Protecting the Protector of Phimai

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Scholars of Southeast Asian art and architecture often ask questions about visual narratives and cultural meanings embedded in the pictorial programs of Hindu and Buddhist temples in Cambodia. I have argued elsewhere that an underlying pictorial organization, based on what I call "the principle of picture pairings," unites the stories recounted on the bas-reliefs at the tenth-century temple of Banteay Srei into an ideological totality.[1] However, not all ancient Cambodian temples have a coherent narrative program. A case in point is the twelfth-century Buddhist temple of Phimai, located in modern northeastern Thailand. The verbal and visual materials there raise a very different set of questions about the nature of narrative and thus challenge assumptions about the presence of an artistically constructed "pictorial program." I argue below that there is no intentional "visual narrative program" at Phimai. Instead, the images there served primarily political and apotropaic purposes, and they formed part of a maṇḍala-like architectural configuration. Before we turn our attention to the Phimai reliefs, however, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider the broader political implications and uses of Buddhist Tantric imagery in Cambodia before the twelfth century.

The politicization of Vajrayāna Buddhism at the temple of Phimai is by no means unprecedented; it has
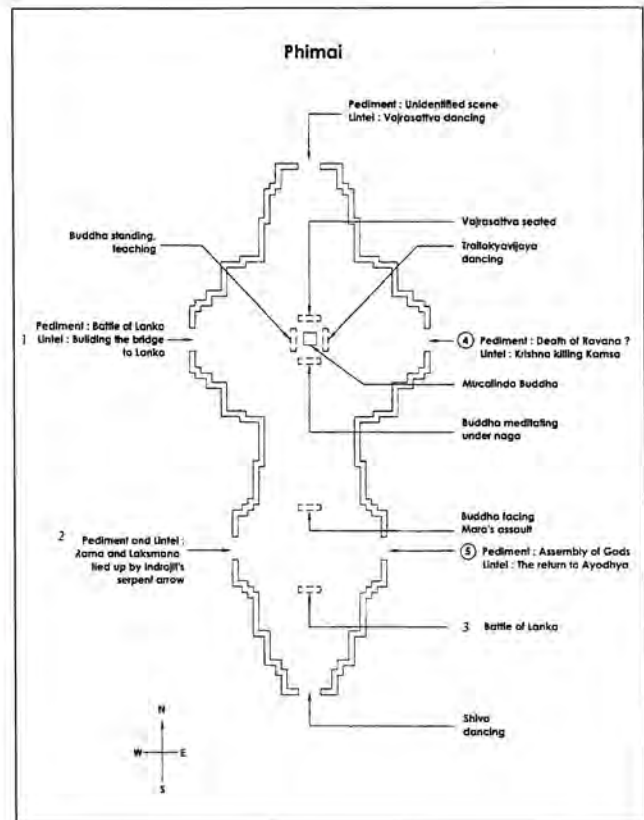

Fig. 1. Phimai temple from the east

ABOVE: Fig. 2. The maṇḍapa and central shrine of Phimai

RIGHT: Fig. 3. Ground plan showing the placement of narrative panels at Phimai

its roots in the ninth-century temple of Bat Chum.[2] In the eleventh century, however, an inscription appeared that made clear reference to the function of Buddhist Tantric images as political protectors of the Khmer kingdom.[3] A case in point is the recently discovered Sab Bāk inscription (dated 1066 C.E.), which vividly states:

> [T]he images of Vrah Buddhalokeśvara were installed by the Venerable Sristyavarman, who had supernatural power, in the past, on Abhayagiri, with the intention that Java not attack Kambuja [Sruk Khmer].
>
> Later on, the nine images deteriorated. The venerable teacher by the name of Dharanindrapura has renovated these deteriorated images and reinstalled them once again. In this way, they became free from harm.
>
> Indeed, his pupil, Vrah Acharyya Dhanu, has installed these images in the year 988 [saka] which is in the reign of His Majesty King Udāyadityavarmandeva. May he live long and remain powerful for the rest of his reign.[4]

The king mentioned in the above passage might be King Udāyadityavarman II (r. 1050–1066), the Shivaite king who sponsored the construction of the eleventh-century temple of the Baphuon and reportedly also a great supporter of Vajrayāna Buddhism. It is clear that the nine Buddha images described in the inscription were produced and subsequently renovated with the specific purpose of protecting Sruk Khmer (literally, the Khmer district or kingdom) from Javanese invasion.[5]

The Rāmāyaṇa reliefs and Buddhist Tantric images at Phimai served similar parallel political and apotropaic functions. This privileging of the apotropaic function of images over storytelling (i.e., narrative sequence) in part explains the curious absence of a coherent and sequential narrative program in the pictorial layout of the Rāmāyaṇa reliefs at Phimai. Moreover, like the apotropaic role of the nine images mentioned in the Sab Bāk inscription (which were used to protect the Khmer kingdom, or a geographical maṇḍala from foreign invasion), the iconic and narrative images at Phimai are spatially organized in a maṇḍala-like architectural configuration to protect the temple's inner sanctum.

THE POLITICS OF PROTECTION AND THE PICTORIAL PATTERN AT PHIMAI

Phimai is a Tantric Buddhist temple located in northeastern Thailand. The temple faces south and is com-

Fig. 4. Mucalinda Buddha, from the central shrine of Phimai

Fig. 5. Trailokyavijaya [?]. Khmer or Khmerizing style, 12th century. From Phimai. Bronze, height 16 cm. National Museum, Bangkok.

posed of a single tower (*prâng*) and a maṇḍapa (figs. 1 and 2). The temple's six entrances open to the four cardinal directions (see ground plan in fig. 3). The name *Phimai* probably derives from the Sanskrit *vimāya* (or *bimāya)*, meaning "illusion."[6] The temple was dedicated to a deity named Vimāya (whose image is now lost or yet to be identified). Presumably, the image of Lord Vimāya was once housed in the inner sanctum of the central shrine. Hiram Woodward, Jr., has suggested that Lord Vimāya was probably the name of a nāga who protected the Buddha (Mucalinda Buddha), comparable to a replica presently found in situ (fig. 4).[7] Without doubt, the theme of political protection is closely associated with the role of the patron at Phimai.[8] For instance, an inscription engraved on the door jamb of the south gate of the second enclosure informs us that the patron played a martial role in protecting the image of the deity, Trailokyavijaya, and that, in turn, this particular deity served and protected the main deity (possibly Mucalinda Buddha) at Phimai:

On Sunday December 8, 1108 A.D., Śrī Virendrā-dhipativarman of Chok Vakula had erected an image of Karamtan Jagat Senāpati [general] Trailokyavij-aya who is the *senāpati* [protector] of the *senāpati* of Phimai.[9]

No three-dimensional image of Trailokyavijaya seems to have been found at Phimai,[10] although in his recent book, *The Art and Architecture of Thailand*, Woodward makes a reference to a bronze image of a Tantric Buddhist deity (now housed at the National Museum, Bangkok), prob-ably from the region of Phimai, that may resemble the one mentioned in the above inscription (fig. 5).[11] We do know, however, that Trailokyavijaya is another Tantric form of the protective bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi.[12] David Snellgrove suggests further that Trailokyavijaya might be a title referring specifically to Vajrapāṇi:

Although this particular image [of Trailokyavijaya] referred to is no longer evident, it is likely the ten-armed dancing figures whom we see represented,

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Fig. 6. Trailokyavijaya [?]. Lintel situated on the outer gateway of Phimai

Fig. 7. Portrait of Śrī Virendrādhipativarman of Phimai, ca. 12th century, south gallery, Angkor Wat

particularly on the lintel at the entrance to the main sanctuary and even more clearly reproduced on a lintel in the north-east corner of the galleries, should be identified as Trailokyavijaya ("Victory over the threefold world") [fig. 6]. This title pertains to Vajrapāni as the result of his subduing and converting to Buddhism the major divinities of the whole (threefold) world, thus forming them into a special maṇḍala known as the Trilokçakramaṇḍala (Maṇḍala of the Circle of the Triple World), of which he himself is the central presiding divinity.[13]

Interestingly, both Woodward and Snellgrove attach the identification of Trailokyavijaya to two very different images. We might never know what Trailokyavijaya at Phimai looks like, but one thing is clear: both the patron and the image of Trailokyavijaya served as protectors in more ways than one at Phimai. Moreover, it is clear that Śrī Virendrādhipativarman was a marshal (senāpati) who protected the deity Trailokyavijaya; as a marshal, Śrī Virendra's role was also to protect the town of Phimai. In addition, we know that Senāpati Śrī Virendra served as an important member of the army of King Sūryavarman II (1113–1150 C.E.). A portrait of Śrī Virendra appears on the bas-reliefs of the south gallery at Angkor Wat. Here the marshal is portrayed as a powerful soldier riding an elephant while holding an unidentified weapon with his right hand (fig. 7). According to Albert le Bonheur, a person's rank during King Sūryavarman II's reign was signaled by the number of parasols over his head; the nine that shade Śrī Virendrādhipativarman suggest that he was a important individual in the military hierarchy.[14]

The visual theme of political protection (i.e., the conquering and subduing of demons) dictated the function

and, in effect, shaped the arrangement of both the iconic and narrative images at Phimai.[15] The images at Phimai are arranged in a maṇḍala-like pattern moving outward from the center (i.e., the central shrine), and the deities placed on the margins of this rectangular and square architectural configuration are strategically placed to serve an apotropaic function (see fig. 3). A case in point is the placement of a Tantric Buddhist figure at the foot of a pilaster next to the southern entrance at Phimai (fig. 8). The figure is shown holding a vajra (thunderbolt) and a ghaṇṭā (bell), and he stands on a corpse. Woodward suggests that this figure might be Vajrasattva in a secondary role as one the sixteen vajra beings in certain esoteric maṇḍalas.[16] Vajrasattva is another manifestation of Vajrapāṇi, whose role is to guard the temple's entrance. In addition, Woodward has pointed out that the four interior lintels of the central shrine (figs. 9–12) depict deities in the act of conquering:

> The other four interior lintels have Buddhist subject matter and may each involve conquering. The outer southern lintel depicts the defeat of Māra; on the western lintel . . . is a standing crowned Buddha at the center of a crowd of figures; and the northern and eastern lintels, both themselves stretched-out-maṇḍalas, have at their centers forms of Vajrasattva and Samvara, respectively.[17]

At a cursory glance, the standing crowned Buddha rendered on the west interior lintel might at first appear contradictory because he is not portrayed in the act of conquering anything. However, on second glance, this crowned Buddha, who stands at the center of a group of figures and dancers, seems indeed to be registering a victorious moment (fig. 10). Moreover, the standing Buddha

Fig. 8. Vajrasattva [?]. South entrance, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 9. The Defeat of Māra. South interior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 10. Standing Crowned Buddha. West interior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

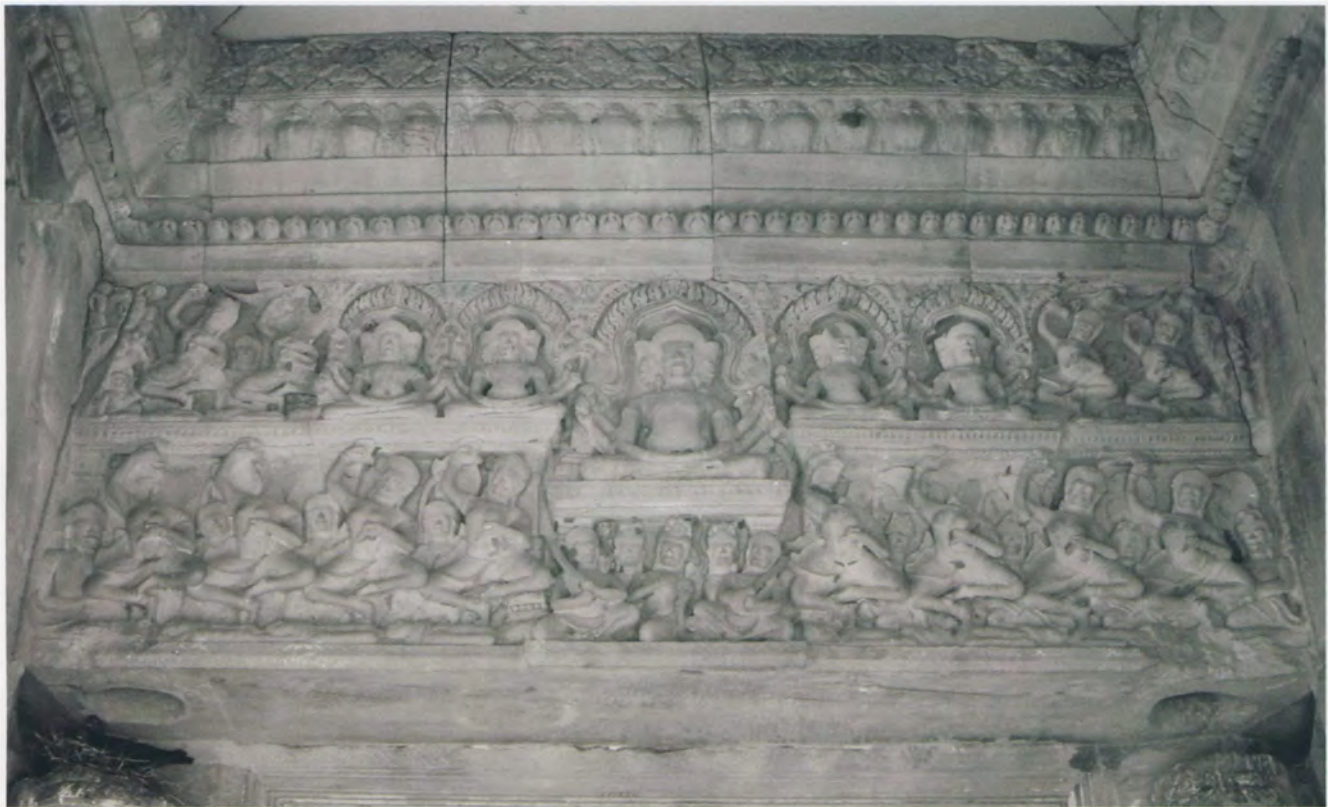Fig. 11. Vajrasattva "stretched-out" maṇḍala. North interior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 12. Samvara "stretched-out" maṇḍala. East interior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 13. The Battle of Laṅkā, from the Rāmāyaṇa. South interior lintel, Phimai

Fig. 14. The Battle of Laṅkā, from the Rāmāyaṇa. Northwest pediment, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 15. The Death of Ravana, from the Rāmāyaṇa. Northwest pediment, central shrine, Phimai

Fig. 16. Kṛṣṇa Decapitating King Kaṃsa, from the Harivaṃśa. Northeast exterior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

and the other Tantric deities depicted on the other three interior lintels face outward toward the four respective cardinal directions. It is thus plausible to argue that they served apotropaic roles in preventing malignant spirits from penetrating into the inner sanctum of the central shrine (see ground plan in fig. 3).

The Rāmāyaṇa reliefs at Phimai were largely intended to perform a similar apotropaic role. Thus the disjunctive narrative layout of the Rāmāyaṇa reliefs at Phimai might be attributed to the protective role that these narrative reliefs were intended to perform. For example, if we were to view the five episodes sequentially, they would appear in the following order: (1) Building the Bridge to Lanka; (2) Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Tied up by Indrajit's Serpent Arrow; (3) the Battle of Lanka; (4) the Death of Rāvaṇa (5) The Assembly of the Gods and the Return to Ayodhya (see ground plan in fig. 3).[18] Clearly, the five Rāmāyaṇa episodes are not sequentially placed.[19] Moreover, they are situated quite far apart from one another and thus spatially are not conducive for viewing in situ as one moves through the monument. In short, the placement of the Rāmāyaṇa reliefs at Phimai follows neither a clockwise nor a counterclockwise pattern of viewing as generally dictated by Hindu or Buddhist ritual.

Instead, we see narrative reliefs placed rather randomly on pediments and lintels situated at the interior and exterior of the monument. It is perhaps not a coincidence that most of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes (and other texts) narrated at Phimai tend to show the martial episodes that further amplified the theme of political protection. For example, the Battle of Lanka appears twice at Phimai (see ground plan in fig. 3). We first see the Battle of Lanka episode rendered on the south interior lintel (fig. 13). Rāma is shown riding on the shoulders of Hanuman, his monkey general, while confronting

Fig. 17. Unidentified episode. North pediment, central shrine, Phimai

Rāvaṇa, who is riding on his chariot. This particular scene is repeated again on the northwest pediment of the central shrine. Here we see the ten-headed demon, Rāvaṇa (on the viewer's right), and Rāma (on the left) confronting one another while riding on their respective chariots (fig. 14). Lastly, another problematic scene that has been interpreted as the Death of Rāvaṇa is found on the northeast pediment of the central shrine (fig. 15). It is doubtful that this scene is from the Rāmāyaṇa, and numerous scholars have questioned the puzzling iconography involving the scene of a flying palace supported by the four-headed Brahma.[20] Michael Freeman gives the following interpretations:

> The pediment probably shows the death of Rāvaṇa, near the end of the Rāmāyaṇa epic. Until recently, however, it was thought that this was the judgement of Rāvaṇa's uncle, the Brahma Malivaraja (also from the Rāmāyaṇa), shown in the middle descending from heaven on a haṃsa. Heaven here is represented by no less than the temple of Phimai itself. Below, on chariots, are Rāma (left) and Rāvaṇa (right). So far so good, but if you look carefully under the horses' hooves, you can see an inverted head. Khmer lintel carvers were quite fond of including the various parts of a story in a single narrative lintel, and this head is now thought to be Rāvaṇa's, as he is killed.[21]

Oddly, there is no precedent for the Brahma Malivaraja or the Death of Rāvaṇa on other ancient Khmer temples in present-day northeastern Thailand and Angkor proper. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, the Death of Rāvaṇa is rarely depicted on ancient Khmer temples; contemporary artists and dramatists in mainland Southeast Asia tend to avoid depicting the episode because it is considered to be inauspicious. On the other hand, it is possible that the Phimai version is simply a regional variation. Regardless of whether this particular scene is from the Rāmāyaṇa, it is undeniably clear that it depicts a scene of conflict. Let us entertain the possibility that this scene is from the Rāmāyaṇa and that it depicts the Death of Rāvaṇa, which took place at the Battle of Lanka. Essentially, it is another battle scene registering conflict and confrontation. We see presumably the ten-armed (but single-headed) Rāvaṇa and Rāma shown riding on their respective chariots while engaged in a fierce battle. Rendered on a lintel below the above-mentioned pediment is a scene from an entirely different text, the Harivaṃśa, depicting the episode of the Kṛṣṇa Decapitating King Kaṃsa (fig. 16). This scene is also violent and hence apotropaic, guarding the northwest entrance to the central shrine.

Fig. 18. Constructing the Bridge to Laṅkā, from the Rāmāyaṇa. West exterior lintel, central shrine, Phimai

Equally fierce and ferocious is an image of Vajrasattva Dancing that is depicted on the north lintel of the central shrine (fig. 17). Vajrasattva adds a Buddhist layer of visual protection on the margins of the architectural configuration of Phimai. Admittedly, it is not easy to pinpoint the precise identity of this four-armed dancing figure with a couple (Umā-Maheśvara being conquered by Vajrasattva?) all tied up on his right. To his left is another unidentified figure holding a club in his hands. However, it is clear that the dancing figure on the lintel is shown engaged in the act of subduing demons. The much-damaged scene rendered on the pediment above remains to be identified.

Since the Death of Rāvaṇa episode took place at the Battle of Lanka, one might even venture to argue that the Battle of Lanka episode is represented not twice, but three times, at Phimai. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the Battle of Lanka is represented three times and that each scene is rendered on lintel and pediments above three different entrances to Phimai. It is possible that the need to keep malevolent spirits from entering the shrine dictated the placement of battle scenes from the epic poem on the periphery of the temple because they underscore further the visual theme of political protection. As David Gordon White has pointed out, Tantric images play significant political roles on the margins of a maṇḍala:

> The principal deity with whom the non-elite specialist or practitioner will interact—some low-level 'lord of spirits'—will not be absent from the elite *maṇḍala*; rather, he or she will be relegated to a zone nearer to the periphery of that *maṇḍala*, as a fierce protector deity guarding the *maṇḍala* of the King's (and supreme deity's) utopian realm from incursions by

Fig. 19. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Captured by Indrajit's Serpent Arrows," from the Rāmāyaṇa. West pediment and lintel of the maṇḍapa, Phimai

malevolent spirits from the outside, that is, enemies. [Thus] the fierce and heavily armed deities pictured at the borders and gates of the Tantric *maṇḍalas* are recognized as protectors of the realms.[22]

How, then, does one account for the presence of the other three Rāmāyaṇa episodes at Phimai?

As I pointed out earlier, it is apparent that these three episodes are not sequentially placed; therefore, they are not conducive to viewing in situ. Hence, it is possible that they are present to provide a cause and effect to this "narratable" program at Phimai.[23] In other words, the climatic moments of these three battle scenes required preceding causal events that lead to this dramatic effect. For example, in order to fight the Battle of Lanka it was first necessary to construct the bridge to the island of Lanka. This explains the presence of the Building of the Bridge to Lanka episode on the northwest lintel of the

Fig. 20. Assembly of the Gods and Return to Ayodhaya [?] Southeast pediment and lintel of the maṇḍapa, Phimai

central shrine (fig. 18). The narrative of the Building of the Bridge to Lanka begins with a detailed and imaginatively carved episode from the Yuddha Kanda, which presumably shows Rāma instructing his monkey army to throw rocks into the ocean in order to construct the causeway to the island of Lanka.[24] The monkeys' attempts were unsuccessful at first because Rāvaṇa had instructed all the sea creatures to consume the rocks in order to prevent the completion of the bridge. However, after several failed attempts, Rāma and his army managed to build the causeway. The Building of the Bridge to Lanka episode is sequentially followed by that of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Tied up by Indrajit's Serpent Arrow, situated on the southwest pediment and lintel of the maṇḍapa (fig. 19). This particular scene represents the moment when Indrajit, the son of Rāvaṇa, held Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa captive with his powerful serpent arrows. The panel shows the two brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa,

tied up with the serpent ropes while their monkey army (depicted on both the badly damaged pediment above and on the lintel below) attempts to liberate the two brothers from their restraints.

Finally, another dubious episode that is purportedly from the Yudda Kanda of the Rāmāyaṇa is the Assembly of the Gods and the Return of Rāma and Sītā to Ayodhya (fig. 21). Both scenes are depicted on the east pediment and lintel of the maṇḍapa. The four figures rendered on pediment are respectively: Śiva and his consort, Parvati, riding on their vehicle, Nandi (above); below them (from the viewer's left to right) are the four-headed Brahma on his *haṃsa* goose, Indra on his three-headed elephant, and the four-armed Viṣṇu shown riding on his Garuda. These four gods are present to confer the blessing of Rāma and Sītā's victory, and their return to Ayodhya is rendered on the lintel directly below. The identification of these two scenes is perplexing because at Angkor

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Fig. 21. "The Assembly of the Gods" and the "Return to Ayodhya" from the Rāmāyaṇa? Southeast pediment and lintel of the maṇḍapa, Phimai

Wat and many other Khmer temples, the episode of the Return of Rāma and Sītā to Ayodhya is portrayed with Sītā and Rāma seated on their puṣpaka, a flower chariot accompanied by a group of monkeys. Oddly, at Phimai we see two figures (perhaps Rāma and Sītā?) seated at the center of a boat with a group of unidentified figures shown paying homage to them. In brief, the scene remains to be identified. It is possible, however, that the distinctive rendering of this particular episode at Phimai might be attributed to a regional variation. Another possible explanation might be that these two scenes are derived from entirely different texts and, likewise, remain to be identified.

The identification of these episodes as belonging to the Rāmāyaṇa (or not) actually plays a minor role in our discussion of the overall pictorial program (or the lack thereof) at Phimai. More pressing and relevant to my argument is that the narrative scenes depicted on the pediments and lintels at Phimai are not narrative precisely because they are clearly not sequentially placed. More importantly, episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa are placed on the periphery of the maṇḍala-like architectural configuration of Phimai. I would like to suggest that they extend further the protective role of the Tantric Buddhist images situated on the four interior lintels. Thus the rather conspicuous and repeated battle scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa are now used to further underscore the theme of political protection. This denigration of the narrative role of images by privileging the protective quality of the iconic is commonly found in esoteric art and maṇḍala.

Although one might argue that the square and rectangular layout of Phimai contradicts entirely the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word maṇḍala ("circle"), meaning is not established merely by etymology.[25] Moroever,

Fig. 22. Hevajra maṇḍala, ca. 12th century, National Museum, Bangkok

it is undeniable that the Buddhism practiced at Phimai was Vajrayana. In addition, the use of maṇḍala is one of many important devices in Tantric practice. In fact, there are maṇḍalas that are contemporaneous with Phimai that are shaped like a Khmer *prasat* (temple). For example, the Hevajra maṇḍala (now housed at the National Museum in Bangkok) is shaped like a miniature version of Phimai (fig. 22).

Hevajra, the main deity is shown dancing at the center of the maṇḍala, accompanied by eight yoginis dancing on the outer circle. J. J. Boeles points out that these eight yoginis hold iconographic attributes comparable to the ones held by the yoginis rendered on the two "stretched-out-*maṇḍalas*" found on the interior lintels of Phimai.[26] Another similar feature between the architectural configuration of Phimai and the Hevajra maṇḍala is the placement of a crowned Mucalinda Buddha (in *dhyāna mudrā*) on the very top of the maṇḍala. One might imagine that a comparable crowned Mucalinda Buddha was originally placed at the inner sanctum of

the central shrine at Phimai. In addition, the standing Buddha depicted on the northwest interior lintel is also portrayed as wearing a crown on his head. Boeles suggests further that the crowned Mucalinda Buddha on the Hevajra maṇḍala might be Adi Buddha. It suffices to say here that the similar spatial configuration and iconographic attributes shared between the Tantric figures in the Hevajra maṇḍala and at Phimai are sufficient reasons to qualify Phimai as a maṇḍala. Moreover, Woodward has convincingly pointed out that the two lintels with Vajrasattva and Samvara can be called "stretched-out-maṇḍalas." Last, historians such as O. W. Wolters have long used the word maṇḍala to describe the geopolitical entities of early kingdoms in Southeast Asia.[27]

In a different context, but relevant to our discussion of Phimai as a maṇḍala-like structure, is Marijke Klokke's sound argument that Borobuḍur is not a maṇḍala but a stūpa. Klokke has astutely pointed out in her writing:

> I do not know of any *maṇḍala* in which narratives play such a prominent role as they do on Borobuḍur. Some *maṇḍalas* have narrative elements, but these always play a subordinate role. Narratives depicted in 1460 relief panels, as on Borobuḍur, can hardly be called subordinate. They form an integral part of the structure of Borobuḍur, but have generally been neglected in studies which emphasize the theory of Borobuḍur as a *maṇḍala*.[28]

Turning Klokke's argument on its head, one can argue that the de-narrativization of the Rāmāyaṇa at Phimai makes Phimai into a maṇḍala. In brief, the disjunctive pictorial layout of the five Rāmāyaṇa episodes at Phimai suggests that this temple might possibly have been conceived as a maṇḍala, or a spatial configuration conceptually and theoretically bordering on a maṇḍala.

Clearly, the visual theme of political protection in the iconic and "narratable" program at Phimai calls for the denigration of the narrative in order to foreground the apotropaic power of iconic images. Furthermore, one might even argue that the iconic is more representational than a narrative panel and thus expressively more conducive for the mapping of the symbolic power relation between sacred image, patronage, and kingship. Subsequently, it is probable that the five "narratable" episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* at Phimai are present in order to reinforce and to further underscore this political agenda.

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NOTES

1. See B. Ly, "Picture-Perfect Pairing: The Politics and Poetics of a Visual Narrative Program at Banteay Srei," *Udaya: Journal of Khmer Studies* 6 (2005): 151–85.

2. The Bat Chum inscription opens with the protective role of Vajrapani. See G. Cœdès, "Les Inscriptions de Bat Cum," *Journal Asiatique* (Paris, 1958), 237. See also A. Chouléan, "Collective Memory in Ancient Cambodia with Reference to Jayavarman II," in M. J. Klokke and T. de Bruijin, eds., *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1998* (Hall, 1998), 117–22.

3. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya has pointed out the political usage of Hindu images in early Cambodia. See K. Bhattacharya, "Hari Kambujendra," *Artibus Asiae* 27 (1964-1965): 72–78; and P. A. Lavy, "As in Heaven, So on Earth: The Politics of Visnu, Siva and Harihara Images in Preangkorian Khmer Civilisation," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2003), 21–40.

4. Chirapat Prapandvidya, "The Sab Bāk Inscription: Evidence of an Early Vajrayāna Buddhist Presence in Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society* 78, no. 2 (1990): 13.

5. For an analysis of the content of the Sab Bāk inscription, see H. W. Woodward, Jr., *The Art and Architecture of Thailand* (Leiden, 2005), 146. See also Claude Jacques, "The Buddhist Sect of Srighana in Ancient Khmer Lands," in François Lagirarde and Paritta Chlermpow Koanantakook, eds., *Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia* (Paris, 2006), 71–78.

6. See H. W. Woodward, Jr., "Studies in the Art of Central Siam, 950–1350 A.D" (Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1975), 64.

7. Ibid., 32.

8. The political uses of Buddhist Tantric images are by no means a specifically ancient Khmer phenomenon, as it was a common practice elsewhere in the Buddhist world. See G. G. White, "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition," in G. G. White, ed., *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 3-38. See also P. Berger, "Preserving the Nation: The Political Uses of Tantric Art in China," in M. Weidner ed., *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850–1850* (San Francisco, 1994), 89-124.

9. G. Cœdès, "Études cambodgiennes," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient* 24 (1924): 350–51.

10. See H. W. Woodward, Jr., "Esoteric Buddhism in Southeast Asia in the Light of Recent Scholarship," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35 (June 2004): 348–52.

11. A photograph of this image is reproduced in Woodward, *The Art and Architecture of Thailand*, pl. 46 (A).

12. For a discussion of the origin of Trailokyavijaya and his association with Vajrapāni, see F. A. Bishchoff, trans., *Arya Māhabala-Nāma-Mahāyānasūtra, Buddhica* 10 (Paris, 1964). See also R. Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion* (Boston, 1999), 178–213. For the debate on the image of Trailokyavijaya, see H. W. Woodward, Jr., "Practice and Belief in Ancient Cambodia: Claude Jacques' *Angkor* and the *Devarāja* Question," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32 (June 2001): 249–61; and idem, *The Art and Archaeology of Thailand before 1300* (Leiden, 2005), 117–64.

13. D. Snellgrove, *Asian Commitment: Travels and Studies in the Indian Sub-Continent and South-East Asia* (Bangkok, 2000), 473.

14. A. Le Bonheur, *Of Gods, Kings, and Men* (London, 1995), 19.

15. For a comparable study of narrative reliefs and maṇḍala at Caṇḍi Jago in Java, see K. O'Brien, "Caṇḍi Jago as a *Maṇḍala*: Symbolism of Its Narratives," *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 1–57.

16. J. J. Boeles, "Two Yoginis of Hevajra from Thailand, in Ba Shin et al, eds., *"Essays Offered to G. H. Luce*, vol. 2 (1966), 14–29. In addition, see R. Tajima, *Les deux grands maṇḍalas et la doctrine de l'ésoterisme Shingon* (Tokyo, 1959), 168–75.

17. Woodward, *The Art and Archaeology of Thailand*, 149.

18. M. Freeman, *Khmer Temples in Thailand and Laos* (Bangkok, 1996), 84–85. In his guidebook, Freeman presents sequentially the Rāmāyaṇa reliefs at Phimai in the clockwise direction starting with the episode of Rāmā and Laksmana Tied up by Indrajit's Serpent Arrow, situated on the west pediment. The problem with Freeman's presentation lies in the fact that the Building of the Bridge to Lanka is located on the northwest pediment, which precedes this episode. In short, there is no narrative sequence in the pictorial layout of these reliefs.

19. The Rāmāyaṇa follow neither clockwise nor counterclockwise patterns of circumambulation.

20. J. J. Boeles has identified this palace as the Kutagara mentioned in *Gandayuha Sutra*. See his, "Two Aspects of Buddhist Iconography in Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society* 48 (1960): 74–77.

21. Freeman, *Khmer Temples in Thailand and Laos*, 85.

22. White, "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition," 31.

23. By "narratable" I mean that some episodes are composed of two events and can be perceived as independent units that clearly tell a story. For example, the two events rendered on the northwest lintel and pediment at the central shrine of Phimai clearly fit the definition of a narrative (i.e., it has two events). The narrative here begins with the Building of the Bridge to Lanka rendered on the lintel and, in effect, lead to the Battle of Lanka, which is found on the pediment above (fig. 14). In brief, these two events are sequentially placed and hence it is a narrative, but they are not sequentially placed in relation to the rest of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes found at Phimai. Therefore, the two episodes are "narratable" but do not constitute a complete narrative.

24. J. J. Boeles, "A *Rāmāyaṇa* Relief from the Khmer Sanctuary at Phimai in North-East Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society* 57 (1969), 163-169. See also Uraisri Varasin and Nandana Chutiwongs, "Essai d'interpretation d'une scène du Rāmāyaṇa representée sur un linteau d'art khmer," in *Sinlapa lae bôrânkhadî nai Prathêt Thai/Art and Archaeology in Thailand* (1974), 201-26.

25. See M. Brauen, *The Maṇḍala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston, 1998).

26. Boeles, "A *Rāmāyaṇa* Relief," 28–29. See also Pattaratorn Chirapravati, *Votive Tablets in Thailand: Origin, Styles, and Uses* (Singapore, 1997), 40–49; and W. Lobo, "The Figure of Hevajra and Tantric Buddhism," in H. Jessup and T. Zephir, eds., *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 71–98.

27. For example, O. W. Wolters wrote:

> [The] *maṇḍala* represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security. *Maṇḍalas* would expand and contract in a concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arouse and try to build up their own networks of vassals.

See O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Religion in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore, 1982), 16–25. See also R. Hagesteijn, *Circles of Kings: Political Dynamics in Early Continental Southeast Asia* (Providence, 1989), and S. Tambiah, "The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia," in his *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge, 1976), chap. 4.

28. M. Klokke, "Borobudur: A Mandala? A Contextual Approach to the Function and Meaning of Borobudur," in Paul Van der Velde, ed., *IIAS Yearbook* (Leiden, 1995),195. See also H. W. Woodward, Jr., "On Borobudur's Upper Terraces," *Oriental Art* 45, no. 3 (1999), 34-43.