

KHMER ART SAMPLINGS: IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE THROUGH HINDU DIVINITIES

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the medieval art history of Southeast Asia is still a virgin site, which needs to be explored with multi-disciplinary approach and methodology. The transcultural aspects between India and Southeast Asia from ancient to late medieval period cannot be contemplated through a single medium, it needs to be analyzed from various angles through religious sources, philosophical materials and visual contents. The main focus of the present study is on interlinks of religious arts. Few iconographical sample forms from the various monuments of Angkor are taken for critical analysis, such as Śeṣaśāyī, Vamana, Kāliyāmardana and Dance of Śiva. The common designs in iconographic cornice will have to be recognized in comparative religious studies, getting beyond the shackles of spirituality if we are to discover the ancient heritages. There is no much deviation in representation of the Buddhist and Hindu imagery in India and Southeast Asia but the localization is visually sensed. The cultural links of ancient Indian Knowledge System between Southeast Asia, China and Japan is entangled in the annals of the history.

Keywords: India, Khmer, Hindu, Iconography

1. INTRODUCTION

The word Khmer (kmer, ke mer; origin late 19th century) stands for the people, the ancient kingdom and official language of Cambodia and also a Republic that flourished during 1970-75.¹ The Encarta Dictionaries give the following meanings of the word:

¹ See *Encarta Dictionaries*. Khmer Rounge (*rounge* means “red”) was the Communist Party of Cambodia that seized power in 1975 and held sway over the country down to 1979.

- A member of the most populous people in Cambodia.
- An inhabitant of the ancient kingdom that flourished in the Mekong valley (upper reaches of Thailand, adjoining Myanmar) between the 9th and 13th centuries.
- Official language of Cambodia belonging to the Mon-Khmer family, total of speakers 5 million.
- It was an ancient kingdom that flourished in the Mekong valley (9th to 13th centuries). Its capital was Angkor, north-western part of modern Cambodia² Figure 1.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Prasat Phimai, Khao Noi, Prachinburi Province (hilly terrain), Cambodia

However, art historians by Khmer denote the architecturally constructive work from the upper Thailand, excluding Myanmar (Burma), down to Java, with its epicenters in Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom,³ Borobudur and Prāmbanan ([Rajarajan \(2020\)](#)). Ever since the French discovered the ruins of the Khmer civilization in Cambodia (mid-19th century CE) a bumper crop of research works has been published in journals and books.⁴

[Rooney \(1994\)](#) brings the development of Khmer Empire (for the chronology see ([Briggs \(1951a\)](#): 186) architecture under certain stylistic periods, named after a principal site or a specific temple. These styles were demarcated by the French experts as enumerated below:

Kulen:

Date 9th century (c. 825-75)

King Jayavarman II (802-50 CE)⁵

² [Higham \(1998\)](#): (236-239, [Figs. 1 and 2](#)) earmarks the geographical zones of the Phimai region by dividing into six phases of development from prehistoric to historic periods (1000 BCE to 1300 CE) as Tamyae, Prasat, Classical Phimai, Late Phimai, Muang Sema and Lopburi.

³ Angkor was the capital of the ancient Khmer civilization, now in Cambodia, is a tourist center in addition to being a Garden of Eden for scholars who work on Southeast Asian art.

⁴ For a brief account see references. I am thankful to Raju Kalidos (under DAAD Fellowship) collection from the Institut für Indische Philologie und Kunstgeschichte of the Freie Universität Berlin. He had collected enormous data on the subject that helps our research today.

⁵ The Pallavas were first Tamil rulers to establish the real contact with Southeast Asia that reflected in the Hindu remnants of the maritime routes ([Christie \(1998\)](#)). Pallava influence script in inscriptions is popular in the Hindu monuments of Southeast Asia ([Woodward, H. \(2005\)](#): 40, 51, 91). When the name ends with

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Monuments | The Phnom Kulam |
| Prah Kō: | |
| Date | Last quarter of the 9th century (c. 875-93 CE) |
| King | Indravarman I (877-89 CE) |
| Monuments | Prah Kō (879 CE), Bakong (881 CE), Lolei (893 CE) |
| Bakheng: | |
| Date | Late 9th and early 10th century (c. 893-925 CE) |
| King | Yaśovarman I (889-900 CE) |
| Monuments | Phnom Bakheng (893 CE), Phnom Krom, Baksei Chamkrong, ⁶ Prasat Kravan (921 CE) |
| Koh Ker: | |
| Date | First half of the 10th century (c. 921-45 CE) |
| King | Jayavarman IV (921-42 CE) |
| Monuments | the Koh Ker (Chok Gargyar) Group (Briggs (1951a): 117, plan 6, fig. 21) |
| Banteay Srei : | |
| Date | Later half of the 10th century (967-1000 CE) |
| King | Rājēndravarman II and Jayavarman V |
| Monuments | Banteay Srei (967 CE) |
| Kleang: | |
| Date | Later half of the 10th and early 11th century (c. 965-1010 CE) |
| King | Jayavarman V (968-1001 CE) |
| Monuments | Ta Keo (c. 1000 CE), North and South Kleangs, Phimeanakas ⁷ (c. 970 CE) |
| Baphuon: | |
| Date | 11th century (c. 1010-80 CE) |
| King | Sūryavarman (1002-50 CE), Udayādityavarman (1050-66 CE) |
| Monuments | Baphuon (Gail (2016): 7-29), West Mebon, Kbal Spean |
| Angkor Wat: | |
| Date | 12th century (c. 1100-75 CE) |
| King | Sūryavarman II (1113 - c. 1150 CE) |
| Monuments | Prah Palilay, Chau Say Tevoda, Thommanon, Banteay Samre, Angkor Wat (1113-50 CE) |
| Bayon: | |
| Date | last quarter of 12th and early 13th century (C. 1177-1230 CE) |
| King | Jayavarman VII (1181-1220; Vickery (1985): 226-44 CE) |

“varman” (“ṇ” dental voiceless nasal) it shows Pallava influence (Czuma, S. (1974): 119; 2000: 131). If it ends with “varma” it may be Sanskrit. However, the other constituents of the name such as Jaya (Victory), Sūrya (Sun), Yaśo (yaśas means full of glory or reputation), Rājēndra (Tamil Irācēntiraṇ, King Indra) and Indra (King of Gods) are Sanskrit (Rajarajan (2022)).

⁶ The temples might have been erected by Harshavarman I and dedicated the sculptures to his parents. According to the inscriptions, the sculptures represent Īśvaraloka – Indravarman I, Paramaśivaloka – Yaśovarman I, Viṣṇuloka – Jayavarman III and the queens of the kings (Briggs, L. P. (1951a): 115).

⁷ The Phimeanakas in Sanskrit means *ākāśa vimāna* ‘celestial or aerial palace’. The Phimeanakas was originally built Yaśovarman I and dedicated to Viṣṇu.

Monuments Banteay Kdei (1181 CE), Ta Prohm (1186 CE), Prah Khan (1191), Ta Som, Angkor Thom Enclosure and Gates, Bayon (c. 1200 CE), Royal Terraces, Srah Srang, Neak Pean

The above tabulation would reveal the fact that Khmer architecture was contemporaneous Cōla art in its Early (Vijayālaya [beginning 850 CE] to Sundara Cōla), Middle (Rājarāja I to Adhirājendra) and Later phase (Kulōttuṅga I to Rajendra III [end 1250 CE]). The stone and bronze sculptures of this vast era in art show unmistakable traces of Indian influence, particularly Cōla. In spite of the influences the sculptures are ingeniously cast to earmark a style of art called Khmer that is visible in the anatomical features of the faces, ornamental foliage's and garments.

Dawn F. Rooney says the King in Khmer tradition was a veritable incarnation of God, the devarāja cult, an idea that the Cōlas adumbrated, e.g., the God and King called Rājarāja/Rājarājeśvara and the temple Rājarājeśvaram [Figure 2](#).⁸ Four phases are discerned in the style of Khmer art ([Rooney \(1994\)](#): 73):

Figure 2



Figure 2 Bṛhadīśvara Temple, Tañcāvūr

- Mid-8th to mid-9th century: The images show a rigidity of the parts of the body such as head, torso, and legs. Each part is clearly defined. There is a deep incising either vertically or horizontally. The male dress is draped over left thigh in pocket-like fold and in front in the shape of an anchor.
- Mid-10th to mid-11th century: The profile is unified. The images have a sense of softness. Drapery and headdress are less emphasized. The garments have incised edges.
- 12th century: Sculptural technology during this period bestowed more attention to bas-relief and bronzes ([Kempers \(1933\)](#): 1-88)⁹.

⁸ Inscriptional sources would reveal Rājarāja took the title *Śivapādaśekhara* (Garland at the feet of Śiva). See Tañcāvūr Inscriptions ([Rajarajan \(2016a\)](#): fn. 9) note Civapātacēkaran. His original name was Arumolivarman and the name given at the time of anointment during the coronation was Rājarāja, which is an epithet of Śiva as it appears in the *Śivasahasranāma* (no. 983, [Rajarajan \(2021\)](#)). Some suggest the temple was named after the Cōla Emperor. I may view it otherwise; it was named after the King of Gods, *devarāja*-Śiva.

⁹ The Pallava ruler Nṛsiṃhavarman II, built a Buddhist temple at the port city Nākapattinam exclusively for the use of Chinese Buddhists traders ([Sastri \(1935-1937\)](#): 608). For more details of Nākapattinam as South Indian Buddhist center and its connection with the Śrī Laṅka and Southeast Asia ([O'connor \(1972\)](#): 22, [Rajarajan, \(2019\)](#): 4). Kemper's work is important to understand the bronze imagery connection between India and Southeast Asia. Especially for the argument of the Tamil inscription in the twelfth century Buddha image from Nākapattinam ([Kempers \(1933\)](#): 19).

- Late 12th and early 13th century: The spreading *nāga* hood, giant heads of gods and demons (as in the Bayon, e.g., Churning the Ocean of Milk) and colossal faces on towers were emerging. This was the peak of Khmer architecture and iconography.

II

With this small introduction, the present article examines samples of Khmer iconography that betray their indebtedness to Indian thought, particularly Tamil, in as far as their ideological setting is concerned. The *prāsāda* (means “palace” or “temple” – Rajarajan (2011): Chap. I)¹⁰ consist of the *vimāna* (i), *ardhamanḍapa* (ii), *mahāmanḍapa* (iii) and *agramanḍapa* (iv) as one may find in the Rājārājeśvarams at Tañcāvūr and Kañkaikoṇṭacōlapuram.¹¹ These temples also make a good comparison with their counterparts in the Hoysala monuments of a contemporary period (infra). Even when these Tamil elements of the architectural style could be detected, the temples at Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, Borobudur and Prāmbanan are veritable “temple-mountains”. Such monuments in pyramidal proportions are not to be found in Tamilnadu, excepting the Rājārājeśvarams. If one makes an entry into a Khmer temple and observes its sculptural decoration, he is sure to feel he is in Ajaṇṭa, Ellora, Deogarh, Māmāllapuram, Kāñcīpuram,¹² Halebīḍu or Koṇāraka. Now let us examine few of the iconographical masterpieces. The themes cover Viṣṇu, Śiva and the minor gods such as Indra. In all these images even though the ideological setting is in Indian thought the decorative aspects such as scroll work, floral or faunal frieze, *kīrtimukhas* and such other additional ornamentations are typically Khmer.¹³ The present article considers few of the Vaiṣṇava images and a rare Nṛttamurti-Śiva for exemplification.

¹⁰ This work examines the etymological significance of the various terms in Sanskrit and Tamil that denote a temple, residence or gateway. In the mainland Tamilnadu *grha* (meaning house or temple) is a commonly employed terminology in Pallava period inscriptions, e.g., Ādivarāhaviṣṇu-*grha*, Atiyendraviṣṇu-*grha* (see also Jeyapriya (2004): 292-96).

¹¹ These could also be made a comparison with the integral members of an Orissan temple known as *rekha-deul*, *pīḍha-deul* or *khakhara-deul*. In the longitudinal order these temples consist of the following members: *śikhara* (*vimāna*, *rekha* called *rekha-deul*), *jagamohana* (*manḍapa*), *naṭamandira* and *bhogamandira* (Deva (1985): 64).

¹² Briggs (1951a) (25 and 55) mentions an undated Sanskrit inscription of Jayavarman I that mentions Kāñcīpuram as Pallava capital. The Pallavas made the ultimate influence on the culture of Indonesia and Indo-China.

¹³ In Buddhism, *kīrtimukha* refers to the opening of the chaitya-hall, initially the term *kīrti* denoted an excavated rock-cut chaitya-hall, and during the Gupta period it stood as a symbolic element to ward off evil (Ranasinghe, L. (1991/2): 140). The *kīrtimukha* in Southeast Asian visuals clearly indicates the origin from the Hindu religion. The well-established trade links between India and the Bali region, from first century onwards through the Buddhists and later the Hindus, the transportation was not a mere goods but also the religious imageries by the Indian traders, which got syncretized into the indigenous culture. The South Indian pearl trade was one of the major links with the Southeast Asia (Stuart-Fox, M. (2000): 26), since ancient time and especially during the Pallava reign (Rajarajan (2019): 12). The *kīrtimukha* “lion-mask, an iconographical fitting (Rajarajan (2006): 209)” is a popular architectural fitting in Hindu temple architecture, but as mask ‘*śiṃha-mukha* (lion face mask)’ it has Vaiṣṇava connotation to the Nṛsiṃha *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Both as an architectural element *kīrtimukha* and iconographical form *śiṃha-mukha* made a clear impact on Southeast Asian Art. It is interesting to note Coldiron’s (2005): 232-234) argument about the demoness Hannya and the witch Rangda, both these characters would be of Hindu forms, the Nṛsiṃha and Hiranya. Serious research is warranted to decipher these connections between the syncretistic forms of South and Southeast Asia Art.

Śeṣaśāyī:

Figure 3



Figure 3 Śeṣaśāyī, Prasat Kamphaeng Yai, Thailand

Two examples of reclining Viṣṇu are reported herein. One is found on the lintel (Marcus (1968): 321-30) of the Prasat Kamphaeng Yai, Thailand Figure 3. The Lord Viṣṇu is found reclining on the serpent couch supporting his head with the bent left arm. The snake's coil is single and extends leftward. The five hoods of Ādiśeṣa or Ananta are prominently shown above the head of Raṅgaśāyī.¹⁴ Brahṃā is found seated on the lotus emanating from the Lord's umbilicus. *Garuḍa* with an awkward face and tongue peeping out is seated near the Lord's feet. He is in a peculiar, seated posture with the right leg bent at knee and rested on earth and the left knee bent and erect.

What is interesting in this image is that three Devīs are seated near the Lord's feet. All three are found massaging the Lord's feet and thigh. Normally is Śeṣaśāyī images one or two Devīs are present (Parimoo (1983): figs. 1-77, cf. Kalidos (1993) and Kalidos (2006): Chap. I, Gail (2012): figs. 38-45, 47 and 64, Rajarajan et al. (2017b): 162-164, figs. 49, 53, 116-119). The presence of three Devīs is a very rare occurrence.¹⁵ The root for this idea is found in the Tamil *Nālāyiram*:

Pinṇaikol Nilamakaḷkol Tirumakaḷkol (*Tiruvāymoli* 6.5.10)

Tirumakaḷum maṇmakaḷum āyamakaḷum cērntāṇ (*Tiruvantati* 1. 42)

Uṭaṇamar kātāl makaḷir tirumakaḷ maṇmakalāyar

Maṭamakaḷ eṇṇivar mūvarāḷum ulakamum mūṇṇē (*Tiruvāymoli* 1.9.4)

These verses clearly state the Devīs of the Lord are Pinṇai, Nilamakaḷ or Maṇmakaḷ (Bhūdevī) and Tirumakaḷ (Śrīdevī). The last verse is very important because it states when the Lord is united with the three, he represents the three worlds and that he is the Cosmic Principle (Kalidos (2012)). This is a clear case of the ideological influence of the Tamil *Nālāyiram* in the sculptural work of Thailand. In my opinion a Tamil sculptor familiar with the *Nālāyiram* must have sculpted this image. Sanskrit literature, either the canon or corpus, does not link three Devīs with

¹⁴ "The Gupta image of bas-relief Śeṣaśāyī in Udayagiri (400 CE) is one of the earliest carved on the boulder amidst a cluster of the rock-cut temples. Alike any other cult Mūrti in the south, e.g., Tirumeyyam, Śrīraṅgam and Śrīvilliputtūr, the Lord is an imposing, rather hefty, personality, śayana-Viśvarūpa, about ten meters long. Reposing on the serpent Ananta, He is Anantaśāyī, called Raṅgaśāyī in Śrīraṅgam, Vaṭapatraśāyī in Śrīvilliputtūr and 'Calacayaṇam' or Jalaśayana of Cīrupuliyūr Jeyapriya (2018), including Uṇḍavallī on the south bank of the River Kṛṣṇā", Rajarajan (2019).

¹⁵ This is a rare image that represents the Lord with three Devīs symbolizing *Aiśvarya*, prosperity for the worlds (Śrīdevī), Global Peace (Bhūdevī) and Universal Harmony (Āṇṭāl), see Rajarajan (2018): fig 3. Raju Kalidos has reported Viṣṇu in the company three Devīs in the Vaikuntam temple, one among the Navatiruppatis in the Tāmiraparaṇi basin, in which case the third feminine member is identified with Nappinṇai. See Kalidos (2012): figs. 1-3. In the present case the third member should be Āṇṭāl because the woman mystic took the hand of Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam (*Ārāyirappaṭi-Guruparamparabhāvam*, p. 50).

Śeṣaśāyī. Scholars who examined the image earlier have rarely noted the three Devīs and did not point out their importance.

Another interesting image of reclining Viṣṇu on the Reachisey is from Prasat Phanom Rung [Figure 4](#).¹⁶ It appears on the northern pediment of the temple. The image is four-armed, the back right hand supporting the head. The front left hand holds a gadā, rested on earth. The front right arm is laid up on the body. What is interesting is the face in Mongolian anatomical mode. The headgear and garments are in typical Khmer style.

Figure 4



Figure 4 Śeṣaśāyī, Prasat Phanom Rung, Thailand



Figure 5 River of Thousand Lingas, Kbal Spean

¹⁶ Boisselier, J. (1966): 320) identified the mythical form as *Reachisey* 'the composite creature that was part crocodile and part dragon, with a lion's head and occasionally an elephant's trunk (cf. Feneley et al. (2016): 286). But the body of *Reachisey* resembles the Catfish family and the snake Python in Southeast Asia, especially from the Mekong basin, known as Mekong giant catfish '*Pangasianodon gigas*'.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Miniature carvings of *śayana* Viṣṇu

Figure 7



Figure 7 River of Thousand Liṅgas, Kbal Spean

Figure 8



Figure 8 Liṅgas and *Śayana* Viṣṇu

Figure 9**Figure 9** River of Thousand Liṅgas, Kbal Spean

There is quite a difference in visual representation between the Prasat Kamphaeng Yai and the Prasat Phanom Rung images, the former reclines from left to right while the later vice versa. Though Kamphaeng Yai is damaged and not vividly decorated, but the Phanom Rung clearly shows underwater nature legibly with the flora and aquatic nature and so the reposing Viṣṇu may be comfortably identified as symbolic representation of Jalaśayana. The Jalaśayana representations are common in Southeast Asian art, especially in Kbal Spean (see [Rajarajan \(2020\): Fig 5](#), [James \(2011\): figs. 5.10 – 5-12](#)).¹⁷ Though the Kbal Spean carvings are known as ‘River of Thousand Liṅgas’ [Figure 5](#), but there are many reposing Viṣṇu carvings [Figure 6](#), [Figure 7](#) too, both the Liṅgas and reclining Viṣṇus image are entwiningly carved [Figure 8](#), [Figure 9](#). According to the existing inscriptions, during the early eleventh century under the reign of Sūryavarman I (1002-1050) the *sahasra* ‘thousand’ Liṅgas was carved, similarly Udayādityavarman II (1050-1066) contribution to the site seems too higher than his predecessor. Though both the rulers appear to be Śaivites through the inscriptional sources (Chevance 2104: 209-210), yet their contribution to Vaiṣṇavites art and architecture is plenty. A good example is the West Baray was the work of Sūryavarman I and Udayādityavarman II built the West Mebon, both are exclusively dedicated to Viṣṇu.¹⁸ The restructuring of the waterbody at Angkor might have happened many times, similarly carvings of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava themes at Kbal Spean, also have evolved over centuries. The sporadic recurrent carvings of Liṅgas and Jalaśayana Viṣṇus at the water course emphasize the sanctification of the Angkor water bodies.¹⁹

Vāmana:

The twin, Vāmana-Trivikrama, is the fifth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. An image on the lintel of the Prasat Muang Khaek (Phimai Museum) presents Vāmana in a peculiar

¹⁷ The Digital visualization of the West Mebon images ([Feneley et al. \(2016\): figs. 23-24 and 27-28](#)) are clear indication that the reclining form of Viṣṇu is Jalaśayana and may be this is largest bronze reclining Viṣṇu.

¹⁸ A decent political relationship was maintained with the Cōla dynasty, especially with Rajarajan I and Rajendra I ([Briggs \(1951a\): 147-148](#)).

¹⁹ There are many Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples on the course of the Kāviri river. But the excellent examples are the Raṅganātha temple, Śrīraṅgam and Jambukeśvara temple, Tiruvānaikkā within the doab of the Kāviri and Kallātam rivers ([Rajarajan \(2006\): 23](#)). The Śrīraṅgam stucco image of Trivikrama reported by [Rajarajan, J. \(2018\): 6, Fig 2](#) is one of the best examples from the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka art that connects both the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva iconographical forms of Trivikrama and Gaṅgāvatāra in to a single frame of visual narration. Trivikrama is found lifting the right leg. Brahmā rushes to the spot and pours Gaṅgā-jala ‘water’ on the exposed palm of the foot. The sacred water poured on the foot of Trivikrama is flooding downward. Śiva receives Gaṅgā, with the hands in *añjalibandha*.

posture [Figure 10](#). By the way we may note Vāmana was a cherished theme in the hymns of the Ālvārs. He was called Kuṛaḷ (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 1.10.1), Māṇi or Māṇikkurāḷaṇ (*Periyālvār Tirumōḷi* 1.4.1)²⁰, Kuṛiyaṇ ([Ganeshram, S. \(2010\)](#)) and Vāmaṇaṇ (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 8.3.10). The cult of Vāmana seems to have been very popular during the high medieval period. There is a temple for Vāmana among the Khajurāho group of monuments in Madhya-Bhārat. The *Tiruccantaviruttam* v. 74 says:

Arintaṛintu vāmaṇaṇaṭiyiṇai vaṇaṅkiṇāl
Cerintēlunta ṇāṇamōṭṭu celvamum ciṛantiṭum.

“If you extol the sacred feet of the Dwarf, your wisdom and riches increase and the evils vanish” ([Kalidas, R. \(2006\)](#): I, 8).

Figure 10



Figure 10 Trivikrama, Lopburi Art, Prasat Muang Khaek, Phimai Museum, Thailand

The image under [Figure 10](#) study is set within a Khmer type of aedicule or what is called *devakoṣṭha* in Tamil tradition (cf. [Figure 2](#)). The lower garment is in typical

²⁰ *Periyālvār Tirumōḷi*: 1.4.1 ([Rajarajan et al. \(2017\)](#)): III, pp. 26-27)

māṇikkaṅkaṭṭi vayiramiṭaikaṭṭi

āṇipponṇāṛceyta vaṇṇacciruttōṭṭil

pēṇiyuṇakkup piramaṇ viṭitantāṇ

māṇikkurāḷaṇē tālēḷō vaiyamaḷantāṇē tālēḷō

māṇikkaṅ kaṭṭi vayiramiṭai kaṭṭi horde of diamonds were interlaced with bunches of rubies, *āṇipponṇāṛ ceyta vaṇṇac ciṛuroṭṭil* it is colourful a little swing in molten gold, *pēṇi yuṇakkup piramaṇ viṭitantāṇ* with great eagerness Brahmā had sent it for Thee, the baby-Kṛṣṇa, *māṇik* kuṛaḷaṇē tālēḷō*** be rocked in the cradle with lullabies, Thou the Dwarf with a little-penis (*brahmācāri* PVP), *vaiya maḷantāṇē tālēḷō* Thou that measured the worlds, be asleep.

* See [Rajarajan et al. \(2017a\)](#): māṇi; *Māṇ* “glorious”, “beauty”; *māṇi* “bachelor”, Dwarf, “penis” (TL V, 3151-52); *brahmācāri* (PVP TM 2.10.7), *kuṛiya-māṇ* “small beauty” (MOLI 8.4.4)

** *Tāl-ēl-ō, tāl* “tongue”; when children are laid to rest in a cradle women sing lullabies uttering the meaningless word *tālēḷō* (PVP).

“Horde of diamonds was interlaced with bunches of rubies for making a little swing in molten gold. Thou the little-master, Kṛṣṇa, it was created for Thee by Brahmā. The Dwarf with little penis be rocked in the cradle by the recital of lullabies; Thou that measured the worlds, be asleep.”

It is interesting to note that the *Tiruvilaiyāṭar Purāṇam* narrates an episode in which Śiva sells rubies, ‘Māṇikkamvirṇapaṭalam’ (Paraṇcōti Episode 17, [Rajarajan and Rajarajan, J. \(2013\)](#): 26); Paraṇcōti (v. 38) talks of four varieties of rubies known as *cātaraṅkam*, *kuruvintam*, *caukantikam* and *kōvāṅkam* (TL V, 3153) v. 38.

Khmer pattern. The headgear appears to be a cap-like *jaṭāmakūṭa*. The image is four-armed and seems to carry the *kamaṇḍalu* and *puṣṭaka* in the left hands. The objects in right hands are not clear. The Lord has just started measuring the worlds as Vāmana and has not reached the level of Trivikrama. The right leg is lifted and placed on the hands of Mahābali. To the left Sukrācārya is found seated. Below the legs few fishes are found which means it represents the netherworld to which place Bali was sent at the end of the striding activity. The aedicule on either side is decorated with scroll work and foliages that very much gets closer to Hoysala decorative work (Settar (1991): II, figs. 83-88, Foekema (1994): Fig 12). In the upper part are found four *ṛṣis* seated in *utkuṭikāsana* and hands held in *añjalibandha*. Tassels move on either side of the aedicule at the far end of which *Garuḍa*-like figures with elongated beaks seated on leogriffs appear. Upon the tassels hamsas are found flapping their wings.²¹ These may symbolically suggest the “wisdom” that the Lord promises to his adherents (cf. the *Nālāyiram* verse n. 7).

In Indian art Vāmana usually appears a *bālaka-brahmacāri* (Ganeshram (2010): fig. CP XV-6) holding an umbrella and *puṣṭaka*. He is not engaged in striding action. In the present Khmer image, he is doing it. This is the novelty of the theme. The image is said to be in Koh Ker style and dated around c. 640 CE.

Kāḷiyamardana:

Figure 11



Figure 11 Kāḷiyamardana Kṛṣṇa, Prasat Muang Tam, Buriram, Thailand

²¹ The *Hamsa* is a minor incarnation of Viṣṇu who is said to have rescued the *Vedas* by this *avatāra*: *Periya Tirumoli* 5.1.9 ((Rajarajan et al. (2017): IV, pp. 6-7)

tuṇṇimaṇṇum viṇṇōṭum tōṇṛātirulāy mūṭiyanāl

aṇṇamāki yarumaṛaika ḷaruḷic ceyta vamalaṇiṭam

miṇṇucōti navamaṇiyum veyiṇmuttum cāmaraiyum

Poṇṇum Poṇṇi koṇarntalaikkum Puḷḷampūtaṇkuṭitāṇē

Tuṇṇi maṇṇum viṇṇōṭum tōṇṛāt irulāy mūṭiyanāl the doomsday when the flourishing planets and the vast skies are hidden in darkness, *Aṇṇamāki yaru maṛaikaḷ aruḷc ceyta vamalaṇiṭam* it is the venue where the Lord Pure appeared as *Hamsa*/Swan to ordain the priceless *Vedas**, *miṇṇu cōti nava maṇiyum* the everlastingly shining nine-gems, *vēyiṇ muttum*** the pearls of bamboo, *cāmaraiyum* fly-whisks (*cāmaras****), *poṇṇum* golden particles, *Poṇṇi koṇarn talaikkum* are brought by the River *Poṇṇi*/Kāviri (from the western hills to deposit in the delta), *Puḷḷampūtaṇkuṭi tāṇē* the holy land is *Puḷḷampūtaṇkuṭi*.

* Pure white *Hamsa* is a metaphor for purity; it is supposed to suck the milk alone avoiding the water-mix

** *Mūṇkilarici* (rice of bamboo) is an edible stuff for the dwellers in hills, *kuṛiṇci*

*** Bushy tail of Yak (chowrie), product of the hills; a royal insignia and used as fan in aristocratic circles (Liebert (1986): 53)

“On the doomsday the flourishing planets and the expansive skies are hidden in darkness. It is at this venue that the Lord Pure appeared as *Hamsa* to ordain the *Vedas*. The River *Poṇṇi* brings along with the floods the everlastingly shining nine gems, the pearls of bamboo, chowrie and particles of gold deposited in the delta. The holy land is *Puḷḷampūtaṇkuṭi*.”

Figure 12



Figure 12 Kāliyamardana and Trivikrama, Māriyamman Temple tēr, Peṇṇakkōṇam

Kāliyamardana is a coveted theme in the hymns of the Ālvārs and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Kalidas (2006): I, 13, 43-44). The inner lintel of the inner eastern *gopura* of Prasat Muang Tam illustrates a glamorous scene of Kṛṣṇa dancing on the hood of Kāliya Figure 11.²² It is a picturesque portrayal showing Kāliya with seven hoods. Kṛṣṇa stands on the middle hood and kicks another hood with his left leg. Above is a decorative element, resembling the Khmer aedicule within which the image is set. Foliages and scroll work go on magnifying on either side of the relief that recall the decorative elements in Hoysala art.

An array of wood-carvings Figure 12 on the Māriyamman Temple tēr ‘temple car’, Peṇṇakkōṇam,²³ Perampalūr District depicts five separate panels in a row. The panel runs as Garuḍārūḍa ‘Viṣṇu seated on *Garuḍa*’, Trivikrama with the left leg on the head of Mahābali, the typical wood carved Kāliyamardana ‘Kṛṣṇa dancing on the single headed Kāliya and holding the tail of the snake’, Trivikrama with the left leg on a creeper, and Mahābali with *añjali* pose receiving Vāmana. The panels run from right to left, it is very interesting to note the Kāliyamardana scene is accommodated in between the recurring Vāmana Trivikrama panels. The depiction of *kīrtimukha* in each of the panels correlates with the lintel panels of the South-east Asian samples.

Dance of Śiva:

A gorgeous scene of the Dance of Śiva is portrayed in the Sikhoraphum Temple, Surin Figure 13.²⁴ The central figure in this illustration is Śiva dancing the *caturam*, a mode popular with early medieval South India as may be found in Ellora Caves XX and XXIX, Badāmī Cave I, Paraṅkuṇṇam and other places (Kalidas (2006): II, pls. xxxv. 1, xliii. 2, c. 1). The Lord is endowed with ten arms that expand on both sides in a circular form. The left leg is planted on earth and right slightly lifted in *kuñcita* mode, thus forming a *caturam*.²⁵ The pedestal upon which the Lord dances is supported by swans. Below the swans a *kīrtimukha* is found. To the right and left are

²² For exact location of the image, see <https://www.orientalarchitecture.com/sid/944/thailand/buri-ram/muang-tam-temple>, Figure 11.

²³ Peṇṇakkōṇam is a small hamlet that lies on the off-road, three kilometers from the Tiruci-Ceṇṇai National highways, Perampalūr District, Tamil Nadu. The tēr ‘temple car’ is at present located in the Māriyamman Temple of the Peṇṇakkōṇam village, but, the tēr has nothing to do with the Māriyamman Temple. The tēr consists of more than seventy panels of Vaiṣṇava themes, there is minor Viṣṇu temple and a Śiva temple in the village. Neither the tēr nor the panels are reported.

²⁴ For exact location of the image, see <https://www.orientalarchitecture.com/sid/947/thailand/surin/sikhoraphum-temple>, Figure 12.

²⁵ The dance *karaṇas* popular in early medieval art are *caturam*, *ūrdhvajanu*, *bhujāṅgaṭrāsita* or *ānandatāṇḍavam*, *ūrdhvatāṇḍavam* or *lalāṭatīlakam*, and *vṛścika*. (Kalidas (2006): II, 232-34).

found Kālī, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Gaṇapati. On either side of the *kīrtimukha* six dancing divinities are present.²⁶ To the upper left the *Kiratārjunīyam* episode from the *Mahābhārata* is illustrated in miniature relief (Rajarajan (2021a): 355-366). To the upper right Śiva perhaps is fighting with a demon.

Figure 13



Figure 13 Dance of Śiva, Sikhoraphum, Surin, Thailand

On the whole this lintel image is one of the most illuminating in the entire range of South and South Asian art. In my opinion, it seems to have been inspired by the Tēvāram (6.227.10) hymns in one of which Nāvukkaracar has the following to say:

*Kōvāyavintiraṇ nullittārākak Kumaraṇum vikkiṇ Vināyakaṇṇum
pūvāyapīṭattu mēlayaṇṇum pūmiyaḷantāṇum pōrricaippap
pāvāya viṇṇicaikaḷ pāṭiyāṭip pāriṭamuntāmum parantupaṇṇi...* (Kalidos 1996: 34).

The hymn says the Lord danced to the tune of the music generated by Indra, Kumaraṇ/Murukaṇ, Vigna-Vināyaka, Ayaṇ/Brahmā and Pūmiyaḷantāṇ (one who measured the worlds, i.e., Trivikrama/Viṣṇu). In addition to these that the corpus prescribes, the Khmer artist has taken the privilege of inducting several other luminaries and mythical events such as the six additional dancing divinities and *Kiratārjunīyam* in this revealing picture of the Dance of Śiva.²⁷

The present study is incomplete. There are several other specimens that I have collected such as Śiva and Devī seated on the bull (Vṛṣabhārūḍa; Rajarajan (1996): 305-310), Dancing Kāla, Indra seated on an elephant, Airāvata, that has heads facing the cardinal directions and so on.²⁸ These images constitute a milieu in the history of Khmer sculpture and the syncretistic forms in the evolution of Southeast Asian art (Briggs (1951), Lavy (2003)). Scholars may differ in opinion with either the Sanskrit (Havenon 2006/2007: 91) or Tamil (Wheatley (1974); James (2011): 21-22, 220; Feneley et al. (2016): 287) influence was predominate in Hindu visual

²⁶ Such an image of Śiva presenting *ūrdhvatāṇḍavam* was found in the Tiṭṭakuṭi temple (Rajarajan (2021a)) car that included the Sapta Mātṛkas also (cf. the Nṛttamurti in Aihole cave temple, flanked by the dancing Mātṛkas). This temple car is lost now. Kalidos (1996a) has recorded the image in *East and West*, Rome, Vol. 46: 3-4, Figure 9. See also Rajarajan and Ganeshran eds. (2010): fig. BW 20.

²⁷ Kāraikkālammaiṇār within the Śiva-Naṭarāja group is popular theme in Southeast Asian Art from ninth to twelfth century. Banteay Srei, Phnom Rung and Banteay Samre are the good examples that accommodate Kāraikkālammaiṇār.

²⁸ For brief discussion on the term Vṛṣabha 'bull' and the usage of the term *vṛṣaḥ* as a synonym for *dharmaḥ* in both Indian and Khmer inscriptions, see Rajarajan, J. (2004): 438, fn. 318.

Śivāṣṭottaram – 39: Vṛṣāṅkāya 'Dharma makes up the limbs of the Lord, Vṛṣabha "dharma" is the Lord vehicle'; Śivasahasranāma – 40: Vṛṣarūpāya 'Bull of Righteousness'; Śivasahasranāma – 439: Vṛṣaṇāya 'vṛṣa 'bull, dharma', Offers the due reward for the karma' (cf. Rajarajan (2021)).

culture of Southeast Asia, but none can deny that it was purely the Indian Art that was indigenized to the Southeast Asian culture. Yet the question of Pallava and Cōla relation with the Southeast regions, and the quantum of the Tamil bhakti literary influence in these regions are yet to be analyzed, the question will remain open for further research.²⁹ A Day should come when these places are visited for field work so that more elements from the Indian subcontinent that have found the way with the trade winds to Cambodia and Java could be brought to the light. I may add Cambodia, Java and Thailand are the artistic paradise on the Southeast Asian artistic world.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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²⁹ A scholar proficient in Pallava and Cōla art, the visual forms appear to be works artists from the Indian mainland that may be dated during the Pallava-Cōla transitional phase (Rajajaran (2016): 142) with an indigenous impression.

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