṇī is the universal urge to Enlightenment as it acts in him.'[224]

2.5 The 6,250 Bàyon goddesses

The placing of the dancers in the entrances to the Bàyon in its pristine state can be imagined through today's ruin. Although most of the dancers today lie broken in piles of rocks outside the temple walls, or stacked up in the 'heaps of Commaille', they were originally given a prominence that is surprising, given the negligible attention they have received. Outside the four axial and four corner gopuras, stand two rows of pillars carved with sets of two or three dancers, framed in polylobate niches. **[Plate 37 Bayon pillars north gallery]** The niches give the groups of dancers the form of a badge or logo. The large gopuras are dominated by sets of three, one metre high, deeply-carved reliefs of dancers who stare down from all sides. Their faces are stern and their eyes bracket all who approach, as though warning the uninitiated against intrusion. One of their roles could indeed be the protection of cultic secrets. Secrets (*yoginīguhye*), and their protection, were the stock in trade of post-ninth century orthodox Tantric Yoginīs.[225]

2.6 What was behind the change?

Petrological measurements of magnetic susceptibility indicate that the outer gallery walls and gopuras of the Bàyon were constructed from later shipments of stone than the inner gallery and central sanctuary.[226] Thus the last phase of the Bàyon includes the extention of a 4.5m high platform around the central sanctuary. This appears to have coincided with the end of what Philippe Stern called the 'Lokeçvarisation' of Jayavarman's monuments, for magnificently

[224] John Blofeld (1970:114) *The way of power: a practical guide to the Tantric mysticism of Tibet* Allen & Unwin, London
[225] Dehejia 1986:32
[226] Olivier Cunin's work on the magnetic susceptibility of the sandstone blocks in the Angkor temple halls, confirms they were late additions: Olivier Cunin and Etsuo Uchida (2002:216) *Annual report on the technical survey of Angkor monument 2002*.

carved pediments of Lokeśvara were ignominiously obscured by the extension. This single act signals a change in the politico-religious agenda behind the temple's construction.

We can imagine ourselves experiencing the phenomena of entering Jayavarman's great stone palace of the gods and leaving behind the everyday scenes on the Bàyon's walls. We are challenged on all sides by these wide-eyed female presences seeming to invite us to experience another world. Emblems of the potency of that world, they challenge us to awareness of the numinous forces within.[227] The Yoginīs of the Vajrayāna were propagated as the most accessible means of reaching the supreme bliss of Buddhahood.[228] Phenomenologically, whereas Angkor Wàt has the grandeur of a superbly decorated palace,[229] the Bàyon is a *temple* whose mystical, unearthly atmosphere has been remarked down the years by visitors. The challenge in the eyes of the Bàyon gopura goddesses leads us, as through the metaphor of a maṇḍala, from the phenomenal world of the outer gallery reliefs into the presence of the cosmic powers manifested in the mysterious giant faces.

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[227] 'In the caryā-songs we find frequent reference to this female force variously called the Caṇḍālī, Ḍombī, Śavarī [Śabarī], Yoginī etc…This Yoginī or Sahaja-damsel should not be confused with the woman of flesh and blood, associated with the actual yogic practices; she is but an internal force of the nature of vacuity (*śūnyatā*) or essencelessness (*nairātmyā*) and great bliss residing in the different plexuses in different stages of yogic practice.' Shashibhusan Dasgupta (1962:99) *Obscure religious cults* Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta

[228] However, although allowing Dasgupta his emphasis, it appears that the woman of flesh and blood could be confounded with the Yoginī in important ways for achieving the desired Tantric trances in sādhana, at least in some times and places where the rites were practised. Dowman, for example, illustrates this in describing the eighth-ninth century Mahāsiddha Śavaripa from the Tibetan text *Legends of the Eighty-four Mahāsiddhas*, when he refers to the tribal origin of the Yoginī Śabarī: '"Śavaripa" means the Śabara or The Śabara Siddha. The Śabaras were a wild, aboriginal, outcast, hunting and gathering tribe from the Vindhya Hills and perhaps also from the Deccan…The Śabaras were an untouchable people even lower than the Ḍombīs and Caṇḍālīs on the social ladder." The most archaic level of Tantric worship is represented in the *Kādambarī* by the Śabaras whose 'religion is offering human flesh' to Candikā and whose chiefs had shoulders that were 'rough with scars from keen weapons used to make an offering of blood to Candikā." Keith Dowman (1985:64) *Masters of Mahāmudrā* SUNY New York

[229] In the words of Paul Mus: 'the ordered splendour of Angkor Wàt, evoking Versailles and greater perhaps than Versailles, park included, is an apt expression of this era when the display of order tended towards academism…The sacred face of the king as god hidden behind enormous seats of stone, central mountains, veritable spiritual fortresses.' Mus, P. (1964:31) 'Un cinéma solide: l'intégration du temps dans l'art de l'Inde at dans l'art contemporain: pouquoi?' *Arts Asiatiques* X, A. Maisonneuve, Paris

3. 'Salles aux danseuses'

Powerful new goddess icons appeared simultaneously in Jayavarman's other temples. Most of Jayavarman's temples have a large central room with lively friezes of dancers, which were late additions.[230] The French scholars used the non-committal term 'salles aux danseuses' to describe them, and left their purpose unexplained. The temple dedication stones carved by 1191 show that large dance troupes were attached to the temples, and the Phiméanakas inscription mentions performances of *Jataka* tales being ordered by the queen.[231] But later dedication stelae, which would no doubt have thrown light on later cultic shifts, have not survived. They may have been destroyed as part of the systematic defacement of Jayavarman's temples, presumably ordered by a Śaiva successor who also crudely converted the Bàyon for Śaiva rites.[232] The new 'halls with dancers' are accorded central locations and allocated a large amount of space. Indeed, the dancers' hall added to Praḥ Khan temple was one of the the largest spaces under a corbelled roof in Angkor. The dancers' hall in Bantéay Chmàr was even bigger.[233] **[Plate 38 Praḥ Khan lintel]**. Bantéay Chmàr has not been restored and the piles of stone around the standing walls that make traversing the ruins so difficult today are probably the most complete repository of the iconography of the late pantheon of the king. **[Plate 39 Ruins of Bantéay Chmàr towers with faces]** In the final building phase of Bantéay Chmàr a double Yoginī hall measuring 35m x 15m was added to the central sanctuary complex. In Chapter 5, I describe a Hevajra image I have identified on a lintel in the centre of this Yoginī hall. The lintel is important in that it is the sole extant Hevajra embedded in the wall of one of Jayavarman VII's temples. The Yoginī hall that surrounds it is also exceptional. The Yoginīs that create a one metre frieze

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[230] "Many additions are made to the monuments that were most important in the first phase. Typical additions were outer galleries, halls with dancers etc." Philippe Stern (1965:147) *Les monuments Khmers du style du Bàyon et Jayavarman VII* PUF, Paris

[231] Coedès (1942) *Inscriptions du Cambodge II* v. LXXIII p.178

[232] Thousands of Mahayana images (one estimate is 45,000) were roughly chiselled off Jayavarman VII's temples, possibly in a Brahmanical reaction. The dedication stela of the Bàyon has not been found. The Phiméanakas stela was found smashed into 70 pieces and buried in rubble. In Chapter 6.1 (p.157n444) I propose that the available evidence suggests a Brahmanical reaction orchestrated in the 1320s by king Jayavarma Parameśvara is more likely than one in the late 1200s by Jayavarman VIII, which is now universally assumed.

[233] Angkor did not have the arch, so the construction of internal spaces in stone temple buildings was severely restricted.

around the double room are distinctive in their size and in the fact that their arms are symbolically feathered and their legs are the legs of eagles (Garudas). **[Plate 40 Bantéay Chmàr 70cm Yoginī frieze]**

The halls with dancers were added to the king's three major active foundations in Angkor at the time the final decoration phase of the Bàyon got underway, suggesting they were all part of one 'Yoginīfication' campaign. A recent petrological study of the temples' sandstone blocks by Olivier Cunin and Etsuo Uchida produced identical measurements of 1.22×10^{-3} SI Unit readings of magnetic susceptibility in the sandstone of the Halls of Dancers at Ta Prohm and Praḥ Khan.[234] This suggests they were built at the same time and from the same quarry shipment. Even in their present state of collapse, the roofless halls are inviting and alive when their bold lintels of dancers are caught in the sunlight. Why was so much covered space suddenly required in all the temples, under the aegis of the goddesses? The new cult symbolised by the Yoginī-dancers must have engaged large numbers of people in the temple rites. In Chapter 4, I will suggest large scale conversions and consecrations were the order of the day.

4. Conches

The large number of bronze Hevajra libation *śankhas* or conches in museum collections and on the art market suggests they were cast to meet a demand created by a high volume of consecrations associated with the *hevajra-tantra.* These were presumably the same rites that required the construction of large Yoginī halls. Moreover, outside the new halls with dancers, are spacious, uncovered new terraces and large new staging areas capable of accommodating many more participants. The terraces are surrounded by balustrades showing Garuda embracing Nāgas, an icon which I will argue in Chapter 4 represents Vajrapāṇi protecting new converts to the faith. Although Tantric Buddhism was esoteric, with its secrets passed down for generations between master and pupil, it was also deeply and overtly engaged in politics. Its consecrations were at times staged on a massive scale that challenged the

[234] Olivier Cunin and Etsuo Uchida (2002:216) *Annual report on the technical survey of Angkor monument 2002*.

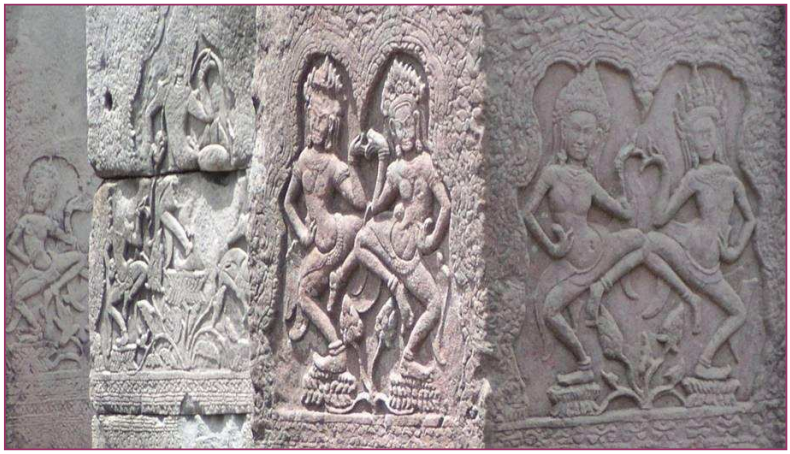
political and military leadership, as well as the monks, to demonstrate their commitment to the Buddha, the emperor and the state.[235] The imperial records of Tantric Buddhism in T'ang China show such events could last for many days and were funded directly by the emperor.[236] A large-scale public ritual purpose is the most likely explanation for the late extention of a 4.5m platform in the shape of a Greek cross around the Bàyon's towering central sanctuary. Space also looks to have been made for privileged participants and those queuing for consecrations by the dismantling of 16 *vraḥ kuṭi* or 'salles de passage' in the courtyard between the Bàyon inner and outer galleries.

In the huge open space around the temple, aprons and terraces were laid out in the east and space was available on the other sides to accommodate many thousands of participants or onlookers, who could at least view and listen to major ceremonies performed on the elevated platform. Indeed, the architectural concept of the un-walled, open Bàyon, with a highly visible central ceremonial platform, seems aimed at immediately engaging the people rather than distancing them from state rituals performed behind high walls, as had been the case earlier in Angkor Wàt.[237] Bernard Philippe Groslier saw the last modifications to the Bàyon – the carved outer gallery, the raised platform and the face towers – as *exoteric* means to engage the people in the king's cult:

[235] For example, in the eight century in T'ang China, Tantric Buddhist patriarch Amoghavajra conducted an abhiseka in which he 'converted in succession hundreds, thousands, and myriads of people.' Chou Yi-liang (1945:280) 'Tantrism in China' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 Cambridge Mass.

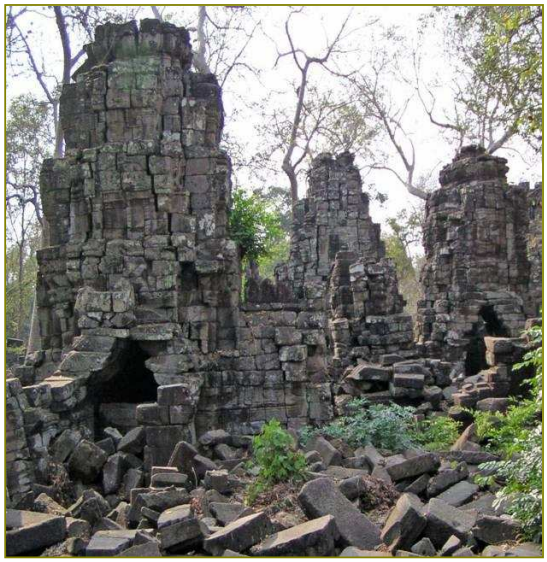
[236] In 768 Amoghavajra celebrated a ceremony that lasted 14 days. 'The eunuch attendants, the ministers, and all the commanders of the imperial army were ordered by the emperor to receive abhiseka at the ceremony. Altogether more than 5,000 monks and laymen attended.' Orlando, Raffaello (1981: 147) *A study of Chinese documents concerning the life of the Tantric Buddhist patriarch Amoghavajra* (A.D. 705-774) Princeton

[237] Mus (1961:380)



Pl. 37. Bàyon pillars north gallery

Pl. 38. Praḥ Khan lintel



Pl. 39. Ruins of Bantéay Chmàr towers with faces

Pl. 40. Bantéay Chmàr 70cm Yoginī frieze

> His religious fervour was unequalled and burned like a flame in this crowned old man who would reign into his nineties. …As well as the order and prosperity of the kingdom, he seemed to take to heart the wellbeing of each of his subjects. We witness an eruption into the sanctuaries, formerly jealously reserved for the king and his entourage. …It is not only the close or distant relatives of the king who partake of these privileges; they are extended to all…the temples of Jayavarman VII become veritable pantheons.[238]

The Bàyon with its large, raised central platform, and the other temples with their new Yoginī halls and Vajrapāṇi terraces, seem designed for an unprecedented mass engagement in state ceremonies. The proliferation of Yoginīs dominating the entrances to the Bàyon, along with the large group of bronze Hevajras, the high output of Hevajra-embossed ritual paraphernalia collectively appear to signal the exoteric incorporation of the late *anuttarayoga* Tantras into the public ceremonials of Angkor. The last changes to the Bàyon and the other temples under the Yoginī emblem constitute cumulative and coherent grounds for our admitting that the balance of evidence has moved in favour of seeing a shift to a large and well-orchestrated royal Hevajra cult late in Jayavarman's reign.

5. The Vajrayāna in the 10th-12th centuries

We now turn to circumstantial evidence drawn from the dynamics of international Buddhism in the 10th – 12th centuries to seek further elements that cohere with a significant shift to the Vajrayāna in Angkor. The *Hevajra-tantra* was used in the consecration of emperor Khubilai Khan to Hevajra and Mahākāla in 1261.[239] By any standards this was a major politico-religious act that led to Mongolia being converted and Tibet being ruled by Lama-Kings.

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[238] Groslier 1956:153

[239] Albert Grünwedel wrote the first European account of the great Tibetan Lama Phagpa 1235-80) travelling under duress to Dadu (Beijing) where he eventually succeeded in conferring the initiation of Hevajra on the Mongol emperor Khubilai Khan. Although his Sakya clan had owned the Sanskrit text of the *Hevajra-tantra* it was now in Khan's hands and the Lama had never read it. According to Tibetan legend, the god Mahākāla brought the text to the Lama for overnight study. The Lama, after compromising on having chairs of the same height, consecrated the emperor and was granted in return political and religious sovereignty over Tibet. (Grünwedel 1900:63-5 *Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei* Brockhaus, Leipzig)
According to recent scholarship Phagpa first converted the khan's wife Chabi, who underwent the Mahākāla and Hevajra (Chinese Xijingang) initiations and then persuaded her husband to do the same. Khubilai Khan then took Mahākāla as his personal tutelary deity, *yidam* or *iṣṭadevatā*. This was the first step towards 'the new transcendent role the Mongol emperors eventually assumed as [unprecedented posthumous] reincarnations of the bodhisattva

In the late Tantric Buddhism developed in the monasteries of Bihar and Bengal in the 10th to 12th centuries, Hevajra and the Yoginīs are among the deities that combine to create the *upāya* or 'skilful means' that make transformation to Buddhahood possible. The female powers engage in the lower world and activate intercession with the remote and absolute, 'adamantine being' Vajrasattva that Hevajra makes manifest.[240] The increase in female forces in this Tantra also marks the shift from the monastic environment of early Tantrism to the engagement with the political class in the outside world that characterised late Tantrism. The royal Khmer sculptural workshops of the 12th century were evidently carefully instructed in these developments in late Buddhism, where icons of wrathful deities in their maṇḍalas became crucial stimulants for achieving transformative states of great intensity known as visualizations or *bhāvana,* 'realisation'.[241] For some of the Khmer bronzes of Hevajra are carefully modelled three-dimensional reproductions of the Hevajra maṇḍala. Scores of these Bàyon-style Khmer bronze Hevajras exist today in public and private collections. Wibke Lobo says her count easily reached 40[242] and a London art market dealer who said he had handled 25 Khmer Hevajras over the past 25 years, said a better estimate would be 100. This is not a very large number, particularly when the Praḥ Khan dedicatory stela of 1191 recorded that more than 20,000 statues in gold, silver, bronze and stone[243] had already been distributed throughout the ancient kingdom within a decade, but the Hevajra bronzes do, along with the consecration conches, the vajras and bells and other ritual paraphernalia, represent a significant part of the surviving bronze corpus of this period.

Mañjushri.' (Patricia Berger 1994:103 'Preserving the nation: the political uses of Tantric art in China' *Latter days of the law: images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850* Ed. Marsha Weidner Univ. Kansas)

[240] Woodward (1981:60) cites G. Tucci's description of the name Hevajra as 'a formula of invocation *he vajra* (*hail vajra!*)' for the vajra 'symbol of non-existentiality beyond time and space.' Dasgupta cites this formulation in the *Jvālāvalī-vajra-mālā-tantra*: 'Śūnyatā (the void) is said to be Vajra, and all manifestation in form is said to be *sattva*; Vajra-sattva implies the unity and the identity of the two.' (1950:87) *An introduction to Tantric Buddhism* Calcutta

[241] 'Art functioned actively for the practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism both as visual triggers of integrated states of realization and as expressions of those states, which beggared verbal description.' Linrothe 1999:3

[242] Lobo, Wibke (1997:73) 'L'image de Hevajra et le bouddhisme tantrique' *Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer* eds. Jessop and Zephir, Réunion de Musées Nationaux, Paris

[243] Wheatley, P. (1975:255) 'Satyanrta in Suvaradvipa' in *Ancient Civilization and Trade* (Eds J. Sabloff and C. Lamberg-Kallovsky Albuquerque

Some of the Khmer maṇḍala bronzes have a square base in which the four cardinal directions are marked with doors. **[Plate 41 Hevajra mandala Phnom Penh Museum]** One in the Phnom Penh museum has a square architectural frame which fits over the top and encloses the dancing group in their 'temple-palace with gates to the four quarters'.[244] The design is exactly that of the Hevajra maṇḍala preserved as number 99 in the 19th century collection from the Ngor monastery in Tibet.[245]**[Plate 42 Hevajra mandala Ngor]** The numbers in the Ngor plan around the central deity mark the fixed positions of the Yoginīs Gaurī, Caurī, Vetālī, Ghasmari, Pukkasī (earth), Śavarī (water), Caṇḍālī (fire) and Ḍombī (air). Images of the deities are gradually built up in visualizations like that described in the *cakraśaṃvara-tantra:*

> There are eight of them in the eight points of the compass…They repeat a syllable of the Mantra of the four-faced deity and as each *pada* [syllable] is repeated they make a snapping sound with the finger and thumb of the left hand. By these means let him [the adept] think that he has expelled all mischievous spirits. Then in a flood of light issuing from the 'hum' in the heart, they proceed by stages to make the *vajra-bhumi* [ritual ground], next the wall, ceiling, ceiling curtain and network of arrows, and outside all a fence of divine flames.

Some of the bronze Hevajras have a circular base like the one, in exceptional condition, in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. **[Plate 43 AGNSW Hevajra maṇḍala]** (The static Prajñāpāramitā in front of Hevajra, who is out of place in this dynamic group, is an intruder who may have been added much later by the art market). In this well-preserved piece the Yoginīs are still holding some of their attributes. The Yoginī in front of the Prajñā is carrying a battle axe (*paraśu*) in her left hand and is thereby identifiable from the Tantra as the 'sapphire-like' Pukkasī, a woman of low class[246] who represents the flesh of Hevajra and who purifies the element of earth.[247] She is erotically provocative

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[244] Snellgrove 1957:69

[245] bSod nams rgya mtsho and Musashi Tachikawa (1989) *The Ngor Mandalas of Tibet* p.174

[246] The Yoginīs in these superior positions in the Tantra were of low class as a challenge to the social orthodoxy of the Hindus. Candālī's ('untouchable') name shows they could not be touched by the Brahmans, who therefore could not achieve Nairātmyā. (Dasgupta, S. 1962:104 *Obscure religious cults* Calcutta)
'Given the unorthodox, caste-violating character of Esoteric Buddhism, inner mystic features are emphasized at the expense of Hindu socially-directed ones.' Linrothe 1999:181

[247] *Hevajra-tantra* II.ix.13

and her low status is part of Vajrayāna's overturning of traditional (Hindu) class structures. English comments:

> Texts that prescribe sexual yogic practices often recommend consorts from the most taboo groups such as close relatives, or untouchable or contaminated classes – a fact reflected in the names of consorts such as Śaundini, a female from the liquor-selling caste (GSS II v. 5li).[248]

Pukkasī destroys ignorance in the northeast division of the universe, as in the Ngor mandala number 100 that is based on this circular model. She uses the axe in Hevajra's service to cut aspirants' ties to the five passions that block their progress to Buddhahood. Her right hand would have held a lion, representing pride and she dances on the heart of Yama, the Hindu god of death. She is 'emancipation by the void' and the 'perfection of means'.[249] It is of interest to the theme of this chapter that one of the impressive late Bàyon style gilt Hevajras was excavated by Bernard Philippe Groslier in 1952 from his trench in the royal palace at Angkor.[250] **[Plate 44 Palace Hevajra & triad Phnom Penh Museum]** This find spot in the wooden palace could suggest a personal identification of the king with Hevajra. The proliferation of Hevajras, in bronze and stone, at Angkor surely attests to royal favour. Hevajra indeed had a special attraction for kings and emperors in the 12th and 13th centuries. In late 12th century Angkor the indication of ritual changes introducing the Yoginī Tantras can only have been by royal command. If Hevajra was the king's personal deity or *iṣṭadevatā,* it is likely that Hevajra consecrations were frequent and that a 'self-sanctification' (*svādhistāna*) culture penetrated everyday court life. The courtly ladies would also have been engaged, as is suggested by a mirror bearing an image of Hevajra and two Yoginīs in Jim Thompson's house in Bangkok. **[Plate 45 Hevajra and Yoginis on mirror Jim Thompson House Bangkok]** In the no doubt far more intensified cult of contemporary Tibetan monasteries recorded by Chos-rgyal 'Phags-pa (1235/9-1280) the pride of becoming Hevajra permeated the day:

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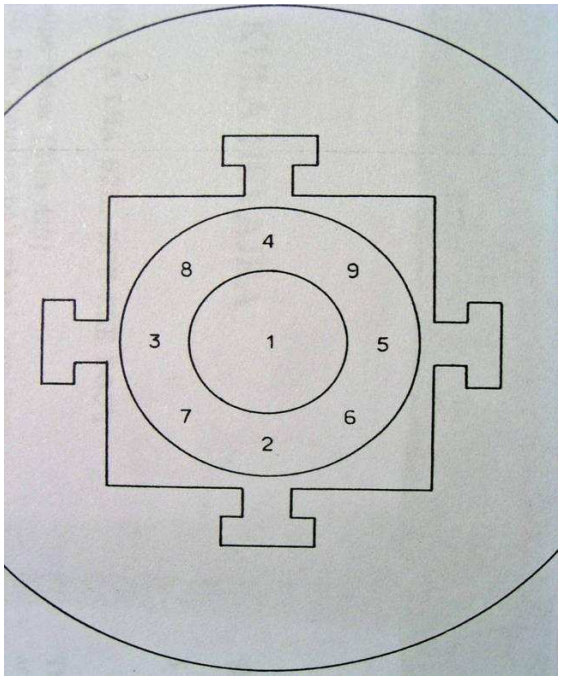
[248] Elizabeth English (2002:41) *Vajrayoginī, her visualizations, rituals and forms* Wisdom Publications, Boston

[249] *Hevajrasekaprakriya* Finot (1934:45) 'Manuscrits sanskrits de sādhanas retrouvés en Chine' *Journal Asiatique*

[250] Groslier, Bernard Philippe (1954:229) "Fouilles du Palais Royal d'Angkor Thom" in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Orientalists Cambridge 1954* Royal Asiatic Society London

Pl. 41.Hevajra maṇḍala Phnom Penh Museum (after Dalsheimer 2001:268)



Pl. 42. Hevajra maṇḍala Ngor manuscript 99 (after Tachikawa 1989:99)

Pl.43. Hevajra maṇḍala, Art Gallery of New South Wales (after Albanese 2002:119)

> When the yogin falls asleep, his visualization is similar to that performed at the dissolution of the *mandala*. Upon awakening, he arises with the pride of Hevajra like a fish jumping out of water. While bathing, he imagines that he is receiving the various consecrations. Upon eating, he visualizes that the deities are assembled in his heart, and that his desireless eating is the enjoyment of the nectar to satisfy both himself and the divinities. If the yogin is a householder, he may perform intercourse according to the meditations of either the developing process or the perfecting process. In the former case, he develops the three conceptions (*trisamjna: 'du-shes gsum*) that he and his partner (*karmamudrā*) are Hevajra and Nairātmyā (*devatā-samjñā:lha'i 'du-shes*), that their sexual organs are the *vajra* and lotus impressed with the *bīja-mantras* of the two deities (*mantra-samjñā: sngags kyi 'du-shes)*, and that the resulting bliss *(dharma- samjñā:chos kyi 'du-shes)* is an offering to Hevajra – similar to the *utpattikrama* visualization during the 'passion' of Hevajra.[251]

Experiences like this would have been new for the citizens of Angkor, but they may have been familiar to the citizens of Phimai and also to long-embedded Buddhist communities with experience of Tantric rituals in northwest Cambodia, beside the imperial road between Angkor and Phimai. For example, not far from the Phnom Srok area, where a number of 10th century caityas of Prajnāpāramitā, Lokeśvara and Vajrapāṇi were found, an inscription with a truly rural ring was discovered, dated 982, on a hill called Bantéay Nâng hill, outside Monkol Borei, between Battambang and Sisophon.[252] The inscription pledges two rice fields, slaves and water buffalos to Prajnāpāramitā, under the strange but Tantric-sounding name of Trailokyavijayagiśvara, and to Trailokyanātha – either Lokeśvara or Vajrapāṇi – at a ceremony attended by all the family members, the leaders of whom all bear names ending with –vajra, indicating they have undergone Tantric initiation.

But elsewhere in Cambodia, outside the capital, the only signs of it taking a widespread hold are in the Tantric ritual traces left embedded in Cambodian Theravādin Buddhism. Francois Bizot's research has shown that distinctly

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[251] Ronald Davidson (1992:124) 'Preliminary Studies on Hevajra's *Abhisamaya* and the Lam-'bras Tshogs-bshad' *Tibetan Buddhism; Reason and Revelation* Eds Steven Goodman and Ronald Davidson, SUNY

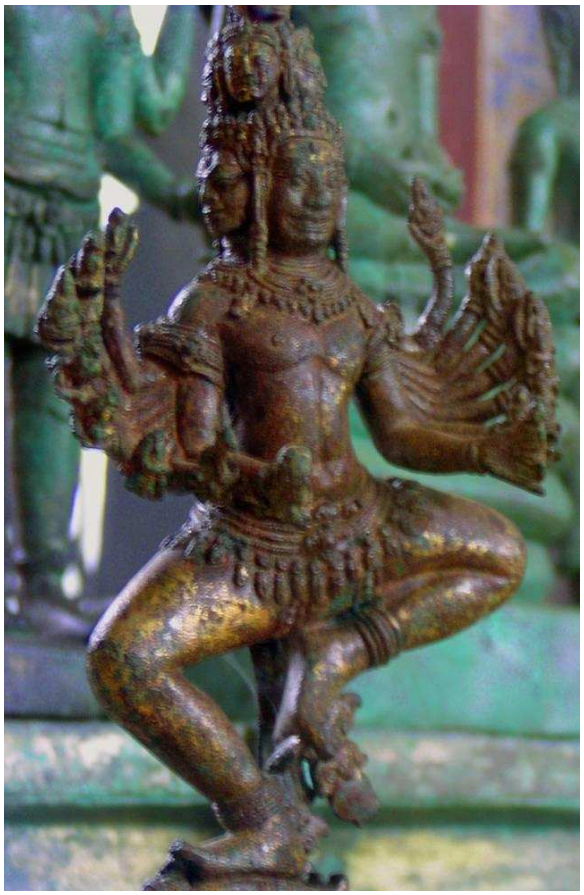
[252] IC II (1942:202)

Tantric meditation practices such as aiming at consubstantiation with the Buddhas through reciting mantras that invite 10 *pāramī* to enter the body, remained current when the Theravādins achieved ascendancy sometime in the late 13th century. Such beliefs persisted into modern times (at least until the monks and their texts were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge late in the 20th century) as part of Theravādin orthodoxy under the late classical Mahāyānist name *yogāvacara*.[253] Exactly when and how the Theravādin wave reached Angkor and took control of all Buddhist foundations is unknown. Inscription K.241 of 1267, perhaps the 14th year of Jayavarman VIII's long reign, marks the installation in the long-Buddhist area just northwest of the capital of an earth-touching, *māravijaya* (victory over Māra) Buddha, the icon which developed into the dominant image of the later Hīnayāna of all Indochina. Similar earth-touching Buddhas first adorn Angkor temples walls at Praḥ Pallilay, which probably dates to the early 1300s. Certainly by the end of the 13th century, from the description of the robes of the monks and the decoration of their temples by visiting Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan in 1296-7[254], Theravāda, though much impoverished compared with Mahāyāna of Jayavarman VII's day, seems well established.

One indicator that the Theravāda came in after Jayavarman's death is that the Nāga Buddha continued in a series of clearly post-'Bàyon style' Buddhas which was perhaps sculpted towards the mid-13th century – a date proposed by Boisselier.[255] If Boisselier's dating is accurate, and the style evolution in this series of Buddhas supports it, he suggests there was a slight evolution from the Bàyon period Nāga Buddha into a softened 'early post-Bàyon style' with a rounder, fuller face and less flat mouth, softly dimpled chin and with snail shell curls replacing the lotus petal *mukuta* of the late Bàyon style. The mid-13th century date for at least the quietist and graceful uncrowned 'Commaille Buddha' on a Nāga (named after Jean Commaille, the first head of

[253] This is researched in various works by François Bizot, which are summarised by Kate Crosby (2000) 'Tantric Theravāda: A Bibliographic Essay on the Writings of François Bizot and others on the Yogāvacara Tradition' *Contemporary Buddhism* vol. 1.2
[254] Pelliot, Paul (1902) trans. Gilman d'Arcy Paul (1987) *The customs of Cambodia* Siam Society, Bangkok
[255] Boisselier, J (1967:283) 'Notes sur l'art du bronze dans l'ancien Cambodge' *Artibus Asiae* XXIX,4

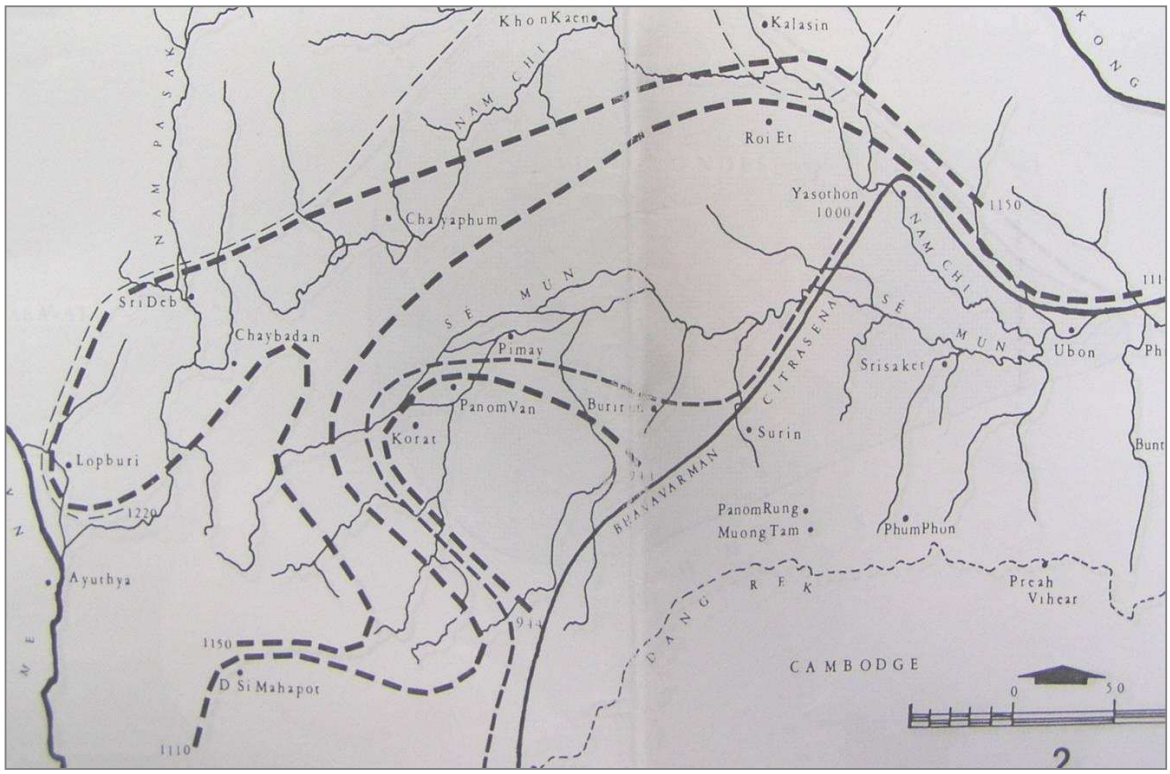
conservation at Angkor who discovered it, and who was later assassinated in Angkor) is significant, for it means that the icon was commissioned by Jayavarman's son King Indravarman II (r.1219?-1243). [Maybe Indravarman's reign ended 1279, according to EFEO research]



Pl. 44. Gilt bronze Hevajra excavated in 1952 from the royal palace site, Angkor Thom

Pl. 45. Hevajra and Yoginīs on mirror, Jim Thompson house Bangkok

Pl. 46. 'Commaille' Buddha (after Giteau 1997:91)



Pl. 47. Groslier's map of Khmer expansion into Īśān (after Moore 1986)

Although the face of the Buddha has softened, the continuity from his father's religious art is there in the Nāga, which signals the continuing unbroken tradition of Buddhas on serpents that was the principle Khmer Buddhist icon from 950-1250. **[Plate 46 'Commaille' Nāga Buddha]**

6. Phimai and the Vajrayāna

Tantric Buddhism was the established religion in Phimai in the late 11th century, but an earlier version of the cult flourished in this area in the 10th century and probably much earlier. Tantric icons have been found on the road from Phimai just northwest of Angkor at this time too. The Thma Pûok caitya dated 989 and the Phnom Srok caitya (now in the Musée Guimet) are in the same style and bear images of a ferocious 'Vajrin' (Vajrapāṇi), the first Khmer Nāga-protected Buddha, a four-headed Prajñāpāramitā and Lokeśvara. Vajrin's three heads are surmounted by five cosmic Buddhas.

In 1066 at Sab Bāk, near Phimai, the Tantric Buddhist community erected a stela to a foundation that pre-dated the great sandstone temple consecrated in 1108. The Sab Bāk inscription calls the supreme Buddha 'Vajrasattva', the sixth Buddha and lord of the five Buddhas ('*śrīpañcasugata*') of the Vajradhātu Pentad. K. Bhattacharya rightly considers Sab Bāk as one of the first explicit proofs of the presence of mature, post-10th century Vajrayāna in the Khmer Empire.[256]

How Tantrism arrived in Phimai and the Khorat Plateau can only be traced through the icons it left behind. Although Tantric imagery, texts and adepts could have been carried overland from Bengal through Burma[257], they could also have moved along the ancient southerly maritime trade network and arrived via the trading settlements of peninsular Thailand. Because of the Khmers troubled relationship with the Čams in the East, its principal export route ran west along the Mun valley to the Chao Praya basin and the

[256] Bhattacharya, K. (1997:46) 'Les religions du Cambodge ancien et l'epigraphie sanskrite' in *Angkor et dix siècles d'art khmer* Eds. Jessop and Zephir, Réunion de Musées Nationaux, Paris.

[257] Hiram Woodward may favour a land route via Burma as he says: 'Much of the imagery of Phimai has Pāla sources. The fresh subject matter appeared in two guises: in a kind of Indo-Burmese style and in an entirely Khmer style.' (Woodward 2003:170)

peninsular ports. The peninsular settlements had ties with both Cambodia and the Sumatra-based 'Śrīvijayan' alliance of entrepôt naval powers whose Buddhist art reflected currents from Bihar and Bengal under the Pāla Sena dynasties.[258] Nālandā university-monastery in Bihar received direct financial support in the ninth century from peninsular settlements of Śrīvijaya, probably from the Śailendras who built Borobudur then withdrew from Java to Sumatra. Excavations of the peninsular settlements have yielded large quantities of Mahāyānist votive tablets in caves, suggesting the cult had a popular base and social importance.[259] 'Śrīvijayan' ('Indo-Javanese') bronzes have also been found in Čampā, indicating that the Māhāyana propagated itself far across and beyond the maritime connections of this naval-based alliance of states.[260] Michael Wright has suggested that as the cultural highways were the seas and rivers, a better name of the pre-Thai polity generally known as Dvāravatī would be Dvāravatī-Śrī Vijaya ('the prosperous and victorious city').[261] With this designation he wishes to emphasize the importance of the coasts and river valleys on each side of the polity and the two distinct cultural traditions this generated -- on the east coast and mainland the Mon Theravādin art of Dvāravatī, and on the west a Māhāyana culture linked through the port of Nakhon Si Thammarat with Dong Si Maha Phot, the Khorat Plateau and Cambodia. Boisselier also notes the influence of Nālandā in the west and south and this region's links with the northeast and the Khmers.[262] The Śrīvijayan side of the Dvāravatī polity is what would have facilitated the passage of the third Buddhist vehicle from Bengal across the Peninsula and onto the Khorat Plateau because of the Khmers' frequent wars with Čampā:

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[258] Stanley O'Connor (1975:162) 'Tambralinga and the Khmer Empire' *Journal of the Siam Society* Vol. 63.1

[259] O'Connor, Stanley (1972:60) *Hindu Gods of Peninsular Siam* Artibus Asiae, Ascona

[260] Boisselier, Jean (1963 :83) *La Statuaire du Champa* EFEO, Paris

[261] 'Foreign writers seem to have recorded one term or the other, "Dvāravatī" or "Sri Vijaya", with Dvaravati (Tolopoti to the Chinese) meaning east coast and mainland, and Sri Vijaya (Tiruvisayam to the Tamils) implying the west coast and the south.' Wright, Michael (1992:81-86) 'Ayudhya and its place in pre-modern Southeast Asia' in *Journal of the Siam Society* 80

[262] 'It was towards the end of the eighth century, at the latest, that Māhāyana Buddhism made its appearance in Thailand. Its advance into central Indochina seems to have been connected with the expansion of Śrīvijaya. Along with the Māhāyana came the practice of making Bodhisattva images, especially of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, and the making of bronze images in the Indian style of Nālandā art…Māhāyana Buddhism does not seem to have taken root very deeply in central and eastern Thailand…' *The heritage of Thai sculpture* (1975:20)

> Cambodia's front door [to the international trade route] was at the mouths of the Mae Khong in Champa, but as Cambodia was frequently at war with the Chams that route was unreliable and the overland route from Angkor to the headwaters of the Bang Pakong River must often have been the favoured route of foreign trade.[263]

In fact the Khmers not only had regular access to Dong Si Maha Phot, they took control of Khorat in the late 10th century under King Rājendravarman (944-68 CE)[264] and had annexed the port itself by 1110 under Sūryavarman I. **[Plate 47 NET Groslier map 1980]** It was under Rājendravarman that Buddhism re-emerged at the Cambodian court after a silence of 150 years while the state Śaivism instituted by Jayavarman II took a firm hold. The small Tantric Buddhist temple of Bàt Čum, placed among the palaces of the capital, reconstructed after Jayavarman IV's 16-year excursion to Koḥ Ker, was built by the king's renowned architect and general Kavīndrārimathana. No icons survive from Bàt Cum but the inscription dedicates the foundation to the Buddha, Prajñāpāramitā and Vajrapāṇi. It is reasonable to speculate that the Buddha image would have resembled the almost coeval Nāga Buddhas carved on stupa-like caityas or columns found near Phnom Srok, Battambang, one of which is dated 898, for these were among the very first Khmer Nāga Buddhas. The Nāga Buddha of the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin caitya is protected by a serpent with seven long, separated heads which holds the deity aloft on two pneumatic coils. **[see Plate 4 Phnom Srok Buddha]** Its Tantric credentials are visible in the wrathful image of the six-armed, multicephalous Vajrapāṇi, gripping vajra and ghantā, and the 10-armed, five-headed Prajñāpāramitā on its other sides.

7. The Nāga Buddha and Īśān

The art historical record suggests the Khmer Nāga Buddha was earlier venerated in the trading corridor communities stretching from Īśān to peninsular Thailand. Woodward notes that the transit from Īśān to Cambodia was easy in the 10th century:

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[263] Wright 1992:83

[264] One of the king's inscriptions acclaims him as 'victorious in combat against the powerful and wicked Ramanya (i.e. Mons) and Čampā, shooting his arrows right and left like another Rāma.' Coedes (1953) *Inscriptions* vol.5 p.97

> In the middle of the 10th century, the encounter between Dvaravati towns and the kingdom of Cambodia was a two-way street, with Khmer stylistic elements entering Dvaravati workshops and Buddhist subjects becoming increasingly important in Cambodia.[265]

The Nāga Buddha flourished on Sri Lanka when the Abhayagiri monastery enjoyed a brief ascendancy in the eighth century but thereafter the image, which had reached the peninsula, was kept alive by Dvāravatī sculptors. They reproduced it frequently in the eighth and ninth centuries, giving it more earnestness and more force. The earliest known Dvāravatī version is the striking, shallow 75cm relief carved in slate blue limestone **[plate 48 Dong Si Maha Phot C7-8 Nāga Buddha]** from Dong Si Maha Phot. Dupont and Boisselier attribute this to the 7th century.[266] Another early Nāga Buddha is found on a sacred boundary or *sema* stone in Īśān. **[Plate 49 Khon Kaen Nāga Buddha]** The icon developed in many ways in a number of Dvāravatī or neighbouring workshops before it was suddenly taken up by the Khmers in the 10th century after which it was continuously enhanced in thousands of icons carved over several centuries. At the time of the first transmission of the icon across the Dangrek mountains to Cambodia in the 10th century Dvāravatī may have already disappeared as a definable polity. By this time the Mon sculptors of Northeast Thailand were casting a bronze Nāga Buddha with extended, inelegant, crested Nāga heads rising separately without a cobra-like hood **[Plate 50 Īśān Nāga Buddha C10]**. Woodward dates the strange little bronze in the Griswold collection with scowling heads to the mid-10th century.[267] Yet just such an unprepossessing image may have planted the seed of the most prevalent dominant Buddhist image in this region for the next 400 years. When the Khmers began building large stone temples in the ninth century, the decoration of their sanctuaries disclosed a strong ancestral religious connection with serpent worship. The first Khmer stepped-pyramid stone-faced temple, the Bakong at Hariharilaya, has several sanctuary lintels containing Hindu deities but clearly dominated by triple-headed, crested Nāgas **[Plate 51 Bakong Nāga cult]** and a pair of huge (190cm x 180cm) Nāgas whose 100m tails stretch across the temple moat. **[see Plate 67**

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[265] Woodward (1997) p.72
[266] Boisselier in Snellgrove D (1978) *Images of the Buddha* Unesco, p.151; Dupont, P (1943) *Le Buddha de Grahi et l'école de Chaiya* BEFEO 42-43
[267] Woodward H (1997) *The sacred sculpture of Thailand* Thames and Hudson London p.53

Bakong Nāga] All these Nāgas have the same long separated necks and ferocious faces of the first Khmer Nāgas protecting Buddhas. The Khmers therefore seemed predisposed to uniting their new Buddha with the ancestral Nāga. Sculptors of the Bàphûon period perfected the principal image of Khmer Mahāyāna Buddhism in a masterpiece in the 11th century Bàphûon-style Kompong Čam Naga Buddha, which stands 1.14m-high in dark sandstone **[Plate 52 Nāga Buddha Kompong Cam]**. This image achieves mastery of the Buddha's meditative pose in the erect spine and the relaxed limbs, suspended on the cushion of coils. The sheltering Nāgaraja heads are designed into the (bodhi) tree-shaped hood that will retain primacy in the workshops of Cambodia and Thailand. The meticulously carved serpent scales contrast with the almost invisible, wet-look robe and the finely polished face. The linear carved, wide-open eyes seem to invite the viewer to enter an exalted state of meditation.

7.1 Peninsular corridor

Śrīvijaya occasionally supported polities, like Phimai, which experienced alternating centrifugal and centripetal pulls from Angkor. And the Mon-Khmer language had a currency that would have facilitated this as it seems to have been used as a language of learning and trade in areas like the Peninsula, which were marked by a diversity of languages and ethnic groups.[268] It can also be argued that a southern peninsular route is indicated by an inscription (K.397) about one of the principal Phimai icons. George Coedès identified the deity as either Trailokyavijaya or Saṃvara, sometimes written Śaṃbara.[269] His hesitation between the two was probably due to the image not being a standard representation of Trailokyavijaya, the principal god of Tantric Buddhism in the 10th century.[270] Trailokyavijaya's unique gesture is to cross his hands on his chest with palms facing out and little fingers intertwined -- in

[268] 'L'emploi du khmèr comme langue de civilisation, dans ce milieu qui n'était selon toute probabilité ni malais ni siamois, semble même avoir longtemps subsisté puisqu'une charte de donation datant de 1699 A.D., trouvée a Patalung (Malaisie centrale), est encore écrite en langue khmère, et dans un alphabet assez composite supposant une évolution graphique autonome.Dupont, Pierre (1942:108) 'Variétés Archéologiques II – Le Buddha de Grahi et l'école de C'aiya' *BEFEO* XLII-XLIII

[269] Coedès (1920:98) 'A propos de la date d'édification d'Angkor Vat' in *Journal Asiatique*

[270] Linrothe 1999:178

a vajra shape. This is the *vajra-hum-kāra mudrā* which is described in the eighth century *sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṇgraha-tantra (STTS)* as 'fixing two fingers in Vajra-wrath' at the heart.[271] Saṃvara, Trailokyavijaya's successor in the final *anuttara* phase of Tantrism, holds the *vajra* and *ghantā* in his hands crossed over the heart and facing inwards, as does the Ādi-Buddha Vajradhara.[272] **[Plate 53 Vajrahumkara and prajñā-embrace mudras]** Phimai's four-faced deity has a unique wrist-touching *mudrā* which falls somewhere between the two. Saṃvara is also generally considered as interchangeable with Hevajra.[273]

The 11th century Chinese Sanskrit manuscript the *hevajrasekaprakriya* opens by addressing itself to Hevajra and in its second section switches without explanation to addressing him as a 10-armed, four-headed Saṃvara, who is also called Śrī Vajradāka. Amid these identity confusions, the Phimai icon has an unmistakable attribute that is unique to Saṃvara – he stretches out behind him and elephant hide that represents the illusory world.[274] The iconographic mix of this unique Trailokyavijaya/Saṃvara image in Phimai may indicate that it drew its inspiration from northern India at a time of doctrinal flux in the 11th century when the cult of Trailokyavijaya was mutating into the cult of Samvara.[275] The brief period of the supremacy of Trailokyavijaya in Tantric Buddhism did however leave rare traces in this area. Woodward believes a

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[271] Snellgrove, D (1981:43) 'Introduction' in S*arva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha: Facsimile reproduction of a Tenth Century Sansrkit Manuscript from Nepal* edited by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove New Dehli

[272] The two mudras are illustrated in de Mallmann (1986) *Introduction à l'Iconographie du Tântrisme bouddhique* Planche 1 and 2.

[273] From the *sādhanas* of the *Sādhanamālā* Śaṃvara is a form of Hevajra. (Bhattacharyya, B 1932:131 *An introduction to Buddhist Esotericism* OUP)

[274] Sir John Woodroffe has this description of Cakrasaṃvara: 'He has four faces…[that] symbolise the four material elements (earth, water, fire, air), the four infinitudes, the four releases and the four ritual acts…With his first pair of hands, which hold a vajra and bell, he embraces his spouse, symbolising the union of Wisdom and Means. With his next pair of hands (he holds aloft) a raw elephant hide made into a garment, thus rending the elephant of illusion.' Cited from *Tantric Texts* vol.VII by Snellgrove (1987:154) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* reprint 2004 Orchid Press, Bangkok.

[275] Snellgrove sees Saṃvara (and Hevajra) as a Buddhist remodelling of Śiva: 'Despite the symbolic interpretation in exclusively Buddhist terms, the origin of this divinity must surely be clear. The naked ascetic smeared in ashes with piled up matted hair, adorned with a lunar crescent, wearing skins of elephant and tiger, garlanded with skulls, holding trident, drum and *khatvānga*, all these attributes indicate Śiva as lord of yogins, the very one whom Vajrapāṇi is presumed in another context to have reduced to abject submission.' Snellgrove, D (1987:155) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* reprint 2004 Orchid Press, Bangkok

bronze *krodha* figure with fangs and blazing eyes found near Phimai may represent Trailokyavijaya.[276] The little fingers do seem to interlock before the chest. [277] **[Plate 54 East entrance Phimai Saṃvara]**

No image of Trailokyavijaya has yet been identified in Angkor. Offerings are however made to him as the Buddha in the small, provincial style 982 A.D. Khleang period inscription of Bantéay Nan near Battambang,[278] which is contemporary with and geographically close to the Phnom Srok caitya.

Phimai's experience with Buddhism's third wave appears to have been seminal in the later adoption of Buddhism as the state religion in Angkor. Among the other major icons of Phimai's cult are bronze images of Hevajra and Vajrasattva. The fluent dancing posture of these two pieces in private collections brilliantly resolves all the formal problems inherent in a body with 16 arms and eight heads. The Khmer icon is quite unique in the Tantric Buddhist world. The modelling is subtle and our eye acquiesces in the insertion of the radiating arms beneath the extended upper arm ornament. We accept the regal slope of the tower of addorsed heads, without asking how the backbone could extend upwards through such a structure. The 16 arms represent the 16 existential voids adepts must perceive to reach Buddhahood, and the eight heads represent the eight releases to be achieved in a spiritual hierarchy that leads to *nirvāṇa*.[279] In the *Hevajra-tantra* text the god says he has four legs which trample the four root evils or *Māras* which tie human beings to the *saṃsāra* of repeated transmigrations. This suggests that rather than crushing the bodies, the god is spiralling upwards in the dance.

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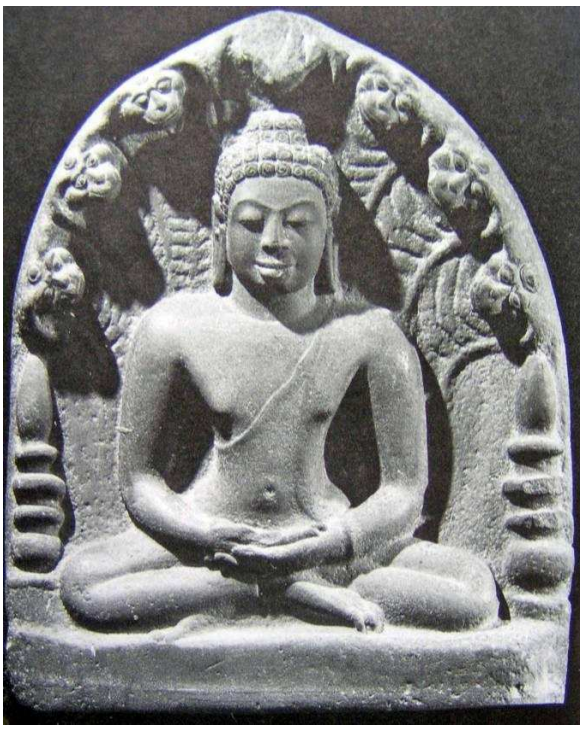
[276] The Mañjuśrīnāmasamgīti for example refers to: 'Having terrible eyes blazing like a Vajra (*vajravāla*) and with their hair blazing like a *vajra*, he is Vajrāveśa, in exalted possession, with a hundred eyes, eyes of *vajra*.' Davidson, Ronald M. (1981:28) 'The litany of the names of Mañjuśrī' *Tantric and Taoist studies in honour of R.A. Stein* Ed M. Strickmann vol 1 Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, Bruxelles

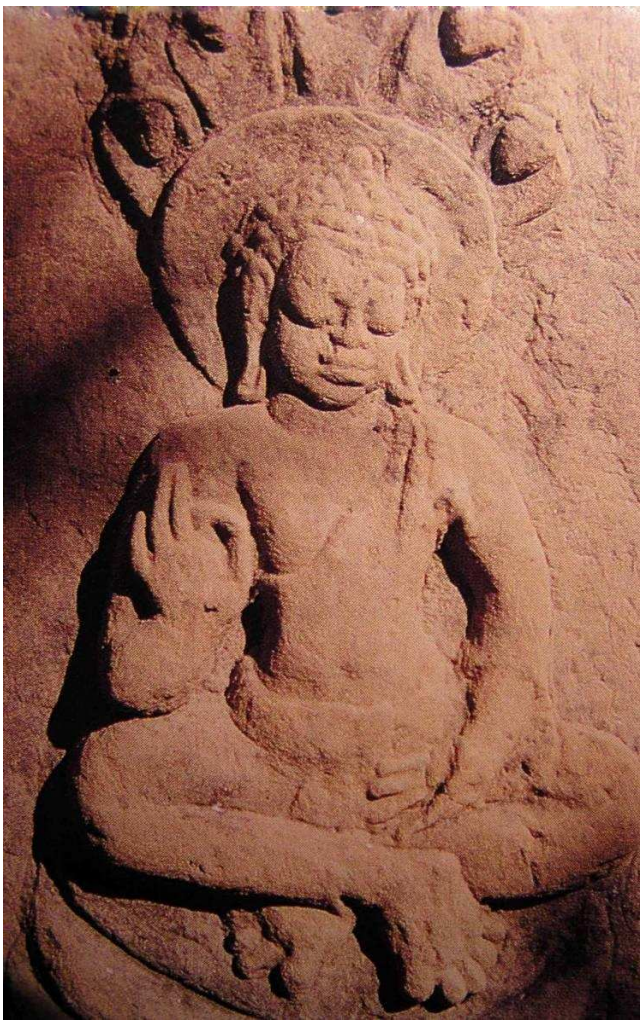
[277] Woodward 2003: Plate 46A. This image could also represent Śaṃvara, whom Benyotosh Bhattacharyya described as: 'Śaṃvara is two-armed, stands in the Alīdha attitude and tramples Kālaratri. He carries the Vajra and the Ghantā.' (1932:132)

[278] K 214; Finot, Louis (1925) "Lokeçvara en Indochine" *Etudes Asiatiques* EFEO, Paris

[279] *Hevajra-tantra* I.ix.15

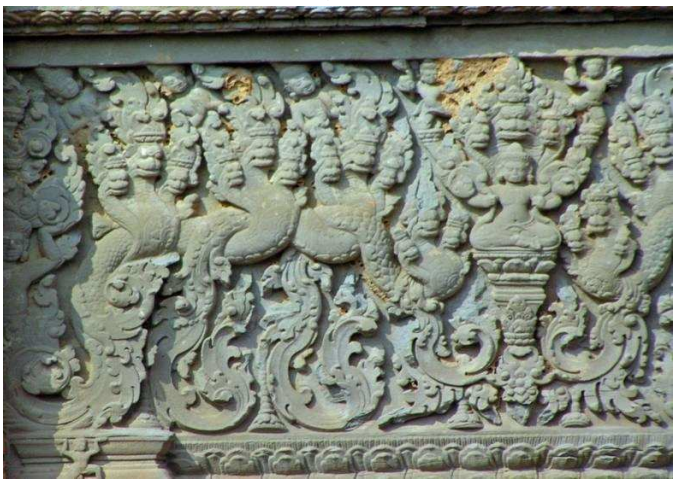


Pl. 48. Dong Si Maha Phot Buddha
(after Dupont 1959:132)



Pl.49.Khon Kaen Nāga Buddha on sema
(after van Beek 1985:66)

Pl. 50. Īśān Nāga Buddha
(after Woodward 1997:53)



Pl. 51.Bakong Nāga cult

Although the Khmer Hevajras have some similarities with the rare Heruka icons of Bengal, the graceful modelling of the multiple heads and arms into a dance posture is an artistic triumph that is purely Khmer. George Coedès' interpretation of the inscriptions of the late 11th century led him to conclude that Jayavarman VI was a vassal prince from the Korat Plateau who rebelled against Harshavarman III in Angkor and took control of the northern part of the empire from a base in a city called Mahīdharapura. [280]

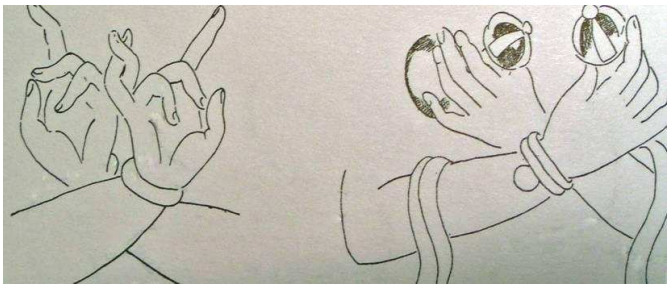
Although he is recorded in an inscription as being crowned at Angkor and as constructing pools and walls at the royal place, Jayavarman VI built no temple there. Indeed there was a long pause in state temple construction in Angkor between the Bàphûon and Angkor Wàt. One interpretation of this situation can be summarised as follows: the royal workshops in Angkor held to the elegant Bàphûon style through to the turn of the century, but they took their iconic direction from Phimai.

8. Stone

Sandstone statues of Hevajra were also made in Angkor late in Jayavarman's reign. Some of the largest stone statues carved in Cambodia after the huge, imperial 'radiating Bodhisattvas' of the 1190s were also icons of Hevajra. The largest is a three metre high statue which was found broken in a mound of earth near the great East Gate (Porte des Morts) of Angkor Thom. **[Plate 55 Hevajra NY Metropolitan]** The 52 inch bust of this statue is in the collection of the New York Metropolitan Museum. In a 1980 exchange between Hiram Woodward and Bruno Dagens, who was making the inventory of the Khmer Conservation Depot in Siemreap at the time, it was established that fragments of its hands and legs were in Depot but in poor condition.[281] During a search of the Siemreap Conservatory in 2005, the staff and I were unable to locate the remains of the legs. In a 1968 article Bruno Dagens had reported:

[280] Coedès (1968:153) *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* Hawaii University
[281] Hiram Woodward in conversation with Bruno Dagens in (1981:57n9) 'Tantric Buddhism at Angkor Thom' *Ars Orientalis* pp.57-67.

Pl. 52.Nāga Buddha Kompong Cam



Pl. 53. Vajrahumkara and prajñā-embrace mudrās (after Mallmann 1986:pl.2)

Pl. 55. Hevajra, NY Metropolitan Museum

Pl. 54. East entrance Saṃvara, Phimai

> In Jayavarman VII's time, this dancing god [Hevajra] of the Mahāyānist pantheon enjoyed a certain popularity that is attested, if not in the epigraphy, at least by numerous representations in bronze and also in a large statue in stone: this latter, sadly very mutilated, represents the god dancing as in the bronze images. It was found in a chapel to the east of the Gate of the Dead of Angkor Thom, where several statues of Lokeśvara were also found.[282]

A search of the electronic inventory of the École Française d'Extreme Orient (EFEO) in Paris did however bring to light photographs of the unearthing of the giant Hevajra by Henri Marchal on 8 March 1923. **[Plate 56 Hevajra and Lokeśvara Porte des Morts March 1923 (EFEO archive)]** Marchal described the giant as 'squatting' but the photograph shows the posture of the huge legs, despite being shorn of feet, to be the classical *ardhaparyanka* dance position of Hevajra. **[Plate 57 Hevajra legs (EFEO archive)]** The site was a pile of earth – not a chapel as Dagens recalls – in the bush 100 metres from the Porte des Morts. The dump, for that is what it looks like in the photographs, also yielded a pedestal, 16 hands and several Avalokiteśvaras. A number of the broken hands in the depot have been identified as belonging to the Hevajra. They have finely carved fingers and skins folds at the wrists that show the high quality of the sculpting. They hold some of Hevajra's normal attributes of animals and Buddhas. The statue must originally have measured more than three metres and was presumably placed on the one metre high pedestal in the photograph (there is a measuring rod beside it), making this Hevajra one of the largest icons of the late Bàyon period. The sculptor captured a fine 'Khmer smile' and the tension in the earlobes, stretched by the heavy earrings. The giant Hevajra is almost as large as the four metre Bàyon-style Viṣṇu that Jayavarman VII may have erected in Angkor Wàt to mark the *indrābhiṣeka* celebrations. If an *indrābhiṣeka* followed the restoration of Khmer control over central and southern Čam kingdoms in 1203, this Viṣṇu may have been designated Cāmpeśvara ('Lord of Čampā'), a Khmer rendering of Viṣṇu erected in shrines since the seventh century to celebrate victories over the Cams. The Viṣṇu and Hevajra bear some striking similarities. The large, gilt Viṣṇu has open but slightly lowered eyes, a broad

[282] Dagens, B. (1968:143) 'Étude sur l'iconographie du Bàyon' *Ars Asiatiques* XIX Paris

flat smile with heavy lips, arched eyebrows that almost meet, as well as a finely domed forehead with a raised but shapeless third eye – all features it shares with the Hevajra. The ears protrude slightly on both icons and the earlobes are distended almost to the shoulders. The necks on both are short, the shoulders high and square, they wear no necklace and the hands hold their attributes with a similar delicacy. In short, they could well be exact contemporaries, and possibly the largest late icons of Jayavarman's reign.

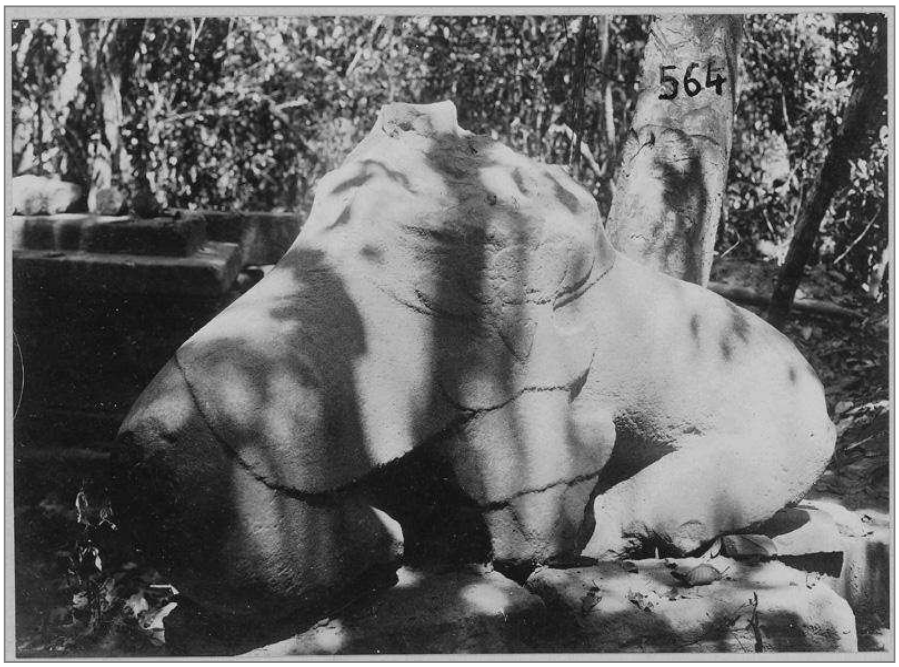
The giant Hevajra appears to have been smashed and dumped outside the Angkor Thom walls, perhaps in a later Śaiva reaction. French scholars do not appear to have prized this stone Hevajra very highly, for the École Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO) sold it to the Metropolitan Museum a few years after it was discovered. They seem to have taken it for a severely damaged 11-headed Avalokiteśvara,[283] but Alan Priest published it at the Metropolitan in 1937 as an eight-headed Hevajra,[284] a judgement later endorsed by Woodward.[285] The remaining top section of the right arm clearly shows a representation of eight of the 16 arms of the deity. **[Plate 58 Hevajra's eight arms]**

The only comment ever elicited by a second large stone Hevajra the EFEO uncovered outside the West Gate of Angkor Thom was a brief diary note in its bulletin in 1925 to the effect that: 'other [finds] outside the West gate of Angkor Thom … brought interesting sculptures to light, including one image of Hevajra (Pl. LXVI, B).' **[Plate 59 West Baray Hevajra Siemreap depot 20 arms 4 legs]** This image is in high relief with 20 arms, four legs and eight heads supported by a back panel and is thereby well preserved. The four large feet are planted at right angles to each other beneath the distinctly 'Bàyon style' heavy legs and typical fish tail sampot. The lack of dancing posture and the strange number of arms set this piece a little apart from its East gate contemporary, but there are clear affinities in their wide, flat mouths,

[283] Woodward (1981:65n3)
[284] Alan Priest (1937:84-8) 'A collection of Cambodian sculpture' *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 9, New York
[285] Woodward (1981:57)

the design of their earrings and tiaras and in the distinctive set of the tower of eight addorsed heads.

Pl.56. Hevajra Porte des Morts March 1923 (EFEO archive)



Pl. 57. Hevajra legs (EFEO archive)

Pl. 58. Hevajra's eight arms

Pl. 59. West Baray Hevajra Siemreap depot, 20 arms four legs

Several stone markers with Hevajra's image have been found. One from the Porte de Morts bears his image surrounded by the eight Yoginīs of his maṇḍala, **[Plate 60 Hevajra marker Porte des Morts (EFEO archive)]** another dances with just two Yoginīs **[Plate 61 Hevajra Marker Siemreap depot 0205]** and a third has a bizarre arrangements of the eight heads **[Plate 62 Hevajra *borne* EFEO]**. Another Hevajra recorded dancing on a stela in Jayavarman's Praḥ Khan temple in the 19th century has been lost. Louis Delaporte published an engraving of it in 1880, suggesting it represented Śiva, and saying it had been found in Praḥ Khan temple and moved to the 'Musée Khmer'.[286] **[Plate 63 Delaporte's 1880 copper engraving of Hevajra on Praḥ Khan stela]**

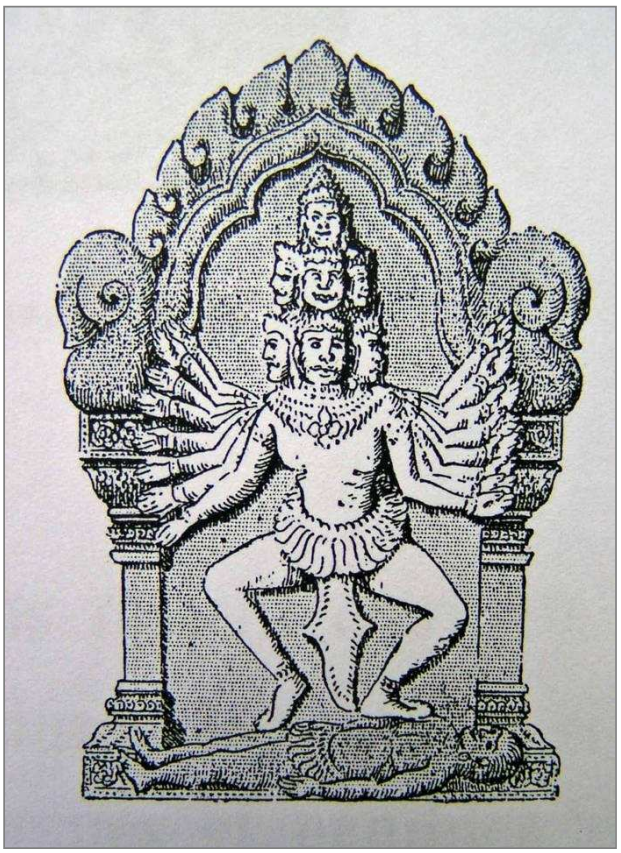
These stone icons and markers, along with the better known bronze Hevajras, are key parts of the accumulating evidence for seeing a state-level cult of the Vajrayāna, centred on Hevajra and his Yoginīs, in the last years of Jayavarman's reign.

[286] L. Delaporte (1880:358) *Voyage au Cambodge*

Pl. 60. Hevajra Porte des Morts (EFEO archive)

Pl.61. Hevajra marker Siemreap depot

Pl. 62. Hevajra *borne* (EFEO archive)



Pl. 63. Delaporte's 1880 copper engraving of Hevajra on Praḥ Khan marker (after Delaporte rpt 1999:358)

Chapter 4

Vajrapāṇi, Garuḍa & conversion

> To accord only a decorative role to all these suparnas [eagles, Garudas], particularly in the Bàyon period, when the smallest scroll of foliage can recount so much history, would be to misunderstand the meaning of Khmer decorative sculpture.
> Jean Boisselier BEFEO 44, 1950

Even small changes in the temple art of king Jayavarman VII were driven by adjustments to his imperial politico-religious agenda. And as the only texts from the period are a scattering of temple inscriptions, we are obliged to search for clues to the agenda embedded in the decoration of temples. The placement, form, size and decoration of his temples project the messages of cosmological and political import that make up the ideological backbone of Jayavarman VII's long reign.

The dynamic behind erecting temples on earth for occupation by the gods was to forge relations with the cosmic forces capable of conferring authenticity and strength on the human kingdom; they added cultural authority to political expediency. As a result, as Davidson puts it, temples became the archives of a ruling house:

> In erecting the new temple complexes, kings became patrons to the new divinities that commanded the areas under the rulers' political control. Thus the new temples satisfied many functions. They became testaments to royal legitimacy, with the rulers using the temple walls as a *tabula rasa* for the epigraphs that communicated royal piety, regal decisions on legal matters, imperial conquests, formal alliances with other houses, and a host of matters rendering them archives of a ruling house.[287]

Jayavarman VII, a gifted communicator, was quick to assert both his regime's new cosmic orientation and his early political messages and, in the tradition set by his own Mahīdhara dynasty, the principal vehicle planned from the outset was a series of huge, walled temple complexes to regroup the

[287] Davidson, R. (2002:73) *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: a social history of the Tantric movement* Columbia University Press, New York

population. When he took power Angkor was immediately set to build; his enormous sacred building programme eventually meant he quarried, erected and carved more sandstone than all his predecessors combined. The royal sculpting workshops must have been greatly enlarged as a strategic asset of the realm.

But the scale and intensity of the building programme has not made reading the messages carved into the stones a matter of easy modern consensus. Indeed, the simplistic explanation offered most frequently for the scale of the programme – Jayavarman's megalomania[288] -- is only now being contested.[289] One obstacle to understanding the temples is the damage they sustained in an iconoclastic campaign, presumably mostly by Brahmanical opponents, after Jayavarman's death. This desecration destroyed an untold number of icons and many of the dedication stelae, which are usually the most concentrated 'archival' records. Some major icons have by chance been recovered and restored, but his temples were left almost empty of icons and substantially scarred.[290] The religious motivation and political strategy that drove this spectacular sacred building programme thus remain surprisingly open to interpretation.

1. Conversion

Sanderson sees an 'intense commitment to Buddhism manifest in his vast architectural undertakings.'[291] This chapter tries to get closer to Jayavarman's

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[288] This was Coedès' view: 'What is sure is that he left the country exhausted by his megalomania and thenceforth powerless to resist the attacks of his young and turbulent neighbour to the west.' George Coedès (1943:205) *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor* Imprimerie d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi. Philippe Stern was among the first to use this word:'Les édifices du style du Bayon sont ceux qui marquent le plus fortement, par leur dimensions, leur nombre, leur laisser-aller dans l'exécution, une sorte de mégalomanie artistique et le désir d'étonner...' Stern, Philippe (1927:182) *Le Bayon d'Angkor et l'évolution de l'art khmer: étude et discussion de la chronologie des monuments khmers* Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuther, Paris

[289] See for example by Christine Hawixbrock:'Mégalomane ou fervent bouddhiste, ces qualificatifs humains qui essayaient tant bien que mal d'expliquer les innovations de cette époque, ne suffisaient pas à notre sens et c'est à cette étude d'ensemble que nous nous sommes attachée en supposant qu'une lecture croisée et détaillée de tous les éléments à notre disposition permettrait de préciser le sens historique de cette période.' Hawixbrock, Christine (1998:64) 'Jayavarman VII ou le renouveau d'Angkor, entre tradition et modernité' *BEFEO* 85

[290] Subsequent pillaging has also been a major factor.

[291] Alexis Sanderson (2004:429) 'The Śaiva religion among the Khmers; Part I' *BEFEO* Paris

direction-giving, politico-religious imperatives by focusing on certain minor changes in ornamental devices. One theme that emerges from the sacred art develops Sanderson's claim and goes further to indicate a vigorous campaign of conversion to Buddhism. The campaign was on a scale implying a major political imperative – something far compelling than the drift of courtly fashion seen by Christine Hawixbrock:

> We could ask ourselves whether it was not a matter of good form to convert to Buddhism during the reign of Jayavarman VII, for one cannot take all these minor works as representing royal commands.[292]

The indications of the scale of the building programme challenge any interpretation that assumes the institution of state Buddhism as a minor adjustment to a continuing syncretic system. On the contrary, it will be seen that the evidence suggests the reign saw a sustained drive to build the Buddhist state and bring stability to the empire. How this was received by the entrenched Brahmanical families can only be speculated on, but the stakes were clearly high. Snellgrove reflects thus on the Angkor scene at the time of the Buddhist revival in the 10th century: 'But Buddhism was clearly at a disadvantage, especially within the confines of the capital city of Angkor… [T]he lineages of influential Brahmans, often related to the leading aristocratic families, formed an essential part of the structure of the state at least from the time of Jayavarman II onwards.'[293]

The impact on ordinary people was significant. The statistics on the Praḥ Khan stela record this temple complex alone housed 14,000 residents within its high outer enclosure wall. Some 20,400 divinities in gold, silver, bronze and stone were erected within it and 8,176 villages with 208,532 male and female slaves donated for the upkeep of the gods, the professors and students of the foundation by the king and landowners.[294] Community-building under the guidance of monks within the Angkor city precincts, now being reinforced by huge ramparts, after its defences were breached in a Čam attack, was obviously a priority. Outside the Angkor Thom walls three large

[292] 'On peut se demander s'il n'était pas de bon ton de se convertir au bouddhisme sous le règne de Jayavarman VII, car on ne peut penser que toutes ces oeuvres de moindre importance représentent des commandes royales.' Hawixbrock (1998:74)
[293] Snellgrove, D (2001:54) *Khmer civilization and Angkor* Orchid press, Bangkok
[294] Coedès, G. (1941:297) 'Le stèle du Prah Khan d'Angkor' *BEFEO* 41

walled temple complexes and a dozen smaller temples were under construction. They were furnished with dance troupes and musicians to spread the new religious calendar. The king was taking the opportunity of the failure of the state's 350-year Śaiva defences to embed Buddhism as the creed of state protection. Cambodia's defence was to be re-secured by realigning its syncretic creed with a Buddhist pantheon supreme over all. State protection Śaivism was fundamentally supplanted by state protection Buddhism, while the Hindu and ancestral gods were kept but realigned.

Before turning to the art, we should note the major historical fact that supports this interpretation. Cambodia turned definitively to Buddhism during this reign. The sacred art and inscriptions leave us in no doubt that Cambodia was only marginally Buddhist until the Mahīdharas took power and then when Jayavarman VII ascended the throne. Buddhism had flowered as a minority faith from at least the fifth century and was suppressed for substantial periods; [Chapter 2.1] but from Jayavarman's reign until today the country has known an eveolving mix of Buddhist and ancestral cults. The Buddhism swung between the poles of Northern and Southern Buddhism, depending on the prevailing environmental forces, but the fundamental shift occurred in the 12th century. Apart from an interlude when one monarch brought back state Śaivism and desecrated Jayavarman's icons and temples, this underlying change remained in place. The turn to Buddhism was the most decisive and abrupt shift in the country's religious history.[295] Events of this magnitude are not accidents. Only a deliberate, sustained campaign of conversion to the new state religion could have embedded it. So our re-examination of the Bàyon-style temple decoration will test the question of whether conversion to Buddhism was given the highest political priority.

[295] In making this judgement I find myself diametrically opposed to the view of David Wyatt who sees 'Jayavarman VII and the Angkorian elite' as maintaining the state Śaivism of previous centuries under a veneer of Buddhism. Wyatt, seeming to put the cart before the horse, sees Jayavarman's 12th century Buddhism as 'a sort of Counter-Reformation' against the 13th century sweep of a (by analogy Protestant) Theravāda which was to emerge from Sri Lanka, Burma and Sukhothai and reach Cambodia by the 14th century. 'It [Jayavarman's politico-religious strategy] was misguided and doomed to failure, for it was sorely deficient in understanding what the religious change had meant, and why it would amount to what can be called a "religious revolution."' Wyatt, David (2001:48) 'Relics, oaths and politics in 13th century Siam' *JSEAS* 32.1

2. Garuḍas and Nāgas

In tracing the evolution of some of the mythical creatures on the temple walls, a mutation in the icon of Garuḍa stands out. Unexpectedly, this will turn out to disclose the ubiquitous presence of Vajrapāṇi, the tough protector of the Buddha, who was capable of converting the most recalcitrant, and who rose to supremacy in the Tantric pantheon of international Vajrayāna from about the 10th century. In early Buddhism Vajrapāṇi was the primitive and violent *krodha-vignāntaka* ('wrathful destroyer of obstacles') or 'hit-man' who was first known as the *yakṣa* (demigod) protector of the *Rājagṛha* on the 'Vulture peak' (*gṛdhrakūta*).[296] He first appeared at the Buddha's side when the Bhagavat knew he had little longer to live and wanted to undertake a number of difficult conversions like that of the Nāgarāja Apalāla in Northern India. So he took Vajrapāṇi with him, rather than Ānanda, and the Nāga's storms and hail were brutally suppressed by Vajrapāṇi's fire and violence. His all-powerful vajra (previously Indra's thunderbolt) counters all monsters, snakes and other obstacles to conversion. Marcelle Lalou says the engagement of Vajrapāṇi in the Buddha's last conversion missions made 'Ānanda the first victim of a re-emergence of local cults, of which one finds traces elsewhere than in the Vinaya of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin* and in Tantric Buddhism.'[297] Vajrapāṇi is immediately linked to conversion, violence and the exotic as Buddhism expands into new areas.

Garuda was the mythical heavenly eagle of Hinduism and Buddhism, and his adversary and prey was the Nāga, the chthonic serpent that is the Indian and Southeast Asian equivalent of the Chinese dragon and often symbolises ancient ancestral cults. Changes in their icons provide a stream of indicators of what was happening.

In the Indian subcontinent, judging from the number of humans with Nāga heads and hoods in the religious art, Nāga cults were particularly strong in the Kriṣṇa River Valley at Amarāvatī and Nagārjunakonda, **[Plate 64 NJK Sāgato and Mango ferry, Longhurst 1937:pl.48]** in Sri Lanka and in Nepal. The

[296] Lalou, M. (1956:289) 'Four notes on Vajrapani' *Adyar Library Bulletin*, Adyar
[297] Lalou (1956:289)

Nāgas' mythical role as guardians of the treasures of the deep was embraced and extended with the arrival of Buddhism, when Nāgas were converted by the Buddha and became guardians of himself, his relics and the law.[298] **[Plate 65 Nāgas protect stūpa Vogel 1926 pl.10]** The Buddhists of Amarāvatī developed the Nāga conversion theme in the form of a Buddha enthroned on Nāga coils and protected by the Nāga's hood. **[Plate 66 Nagajunakonda Nāga Buddha Longhurst 1937:pl.50b]** When this iconic design eventually reached Cambodia in the 10th century – apparently transmitted through the Buddhist communities of Sri Lanka[299] and peninsular Thailand – it became inseparably linked with the message of the Buddha. The Nāga, as Mus and Coedès show, is linked in many Asian cultures with the rainbow and can be seen as a transcendent highway between the world of man and the world of the gods.[300] At the same time the image retains the missionary associations of readiness to embrace converts and to relate sympathetically to local ancestral beliefs. There are already abundant signs of ancient serpent cults in early Angkorian temple lintels **[Plate 67 Bakong crested Nāga]** and in temple moat balustrades like the giant (0.7m. radius) Nāga that stretches 100 metres across the moat at the ninth century Bakong temple at Roluos. **[Plate 68 Bakong Nāga]** However, the Khmer Buddha was only enthroned on a giant serpent, in the form first found in Amarāvatī and then Sri Lanka, when the Khmer Buddhists obtained the right to erect a temple in the capital in the mid-10th century. The Buddha seated on the coils of a giant Nāga was reproduced thousands of times over the next four centuries, culminating in a 4-metre

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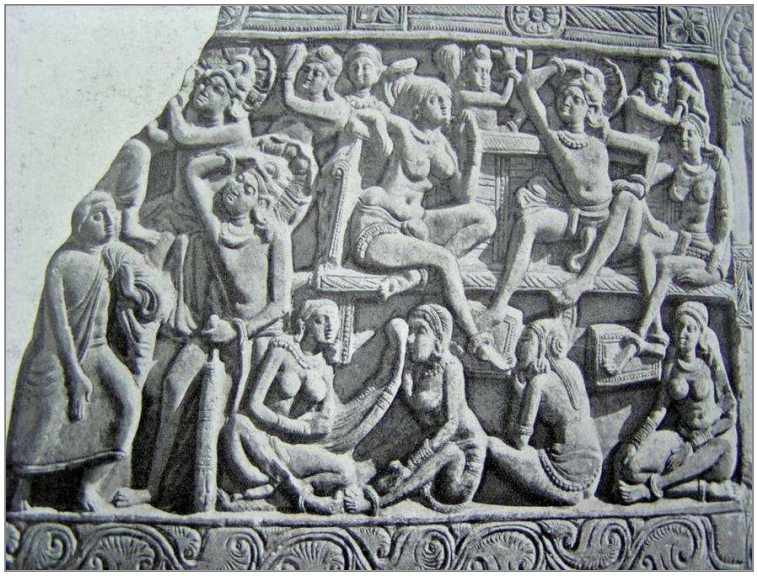
[298] The Nepal Valley was once a lake known as Nāga Daha. John Huntington speculates that this held one of the original eight stūpas that contained the relics of the historical Buddha, which the Nāgas agreed to open for emperor Asoka's distribution around India, as recounted in the *Asoka Avadana*. He therefore proposes that the original Svayambhū Mahācaitya of Kathmandu may even predate the stūpas of Sanchi and Barhut. John C. Huntington (2002:16) 'The Iconography of Svayambhū Mahācaitya: the main mandalas' *Orientations* vol. 33:10.

[299] Although Sri Lanka was to become the world centre of Theravāda, its heterodox monastery of Abhayagiri adopted Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna and dominated Buddhism on the island during the second half of the first millennium, when Nāga Buddha images proliferated. Going further back, Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien, who stayed on Sri Lanka from 411-13 recorded origin myths of the first humans settling on the island that was first only inhabited by Nāgas. Przyluski shows that the word Lanka probably has the same Indo-European root *'lak'* as the Sanskrit *Nāga* and the Chinese *lung*. Jean Przyluski (1938:602-10) 'Dragon Chinois et Nāga Indian' *Documenta Serica* III

[300] Coedès, G. (1943:98) *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor* Imprimerie d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi

Naga Buddha being installed by Jayavarman VII in the central sanctuary of the Bàyon.

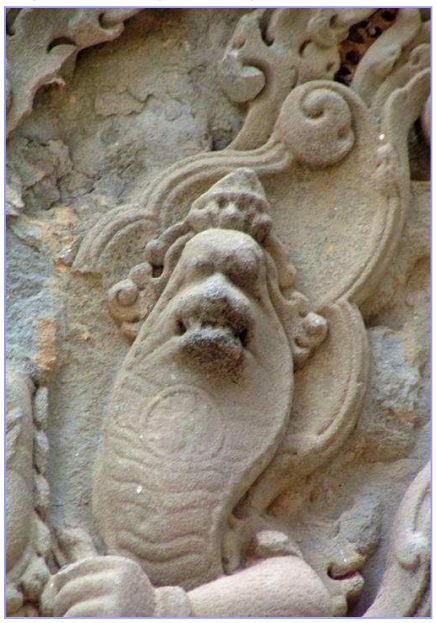
Chapter 4



Pl. 64. Sāgato and the Nāga of the mango ferry(after Longhurst 1937:pl.48)

Pl. 65. Amarāvatī Nāgas protect stūpa (after Vogel 1926:pl.10)

Pl. 66. Nāga Buddha, Nagarjunakonda (after Longhurst 1937:pl.50b)



Pl. 67. Bakong crested Nāga

Garuḍa's entry into Angkorian sacred art often came in discreet places like enclosure walls, balustrades or candleholders. Yet the sacred eagle gradually became pervasive in the late Bàyon period. The most physically powerful Khmer Garuḍa arrives in the middle, imperial expansion phase of Jayavarman's reign. All association with Viṣṇu is dropped and the magical eagle grows into a towering, barrel-chested defender of Buddhism and defender of the people against external threat. For a king imposing Mahāyāna Buddhism for the first time on a long-established Śaiva state, and also defending his empire against further invasion, these were major roles. Frédéric believes the Southeast Asian Garuḍa-Nāga myths always hark back to the stūpa-protecting role of Nāgas developed in Amarāvatī:

> In Buddhism, the Garudas are the mortal enemies of the Nāgas; only Nāgas possessing a Buddhist relic or converted to Buddhism could escape them.[301]

Getty says Buddha divided his monastic robe into infinitesimal pieces and distributed them among the Nāgas who appealed for his help. 'No Nāga with this inviolable talisman could be harmed by a Garuḍa.[302] Boisselier too links the Garuḍa icon firmly to the protection of Buddhism:

> …it is in this period that the curious association garuda-nāga is formed, which was to enjoy such a brilliant career in the Mahāyānist Cambodia of Jayavarman VII. This reign, which leads the empire to its culminating point, is the one that confers on Garuda his most important role. Reappearing in the decoration of pilasters and lintels, he replaces, united with the Nāga, the previous decorative motif for temple balustrade ends, adorns the angles of gopuras, supports the gigantic heads of the face towers and alternates with the lion on royal terrace walls…During the reign of Jayavarman VII, Garuda ceased to be the mount of Viṣṇu and though he certainly remains a symbol of victory, he appears above all as a protector of Buddhism.[303]

Jayavarman's victory over the Čams is thus embellished with a classical literary context, but Boisselier of course sees an umbrella of Buddhist cosmology extended above the Hindu myths. Garuḍa takes his classical Hindu form in the 10th century Pràsàt Kravan where, in an extraordinarily physical image, his human body is raised high on his great bird's legs, as he holds Viṣṇu aloft on his shoulders. The impression of power is dramatic as the

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[301] Louis Frédéric (1989:279) *Buddhism* Flammarion, Paris
[302] Alice Getty (1914:155) *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* OUP, Oxford
[303] Boisselier, Jean (1950:57) 'Garuda dans l'art khmer' *BEFEO* 44

relief image covers the whole interior brick wall of the sanctuary. **[Plate 69 Pràsàt Kravan Viṣṇu & Garuḍa]** This powerful Garuḍa, the same size as Viṣṇu, perhaps contributed to creating a role independent of Viṣṇu (as Śiva's bull did not), for Garuḍa stands alone in temples later in the century like East Mebon and Bantéay Srei. **[Plate 70 Banteay Srei Garuḍa lintel]** Garuḍa briefly lost his human arms in the Bàphûon temple before returning with them as Viṣṇu's vahana in Angkor Wàt. **[Plate 71 Garuḍa and Viṣṇu Boisselier BEFEO 1944 pl.29]** The Angkor Wàt image developed the innovation of showing Garuḍa crowned and bejewelled with his tail transformed into courtly dress by having it protrude forward like a trailing belt. He had the feet of a lion and the wings of an eagle, but with human hands and bejewelled dress he could be a warrior or a prince or a god in disguise.

2.1 Power Garuḍa

Jayavarman's Garuḍas grew to giant proportions – twice the size of a man -- on the walls of Praḥ Khan **[Plate 72 Praḥ Khan outer wall]** and along the terraces outside the royal palace.[304] These 'power Garuḍas' exude strength and military prowess like Dvarapāla door guardians. Their powerful beaks are thrust up into the air and their talons hold down two large, multi-headed cobras with unfolded hoods. The eagles' human hands hold the Nāgas' tails triumphantly aloft. The eagles are crowned and wear jewelled necklaces and belts.

Emmanuel Guillon wonders whether this power Garuḍa did not originate in neighbouring Čampā, where a similar Garuḍa design occurs in the Tháp Mâm hoard, which he dates tentatively to the mid-12th century.[305] **[Plate 73 Čam Thap Mam-style 12th century Guillon]** There are indeed striking similarities in the design of this strange iconic mix of bird and human: both have a

[304] George Coedès sees the royal plaza Garudas as carrying aloft the flying palace of the king: 'Il n'est pas douteux que la présence de ces Garudas-cariatides ne soit destiné à faire de la tribune royale un palais volant, analogue aux pavillons célestes tels que se les représentait l'imagination des anciens Khmèrs.' Coedès G (1943:103) *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor* Imprimèrie d'Extrême-Orient, Hanoi. But as the king was living in a palace of wood, rather than the stone reserved for the palaces of the gods on earth, it seems more likely that the Garuḍa motif signals terrestrial defence.
[305] Guillon, Emmanuel (2001:150) *Cham art* River Books, Bangkok

forward pointing tail-cum-sampot, raised human arms which are also wings, heavy jewellery on the chest and waist belt and a powerful beak with a small beard of feathers. Indeed, the details of the birds of Campā and Angkor are so close as to suggest a cultural exchange.

Pl. 67. Bakong Nāga

Pl. 69. Prasat Kravan Viṣṇu and Garuda (after Jacques/Freeman 1997:89)

Pl. 70. Bantéay Srei Garuda lintel

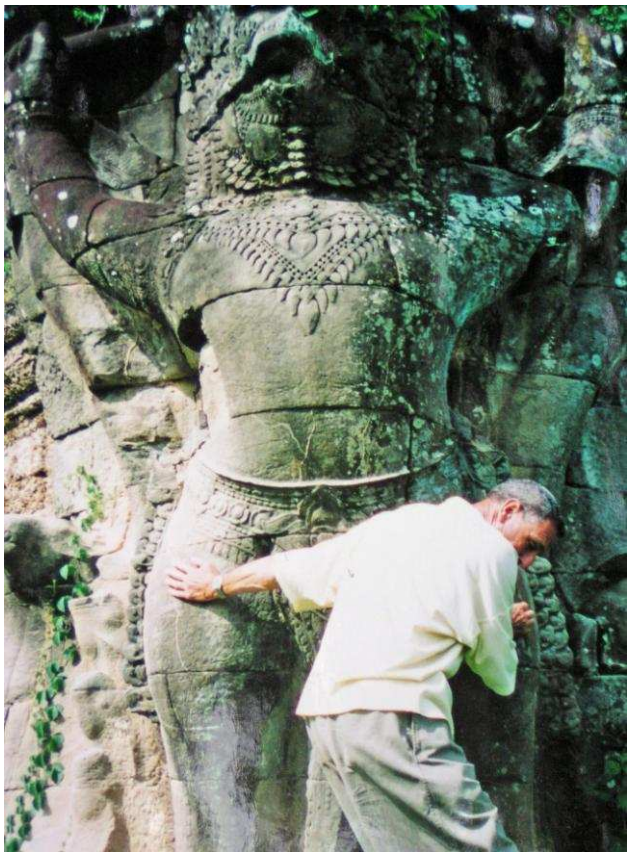
Pl. 71. Garuda and Viṣṇu (after Boisselier 1944:pl.29)

Guillon's date would imply that the Garuḍa design was Čam in origin and was adopted by the Khmers some decades later. Čampā and Cambodia had became military allies under Suryavarman II against the Đai Việt. It is therefore thinkable that Jayavarman eventually took the design back to Angkor. But the cultural flow could also have gone the other way. If the Čam Garuḍa first appeared at the end of the 12th century it may have been part of the cultural flow that followed Jayavarman's re-possession of some Čam territory after wars in the 1190s. The Garuḍa image could have travelled from Angkor to Čampā as part of a cultural package imported by Čam prince Vidyānandana, a Khmer ally. This prince [Chapter 5.4] was educated at the court in Angkor before being appointed by Jayavarman to lead a Khmer army to subjugate part of his native land in 1190. The prince was successful but rebelled against Angkor in 1192 and having declared himself king Sūryavarman-Vidyānandana. He built a victory temple to Heruka, perhaps the same deity as in Jayavarman's Hevajra cult in Angkor. The Tháp Mâm Garuḍa icon design could therefore have been imported under Vidyānandana.

2.2 'Gentle Garuḍas'[306]

The power Garuḍa icon of the mid-Bàyon style went on to be used as a cornice and wall support for the giant face tower deities of the Bàyon and the towers of Jayavarman's temple at Praḥ Khan of Kompong Svāy, northeast of Angkor. But it also underwent a dramatic mutation that is most clearly seen at the two large Praḥ Khan temple complexes in Angkor and Kompong Svāy. Inside the walls of Jayavarman's temples, Garuḍa appears at the end of numerous Nāga balustrades that mark out large sacred areas around the principal sanctuary buildings. These eagles are smaller in size but erected in far greater numbers, and though they still look powerful, instead of attacking the Nāgas they affectionately embrace their multiple heads.

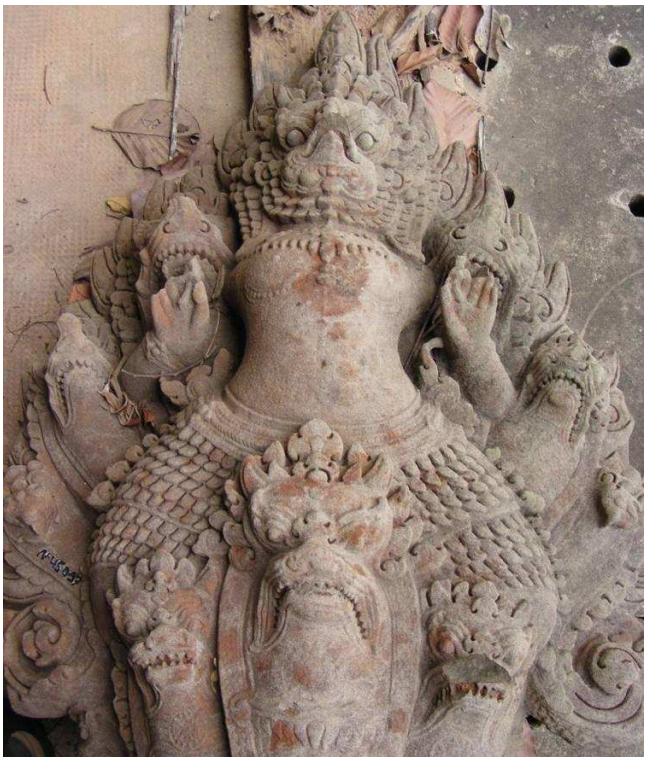
[306] I thank Elizabeth Moore for this designation of the late Bàyon Garuḍa icon.



Pl. 72. Praḥ Khan outer enclosure

Pl. 73.Thap Mam Khmer style Garuda
(after Guillon 2001:150)

Pl. 74. Praḥ Khan Garuda terrace



Pl. 75 Kompong Svāy Garuda recovered, Siemreap depot

[Plate 74 Praḥ Khan Garuḍa terrace] The psychology of the relationship between these mythical creatures has been dramatically reversed.[307]
The balustrade Garuḍas, a quarter of the size of their predecessors, straddle one of the Nāga's multiple heads and wrap their arms gently around others, while holding their human hands forward in the 'have no fear' or *abhaya mudrā,* holding flowers. It is a dramatic move away from the huge, intimidating Nāga-trampling 'power Garuḍa'. The mudrā is clearly visible in exceptionally well-preserved Garuḍas from Praḥ Khan of Kompong Svāy that were recently returned to the Siemreap Conservation depot after being looted and recovered from a truck by the Cambodian police. **[Plate 75 Garuḍa lotus P.K.K.Svay Siemreap depot recovered]** This mutation in the Garuḍa icons has not drawn much comment, but the change is so striking it must, in the Angkorian context, betoken a message from the king. Whatever its import, the message was well distributed, because these gentle Garuḍas also appear in numbers at Bantéay Kdei, Ta Prohm, Sraḥ Srang, Bantéay Chmàr and Wàt Nokor.[308] Indeed the proliferation of Garuḍas in the late Bàyon period took the familiar but not especially celebrated mount of Viṣṇu from relative obscurity to the status of the most reproduced icon of all, as noted by Boisselier:

> …at the end of the first quarter of the 13th century, which corresponds to the apogee of Khmer power and the greatest construction effort the empire experienced, Garuda plays a role of steadily growing importance. Having made a modest debut in statuary, he came to occupy the first place in the Bàyon period…[309]

Boisselier recalls the affectionate Nāga of the Theravādin biography of the Buddha when the serpent Mucalinda protects the meditating Buddha from a sudden storm in the weeks after his enlightenment.[310] Here is one of the 'good Nāgas' who fall into the group that Frédéric, quoted earlier, says escaped the attacks of the heavenly eagles only by either having Buddhist relics or by converting to Buddhism.[311] As these Nāgas show no sign of carrying relics in

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[307] Boisselier comments: 'L'attitude suggère en effet beaucoup plus l'idée d'un protecteur que celled u vainqueur étouffant ses ennemis qui apparaissait à la fin du style d'Angkor Wàt.' Boisselier (1951:326)
[308] Boisselier, Jean (1950:72) 'Garuda dans l'art khmer' *BEFEO* 44
[309] Boisselier (1950:56)
[310] Boisselier (1950:74)
[311] The Khmer 10th century Wàt Sithor inscription refers to the good Nāgas as destroying the wicked with rainstorms and favouring the Buddhists with calm weather: 'the adverse rains and

the balustrade ends, we should presumably take them to be converts to Buddhism. If we now look to the mythologies of Northern Buddhism, to which Jayavarman adhered, rather than to Southern Buddhism that focused on events in the biography of the historical Buddha, including the Mucalinda episode, we find a much better fit for the icon.

3. Vajrapāṇi and Garuḍa

After Vajrapāṇi took over Ānanda's role in conversion, he rapidly accumulated others, according to Etienne Lamotte:

> Dragon or Nāga converting became a major activity in the final years of the Buddha's life, and Vajrapāṇi became his most effective constant companion in this. Where Ānanda was the leading disciple, converter, text memorizer for the Theravāda, Vajrapāṇi had all these roles in the Mahāyāna.[312]

The theme of conversion was present in such early Mahāyāna classics as the Lotus Sūtra, where a striking account is given of the powers of an eight-year-old converted Nāga.[313] The rapid international expansion of Tantric Buddhism in the eighth century boosted the career of the Bodhisattva endowed with Indra's thunderbolt, which could both coerce the recalcitrant and protect the converted. Vajrapāṇi's role as chief converter to Buddhism is defined in chapter six of the *sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha (STTS)*, the root Tantra of the Yoga class, which was the main platform for the international expansion of

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winds destroy the wicked (pāpiṣṭha) but the congenial devas and nāgas bring stability to the righteous (dharmiṣṭha)'

C 7-8 tato nighnanti pāpiṣṭhān viṣamā vrṣṭivāyavah
devā nāgās samās tv ete dharmmiṣṭhān ramayanti ca //

[312] Lamotte, Étienne (1966:133-8) 'Vajrapani en Inde' *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville* PUF Paris

[313] Burton Watson summarises: 'Chapter 12 relates another affair of equally astounding import. In it, the bodhisattva Manjushri describes how he has been preaching the Lotus Sutra at the palace of the dragon king at the bottom of the sea. The Nāga*s* or dragons, it should be noted, are one of the eight kinds of non-human beings who are believed to protect Buddhism. They were revered in early Indian folk religion and were taken over by Buddhism, whose scriptures often portray them as paying homage to the Buddha and seeking knowledge of his teachings. Asked whether any succeeded in gaining enlightenment, Manjushri mentions the daughter of a dragon king Sagara, a girl just turned eight, who was able to master all the teachings. The questioner expresses scepticism and …the girl herself appears and before the astonished assembly performs acts that demonstrate that she has achieved the highest level of understanding and can 'in an instant' achieve Buddhahood. Earlier Buddhism had held that five obstacles gravely hamper women, including the fact that they can never achieve Buddhahood. All such assertions are unequivocally thrust aside in the Lotus Sutra. The child is a dragon, a non-human being; she is of the female sex, and she has barely turned eight, yet she reaches the highest goal in the space of a moment.' Watson, Burton (1993:xviii) *The Lotus Sutra* Columbia University Press, New York

the Vajrayāna. The *STTS* was one of the primary Buddhist texts ascertained here as being current in Cambodia from at least the mid-10th century [Chapter 1.2.1] and this text immediately and indelibly links Vajrapāṇi with conversion. He dominates chapters 6-10 of the text after disrupting the smooth flow of the celestial assembly around Vairocana by asserting:

> 'O Lords, there are evil beings, Maheśvara and others, who have not been converted even by all of you Tathāgathas. How am I to deal with them?'[314]

Vairocana endows Vajrapāṇi's vajra with special powers and the vajra bearer then proclaims:

> 'Oho! I am the means of conversion, possessed of all great means. Spotless, they assume a wrathful appearance so that beings may be converted by these means.'[315]

Another Vairocana spell brings Śiva and his host of gods into the assembly and a violent duel ensues in which Vajrapāṇi slays the Hindu god with his vajra and revives him as a Buddha. The vajra was to propel Vajrapāṇi to the highest Bodhisattva rank and ultimately to the status of the highest expression of perfect enlightenment as the expansion drew in more and more magical and supernatural powers into the faith's third wave. Lamotte comments:

> Bearer of the thunderbolt in the old Buddhist tradition, elevated to the rank of Bodhisattva of the 10th world by the Mahāyāna, Vajrapāṇi had his place ready-made in the Vajrayāna. But here the baton he holds is not only the weapon of fire brandished against the adversaries of the Buddha, it is also the immanent, adamantine essence of all beings and all things.[316]

Lalou is in agreement when she supports the research of S. Toganoo in his *Rishukyō no Kenkyū* ('Research on the Nayasutra') who traces the fusion in Tantrism of Vajrapāṇi with the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra to produce the notion of a supreme, primordial Buddha – 'which is ancient, if the designation is not.'[317]

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[314] Snellgrove, D. (1981:39) 'Introduction' S*arva-tathāgata-tattva-samgraha: Facsimile reproduction of a Tenth Century Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal* edited by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove pp. 5-67 New Delhi

[315] Snellgrove (1981:40)

[316] Lamotte (1966:151)

[317] Lalou (1956:292). She returned to the subject in 1962 with a study of the *Vajrapāni-abhiṣeka-mahātantra* which concluded: 'To sum up, the 'Introduction' to the *Vajrapāni-abhiṣeka* shows the local *yakṣa*, taken on by Śākyamuni as a travelling companion, promoted

4. *SDPS*

Vajrapāṇi's role of protecting Nāgas who converted to Buddhism is given weight in the eighth century *sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra (SDPS)* 'Tantra of the elimination of all evil destinies'. It is possible that the *SDPS* was one of the texts introduced into Cambodia in the 10th century along with the *STTS.* There are many similar themes in both texts, including a central 37-deity maṇḍala, and both are attributed to Buddhaguhya, a celebrated sage of Vikramaśila monastery[318] whom Davidson calls 'the pre-eminent exegete during the second half of the eighth century… [who] more than any other single individual represented the confluence of spirituality, esotericism, political insight, and promotional skill.'[319] Traces in the temple art of 12th century Angkor may point to the presence of the *SDPS*. In the *SDPS* Vajrapāṇi introduces a series of maṇḍalas centred on himself and Śākyamuni/Vairocana, in which the pan-Indic Hindu gods acknowledge the superiority of the Buddhas, as do the Eight Great Planets and the Eight Great Nāga kings. The Tantra makes an historical transition by having Śākyamuni appear as 'Sarvavid' ('omniscient') Vairocana,[320] while Vajrapāṇi is the dominant master of ceremonies.[321] The *astamahānāga* ('Eight Great Nāgas') maṇḍala section echoes the theme of conversion from ancestral beliefs, when it says the maṇḍala is an antidote to the venom of snakes.[322] But the Tibetan translation of a commentary known as *sNan bahi rgyan* (TT vol. 76, no. 3454) takes the ritual removal of the venom of the snakes in the maṇḍala as a metaphor for

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to a summit rank in Buddhism.' Lalou (1962:249) 'A fifth note on Vajrapāni' *Adyar Library Bulletin*, Adyar

[318] Buddhaguhya, a pupil of Buddhajñana who consecrated the Vikramaśila monastery founded foundation of the Pāla dynasty in Bihar. (Skorupski 1983:xxv)

[319] Davidson (2002:154)

[320] Skorupski notes: 'The first chapter of Version A (Chapter I) centring on Śākyamuni contains the Introduction and the 'basic Tantra' (*rtsa bahi rgyud*). The 'basic Tantra' consists of the basic *mandala* of this Tantra with Sarvavit at the centre…' Tadeusz Skorupski (1983:xxiii) s*arvadurgatipariśodhana* Motilal Banarsidass (UK), Oxford. See also John Huntingdon: 'Sarvavid Vairocana is the form that Śākyamuni takes in the s*arvadurgatipariśodhana tantra.' <kaladarshana.arts.ohio-state.edu/studypages/internal/213slides/JCH/lecture7/index07.html>*

[321] Another common detail in the *STTS* and *SDPS* is when the Vajradhatu *mahāmaṇḍala* drawn in coloured powder is disposed of the powder is collected in a vase and entrusted to the eight Nāga kings who carry it to their underground abode for safekeeping. SeeTadeusz Skorupski (2002:15) *Kriyasamgraha; compendium of Buddhist Rituals* Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring, UK

[322] Skorupski (1983:xxvii)

'the conversion of unbelievers.'[323] In order to generate the Eight Great Nāga maṇḍala, Vajrapāṇi leads the Nāgas kings Ananta, Taksaka, Karkota, Kulika, Vāsuki, Śamkhapāla, Padma and Varuna into the maṇḍala while they display their cobra hoods. The text says the Nāgas rejoice 'holding their hands in *añjali'* and promising to 'provide that great being with constant protection, security and cover':

> We will act with great initiative, strength and vigour. We will render the venom ineffective. From time to time we will shower with rain. We will produce all crops. We will shower untimely rains on all the hostile kingdoms. Destroying all fears, we will ensure that the command of the Victorious One and of Vajradhara is carried out.[324]

Vajrapāṇi, called Vajradhara in this passage, is envisioned surrounded by Nāga hoods:

> He [the adept] should recite the syllable PHUM one hundred thousand times meditating on the Lord Vajradhara with his head surrounded with snake-hoods and garlanded with beautiful white rays.[325]

This vision of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by Nāgas may throw light on a mysterious series of Khmer sculptures located behind the Leper King Terrace in the Royal Plaza at Angkor. In these carvings, which might have functioned as the embellished ends of Nāga balustrades, a deity in the Bodhisattva sitting posture *mahārājalīlāsana* ('at royal ease')[326], with right knee raised, holds a vajra to his chest and is surrounded by a group of crested Nāga heads that tower above him. **[Plate 76 Vajrapāṇi in mahārājalilasana under Naga]** One interpretation of the carvings is that the represent Vajrapāṇi and the Eight Great Nāgas, the deities of one of the maṇḍalas that Tantric Buddhism had been disseminating via the international Buddhist circuit. The impact of the *SDPS* can be gauged from the fact it was still attracting learned expository commentary in Jayavarman's day and into the 13th century.[327] These balustrade embellishments with Vajrapāṇi and Nāgas point to the possibility that the *astamahānāga* maṇḍala played a role in Jayavarman's conversion campaign in Angkor. And there is even stronger evidence.

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[323] Skorupski (1983:xxviii)
[324] Skorupski (1983:58)
[325] Skorupski (1983:58)
[326] Mallmann, M.-T. de (1986:10) *Introduction à l'iconographie du tântrisme bouddique* Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Paris
[327] Skorupski (1983:xvii)

5. Vajrapāṇi and Ta Prohm

No Khmer icon has yet come to light showing the eight Nāgas reclining in añjali mudrā on the petals of a lotus, as described in the words of the Tantra. This form can be seen in an 11th century Pāla dynasty stone carving from Nālandā, the other great centre of Vajrayāna with close relations with Southeast Asian states. **[Plate 77 Astamahānāga maṇḍala Nālandā]** Unfortunately, the central column inside the lotus is broken so we cannot see how Vajrapāṇi is represented. The Khmers produced another version of the eight great Nāga kings being supported by Garuḍa, following their conversion. This icon can be seen in a narrative lintel in Jayavarman's Tà Prohm temple on a tower just outside the central sanctuary. The eight Nāga kings have three crowned heads and their human bodies, wearing sampots, kneel in añjali mudrā beside and under the raised throne of a (defaced) Buddha icon. **[Plate 78 Astamahānāga Tà Prohm]** The leading Nāga king kneels beside the Buddha's throne and on the other side of the throne we find Garuda, also kneeling in añjali mudrā. If, following the tips from Boisselier and Lamotte[328] about Vajrapāṇi's discreet presence permeating Angkor, we can account for Garuḍa's taking Vajrapāṇi's place in the Khmer version of the *astamahānāga* maṇḍala, we could claim hard evidence for the influence of this major Yoga Tantra text in the Khmer capital.

The special link between Vajrapāṇi and Garuda is found in Buddhist conversion stories from Nepal. Seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang records oral accounts in Nepal of how a group of Nāgas listened to the Buddha preaching and was converted. Alice Getty notes that as they entered the faith, the Buddha charged Vajrapāṇi with protecting them henceforth against their natural enemies, which they identified as the eagles. To do this Vajrapāṇi transformed himself into Garuḍa, king of the eagles:

> Hsüan-tsang mentions Vajrapāṇi as being with the Tathāgata when he subdued the gigantic snake in Udanya. It is also related that when the Nāgas appeared before the Buddha to listen to his teachings,

[328] 'Vajrapāṇi only shows himself to the Buddha and to his direct adversary and remains invisible to the mass of spectators.' Lamotte, Étienne (1966:115) 'Vajrapani en Inde' *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville* PUF Paris

> Vajrapāni was charged by the Tathāgata to guard them from the attacks of their mortal enemies the *Garudas*, and that in order to deceive and combat the *Garudas*, Vajrapāni assumed a form with head, wings, and claws like the *Garudas* themselves.[329]

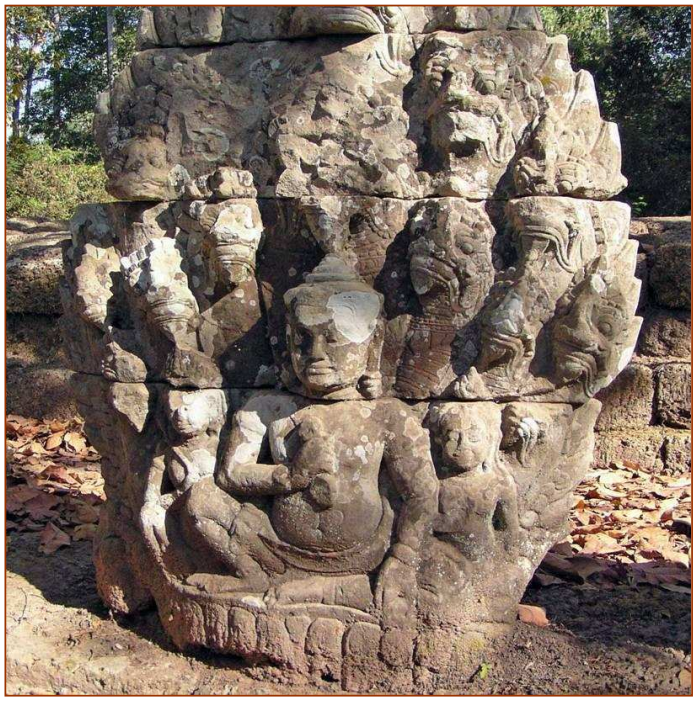
Getty says the 'Garuḍa form' of Vajrapāṇi 'may have a human head with a beak or a head like a Garuḍa; he sometimes carries a sword and a gourd-shaped bottle, or his two hands may be in "prayer mudrā,"' as in an icon in the Berlin Museum für Völkerunde. This latter pose appears to be the one we find in the Khmer lintel with the eight crowned Nāgas in Tà Prohm. A somewhat saintly-looking Garuḍa, dressed as a prince, suppresses his raw native power to submit to the commands of the Buddha.

With this new image of Garuḍa in mind, it then comes as something of a shock to realise that we have all along been surrounded by just such gentle, partly anthropomorphised and princely eagles in all of Jayavarman's temples. For the figure that embellishes the balustrades that demarcate staging platforms outside the principal halls of the temples is no other than the princely 'gentle Garuḍa' who rides upon the necks of Nāgas. All who enter these areas were presumably under the direct protection of Vajrapāṇi, for the Garuḍas of the balustrades *are* Vajrapāṇi, the defender of the faith and protector of new converts. His human hands open in the 'no fear' mudrā and hold a lotus, but in every other feature he is exactly the princely eagle that kneels to the Buddha's bidding in the Tà Prohm lintel. This Vajrapāṇi-Garuḍa is also placed around a large platform beside the Sraḥ Srang pool opposite Bantéay Kdei temple, where other large ceremonies no doubt took place. This major construction effort, focused on conversion and the protection of converts, indicates that conversion to Buddhism was a high political imperative of the day. Vajrapāṇi had become Jayavarman's prime agent in the implementation of his strategy of building the Buddhist state and implanting Buddhism irrevocably among the Khmers.

5.1 Protective balustrades

[329] Getty, Alice (1914:48) *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* OUP, Oxford

Such balustrades as these were constructed in Praḥ Khan, Bantéay Kdei, Tà Prohm and Sraḥ Srang in Angkor and outside the capital at Bantéay Chmàr, Praḥ Khan of Kompong Svay and Wàt Nokor. They also appear on numerous, finely-cast bronze palanquin finials in the Bàyon style that appear in the large museum collections. **[Plates 79 'Gentle Garuḍa' palanquin finial Bangkok Museum]**



Pl. 76. Vajrapāni in *mahārājalilasana* under Nāga

Pl. 77. Astamahānāga maṇḍala Nālandā

Pl. 79. 'Gentle Garuda' palanquin finial, Bangkok Museum

Pl. 78. Astamahānāga Ta Prohm

Furthermore, petrological studies of the sandstone used in the new Vajrapāṇi terraces indicate that the balustrades and the terraces they demarcate, like the 'halls with dancers', were late additions to Jayavarman's earlier temples.[330] The halls suggest that a large investment in space for Hevajra consecrations was undertaken in the period when the Bàyon. The function of the terraces and staging platforms outside the new consecration halls protected by the new gentle Garuḍa icon was possibly added to accommodate people assembled to take the initiation vows of Tantric Buddhism. **[Plate 80 Garuḍa terrace Banteay Kdei]**

Boisselier made no mention of the *astamahānāga* maṇḍala being in Angkor, but he did say, without being specific about the location, that he believed he had located a lintel in Tà Prohm that narrates the commissioning of Vajrapāṇi to protect the Nāga converts from the eagles. Boisselier's description of Nāgas below and beside the Buddha indicates fairly well that he is talking about what I call the *astamahānāga* lintel. Yet there is in fact a second Garuḍa-Nāga narrative lintel in Tà Prohm, which appears to convey Hsüan-tsang's version of the Buddha's command at Udanya. The second lintel is sited *inside* the large new 'hall with dancers' of the same temple. It shows Garuḍa again kneeling in *añjali* before the (effaced) Buddha and apparently accepting the order to protect a three-headed Nāga queen who kneels in añjali mudrā with her skirt reaching to her human ankles. **[Plate 81 Tà Prohm lintel Vajrapāṇi to protect Nāga converts]** The positioning of the lintel inside the 'hall with dancers' appears to link the king's later consecration programme with the overriding conversion strategy.

Ariane Macdonald's study of the maṇḍala of the *mañjuśrīmulakalpa (MMK)*, traces one of the devices the Tantric Buddhists used to incorporate Hindu gods – by claiming they were Bodhisattvas in disguise.[331]

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[330] Olivier Cunin and Etsuo Uchida 2002:216 *Annual report on the technical survey of Angkor monument 2002*

[331] Ariane Macdonald (1962:40) *Le Mandala du Mañjuśrīmulakalpa* CRNS Adrien-Maisonneuve, Paris

Pl. 80. Garuda terrace Bantéay Kdei

Pl. 81. Tà Prohm lintel: Vajrapāṇi to protect converts

Pl. 82. Śiva-Lokeśvara

Pl. 83. ‘Śiva-Lokeśvara and Hevajra, Bantéay Chmar

The Indian Buddhists projected the Buddhist mission back in time to appropriate much of the intellectual property of their Brahmanical rivals. They claimed the Hindu gods were earlier incarnations of Bodhisattvas who had appeared in the world in those forms in order to bring people of sophisticated beliefs in particular worldly contexts to Buddhism. This was claimed as an application of the Bodhisattva capacity for self-transformation into any form in order to propagate the faith. Vajrapāṇi's taking on the form of Garuḍa in order to draw people with only ancestral cultural beliefs to the Buddhist cause had also become an aspect of Bodhisattva doctrine in India. Macdonald builds on Jean Przyluski's earlier work on the minor deities and magicians or *vidyārāja* entering the Buddhist mandala of the *MMK* who are described as 'those who take the body of a woman to save living beings, and those who borrow the form of birds, *yakṣa* or *raksaṣa* in order to effect conversions.'[332] The major instance of such a self-metamorphosis, which is made explicit in the *MMK*, is not accomplished by Vajrapāṇi but by the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who claims he had already adopted the form of Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Garuḍa 'to convert creatures susceptible to this method.' Macdonald hesitates to call the process 'conversion' as the claim is that it had all been pre-planned and the people were all along being gradually nurtured towards Buddhism:

> It was not so much converting as rallying the devotees of Hinduism, viewed as a kind of preconception of the Mahāyāna, at least in its technical aspects.[333]

In the *MMK,* Mañjuśrī claims the credit for the rites taught in the Hindu Tantra of Garuḍa and says he appeared on earth as an eagle as the Bodhisattva 'Garutma'. As the 'buddhicized' Śiva enters the mandala, Mañjuśrī claims to be the author of all the Śaiva Tantras and declares:

> And last the powerful mantra 'oṃ, eagle, great eagle! You whose wings are spread like a lotus! Killer of all the serpents…The Bodhisattva who teaches this, *svāhā* is known under the name Garuda. He is the best at converting the beings who are difficult to convert. He destroys the venom of the serpents and if we add the Mahāmudrā, he will conquer the hordes of hostile demons and serve as the antidote for all poisons. He has been taught by me (Mañjuśrī) as the means for converting those susceptible to this method. I came to act with the appearance of

[332] Przyluski, Jean (1923:309) 'Les Vidyārāja: contribution à l'histoire de la magie dans les sectes Mahāyānistes' *BEFEO* 23
[333] Macdonald (1962:40)

> Garuda, the stunning king of the birds. All the rites developed in the Tantra of Garuda were taught by me for the benefit of creatures. Having come to earth as the Bodhisattva Garutma, with the appearance of a bird to convert creatures, I worked to combat the venom of the serpents.[334]

Mañjuśrī is however unknown in Khmer Buddhism and so the conversion-by-transformation role falls to the ubiquitous and multi-faceted Khmer Bodhisattva 'Vajrin' in his Garuḍa avatar.

In this larger context of Vajrayāna transforming the Hindu and Vedic gods into members of Buddhist maṇḍalas, mention can be made of the rare Khmer images of Śiva as a Bodhisattva – presumably related to the buddhicized 'Śiva-Lokeśvaras' known from Bengal.[335] This appears to be the best account we have of a deity with five heads, in the late Bàyon 'Lopburi' style, with a figurine of a dhyāna Buddha in the hair of the topmost head, in the British Museum. **[Plate 82 Śiva-Lokesvara 40cm BM]** Furthermore, a pediment of Hevajra discovered at the remote Khmer temple of Bantéay Chmàr has a five-headed deity caught up in his dance, which may (the image is badly weather-worn but a sculpted protrusion from the upper head is visible) also have a dhyāna Buddha in the hair of his top head. **[Plate 83 'Śiva-Lokeśvara' and Hevajra Bantéay Chmàr]** Such fusion icons are exceedingly rare in Cambodia but, alongside the 'gentle Garuḍas', they may indicate the Khmer Buddhists were aware of the Vajrayānist Bodhisattva conversion techniques.

Once the conversion motif of Garuḍa and Nāga is identified, it is seen to crop up repeatedly. For example, the bronze ritual paraphernalia cast for the consecration programme in the temples normally feature stylised Garuḍa heads on the bronze vajras and candle holders. **[Plate 84 Garuḍa, Nāga candlesticks Bunker 2004]** Boisselier underlines the link between such instruments and Vajrapāṇi:

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[334] Macdonald (1962:79) (my translation).

[335] 'Śiva-Lokeśvara, Surya-Lokeśvara and Hari-Hara-Sūrya-Buddha icons…show syncretism between Hinduism and Buddhism. Varieties of multi-armed images of syncretistic type hailing from different parts of Eastern India, mainly Bengal, are known, in which Vaisnava and Mahāyāna Buddhist elements have combined, the former being more prominent.' Banerjea, Jitendra Nath (1956:554) *The development of Hindu iconography* University of Calcutta

> The vajras, whether they are authentic vajras or the handgrip on cultic bells, most often bear, as their only element of decoration, small heads or busts of Garudas. This union of the thunderbolt and Garuda seems to us to deserve special mention because it could represent a new aspect of the relationship that would seem to exist between Vajrapāṇi and Garuda.[336]

The ruins of Tà Prohm, today still partly overgrown with the trees of the forest that once engulfed it, hold clues to a seminal message from this Buddhist king who sought large scale participation in Tantric rituals in his temples to consolidate the Buddhist state. The Yoginī halls and nearby sacred staging areas are large enough to have been accommodated everyone in the city, over time. Those who responded were promised protection against any hostile forces – including the Brahmanical families and their gurus – by the mighty Vajrapāṇi. This new light from Tà Prohm, already identified as a monastic university and administrative centre for the nation's hospital network, signals a different, late drive to secure broad-based acceptance of the sovereign's Buddhism under the tutelary and elusive deity Vajrapāṇi, now the key conversion agent in the royal strategy for implanting Buddhism.

6. Giant causeways

We have not yet exhausted the full expressive range of the seminal Khmer iconic partnership between Vajrapāṇi and the Nāgas. For although Vajrapāṇi played a major role in securing the adhesion of the king's subjects to the third, more openly Tantric phase of his state Buddhism, he appears again in a major event which may have been the king's second consecration as a cakravartin.

The main architectural features in Angkor that suggest such an *indrābhiṣeka* are huge causeways of giants pulling on the outstretched bodies of 100 metre-long Nāgas, and creating dramatic entrances to the gates of Jayavarman's rebuilt city of Angkor Thom; they also span the moats around Praḥ Khan temple in Angkor and Bantéay Chmàr in the northwest. The Nāga balustrades beside the walkways leading to Cambodia's earlier Hindu temples

[336] Boisselier (1950:79)

owed much to the cosmology of Indian temples.[337] Powerful, multi-headed Nāgas form bridges between the worlds of men and the gods at the Bakong temple of Hariharilaya and at Praḥ Vihear, Sūryavarman I's hilltop temple in the Dangrek Mountains on the modern border between Thailand and Cambodia. In Angkor, Nāga balustrades line the main, western entrance to Angkor Wàt.

George Coedès followed Paul Mus in linking the causeways with Nāgas and giants to rainbows. Coedès said that in pre-Newtonian Asia, rainbows were believed to be glimpses of huge, multi-coloured serpents rearing up from the oceans and the earth and creating highways to the celestial home of the gods.[338] Coedès sees another form of the Nāga rainbow in the bow of foliage spewed forth by fantastic marine monsters on the entrance lintels of pre-Angkorian temples, where it also affords magical access to the world of the gods:

> The representation of a rainbow, realised architecturally in space as a bridge with Nāga balustrades is known from the 9th century. At the same time, and indeed earlier, the rainbow motif as the link between the human world and the divine world appears in Khmer decorative bas-reliefs on lintels over the entrances to sanctuaries. Instead of leading the visitor from outside over a ditch and along an avenue to the divine residence, as do the rainbows in the form of Nāga balustrades, the bow on the lintel is carved on the surface over the chapel entrance, and the act of passing underneath it marks the transition between the two worlds.[339]

Nāga bridges are therefore appropriate for celebrating the consecration of a cakravartin at the pinnacle of the human world, recognising his privileged access to the gods. Furthermore, the later evidence suggests that a second consecration or *indrābhiṣeka* was celebrated with a lengthy public re-enactment of the Indic origin myth, in which teams of gods and titans pull on a

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[337] Robert Heine-Geldern (1956:2) *Conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia* Cornell data paper 18, New York

[338] 'All over the Far East, as also in India, the rainbow is seen as a multi-coloured serpent that raises itself out of the depths of the underworld and holds itself suspended in the sky, or drinks up the water of the sea. Sometimes there are two serpents, for the rainbow is often double. It is this double rainbow, forming a divine road in the sky that has obviously inspired the construction of a balustrade of Nāgas on each side of the [Angkor Thom] bridges -- the terrestrial representation of this divine road.' Coedès, G. (1943:98) *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor* Imprimerie d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi.

[339] Coedès (1943:101) (my translation)

giant serpent to stir up the elixir of life from the ocean floor.[340] And yet the causeways over the moat surrounding Angkor Thom have long puzzled art historians. Although the overwhelming impression is that they enact the creationist myth that the Khmers always showed fondness for, the principal actors of the Hindu myth are absent and other key details do not fit the story. The most admired temple relief in all Angkor today is the Churning that stretches across half the length of the eastern gallery, south wing of Angkor Wàt. Here Viṣṇu, in human form and as his turtle avàtar, controls the efforts of 92 Asuras and 88 Devas with help from Śiva and Indra. But on the Angkor Thom causeways, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Indra have disappeared, leaving only two polycephalous deities grasping in their multiple hands two large serpents at the head of two teams of Devas and Asuras.

Paul Mus pointed out that as there are two serpents and the giants are pulling in the same direction, so no milk churning is taking place:

> …nor do we know the exact meaning of the serpent-shaped balustrades supported by stone giants, which adorn the bridges leading over the moat to the five gates of the city…It is quite clear they are churning nothing. They recall the churning motif but the true nature of the Angkor Thom bridges must be sought elsewhere.[341]

He referred to the Pràsàt Chrung inscription which compares Jayavarman's 'mountain of victory [the Angkor Thom gates] …and the holy sea of victory [the moat] which in its measureless depth attained the serpent world, both emulating the [rain]-bow of his mighty glory', and concluded that the causeways recreated the rainbow between the world of gods and the world of men:

> It is clear that it was this double rainbow, marking a divine road in space, which inspired the construction of two balustrades of serpent shape on the two sides of the holy bridge, earthly representation of this same divine pathway.[342]

6.1 Vajrapāṇi again

[340] Siamese King Ramadhipati II celebrated a month-long Indrābhiṣeka based on the churning myth in 1510 after bringing northern Siam under his control. H.G. Quaritch Wales (1931:14-15) *Siamese state ceremonies* Quaritch, London
[341] Paul Mus (1937:69) 'Angkor in the time of Jayavarman VII' *Indian Arts and Letters* XI
[342] Mus (1937:71)

There is, however, another explanation of the dramatis personae of the causeways that again involves the elusive 'Vajrin'. The demon Rāhu, who swallows the sun during eclipses, is most dramatically represented in Khmer art in the late Bàyon style on the western gallery wall of Bantéay Chmàr temple, where he swallows the sun god and his chariot and is subsequently defeated by a Khmer hero who may be prince Indrakumara to whom the temple is dedicated. **[Plate 85 Prince Śrīndrakumara defeats Bharatu-Rāhu, Bantéay Chmar]** In a Tantric Buddhist version of the Hindu ocean churning myth, that Emil Schlagintweit collected and translated in Tibet, Rāhu's repeated attempts at sun-swallowing follow a titanic celestial battle with Vajrapāṇi over the elixir of life produced by the churning. In the Buddhist version of the ancient Hindu myth, which Schlagintweit believed reached Tibet from Buddhaguhya's Vikramaśila, Vajrapāṇi takes over both Viṣṇu's lead role and Śiva's minor role of swallowing the poison produced in the churning and becoming blue. The cast is thus reduced to two principals – as in the version on the Angkor Thom causeways. Schlagintweit translated the *Legend of Chakdor* (Vajrapāṇi) from the Tibetan manuscript *Drimed shel preng* ('spotless garland of crystals'):

> Once upon a time the Buddhas all met together on the top of Mount Meru to deliberate upon the best means of procuring the Water of Life (*amrita*) which lies concealed at the bottom of the ocean. In their benevolence, they intended, as soon as they obtained possession of the water of life, to distribute it amongst the human race as a powerful antidote against the strong poison Hala hala, which the evil demons at this period had been using with such mischievous effect against mankind. In order to procure the antidote, they determined to churn the ocean with Mount Meru and so cause the water of life to rise to the surface of the sea. This they did and delivered the water of life to Vajrapāṇi with orders to keep it safely until a future meeting when they would impart it to living beings. But the monster Rāhu happened to hear of this precious discovery and having carefully watched Vajrapāṇi's movements seized an opportunity in the absence of the latter to drink of the water of life; not satisfied with this act, he even voided his water deliberately into the vessel…In the course of his flight Rāhu passed the sun and moon and menaced them with vengeance should they betray him to Vajrapāṇi…With information [from the moon] Rāhu was quickly overtaken and received such a terrible blow from Vajrapāṇi's sceptre that his body split in two with the lower part entirely blown off.

> The Buddhas met again…and determined that Vajrapāṇi should drink [the elixir Rāhu had contaminated] whereupon his fair complexion turned dark…A severe punishment was also inflicted on Rāhu whom the Buddhas made into a horrible monster with the tail of a dragon and with nine heads made from his broken one…He is constantly trying to devour [the sun and the moon], particularly the moon. He overshadows them whilst trying to devour them and this causes eclipses, but owing to Vajrapāṇi's unceasing vigilance he cannot succeed in destroying them.[343]

Schlagintweit comments: 'this legend decidedly derives its origin from the Hindus, from whose tales it was taken almost without alteration.' Rāhu is in fact mentioned as one of the Asuras in the Hindu *Matsya Purāna* version of the Churning myth, where he is beheaded, though not killed, by Viṣṇu for drinking the elixir, after being discovered by the sun and moon.[344] In the Buddhist version on the Angkor causeways, Vajrapāṇi leads the row of gods pulling on a serpent and Rāhu leads the demons on the other. Rāhu here bears the nine monstrous heads the Buddhas imposed after his battle with Vajrapāṇi. **[Plate 86 nine-headed Rāhu A.Thom]** Vajrapāṇi appears with nine deva heads. Once more Vajrapāni acts as the principal agent of the Buddhas, just as he became the principal agent for implementing Jayavarman's conversion strategy.

6.2 Celestial political agent

'Vajrin', the elusive master of disguises, was a potent player in Jayavarman VII's supreme political strategy. The extraordinary trajectory taken by the Garuḍa icon from obscure, tertiary status under Sūryavarman II, to the most reproduced and pervasively distributed icon of Jayavarman VII's reign, has received little attention since Boisselier's pioneering paper in 1950. But unravelling the icon's mutations releases a series of indicators to the strategy the king was pursuing. The protection offered by the powerful Garuḍa icons to the new Buddhist temple-centred communities created at the start of

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[343] Schlagintweit, Emil (1863) *Buddhism in Tibet; illustrated by literary documents and objects of religious worship*. Reprint (1988:114) Indological Book House Dehli

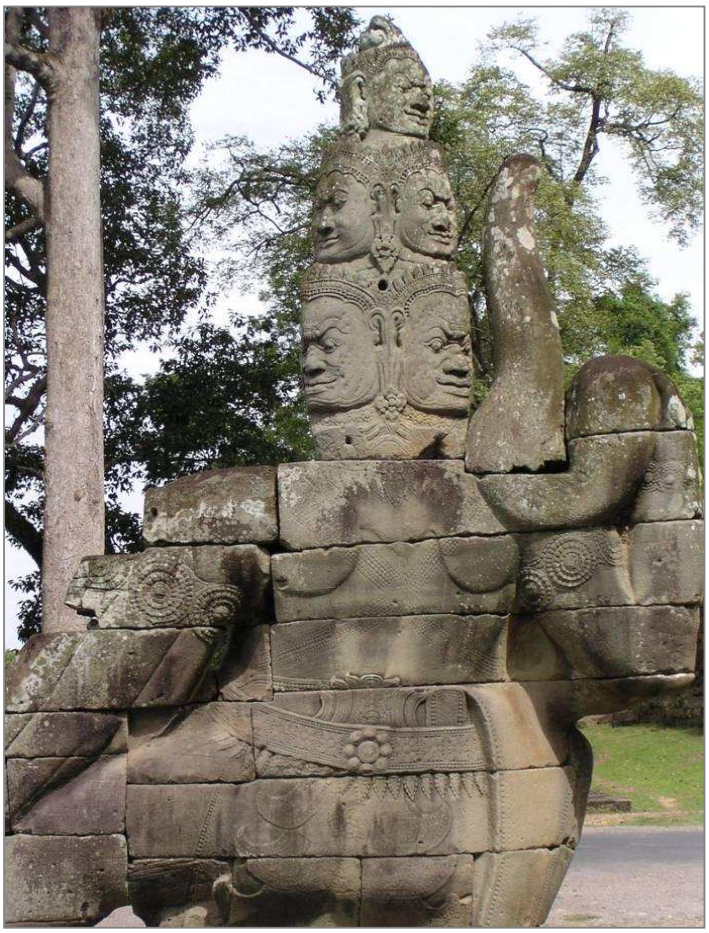
[344] 'According to the *Matsya Purāna* Indra, Sūrya, Rudra, Vasus and Guhyakas headed the *devas*, while, of the asuras, Vipracitta, Namuchi, Vrtra, Saṃvara, Dvimūrdha, Vagrudamstra, Rāhu, Bali, etc., were prominent and faced the mouth of Śeṣa.' Bhattacharyya, A.K. (1959:121-34) 'The theme of Churning of the Ocean in Indian and Khmer Art' *Arts asiatiques* VI 1959.

Jayavarman VII's reign, and the protection of Buddhist converts offered by the 'gentle Garuḍas' of the late reign, can now be seen as variations on a theme.

During the later period, there are signs that Hevajra consecrations became the order of the day. The new Garuḍa icons that embrace Nāgas marshal and protect those awaiting consecration. Furthermore, the ritual paraphernalia produced to conduct large numbers of consecrations is covered with Nāgas and Garuḍas. Vajrapāṇi, invisible as a Bodhisattva, is the driving spiritual force behind these manifestations of a conversion campaign.

Pl. 84. Garuda, Nāga oil lamps
(after Bunker 2004:385)

Pl. 85. Prince Śrīndrakumara defeats Bharatu-Rāhu



Pl. 86. Nine-headed Rāhu,
Angkor Thom

In his ultimate manifestation, at the culmination of a spectacular career from *yakṣa* (demigod) to supreme godhead,[345] Vajrapāṇi is transmuted into the supreme deity in the giant face towers of the Bàyon.[346] The bearer of the vajra becomes what the *guhyasamāja-tantra* describes as:

> Master of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and all the Tathāgatas; he who is alone Bhagavat, the great bearer of the thunderbolt, the sovereign master of the knowledge of all the Buddhas.[347]

Vajrapāṇi's mission in Cambodia was as Jayavarman's principal cosmic agent for the implantation of Buddhism. He did this by converting and protecting converts, keeping Rāhu and other demons at bay, and ultimately evolving into a supreme Buddha. His role was part of an extraordinary historical success, for Cambodia made a dramatic departure from 400 years of state Śaivism and turned, definitively, to Buddhism.

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[345] Étienne Lamotte summarises his career as: 'Forme secondaire d'Indra, genie protecteur de Śākyamuni, bodhisattva attaché avec Ānanda au service du Maître, divinité émanée de l'Être suprême: telles sont en gros les étapes parcourues au cours des temps par le yaksa Vajrapani. Le secret de sa fortune et de son apothéose se trouve dans le vajra, son inséparable emblème. Vajra est le *foudre* servant d'arme offensive et défensive; c'est aussi le *diamant*, le plus dur des minéreaux.' Lamotte, Étienne (1966:159) 'Vajrapani en Inde' *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville* PUF Paris.

[346] 'Dans le Tantra, Vajrapani est le Vajrasattva ou tout au moins un aspect du Vajrasattva: en sa qualité de Guhyakādhipati «Maître des mystères», il préside au Triple Mystère du corps, de la voix et de la pensée caractérisant le Buddha «en dharmakāya».' Lamotte (1966:158)

[347] sāsta sarvabuddhabodhisattvānām sarvatathāgatānam ca, sa eva bhagavān mahāvajradharah sarvabudhajñānādhipatir iti. *Guhyasamaja-tantra* ed. B. Bhattacharyya (1931:138 lines 19-20) Oriental Institute, Baroda