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Hevajra at Bantéay Chmàr

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On a recent field trip to the ruins of Bantéay Chmàr temple in northwest Cambodia, in dry season conditions that made clambering over the treacherous piles of overgrown sandstone blocks easier than usual, I climbed up close to the miraculously still-standing remnant of a doorway leading to the easternmost hall of a mandapa to the central sanctuary. The lintel over the door bears a large weather-worn icon, which, to my knowledge, has not been published. Some years earlier, I had taken a rainy season, tourist-style photograph of the same doorway from a safe distance across a slippery mass of collapsed stones and forgotten about it. But on this dry season trip, which came after months of research into the Khmer bronzes of the late Tantric Buddhist deity Hevajra, the lintel gripped my attention. First I marvelled that the 70cm x 75cm icon was still standing over a three-metre high door amid such devastation. **[Plate 1]**



Plate 1 Banteay Chhmar Hevajra lintel and doorway

Then it sank in that I was looking at an eight-headed, 20-armed, dancing figure bearing swords in its right hands – Hevajra! At last, I thought in a flash, we have an icon of this wrathful manifestation of the supreme Buddha of the

Tantric cosmos 'showcased'¹ in a central lintel on the wall of a Khmer temple, which can be securely dated to the end of king Jayavarman VII's reign. For several months, I had been studying all the traces of Buddhism's third Tantric wave, Vajrayāna, passing through the culture of the ancient Khmers, and now, at last, they could be anchored to the walls of one of Jayavarman's largest temple complexes. The sudden identification of the figure in the lintel felt like the culminating affirmation of a hypothesis that had been gradually superseding all others in my current research -- the royal creed of the Buddhist state that Jayavarman was building around the Bāyon temple, in the late 12th century, was *essentially Tantric*. Although the evidence for this is muted, and probably severely reduced by subsequent sectarian desecration, the time had come to challenge the prevailing conceptions.

My research into the Tantric elements in Khmer sacred art was first stimulated by a pioneering article that Hiram W. Woodward Jr., published in Michigan University's *Ars Orientalis* 12, in 1981, and entitled 'Tantric Buddhism at Angkor Thom'. In 1979, Woodward had already 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'². Two years later he extended his research in the complex, ground-breaking 1981 paper that made my own research possible.

Many years later, Woodward was to reaffirm 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.'³

The 1981 paper is an erudite, densely written piece, requiring slow ingestion⁴, which does something remarkable: it pulls into a coherent argument multiple strands of evidence from across the medieval Buddhist world in a way that makes it possible, for the first time, for modern scholars to seriously reconsider the nature of Khmer Buddhism, and in particular the status of Hevajra in the state cult of Jayavarman VII. It also ponders anew the question of when and how the Khmers swung from northern Mahāyāna Buddhism to the southern Hīnayāna they follow today. And yet the article did not launch the wave of re-examination it should have done. Art historians went on marginalising the Khmer bronzes, considering them incapable of further illumination, principally because there is no mention of Hevajra, a supreme, wrathful, Tantric Buddhist deity, in the surviving inscriptions of Jayavarman. David Snellgrove, for example, whose 1959 translation of the *hevajra-tantra*

¹ I was thinking of Bruno Dagens' rejection of arguments for seeing a Tantric Buddhist deity such as Vajrasattva or Vajrapāṇi in the Bāyon face towers on the grounds that the popularity of such a deity in ancient Cambodia was 'very limited' and 'this character is never *showcased* on any pediment or lintel...' Dagens, B. (2000:112) (my emphasis). 'The Bāyon Face Towers and their Meaning' 5th *international symposium on the preservation and restoration of Bāyon – Final report Siemreap*

² Woodward H. (1979:72-83) 'The Bāyon-Period Buddha Image in the Kimbell Art Museum' *Archives of Asian Art* XXXII

³ Woodward, H. (1997:92) *The sacred sculpture of Thailand* Thames and Hudson

⁴ I kept a photocopy in my backpack during years of field trips.

established a platform for the scholarly rehabilitation of Tantric Buddhism in general and Hevajra studies in particular, some 20 years after Woodward's breakthrough article appeared, still viewed the bronze Hevajras as the product of some obscure fringe cult:

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.⁵

Woodward had long since gone beyond such hesitations. Some scholars did carefully weigh Woodward's arguments, like Christine Hawixbrock, but reached the same epigraphic block as Snellgrove. After acknowledging the indeed large number of Tantric votive bronzes from Angkor, she nevertheless remains guarded in her conclusion:

Mahāyāna Buddhism did therefore become the state religion but it remains impossible to say whether the Small Vehicle cohabited with it or in what manner and in what proportions Tantric Buddhism infused the Mahāyāna in Jayavarman VII's reign. As before, no iconographic or epigraphic index allows us to discern these sectarian specifics.⁶

No Khmer inscription sheds light on the significant number of Khmer ritual bronzes of Hevajra, Vajrasattva, Vajradhara and Vajrapāṇi, which Coedès had brought to general notice back in 1923.⁷ Furthermore, nothing was found to provide an indisputable, *in situ* link between the bronzes and the walls of any of Jayavarman's temples. As a consequence, the obvious questions about why the elaborate, high technology bronzes of Hevajra were made, and what kind of rituals took place in the temples that required their manufacture, were not even posed. And yet Vajrayāna had mushroomed across many Asian states between the eighth and 12th centuries, disseminating such rituals through the courts of East and Southeast Asia.

Hevajra at Bantéay Chmar

The Khmer sculptors created a unique, graceful, dancing form of Hevajra that is quite distinct from the Hevajra icons of Bengal, Nepal, Tibet and China. This was an artistic *tour de force* by the royal workshops, for Hevajra is a complex amalgam of many deities and is represented with eight heads, 16-20 arms, bearing various attributes, and with four feet trampling the corpses of Vedic and Hindu gods. Yet the Khmer rendering of this burdened figure turns naturally and powerfully in a cosmic dance.

The lower part of the Bantéay Chmar Hevajra lintel, where the feet were carved, has fallen into the rubble of the unrestored temple ruin, and the top parts of the legs are abraded. But the dancing posture is unmistakably that of Hevajra in late Bāyon-style bronzes. The pyramidal tower of eight adorsed heads is weathered, but many of the details can still be made out and they are close to those of the gilt Hevajra bronze B. P. Groslier excavated from the site

⁵ David Snellgrove (2001:57) *Khmer civilization and Angkor* Orchid Press Bangkok.

⁶ Hawixbrock, Christine (1998:76) 'Jayavarman VII ou le renouveau d'Angkor, entre tradition et modernité' *BEFEO* 85 (my translation).

⁷ Coedès, G. (1923) *Bronzes khmèrs* Ars Asiatica, Paris

of the royal palace in Angkor Thom. **[Plate 2]** The details include the lift of the left knee, the poised frontal posture, some of the facial features, the way the large earrings are supported by the shoulders, and the manner in which the multiple arms are inserted into the primary ones below ornate upper arm jewellery. In the Bantéay Chmàr lintel, in the lowest tier of heads, the central smiling Buddha face has on its left a frowning Asura-like face, which is the Khmer representation of the Vajrapāṇi in wrathful *trailokyavijaya* mode.⁸



Plate 2 Gilt bronze Hevajra excavated from royal palace Angkor, Phnom Penh National Museum

Śastradhara Hevajra

Swords are not Hevajra's usual attributes, though he is a warrior and a Sanskrit Tantric text taken to China in the 11th century defines his essence as 'the perfection of heroism (*vīryapāramitā*)'.⁹ This aspect is perhaps reflected in the militaristic form of the deity known as the *śastradhara* ('arms-bearing') Hevajra.¹⁰ This is one of the four variants of Hevajra identified in the fifth

⁸This is consistent with the analysis of Hevajra's compound form, amalgamating multiple deities, found in the work of Lama Angarika Govinda and Wibke Lobo (Govinda, Lama Angarika (1960:206) *Foundations of Tibetan mysticism* B.I. Publications Bombay; Govinda).

⁹ The text is the anonymous *hevajrasekaprakīyā* found inscribed on bamboo at the P'ou-ngan temple in Tchō-kiang province in 1914 and translated by Louis Finot (1934:45) 'Manuscripts sanskrits de sādhana's retrouvés en Chine' *Journal Asiatique*.

¹⁰ 'La forme à une seule face et à deux mains, et celle à huit faces, seize mains et quatre pieds, semblent avoir été les plus fréquemment représentées. L'aspect à seize mains selon *NSP 5* serait appelé Śastradhara Hevajra, le Hevajra porteur d'armes, sans doute pour le différencier de l'aspect aux seize coupes crâniennes, Kapāladhara Hevajra.' (M-T de

maṇḍala of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākara Gupta's authoritative 11th century *nispānāyogāvalī*, the classic text that contains details of 26 major maṇḍalas.¹¹ The fifth maṇḍala in the *nispānāyogāvalī* collection lists Hevajra's right-hand weapons as a fang, trident, cudgel, drinking bowl, discus, arrow, sword and vajra. This list of attributes was not adopted by the Khmers; the Bantéay Chmàr Hevajra holds two broad swords, four curved swords, and perhaps three daggers in nine of its 10 right hands. (The left hands of the lintel icon are all missing). And the bronze in the Bangkok Museum, identified as a *śastradhara* Hevajra by Piriya Krairiksh and Wibke Lobo, appears to be holding only vajras.¹²

The militaristic Hevajra may have been chosen for Bantéay Chmàr because the temple is associated with battles. It was dedicated to the memory of prince Śrīndrakumara – probably a younger brother of Jayavarman¹³ -- along with four generals, two from this region, who sacrificed their lives to save the prince in a palace coup; the two other generals died defending Jayavarman in an ambush in Čampā.¹⁴ The Bantéay Chmàr inscription says images of the prince and four generals were raised in the central sanctuary of the temple and in sanctuary-towers around it.

When considering a Čam inscription describing a temple built to celebrate a military victory in 1194 – exactly contemporary with the final phase of construction of Bantéay Chmàr – we shall come back to this Khmer association of the *śastradhara* Hevajra with victory in battle.

Hevajra and Śiva

The Hevajra maṇḍala appears in extended three-dimensional format at Bantéay Chmàr in that this central lintel is surrounded by a frieze of 70 cm. Yoginīs, who embellish a large 'hall with dancers' added in the final construction phase of the temple. In the lintel itself, there is also an additional narrative element which has to be accounted for: this is a smaller, five-headed figure, to Hevajra's left, who seems to be moving in harmony with Hevajra's dance. Hevajra's lower, angry Vajrapāṇi face glares down at the smaller, armed figure. The most likely identification of this figure is Sadāśiva of the Siddhantā Tantras -- the only figure in the late Khmer pantheon usually shown with five heads.¹⁵ Other examples of the five-headed Sadāśiva or Pañcānana can be seen on Bantéay Chmàr's murals. Vajrapāṇi's glare brings to mind earlier Khmer sculptures of the Bodhisattva's wrathful form in which he

Mallmann 1986:185 *Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme bouddhique* (Maisonneuve, Paris).

¹¹ Bhattacharyya, Benyotosh Ed. (1949:40-1) *Nispānāyogāvalī* Oriental Institute, Baroda

¹² Lobo notes: 'Le musée national de Bangkok possède une belle statue en bronze de l'Hevajra porteur d'armes datant du XIII^e siècle. Reproduction dans Piriya Krairiksch (1979:62,145) *The sacred image* Cologne.(Lobo1997:75 n.6)

¹³ Groslier B.P. (1973:153) *Le Bàyon: inscriptions du Bàyon* EFEO Paris

¹⁴ Groslier (1973 :139)

¹⁵ 'The faces of Śiva represent his five aspects. They are known as *Vāmadeva*, *Tatpuruṣa*, *Aghora*, *Sadyojāta* and *Īśāna* facing north, east, south, west and top and representing the aspects of *Īśa*, *Īśāna*, *Īśvara*, *Brahmā* and *Sadāśiva* respectively.' Prabodh Chandra Bagchi (1975:3) *Studies in the Tantras*, Part I, University of Calcutta

destroys Śiva with his vajra and forces him to enter the 37-deity Vajradhatu maṇḍala.

I suggest a more local war was also intended. One of Śiva's many names, 'Bharata', appears in the inscription in the nearby cella in combination with the name of the sun-eating demon Rāhu. Coedès interpreted 'Bharata-Rāhu' as a reference to Tribhuvanāditya, the Śaiva usurper who ousted Jayavarman's relative Yośvarman II in 1167 while the future Jayavarman VII was residing in Čampā. Jayavarman's younger brother, prince Śrīndrakumara, came to Yośvarman's aid during the palace coup but was defeated.¹⁶ The inscription says Śrīndrakumara would have been killed had not two of his generals sacrificed their lives to save him. A large panel on the western gallery of Bantéay Chmār shows a prince defeating Bharata-Rāhu, depicted as a giant in the form of a *rāksasa*. Groslier thought that rather than the losing fight to save Yośvarman this panel illustrates the quelling of an internal insurrection, possibly the one at Malyang, between Battambang and Pursat, where Čam prince Vidyānandana restored Angkor's authority. Bantéay Chmār, linked in this way to battles with Jayavarman's Śaiva enemies, may also be making a dynastic statement -- drawing a parallel between the subjugation of Śiva in the Buddhist Tantras and the replacement of Cambodia's long-supreme Śiva with the creation of Jayavarman's new Buddhist state.

Rituals

Bantéay Chmār makes royal and military statements. It is reasonable to assume that the rituals celebrated there involved some of the large number of superbly designed Khmer bronzes of Hevajra and the Yoginīs now distributed across the museum collections of the world, or seen fleetingly on the art market. How did such Tantric rituals work?

Maṇḍalas were key elements in these rituals and the Tantras indicate a threefold purpose: they determine which deities are assigned to initiands; stimulate deity visualisation in yoga, and frame the enactment of ritual narratives. Tucci offers this account of deity yoga:

[...] the initiate, evoking a divinity out of the bottom of his heart and awaiting its epiphany in confidence and awe, interpreted as true revelations the images appearing before him when he had fallen into the trance of ecstasy.¹⁷

Tantric ceremonies gradually evolved from secret initiations for monks behind monastery doors into large public rituals. This is traceable in the evolution of ritual icons in Pāla Bengal, where roughly-carved eighth century stone relief icons of Vairocana have been interpreted by scholars as the work of artisan monks who crafted the stones themselves for secret ceremonies. The icons are inscribed on flat stones and designed to be placed in sand or rice powder maṇḍalas. But by the ninth century, Pāla Vairocana icons had evolved into large gilt bronzes whose creation would have required a costly team of technologists and artists, of the kind found only in royal workshops or in the

¹⁶ Coedès' ingenious unravelling of the inscription is in 'Nouvelles données chronologiques et généalogiques sur la dynastie de Mahīdharapura' (1929:297-330) *BEFEO* 29.

¹⁷ Tucci, G. (1949:216) *Painted Tibetan Scrolls*

best endowed monasteries.¹⁸ These are bronzes for courtly ceremonials, and the high quality of the Khmer bronzes also suggests royal ritual use.

hevajrasekaprakiyā

Thanks to the tradition of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, who courageously walked the mountain passes to India or sailed the typhoons of the South China Sea, to bring Buddhist texts to China, a Hevajra cult ritual manual has been preserved that is close in time to the Khmer Mahādhara dynasty to which Jayavarman VII belonged. A Sanskrit palm leaf (*olla*) handbook entitled 'The Hevajra consecration ceremony' (*hevajrasekaprakiyā*) was photographed in 1914 by Henri Maspero at the P'ou-ngan temple in China's Tchö-kiang province, northwest of Taiwan and was translated into French by Louis Finot in 1934. Maspero was told by the P'ou-ngan bonzes that the *olla* had been brought from India with other Tantric texts by the monk Pao-tchang in 1057.¹⁹ Finot assigned the script palaeographically to 11th century Bengal. A similar text reached Java and it is not impossible that one was brought to Cambodia at that time.²⁰

The *hevajrasekaprakiyā* is written in a clear, practical style for use in Hevajra monastic consecrations, but the instructions are also applicable on a grand, royal scale. It opens with homage to Vajrasattva, Hevajra and to the officiating master, described as the incarnation of Hevajra. It is worth summarising the rituals described in the text, which is a simplified schema inspired directly by the *hevajra-tantra*, to glean some notion of what the 12th century Khmers may have actually been enacting in their temples. The Hevajra maṇḍala is sketched on the ground with coloured powder²¹ 'and the gods are installed upon it, while their mantras are recited' and parasols, banners and standards erected.²² (This is perhaps how the Khmer bronze Hevajras, Yoginīs and Vajrasattvas were used in rituals). The initiand, dressed in royal robes, his face covered by a red veil and holding a garland of flowers, imagines the maṇḍala shooting up into the air on an eight-petalled lotus, poised on the tip of a vajra-thunderbolt. He is directed into this 'protected circle' (*raksācakra*) towards a raised throne and warned not to touch the sketched lines, the deities or their attributes. Once inside the magic circle he is protected against 'the evil committed earlier during many tens of millions of kalpas'.²³ He throws

¹⁸ Huntington archive at <http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/studypages/internal/213slides/JCH/Lecture7/index07.html>

¹⁹ Henri Maspero (1914:69) 'Rapport sommaire sur une mission archéologique au Tchö-kiang' BEFEO XIV

²⁰ A Javanese Sanskrit version of the *hevajrasekaprakiyā* is known as the *sang-hyang-kamahāyāna-mantrayāna*. Glasenapp compared these texts closely and concluded that although some details are different – the Javanese text for instance does not mention throwing a flower into the mandala – 'soviel ist doch sicher, dass beide Abhisekas eine Reihe von Akten gemeinsam haben.' Helmuth von Glasenapp (1938:202) 'Noch einmal: 'Ein Initiations-Ritus im buddhistischen Java' OLZ *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 1938 Nr.4, Berlin

²¹ Finot: 1934:13. This is probably rice powder or rice grains, as for instance specified for drawing the maṇḍala 'in a splendid way with rice powder' in the Śaiva Vīnāśikhatantra (trans. Teun Goudriaan 1985:101 Motilal Banarsidass); '...le mandala est tracé sur le sol au moyen de fils de couleur, de sable et de grains de riz teintés' Marcelle Lalou (1930:3) *Iconographie des étoffes peintes (pata) dans le Manjusrimulakalpa* P. Geuther, Paris

²² Finot 1934:13

²³ Finot 1934:35-7

a garland onto the image of the presiding deity that will determine his own special powers, and hands a flower to an attendant Yoginī who assists him in subsequent meditations. He is consecrated with water from the 'urn of victory' (*vijayakalaśa*) and enters a yoga trance of triple concentration (*samādhitraya*). A vajra and bell are placed in his hands in further consecrations and he is given a new name which includes the word 'vajra'.²⁴ Finally a curtain is drawn and a girl brought in for the secret consecration (*guhyābhiseka*) with the magic syllables *om*, *hūm*, *āh* inscribed on her head, breast and 'stigma' (*kiñjalke*). The P'ou-ngan olla is damaged here, possibly censored at some later date, but a reference can be made out to 'the drops of nectar left in the heart of the lotus.'²⁵ The initiand identifies so intimately with Hevajra that he worships him as present within his own body at the climax of the ceremony. With a deity as complex as Hevajra, whose eight heads are an accumulation of deities who are interacting with the eight surrounding Yoginīs, this makes an extraordinary demand on the adept who, if he reaches this stage, is said to be already on the way to becoming a Buddha. The external maṇḍala icons are thus crucial aids to awakening a new inner self.

The largest and most remarkable set of maṇḍalic aids for submission to Hevajra was found near Beijing. It is made up of six life-size bronze *yab-yum* couples sitting on mounts that include an elephant, a resuscitated man, a buffalo, a bull, a goat and a gazelle. These bronzes were photographed in the 1920s, before they disappeared without trace. **[Plate 3]** P.H. Pott thought that a maṇḍala on this scale could only have 'featured in the consecration of a sovereign, perhaps at Khubilai [Khan]'s [1261] Hevajravaśitā ['submission to Hevajra']'.²⁶

²⁴ Finot 1934:40

²⁵ Finot 1934:46

²⁶ Pott, P.H. (1966:70) *Yoga and Yantra: Their Interrelation and Their Significance for Indian Archaeology* trans. R. Needham, Nihoff, Hague. Alternatively, the bronzes may have been created for a performance of the *cakrasaṃvara-tantra*, for with the addition of a horse and a makara, these mounts would correspond exactly with the eight *ksetrapāla* of this Tantra, in which Saṃvara, another Heruka class deity like Hevajra, is described ripping open an elephant hide representing illusion. Kazi Dawa-Samdub (1918) *Shrichackrasambhara Tantra* Thacker Spink, Calcutta reprint with preface by Lokesh Chandra (1987:20) Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi

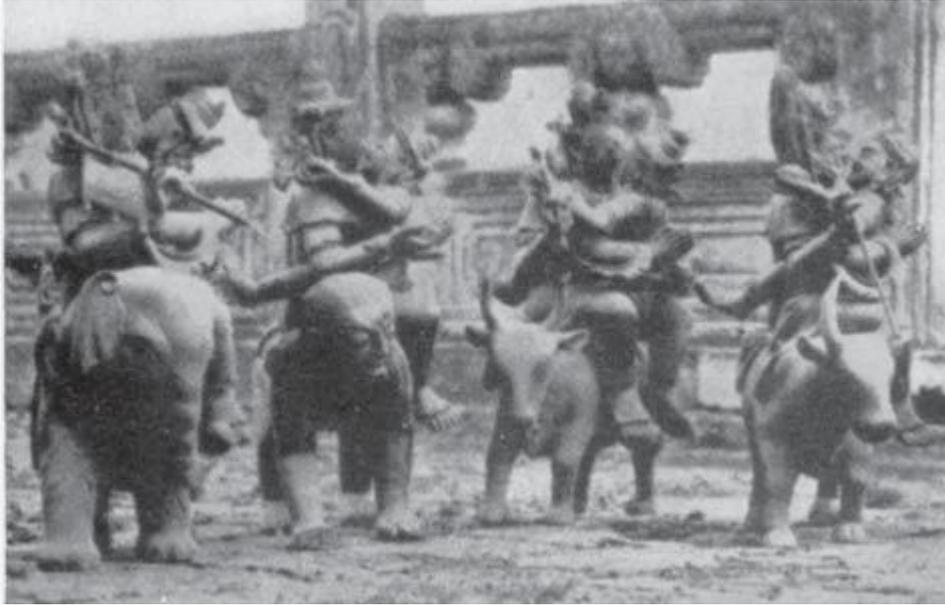


Plate 3 Khubilai Khan's *hevajravaśita*?

Female participation

We have no evidence for what selections from the *hevajra-tantra* the Khmers adapted for their Hevajra rituals. The virtual absence in the Khmer images of Hevajra in sexual union (*yab-yum*, 'father-mother' in Tibetan) with his partner Nairātmyā may indicate that the Khmers did not share the Indian (or Chinese) tantrikas' penchant for sexual yoga, corpses, cannibalism and other antinomian activities recurrent in the Indian Tantras. On the other hand, female celestial dancers, draped with flower garlands, are accorded primary importance at the entrances to the Bayon and in the large halls added late to the other Buddhist temples in Angkor, including Bantéay Chmār, suggesting an intense female participation in rituals. And we do have a brief contemporary text that suggests the four consecrations of the Hevajra system were being conducted by the Khmers, including erotic yoga. Chau Ju-kua, the Chinese Superintendent of Maritime Trade in Canton, in 1225 recorded what he had heard was taking place in Jayavarman's temples:

[In Chen-la, i.e. Cambodia] the people are devout Buddhists. In the temples there are 300 foreign women; they dance and offer food to the Buddha. They are called a-nan... [Skt. ānanda (bliss)]²⁷

The four blisses in Vajrayāna represent the mounting intensities of meditational states and correspond with the four cosmic spheres of the Buddhas.²⁸

²⁷ 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* Imperial Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, with Hirth's notes inserted.

²⁸ [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*, *sambhoga*, *dharma* and *sahaja*, each of them

Ritual paraphernalia

Further evidence for a sizable cult of consecrations is found in the large numbers of museum collection bronze lustration shankhas, vajras, bells and other paraphernalia, many bearing impressions of Hevajra's image – these were the principal ritual instruments of the officiating monks. Although much in the Tantric cults remained secret and could only be transmitted between guru and pupil, rituals were gradually adapted to public performance, where the secrets were enshrouded in a coded language (*sandhyābhāṣā*) only understood by the initiated. Once the rituals were recorded in manuals, the Tantra writers designed interludes as full theatrical scripts, lending themselves further to public performance. These included dialogues between the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods and heavenly choruses. Initiations dramatised in song and dance, varied in the many currents of Vajrayāna, but were no doubt always emotionally charged. Tucci describes Tibetan rituals involving secret rites with female partners, in which the initiand collapses after a frenzied dance (*vajranṛtya*), before being revived to dash wildly through the maṇḍala, brandishing a weapon.²⁹

Indications of scale

The paradigm for a large state level tantric Buddhist cult was set in China, when the T'ang emperors and their Buddhist mandarins sought to exploit the potential claimed by the tantric community for generating superhuman powers and designed large public ceremonies for 'state protection'. These required the aristocracy, the army and the educated classes to undergo consecration in mass ceremonies, designed to procure both expressions of loyalty to the emperor and the favourable alignment of the body politic with the ultimate powers of the cosmos. The supernatural powers conferred by the rituals were of direct interest to kings and armies of Bengal, Java, China, Tibet, Mongolia and Japan.³⁰ In China, tantric ceremonies are recorded as lasting for weeks and requiring the erection of large consecration platforms, with food and accommodation for thousands of participants. This style of court-imposed mass propagation of esoteric Buddhism was led by the Indian master and translator Amoghavajra in the late eighth century under the T'ang. Amoghavajra became the most powerful advisor to three emperors³¹ and was

adequate to the four planes of reality: physical, verbal, spiritual and intellectual (*kāya, vāc, citta, jñāna. Sekoddeśatikā* p.27.)' Tucci 1949:243

²⁹ Tucci 1949:249

³⁰ 'La participation royale au rituel tantrique est un thème qui imprègne la littérature tout entière, et ce n'est pas par accident que le mystère central du tantrisme, la consécration, a été modelé à partir de l'ancien rituel indien d'investiture royale. Il n'a pas seulement transformé les moines en rois tantriques, mais également les rois en maîtres tantriques...Les textes tantriques fournissent des instructions abondantes sur l'agression rituelle, pour agir sur l'esprit et le corps de l'ennemi...Les objets de ces actes peuvent s'appeler «démons», et l'exorcisme était une fonction thérapeutique importante pour les maîtres tantriques. Mais les ennemis humains étaient facilement assimilés au démons, et, lorsqu'il bénéficiait de l'assistance d'un ritualiste habile, un souverain ou un général ne craignait personne.'

Strickmann 1996:40-1

³¹ See Raffaello Orlando (1981) *A study of Chinese documents concerning the life of the Tantric Buddhist patriarch Amoghavajra (A.D. 705-774)* Princeton; Orzech, Charles D. 1998 *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of*

often called on to perform rituals in time of war. Orzech calls him 'the most powerful Buddhist cleric in the history of China ... [who] developed a new paradigm of religious polity for Esoteric Buddhism.'³²

Because of the scant textual evidence for Tantric Buddhism in Cambodia, the scholars who have written about the Hevajra bronzes have been reluctant to evaluate the likelihood of a national cult being practised in public in Jayavarman's large series of temple complexes. But I believe we should now ask again: did Jayavarman VII follow this model of mass engagement in potent loyalty/'state protection' ritual?

Which are the Khmer Hevajra temples?

Before the Bantéay Chmàr lintel caught more than my tourist eye, there was little apart from the overlooked Yoginī-dancer motif to connect the Tantric Khmer bronzes with Jayavarman's temples. Only two bronze Hevajras enjoy fairly reliable provenance. One in the Baphûon style was discovered in the floor of a side sanctuary in Bantéay Kdei. Another dancing Hevajra, this time in late Bâyon style, was excavated by Groslier in 1952 from the ruins of the Royal Palace. Yet there is a host of pointers to a royal Tantric cult:

- A large infrastructure of Buddhist temples was being created that can leave us in no doubt that the temples were at the heart of the regnal strategy, and absorbing a significant part of national resources.
- More than a hundred Khmer bronze icons of Hevajra, sometimes encircled by eight Yoginīs in his maṇḍala, are now held in museum collections around the world or have passed through the auction rooms. Their striking elegance and refined casting suggest they were made for courtly ceremonies.
- There are *thousands* of dancers carved in Tantric-style postures in the entrances of the Bâyon and on a double row of pillars outside its external gallery. The frontal, stamping-dance posture of these Yoginī-style dancers, with their piercing, confrontational stares, seems to identify them with the bronze Yoginīs in Hevajra's three-dimensional maṇḍalas.
- More Yoginī-like dancers are carved into the lintels and pillars of large roofed halls inserted as late additions to Jayavarman's earlier temples in Angkor – Praḥ Khan, Tà Prohm and Bantéay Kdei. The largest Yoginī hall of all, in Bantéay Chmàr, measures 35m x 15m. The halls provide the largest covered sacred spaces in ancient Cambodia.

Chinese Buddhism Pennsylvania State University Press; Patricia Berger (1994:91) '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; Chou Yiliang (1945) 'Tantrism in China' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 Cambridge Mass.; Weinstein, Stanley (1987:78) *Buddhism under the T'ang* Cambridge.

³² Orzech 1998:147

- The halls are surrounded by even larger stone platforms and terraces with Nāga balustrades, which would accommodate many more ritual participants. The balustrades feature Garuda embracing Nāgas, a symbol in Tantric Buddhism for converts being protected by the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi.³³
- Just before the Bāyon was opened, a large flat 4.5m.-high platform in the form of a Greek cross was extended around the temple's central sanctuary, creating an elevated area which would make public rituals visible to a large section of the city's population.
- Dozens of libation conches have survived that bear images of Hevajra and the Yoginīs. Along with vajras, bells and other ritual paraphernalia these shankhas would have been sufficient to service a large programme of Hevajra consecrations.

The temple rituals under Jayavarman VII, from the evidence at our disposal, were probably large and lavish in colour, song and dance and richly furnished with icons in gold, silver and bronze. They were conducted, with a privileged role for women, in a series of large new stone temples. The Hevajra and Yoginīs on the walls of Bantéay Chmār clearly indicate that, at this temple, large rituals towards the end of the reign were performed in celebration of the Khmer Hevajra. Before going further into exploring Bantéay Chmār and its Hevajra cult, I would like to consider another piece of evidence, also found outside Angkor, for the spread of such a cult.

A Ācam piece of the puzzle?

An inscription from neighbouring Ācampā may throw light on the Khmer cult. The Mī-Sṛn inscription C92 B is an unusually clear historical account that suggests both a departure from Ācam tradition and an adoption of Khmer style.³⁴ It departs from the conventional mix of panegyrics for the patron, supplication of the gods and details of daily maintenance, to provide a compact and lucid account of current Khmer-Ācam political relations, as well as of the beliefs and motives of the principal actors.

The man who commissioned the inscription is prince Vidyānandana of Tumprauk-vijaya, appearing in the inscription under his reign name, king Sūryavarman. Sūryavarman-Vidyānandana is described as practising the 'true science of the Mahāyāna teaching' (*mahāyānadharma tuy jñānopdeśa*). The inscription says he erected a temple to the Tantric god Heruka (*Śrī herukaharmya* 'Lord Heruka's mansion') in Amarāvātī (Quảng Nam).³⁵ The temple dedicated to Heruka, celebrated Vidyānandana's victory at Jai Ramya-

³³ See Alice Getty (1914:48) *The Gods of northern Buddhism*, OUP Oxford

³⁴ Boisselier sees telltale signs of Cambodia's Mahīdhara dynasty: 'L'influence khmère aide à comprendre l'accent nouveau de l'épigraphie tant dans sa volonté de préciser les fondements du pouvoir royal que dans des tendances syncrétiques, souvent axées sur le Mahāyāna, qui rappellent celles de la plupart des souverains de la dynastie khmère de Mahīdharapura.' *La Statuaire du Champa* (1963:303) EFEO Paris.

³⁵ Finot, M.L. (1904:168) 'Les inscriptions' in *Le cirque de Mī-Sṛn (Quang-Nam)* Henri Parmentier & Louis Finot EFEO, F.-H. Schneider, Hanoi

vijaya over an army sent against him by Jayavarman VII in 1194.³⁶ The stela was found beside the so-called 'inscription temple', a small 3m x 3m brick structure at the heart of the largest surviving Čam sanctuary site, the dense Mĩ-Sõn complex inland from the modern port of Danang. [Plate 4]

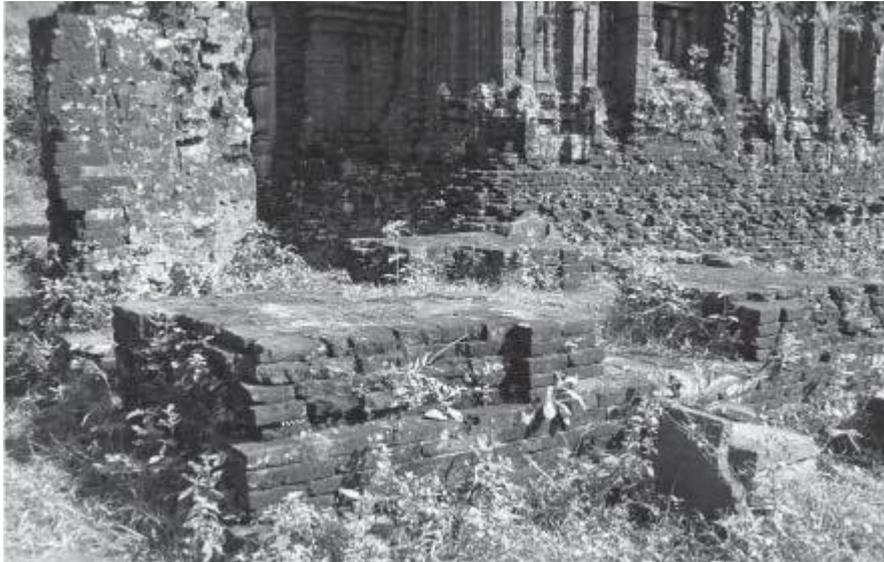


Plate 4 Base of Vidyanandana's Heruka temple in My Son

'Heruka' is both a wrathful supreme deity with a distinctive but rarely found iconic form and a generic name for wrathful manifestations of the supreme Buddha that include Hevajra (with 8 heads), Saṃvara (with elephant hide), Mahākāla (black, with tongue extended). The names 'he-ruka' and 'he-vajra' were initially conceived as similar invocations of supreme states or deities experienced by adepts at critical, ecstatic moments in rituals, which were hardly capable of definition -- 'Oh, radiance!', 'Oh, adamantine!'³⁷ Later these deities of intercession with the ultimate, formless levels of cosmic being were conceived in distinctive iconic forms. All Heruka deities perform the meditation-dance of ruthless compassion³⁸ that enables adepts to feed the transcendent Buddhas within their bodies. The Čam inscription's reference to Heruka was passed over without comment by the pioneers who excavated and translated the inscription. Yet this temple citation is nothing less than the sole surviving epigraphic record of a Heruka/Hevajra cult in ancient Indochina.³⁹ Does this mention of Heruka begin to fill the blank in ancient

³⁶ Finot 1904:169

³⁷ Mallmann (1986:182). 'Formulas take on an aspect, *vidyās* take on a body, they become Vidyārāja, Vidyādhara; Hevajra, "O vajra", a common invocation of the Tantric ritual, becomes a hypostasis of Akṣobhya and expresses his omnipotence by the multiplication of his heads and arms.' Tucci (1949:216). 'Hevajra itself seems to be associated with the naming ceremony (see *STTS* 256a2), but it alternates in the text with Heruka.' Snellgrove, D. (1959:204-18) 'The notion of divine kingship in Tantric Buddhism' *La regalita sacra*: E.J. Brill, Leiden

³⁸ This phrase is borrowed from the title of Rob Linrothe's exemplary 1999 study of wrathful deities of Indo-Tibetan esoteric Buddhist art.

³⁹ It is not however the earliest Tantric Buddhist inscription in the area. Edouard Huber pointed to the 'the piece of Tantric theology contained in stanzas VIII-X' of stela C.138 dated 902 and found in the ruins of An Thai (Quảng Nam). The stone talks of Vajradhara, Lokeśvara

Khmer epigraphy that has so inhibited scholarship? Can it be linked to Jayavarman VII?

Until now, scholars have followed Boisselier and linked it with Śrīvijaya, ancient Indonesia⁴⁰ -- a view which I believe may be a red herring. Boisselier alludes to the growing Tantrism in the Buddhism of Java by the late 13th century⁴¹, while Emmanuel Guillon points us to Java a century earlier, in Vidyānandana's time.⁴² Nandana Chutiwongs says Heruka cults were important in northern Sumatra in the 11th and 12th centuries, but the evidence she adduces does not show a distributed cult.⁴³ She cites F.M. Schnitger's excavation of the temples of Padang Lawas in 1935, that uncovered a single, shattered early 11th century relief of Heruka, **[Plate 5]** which is very close in design to an 11th century⁴⁴ two-armed dancing Heruka, with Akṣobhya in his flaming hair, now in the Dacca museum. **[Plate 6]**

and Vajrasattva are emitted in meditation in three spheres of the body called *vajra*, *padma* and *cakra*. Huber, Edouard (1911:259-311) 'Études indochinoises' *BEFEO* 11. The Čam Buddhists in this period, including those at the large sanctuary site of Đông-dùòng, where a large stone icon in Vairocana's mudrā was found, seem to have been practising a cult based on the middle-period Yoga Tantras of Vajrayāna.

⁴⁰ Boisselier (1963:324) later commented on the mention of Heruka in the inscription but, overlooking the virtual identity of Heruka, Hevajra and Saṃvara in Tantrism, concluded that as no image of Heruka was known in Cambodia, the Čam prince must have had contacts with Java: 'Il s'agit, évidemment, d'une divinité mahāyānique mais elle révèle aussi une tendance tantrique très nette. Il ne semble pas que Heruka soit attesté au Cambodge où l'on n'en connaît aucune image isolée. Le «dharma du Mahāyāna» de Suryavarmadeva [Vidyānandana] semblerait quelque peu différent de celui de Jayavarman VII et inviterait à penser à celui pratiqué à Java avec une ferveur croissante vers la fin du XIII^e siècle.'

⁴¹ Boisselier (1963:324)

⁴² Guillon, Emmanuel (2001:67) *Cham art* River Books, Bangkok

⁴³ 'He also built a sanctuary in the name of Śrī Herukaharmya, which he dedicated to a powerful protective deity of esoteric Buddhism whose cult was very important in Sumatra during the 11th and 12th centuries, though it seems to have been unknown in other countries of the Indochinese peninsula.' Nandana Chutiwongs (2005:75) '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. She made a similar comment in (1984:431) *The iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland South East Asia*, Leiden.

⁴⁴ Khan, F. A. (1969:170) *Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan: Prehistoric, Protohistoric, Buddhist and Hindu Periods* Elite Publishers, Karachi



Plate 5 Heruka of Padang Lawas, Sumatra



Plate 6 Heruka of Suharpur, Dacca Museum

Heruka images are rare, as attested by Dacca curator Nalini Kanta Bhattasali⁴⁵, one of the few extant ones coming from the monastery at Nālandā in the Ganges Valley. The image Schnitger found may therefore have been an import to the small Tantric Buddhist kingdom on the Panai river – a kingdom which was evidently important enough to be invaded by the Chola king Rājendra I in 1025⁴⁶ -- from eastern India, suggesting continued close links between the remnant ruling groups from the Śailendras of Borobudur, who settled in Sumatra after precipitously leaving Java. However, Schnitger found no other Heruka icon. In 1976 Rumba Mulia followed up on his work and revisited the remote Batak region of Sumatra. He reached the overgrown temple ruin with difficulty but found no trace of the Heruka relief.⁴⁷ So we are left with a single photograph of the sole known icon of the Sumatran Heruka cult. In the ninth century, Sumatra may well have had links with the large Cam Tantric Buddhist foundation at Đông-dùờng, but there is no hard evidence for this. Daigoro Chihara believes that the visit of a Cam courtier to Java in the late ninth or early 10th century may have led to the revitalisation of Cam temple architecture at Khùờng Mỹ kalan, southeast of Đông-dùờng, and the Mĩ-Sợn A1 temple (later devastated by an American B-

⁴⁵ Bhattasali, Nalini Kanta (1929:35) *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures in the Dacca Museum* Dacca Museum

⁴⁶ A Tanjore inscription dated 1030-1 records the occupation of a state called Panai: see Diagono Chihara (1996:216) *Hindu-Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia* Brill, Leiden

⁴⁷ Rumba Mulia (1980:9) *The ancient kingdom of Panai and the ruins of Padang Lawas (North Sumatra): Bulletin of the research Centre of Archaeology in Indonesia* no. 14 Jakarta

52 strike), where certain Javanese foliage motifs and *kāla-makaras* seem to have been reproduced by the Cams.⁴⁸ John Guy, pursuing this argument in favour of Śrīvijayan influence in Campā, has further suggested a link between the unusual chimney stack stupas of Đông-dùờng and the Maligai stūpa of Candi Maura Tankus, further south of Panai on the eastern coast of central Sumatra.⁴⁹ But the similarity here is less striking and as Đông-dùờng precedes Maura Tankus by at least a century (Chihara estimates the latter as built in the 11th-12th centuries⁵⁰), Guy has to admit that the influence could have gone the other way.⁵¹ (Boisselier had earlier taken the contrary view that Đông-dùờng's 'cylindrical-conical' stupas with rings 'singularly evoke the stūpa-towers of China and Việt-nam.'⁵²) In summary, the case for claiming that the Heruka cult of the small Tantric Buddhist kingdom of Panai of northern Sumatra led to Vidyānandana erecting a temple to Heruka is far from convincing.

It seems worthwhile, then, to look in another geographical direction to account for the sudden appearance of a Tantric Heruka in Mĩ-Sợn. The Čam king who erected the Heruka temple had intimate connections with the Khmer court of king Jayavarman VII. Ironically, this Heruka temple, erected to celebrate a Khmer defeat by a Čam turncoat of military genius, may give us an important clue to the kind of Buddhism then being practised by the Khmers. For Čam usurper Sūryavarman-Vidyāndana, the author of the inscription, had passed his youth at the Khmer court. As prince Vidyānandana, he arrived at a tender age (*kāla prathamayauvana* 'in early youth') at the court in Angkor in 1182 and was raised like a favourite son of the newly-enthroned Jayavarman VII. This was just one year after Jayavarman seized power in Angkor, possibly with Čam allies from his long sojourn in Vijaya from approximately 1150-67. The Mĩ-Sợn inscription does not explain why the Čam prince was received at the Khmer court but it suggests why he was rapidly elevated to the status of Khmer crown prince (*yuvarāja*):

The Cambodian king, seeing that he had all 33 marks of a great man, took him into his affection and taught him, like a prince of Cambodia, all sacred works and all weapons.⁵³

Prince Vidyānandana's education in religion, statesmanship and arms was that of king Jayavarman VII himself. The inscription shows how Jayavarman trusted the gifted Čam teenager by conferring on him the quelling of an internal revolt by the city of Malyang, west of Angkor.⁵⁴ From the way this revolt may be depicted on the western outer gallery of the Bāyon, the Malyang

⁴⁸ Chihara (1996:190)

⁴⁹ John Guy (2006:152) 'Échanges artistiques et relations interrégionales dans les territoires Cham' *Trésors d'art du Vietnam, la sculpture du Champa* Eds Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, Paris.

⁵⁰ Chihara (1996:217)

⁵¹ Guy (2006:152)

⁵² Boisselier 1963:96

⁵³ This is a translation of Finot's French rendering of: *pu pō tana raya Kamvujadesa mvoh pu pō tana rayā nan madā traitrinśa laksana sampūrna pu pō tana rayā Kamvujadeśa sneha mānasa śiksā putau va sarvvāgamā sarvāyudha samāsta avih di dauk di kamvujadeśa* (Finot 1904:168, 170).

⁵⁴ Finot (1904:170)

rebellion was one of the major domestic crises of Jayavarman's early reign. The Bàyon relief, in between scenes of Khmer soldiers fighting Khmers in apparent civil war, may recount how the Cam warrior prince offered up the severed heads of two traitors to the king. **[Plate 7]**



Plate 7 Vidyānādana(?) presents rebel heads to king, Banteay Chhmar relief

Jayavarman's trust was further affirmed a decade later as Vidyānandana was sent home to Čampā at the head of a Khmer army sent to defeat insurgent Čams and install prince In -- a brother-in-law of Jayavarman of unspecified nationality -- as ruler in Vijaya. Vidyānandana succeeded and was himself made vassal ruler of southern Campā. When, soon thereafter, prince In ran into difficulties, Vidyānandana first came to his rescue against a usurper, but then suddenly betrayed his benefactor's trust and seized the north as well, crowning himself king and refusing to acknowledge Khmer suzerainty.⁵⁵ Jayavarman responded by sending in another Khmer army, but it was defeated by Sūryavarman-Vidyānandana at Jai Ramya-vijaya. In celebration, the Khmer-educated Čam usurper built his victory temple to Heruka, embellished the Mī-Son Śiva-linga with the heaviest golden cover recorded in Čam epigraphy⁵⁶, and turned to emperor Long Cán of the neighbouring Đai Việt for acknowledgement of his legitimacy, which was granted in 1199. But the extraordinary military career of the Čam prince was to end in disaster. Vietnamese records show that after Jayavarman sent yet another army to defeat him in 1203, Vidyānandana fled and requested asylum in the Đai Việt. When this was rejected, he and his fleet of 200 junks off the port of Cử-La disappeared without trace.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Maspero, Georges (1928:167) *Le Royaume de Champa* G. Van Oest, Paris

⁵⁶ Boisselier (1963:324)

⁵⁷ Maspero 1928:167

In the context of the epigraphic conventions of the time, the 1194 Mī-Sṛn inscription is an unusually clear historical exposition. It does not prove which royal creed was being practised in the Khmer court in Jayavarman VII's reign, but it *does* prove that a temple to Heruka was erected in Čampā in 1194 by a Čam aristocrat who had been taught from his youth in Angkor 'all sacred works and all weapons, like a native prince of Cambodia' (*sarvvāgamā sarvāyudha samāsta avih di dauk di kamvujadeśa*).⁵⁸ And as Vidyānandana was a favoured protégé of Jayavarman, there is a strong possibility that if his god was called 'Heruka', then so was Jayavarman's. The inscription may be read as holding up a mirror to what was happening in Angkor. A Heruka cult has no recorded precedent in Čampā, which strengthens the possibility that this cult in Mī-Sṛn was a direct export from Cambodia, and therefore a reflection of Jayavarman's creed. And if Hevajra was called Heruka in Čampā by Vidyānandana, then the probability is increased that Jayavarman also called his supreme wrathful eight-headed Tantric deity Heruka. The Khmer cultural imprint on the sacred art of Čampā is very noticeable in this period of invasion and annexation, so I propose that the Mī-Sṛn inscription be seen as providing grounds for redesignating as 'Herukas' the bronze and stone icons made in Jayavarman's heartland, which we call 'Hevajras' on iconographic, not epigraphic grounds.

Bantéay Chmàr's Tantric pantheon

This new light from Čampa is strong enough to prompt our looking not for *whether* but for *where* Jayavarman built his *Śri Herukaharmya*; Bantéay Chmàr with its Hevajra and Yoginīs and its themes of the military application of Tantric powers is the strongest candidate.

A design change immediately visible at Bantéay Chmàr suggests the construction was divided into two phases. The temple was probably first dedicated to Lokeśvara, for his 1190s-style image is set in the lintel of the western entrance to the central block. This central section has Devatās and false windows with blinds half drawn in the style of Praḥ Khan of Angkor, dedicated in 1191. This is in sharp contrast with the later, large, open, pillared spaces of the large Yoginī hall, which was added in the east and extended out almost to the surrounding gallery wall. The change in style came with a change of pantheon; the second phase, constructed in parallel with the final phase of the Bāyon, includes face towers, the Yoginī hall and the Mahākarunika Lokeśvaras. The Yoginīs of Bantéay Chmàr are unique. They have third vajra eyes and hold flowers with outstretched, feathered, arms and stand astride on Garuḍa legs. In the central sanctuary, on the southern wall, I also came across an unpublished trinity of polycephalous, multi-armed deities that also appear to belong to the late, Tantric phase of decoration. Two of the deities are dancing in Hevajra's *ardhaparyanka* posture beside a seated three- or four-headed deity with its principal arms in *dharmacakra mudrā* and four others rising in an arc behind. **[Plate 8]** This smiling, open-eyed deity has facial features that are reminiscent of the Hevajra in the nearby lintel. He too wears heavy earrings, necklace and diadem. I propose identifying this as the

⁵⁸ Finot 1904:170

supreme Buddha Vajrasattva, the deity whose giant form, I have argued elsewhere⁵⁹, also appears in the Bâyon and Bantéay Chmâr face towers.



Plate 8 Seated Vajrasattva with Herukas, Banteay Chhmar

Heruka/Hevajra appears to have been the Tantric god honoured for military victories in the Khmer sphere of influence at this period. This seems remotely related to what the T'ang dynasty called *chen-kuo*, or 'state protection' Buddhism, when they performed Tantras to ward off hostile armies or put down rebellions.⁶⁰ Geoffrey Samuel sees military and political purposes as the main driving force behind the development of the Tantras:

Evidence increasingly suggests that a central driving force behind this transformation was the use of Tantric ritual for political and military purposes...Rulers patronised Tantric priests and established communities and colleges of Tantric ritualists, because they saw these specialists in Tantric power as an important dimension of the power of the state.⁶¹

Bantéay Chmâr, identified in its second phase with Jayavarman's battles with Śaiva enemies, thus seems to become a metaphor that sublimates his earthly victories into a dynastic celebration of Tantric Buddhism's subjugation of Cambodia's long-supreme Śiva into the dancing sway of the all-powerful *śastradhara* Heruka/Hevajra. On a far larger scale, it is the Khmer equivalent of the victory temple erected contemporaneously by Jayavarman's former protégé king Sūryavarman-Vidyānandana in Čampā. Bantéay Chmâr has the best claim to being Jayavarman's *Śri Herukaharmya*.

Hevajra in Angkor

But what evidence is there for a major royal cult of Hevajra in Angkor at the crossover from the 12th to 13th centuries? Apart from the bronzes, there are in fact several images of Hevajra in stone, the principal one being the bust in New York, which was originally a three metre high statue. The 52 inch bust

⁵⁹ Sharrock, P.D. (2007) 'The mystery of the Bayon face towers' *Bayon, New Perspectives* River Books, Bangkok.

⁶⁰ See Orzech's account of the esoteric turn of the mid-T'ang court in the eighth century in (1998:135-146)

⁶¹ G. Samuel (2003:1) *Ritual Technologies and the State: The Mandala-Form Buddhist Temples of Bangladesh*, paper for 5th international congress on Bengal Art, Dhaka and Mainmati

was found broken in a mound of earth near the great East Gate (Porte des Morts) of Angkor Thom and is now in the collection of the New York Metropolitan Museum. **[Plate 9]**



Plate 9 Hevajra bust NY Metropolitan Museum

In a 1980 exchange between Hiram Woodward and Bruno Dagens, who was then making the inventory of the Khmer Conservation Depot in Siemreap, it was established that fragments of its hands were in the Depot but the huge legs were in poor condition.⁶² 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:

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.⁶³

⁶² Hiram Woodward in conversation with Bruno Dagens in (1981:57n9) 'Tantric Buddhism at Angkor Thom' *Ars Orientalis* pp.57-67.

⁶³ Dagens, B. (1968:143) 'Étude sur l'iconographie du Bàyon' *Ars Asiatiques* XIX Paris

A search of the electronic inventory of the *École Française d'Extrême Orient* (EFEO) in Siemreap did however bring to light photographs of the unearthing of the giant Hevajra by Henri Marchal on 8 March 1925. **[Plate 10]** 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. The site was a pile of earth 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. In a search of the depot, I identified a number of the Hevajra's broken hands, with finely carved fingers and skins folds at the wrists that show the quality of the sculpting. They hold some of the deity's normal attributes of animals and Buddhas.

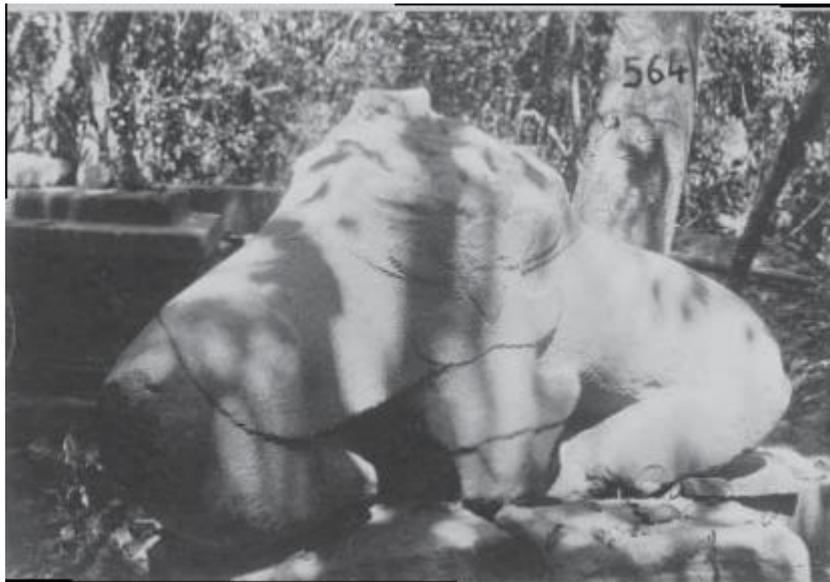


Plate 10 Legs fragment excavated by Henri Marchal outside *Porte des Morts*, Angkor Thom

The statue must originally have been more than three metres high and the pedestal in the photograph, which includes a measuring rod, is one metre high – making this Hevajra one of the largest icons of the late *Bàyon* period. The high quality of the sculpting is also seen in the rendering of the 'Khmer smile' and in the tension felt in the flesh of the earlobes, stretched by the heavy earrings. The giant Hevajra, on its pedestal, is almost equal in size to the four metre *Bàyon*-style *Viṣṇu* that Jayavarman VII appears to have erected in *Angkor Wàt*, perhaps to mark *Indrābhiseka* celebrations on the occasion of the subjugation of central and southern *Āmpā* in 1203. The exceptional scale and quality of this Hevajra image suggest a major royal purpose. I have attempted a 'virtual' reconstruction of this imposing sculpture from photographs of the New York bust and the archived photographs of the legs. **[Plate 11]** We cannot know where this large stone Hevajra was originally erected in Angkor. It appears to have been dumped outside the Angkor Thom walls, perhaps in a *Śaiva* reaction early in the 14th century.⁶⁴ Its broken state suggests it may have been one of the thousands of icons smashed when the Buddhists were driven out of Jayavarman's temples. None of the surviving

⁶⁴ Sharrock (2007:n7)

small Bàyon inscriptions refers to Hevajra, but an icon such as this would presumably have had a central place in the Bàyon tower sanctuary.

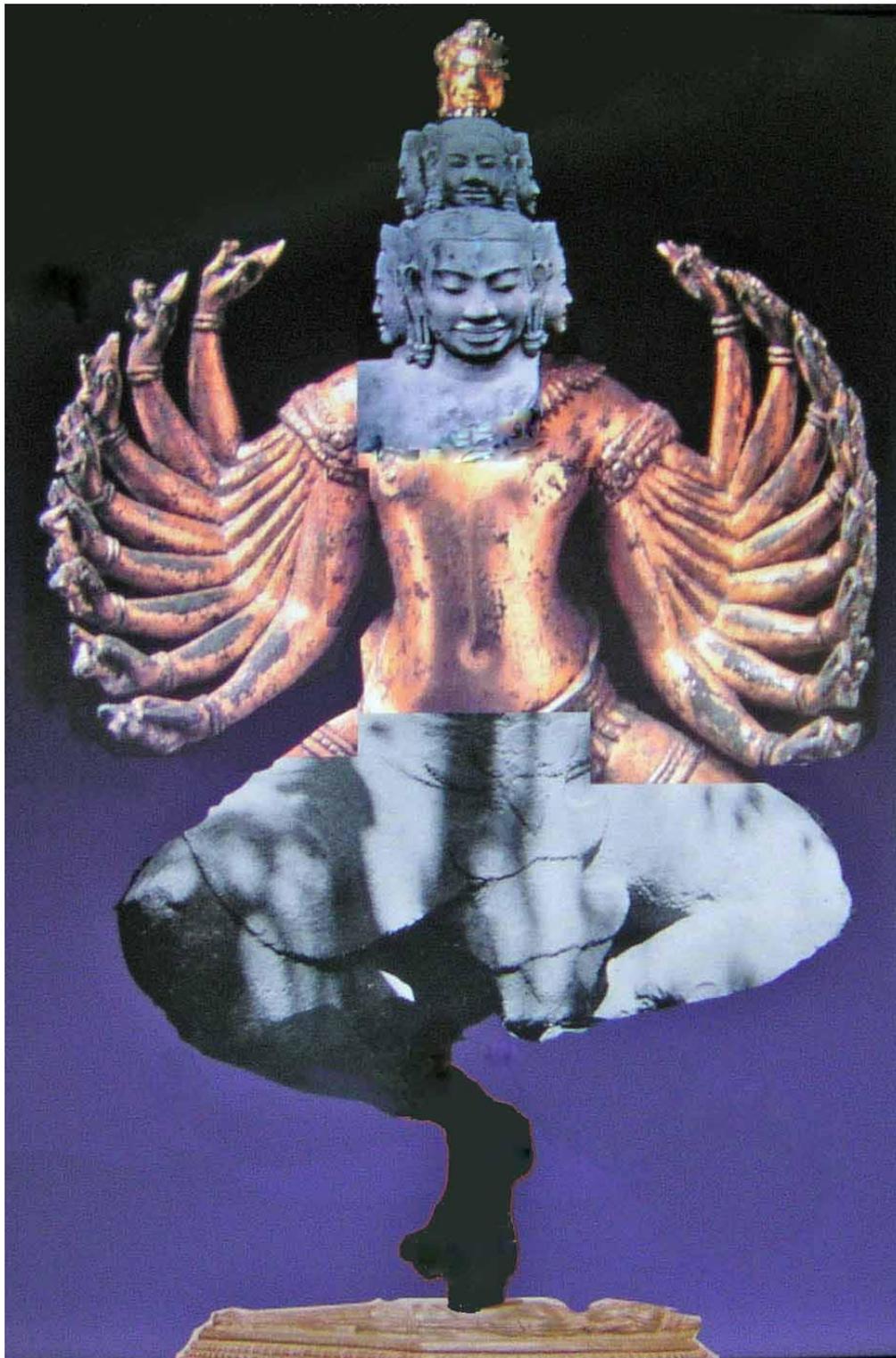


Plate 11 Author's conjectural reconstruction of Hevajra statue, Angkor Thom

Many more elements in the Khmer art from the seventh to the 13th centuries indicate the Khmer Buddhists kept in close touch with the evolution of Tantric Buddhism in the great Indian monasteries of the Ganges valley. What the

Khmers made of these Indic Buddhist conceptions has still hardly been studied, but we can now affirm that the temple of Bantéay Chmàr increases the probability that a Hevajra cult was dominant there at the end of Jayavarman's reign; and the New York stone Hevajra invites a profound re-investigation of the temple art in the late Bàyon-style in Angkor. More pieces of the puzzle are falling into place, thanks to that inspired article of 1981, where Woodward found a new vision of Khmer Buddhist art by drawing in an array of disparate threads from across ancient Asia – the article I have carried with me through this journey of discovery.