Portraits of King Jayavarman VII in the form of Lokeshvara, Bayon style, late 12th-13th C.E., from Kraol Romeas temple, Northeastern of Angkor Thom, sandstone.

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Portraits of King Jayavarman VII
Ven Sophorn

In Khmer history, Jayavarman VII is regarded as the last great king of Angkorian era of the Khmer empire; the name of Jayavarman VII was little known before 1903, at which time the Bulletin EFEO (Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient) published a study by Louis Finot concerning a Sanskrit inscription discovered by Georges Maspero in the Say Fong region of Lao (near Vientiane).¹

From stone inscriptions recorded at Preah Khan, Ta Prohm, Say Fong, Prasat Chrung, Banteay Chhmar and others in his reign from late 12th century to early 13th century A.D., they gave such an important event of King Jayavarman VII's royal court life, social affair and his eulogy. Before ascending to the throne, he probably had a name as Jayavadhana, his birthplace is Jayadityapura². He was a son of Dharanindravarman II (a cousin of King Suryavarman II, the powerful king who built Angkor Wat temple) and Sri Jayaraja Cuddamuni, his mother. He has a principle wife named Jayarajadevi, who mourned for him while he went to Champa³. After the death of Jayarajadevi, King Jayavarman VII married her talented elder sister named Indradevi who is the great composer of Phimean akas stele inscription⁴. Another name of his queen is Rajendradevi which is mentioned in Preah Khan Stele inscription⁵. The king had several sons, namely: Suryakumara, the author of the inscription of Ta Prohm; Virakumara, the author of the inscription of Preah Khan; Indravarman, the governor of Louvo or Lavodaya; and another son who died young is Samdach Srindrakumara⁶. For the death of Jayavarman VII, noted that the end of his reign in Coedès and other books is around 1220⁷, he bears a posthumous name as Mahaparamasingata pada.

During his reign, the territorial political expansion of Khmer empire was spanned a huge area. According to a Chinese book written around 1220. Cambodia's border included Lavo (the region of Bangkog-Ayuthaya -Suphanburi), Chanthaburi on the southeast coast of Thailand, ⁸

² Vong Sothera, King Jayavarman VII through Inscriptions, 2007 and Michael Vickery, Summary of lectures at Faculty of Archaeology 2001-2002, p.106
³ Phimean Akas inscription K.485
⁴ Vong Sothera; according to Vat Sangke inscription K. 86, these two queens are originated from the Buddhist family
⁵ Lawrence Palmer Briggs, The Ancient Khmer Empire, page 209
⁶ Georges Coedès, King Jayavarman VII commemorated the dedication of Banteay Chhmar temple to Srindrakumara
⁷ Michael Vickery, Summary of lectures at Faculty of Archaeology 2001-2002, p.110.
and went as far as Pagan, Burma). But increasingly he devoted his energies and organizational capacities to the kind of religious and social infrastructure construction projects that had been carried on by his royal predecessors. He built Banteay Kdei, Ta Prohm, Preah Khan, Ta som, Krom kr, Neak Phan, Bayon temple and Angkor Thom complex, and as further temple at Banteay Chhmar and Ta prohm tonle Bati temple.

Beside the temple constructions and political administrative works, the king established an irrigation system and road network linking from Angkor to Champa, Phimai and others. Furthermore, as the inscription of Preah Khan says, there were 121 rest houses built along these roads and another significant records, the erection of 23 Buddha images called Jayabuddhamahanatha, possibly representing the king himself as Buddha and intended as symbolic of his rule over the localities concerned in 23 places: Sri Jayarajadhani, Sri Jayantagari, Jayasimhavati, Sri Jayaviravati, Lavodayapura, Svarapura, Sambukapattana, Jayarajapuri, Sri Jayasimhapuri, Sri Jayavajrapuri, Sri Jayastambhapuri, Sri Jayarajagiri, Sri Jayavirapuri, Sri Jayavajravati, Sri Jayakirtipuri, Sri Jayaksemapuri, Sri Vijayadipuri, Sri Jayasimhagrama, Madhyamagramaka, Samarendragrama, Sri Jayapuri, Viharottarakaka and Purvavasa.

With regard to his great achievement for the nation as described above, he is the one who remains his great fame through the archaeological evidences: inscriptions, bas-reliefs and his personal free-standing sculpture through his territorial domination. According to Mr. Gorge Coedès, there are a few male statues represented the royal portrait of Jayavarman VII. For instance, one found

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8 Michael Vickery, Summary of lectures at Faculty of Archaeology 2001-2002, p.109
9 Lawrance Palmer brigge, The Ancient Khmer Empire, page 235
10 Michael Vickery, Summary of lectures at Faculty of Archaeology 2001-2002, p.106
in the south-eastern shrine of Phimai temple, situated in Thailand (it is well conserved in Phimai National Museum)\(^{12}\) (fig.1), it represented as a grand human statue, seated on the circular pedestal, two arms are missing without trace remaining on the laps. Similarly, in 1958, they discovered a beautiful head in Preah Khan, Kampong Svay(fig.2), and another one\(^{13}\) found in 1931 in the interior of Angkor Thom, at the Death gate; but its torso was found since 1924, at Kraol Romeas, (the northern part of Angkor Thom); and then, they transferred to Phnom Penh museum in 1934 for conservation (fig.3). More precisely, In 1934, G.Coedès had an idea to do comparative approach, those discovered statues to the bas-reliefs of Bayon and Banteay Chhmah, and this interpretation was confirmed by inscriptions at northern wall of western external gallery\(^{14}\) of Bayon temple, he assumed those discovered statues were the portrait of the King Jayavarman VII. Moreover, if we observe on the bas-reliefs at Ta Prohm and Bayon temple, there were some unusual figures; they probably represented the portrait of king Jayavarman VII with his two queens\(^{15}\) (fig.4). The most impressive depiction at the outer eastern gallery of Banteay Chhmah temple (fig.5), King Jayavarman VII unusually appears as profile figure with full cheeks, a large mouth and a square jaw; he was identified by showing a hairpin decorated with the image of Lokeshvara.

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\(^{12}\) G. Coedès, Musée de Bangkok (Art Asiatique XII), pl.XVIII-XIX

\(^{13}\) According to Pierre Bapiste and Thierry Zephir, L'Art Khmer dans les collections de Musée Guimet, P.263, Paris 2008: there’s another similar head are displaying in Guimet Museum, its provenance is probably from Ta Prohm?


\(^{15}\) This great depiction is found on the pediment of Ta Prohm’s shrine and Bayon’s gallery, on the bas-relief at Bayon, 2nd floor inner gallery on the East side, it was remarked by showing a figure of king was sitting on the throne with two queens in the royal palace.
in his chignon. Clearly resemblance of his portrait associated with the lord of compassion (Boddhisattva Lokeshvara) in Mahayana Buddhism, another unique statue was found in Kraol Romeas Temple at Angkor, nowadays, displayed in Gallery E, Angkor National Museum (fig.6).

Therefore, from a preliminary study, the portrait of King Jayavarman VII, might be conclude that his representative statue, probably appeared in two forms, one as the human form (before crowning as a king and during the sovereign life?) and another one is associated with the lord of Buddha and Boddhisattva Lokeshvara. This researched subject should be extended for further scientific study in the near future.

Fig.4, from the bas-relief of Bayon, 2nd floor inner gallery on the East side. Photo: Mr. Seng Chantha

Fig.3, from Kraol Romeas, Angkor Thom. Photo: National Museum of Cambodia, in Phnom Penh

Fig.5, from the outer east gallery of the Banteay Chhmar Temple. Photo: Mr.Thlong Bunthoeun

Fig.6, from Kraol Romeas, Angkor Thom. Now displayed in Gallery E, Angkor National Museum, Siem Reap.
THE KHMER NAVAGRAHA:
A series of quotations on the topic of the Khmer Navagraha

Jody Morellato

As we can easily read from the informal online source Wikipedia.com, the meaning for the Hindu Navagraha is:

"Graha (from Sanskrit gráha—seizing, laying hold of, holding) is a ‘cosmic influencer’ on the living beings of mother Bhumi Devi (Earth). In Hindu astrology, the Navagraha (from Sanskrit nine seizors or nine influencers) are some of these major influencers."

Furthermore:

"All the navagraha have relative movement with respect to the background of fixed stars in the zodiac. This includes the planets: Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn [n.d.r. the five planets visible by the naked eye], the Sun, the Moon, as well as positions in the sky, Rahu (north or ascending lunar node) and Ketu (south or descending lunar node)."

But, like Asger Mollerup suggests in his paper "Solar-lunar Events at Prasat Phanom Rung in Spring 2007 AD (2550 BE)"
"The Khmer navagraha differs from its Hindu origin. The series also starts with the Sun and the Moon and ends with Rahu and Ketu, but the five graha between have been replaced with some of the eight Guardians of the Cardinal Directions, the dikpalas. Indra is the leader of the dikpalas and is often depicted on his elephant, Airavata, above eastern doors of Khmer temples, the orientation of which he guards. On Khmer depictions of the Nine Deities (the Nine Deities might be a more proper designation, as the planetary gods have been replaced by members of the dikpalas in various combinations and chronology), he is always presiding in the middle."

And even Vittorio Roveda in his book "Sacred Angkor: The Carved Reliefs of Angkor Wat." confirms saying specifically:

"[...] This problem possibly goes back to the Khmer depiction of navagraha, the Nine Gods of Hindu mythology that include (from left to right) Surya, Chandra, Yama or Skanda, Brahma, Indra, Kubera, Agni, Rahu and Ketu. It is difficult to identify them because – firstly – they are represented with personal attributes and vahana that are shown in a variable order of arrangement, although usually the couple representing Surya-Chandra is to the left, and Rahu-Ketu to the right end of the relief. The five gods at the centre are, however, arranged at random with Indra usually in a central position. Skande/Varuna and Yama to the left, and Kubera and Agni to the right. At some point in Khmer history, some of the deities of the Navagraha became the object of a cult addressed to the regents and guardians of space, the Dikpalas of the four cardinal directions and of the four inter-cardinal directions."

Thus, the three main groups in Navagraha are the Sun and the Moon (Surya and Chandra), the five visible planets (sometimes replaced by the guardians of cardinal directions) and the eclipses (Rahu and Ketu). Especially for Surya, Chandra and Rahu, we can recognize a special role in the Churning of the Milk Ocean Myth. As E. C. Krupp reports on his paper "Buttermilk Sky":

"According to the Mahabharata, a 2,000-year-old Sanskrit epic, and other sacred Hindu texts, the Sun and Moon were, in another age, churned like butter out of the primordial ocean by the 'gods' and 'demons.'", and: "First the Moon rose from the waves, and the Sun soon followed."
Or speaking about Rahu:

"The Sun and the Moon, however, noticed that the demon Rahu had masqueraded as a god. Flanked by the Sun and Moon, he sat in their line and managed to consume some elixir. As soon as Rahu tasted the potion, his deception was exposed and Vishnu decapitated him. Although he didn't have time to swallow it, the mouthful of the beverage made his head immortal. It rose into the sky with the Sun and Moon, but his mortal body fell dead on the ground. Still enraged, the head of Rahu continues to pursue the Sun and Moon through the sky, and eclipses are said to occur when he catches them in his teeth. In a partial eclipse, ritual noise from people below scares Rahu away, and his bite backs off. In a total eclipse, he devours the Sun or the Moon, but inevitably it drops from his severed throat unscathed."

**Stella Kramrisch** suggests an interesting definition when speaking of Rahu in her book "The Hindu Temple":

"Rahu causes the eclipse of the Sun and Moon. His name also designates the eclipse itself. Rahu is the Caput Draconis, the ascending nod of the moon or the point where the moon intersects the ecliptic in passing northwards. Rahu is also one of the nine planets (Nava-graha) but is not visible, being a planet of an aeon which is no more."

I will conclude these groups of quotations on the Khmer Navagraha with a contribution from **Emma C. Bunker's** paper "Tantric Hinduism in Khmer Culture". She speaks of two mandalas among the various decorations of Angkor Wat and Bayon Style temples:

"The earliest example dates to the Koh Ker period (928–944), and displays a standing image of Surya holding two lotus buds. Surya stands within a circle of eight lesser beings representing the Nine Devas (n.d.r. Navagraha). These are a distinctive Khmer group of deities formulated by the Khmer between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. The identity of the mandala figures as belonging to the Nine Devas is confirmed by the presence of Rahu sitting on his cloudbank."

For further information I suggest reading the papers written by **Bhattayacharya** in 1956 and **Malleret** in 1960.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Prasat Top Lech (History and Research)
Sok Keo Sovannara

Prasat Top Lech or the Western Top Temple (also known as Monument 486) is located in the Angkor Thom area, about 500 m to the south-west of Bayon temple. It can be reached through the Western Gate of the Angkor Thom complex.

![Prasat Western Top](image1)

Western Prasat Top was not the original name given to the site. It was coined by later generations and means "small temple in the west". The current visible structures known as the three sandstone towers, the sandstone Buddhist terrace and its laterite enclosure, have primarily thought to be dated at around the 16th-17th centuries, after the the collapse of the Angkorian Empire around the first half of the 15th century. But after finding some Chinese white porcelain and some Khmer green glaze ceramics, Prof. Sugiyama and his colleagues have considered that the central tower was probably from the 14th century, while the two other towers were a bit later.

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16 Nara Institute, Western Prasat Top Site Survey Report, 2012, Phnom Penh, p.14
17 In his brief description in Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments du Cambodge, F. LLINÉT DE LAJONQUIÈRE wrote that the three towers were built by brick.
18 Primarily, through the cultural layers of trench FA01, which was excavated in July 2007, nearby the north-west corner of the central tower, some white porcelain fragments were discovered inside the basic soil layers of basement of the laterite and sandstone basements of the central tower. According to these fragments, actually from De Fua kiln, in South-east of China, they consider the central tower is 14th century and two other towers are not so late from the construction of the central tower.
Khmer people occasionally changed from Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism to Theravada Buddhism. Some of temples in Cambodia, especially in the Angkor Thom area, had been temporarily changed and additions made to accept the concepts of the new religion.

Western Top is one of those temples. Historically, the evidence of the remaining structures indicate that there was probably a former tower of a temple already constructed on that site where the current central tower is located. The existing structure has a Laterite basement that was covered by a decorative sandstone wall of the central tower. The former tower is thought to have been built probably in the 10th century, because the Laterite basement structure and other sandstone elements, such as pillars and four lintels, confirm that it is similar to the style of Banteay Srei temple, which dates from the 10th century or during the reign of the King Jayavarman V (968A.D-1001A.D). The groups of sandstone elements are very similar to the elements of Banteay Srei temple. But after an excavation done by Henri Marchal in 1924, an inscription was found in the south-east of the sub-basement of the North Tower. There are about 23 lines of text, with about 18 lines visible. The inscription, written in mainly Sanskrit with a few lines of Khmer, was about the erection of a statue of Visnu and the foundation of the temple by a maternal uncle of King Ycvarman, who was named Chr-Samoravikraman. This inscription should be during the reign of this prince dated between 889A.D-908A.D. This creates a problem for dating the former tower or structure. Based on the inscription, there would have been a temple constructed and a statue also erected during the reign of this prince (at the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th centuries). But evidentially, when comparing the sandstone elements found using with the later sandstone central tower, it indicates that the former building seems to have been built in the late 10th century. Finally, after the former building collapse in the 14th or 16th-17th centuries, towers were constructed surrounding the former structure known as probably the inner laterite basement.

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19 Henri Marchal, Notes Sur Le Monument 486 D’Angkor Thom, BEFEO, Tome XXV, Hanoi, 1925, pp411-416
However, this poses a big problem that needs further discussion about the progress of constructions of the former and newer buildings.

Western Top was primarily described and named Monument 486 by a French scholar named Lunet De Lajonquière\(^{21}\). He was probably mistaken with his description of the three towers of the temple. He wrote that the three towers of Western Top were built of brick. Actually, the three towers were constructed by sandstone and some laterite blocks. At that time, he also mentioned that there weren’t any inscriptions found at the temple.

In 1924, Henri Marchal came and cleaned up the soil and stone ruins around the building in order to survey the plan of the temple. Fortunately, a 23-line inscription was found in the north-east corner of the central tower. The inscription was later studied and published by another French scholar named Louise Finot.

After Marchal, from the 1940s through the 1960s, there was little scholarly investigation or research on the Western Top temple site.

From 2002, the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Japan) began a new project on conservation and restoration works at this temple, after finishing a research work on an ancient Khmer ceramic kiln at Tanl village site. In the same year, a draft of a topographical map was made for the area around the temple and some collections were created for some ceramic fragments remaining on the ground surface. Starting in 2003, a preliminary excavation was conducted in the southern area of an eastern Buddhist terrace, which measured about 3m from east to west and 11m from north to south\(^{22}\), in order to check the relationship between that terrace and the outer laterite wall surrounding the temple complex. Conducted in steps, the continuous excavations occurred in different places around the whole temple area with the aim of understanding and checking the layers of the soils and underground structures of the temple and eastern terrace. Until the end of 2011, in total 13 archaeological excavations were done around the temple site.

\(^{21}\) Lunet De Lajonquière, Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments du Cambodge, Tome Troisième, Paris, 1911, p.74

\(^{22}\) APSARA Authority, Department of Culture, Report of Excavation Work at Western Top Temple, Siem Reap, 2003, page 1. (written in Khmer)
From March 2012, the Nara Institute cooperated with Apsara Authority to begin the restoration work for this temple. The project will be held over five years. Now we are in the process of removing the stone blocks from the southern tower. First, we will try to reconstruct the basement level for checking the situation of the original structure, level and stone condition. Some poor quality stone blocks will be removed and changed by new blocks, while the partial broken blocks will be rejoined by iron balls and sandstone cement with a form of glue.
The Influence of Hindu Saptamatrika on Khmer Reliefs (At Prasat Pre Rup)

Hou Nolmony and Ven Sophorn

Saptamatrika is a Sankrit word meaning the seven mothers. They are a group of Hindu goddesses and were revered popularly, in addition to the powerful male divinities of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, in India since the early period. We have found different myths of Matrikas from the Indian Puranic texts, such as the Varaha, Matsya and Markandeya Puranas, as well as among others.

Each of the mother goddesses took her name from a particular God: 
Brahman or Brahmi from Brahma, Vaishnavi from Vishnu, Maheswari from Shiva, Kaumari from Skanda, Varahi from Varaha and Indrani from Indra.

With regard to Puranic myths, Matrikas are Shakti (or female consorts) of Shiva, Indra and other gods, and they are the goddesses of the battlefield. Their names reveal that they were born from the bodies of Brahma, Vishnu and the other gods. There is a story that tells when Shiva and Vishnu joined together and tried to kill the Asura named Andhaka and failed, they then created the seven goddesses to kill him and from each drop of Andhakasura’s blood that fell on the ground, there rose another asura. It is believed that the seven goddesses drank up that blood and did not allow it to fall on the ground, making it easier for the lord Shiva to kill the Asura.²³

²³ Meghali Goswami, Dr. Ila Gupta, Dr. P. Jha, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, India 2005.
Another version of this myth was found in the **Vamana Purana**. During a battle between the Deva and Asura, when the Asuras Chanda and Munda were killed, another Asura named Raktabija entered the battle field with chariots, elephants, horses and infantry. Seeing the large troop, Kausiki and Kali made a loud sound and from their mouths, Maheswari and Brahmaani came out seated on a swan, wearing a rosary and holding a water pot in their hands. From the lion of Maheswari came out Kaumari, seated on a Garuda and holding a conch, discus, club, sword, bow and arrow; Varahi seated on the Sheshnaga (serpent), Narasimhini with fierce claws and Chamunda.

According to the **Matsya Purana**, when Shiva shot Pasupata and Andhakasura, the blood gushed from the body of those demons, and thousands of Andhakasuras sprang forth from the flood, and the wounds of those demons also similarly multiplied themselves into hundreds of demons. Then Shiva created the Divine mothers to drink their blood. It was assumed that the earliest reference of Saptamatrika is found in the Markandeya Purana and V.S. Agarwalla dates it between 400 A.D. to 600 A.D. Furthermore, Heinrich Zimmer described in his book *The Art of Indian Asia* the seven shrines of the seven Mother Goddesses.

By observing Khmer Art, the cult of Saptamatrika and their images are very rarely seen in Khmer iconography. Two remarkable figures on the Angkorian temples, at Prasat Pre Rup (the south-west tower, fig.1), they appeared as two beautiful female divinities standing on a brick tower as **Dvarapalikas**. This temple was built by King Rajendravarmman II, located just south of East Baray. Consecrated in 961 AD, it consists of a three-tier laterite pyramid with five large towers, the central sanctuary surrounded by four towers of which the two to the east, dedicated to Shiva (north) and Vishnu (south), are guarded by Dvarapalas, and the western ones to their consorts, Parvati and Lakshmi, respectively, guarded by Dvarapalikas. The south-western tower (fig.2) has notable brick coated by stucco reliefs of the Dvarapalikas; in particular the four faced female guardian to the right of the eastern door and a boar faced female guardian to the right of the western door.

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24 Dvarapalika means female guardian
By comparing to Hindu Saptamatrika sculptures; these two standing Dvarapalikas depicted with four faces and boar head are probably associated with two of Hindu seven mothers: Brami (fig.3) who has four faces like Brahma (the creator of the universe and of all beings) and Vaharhi (fig.4) who has a boar head like Varaha (the third incarnation of the Hindu Godhead Vishnu, taking the form of Boar).
PRAJNAPARAMITA IN ANGKOREAN CAMBODIA

Dr. Hedwige Multzer o’Naghten and Ven Sophorn

In Khmer studies, except for a few lines written in 1920 by Georges Coedès, Prajñāpāramitā has not really held the attention of researchers. However, while she was never worshipped as a deity in India, Prajñāpāramitā appears as such in Cambodia since the ninth century, both in inscriptions and sculpture. Originally, the word Prajñāpāramitā refers to a large body of texts, core of the doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in the same time, a path which bring about enlightenment, then she become the personification of all these texts in the appearance of a female deity, or sometimes a bodhisattva in some countries. Composed of 2 Sanskrit terms which are “Prajñā”, that is to say wisdom, and “pāramitā” which marks the superiority, it literally means the "act of going beyond wisdom", usually translated in Mahāyāna Buddhism by the expressions "Transcendental Wisdom" or "Perfection of Wisdom."

PRAJNAPARAMITA IN CAMBODIA

In Cambodia, it is not astonishing to note that the presence of the Prajñāpāramitā remains discrete and often in Lokesvara’s shadow, in inscriptions as well as in sculpture. Indeed, the cult of the goddess as śakti, whether Brahman or Buddhist, has never known the same devotion or the same spread than in India.
• **Prajñāpāramitā before the reign of Jayavarman VII**

In Khmer inscriptions, dated from the tenth century, she seems to be in favor, but never as an individual deity. In the invocation's stanzas, she is always quoted beside the Buddha and Lokeshvara, or in groups of four or more deities, including sometimes Vajrapāni. It should be noted that in all these inscriptions, this is the divine image of the Prajñāpāramitā which is honored and not the name of the sūtra.

The first sculptures of the Prajñāpāramitā, few in number, are bronze statuettes of the late ninth and tenth centuries, with 4 and 2 arms. Those with 4 arms perform the gesture of discussion, while those with two arms hold the book in the right hand and a lotus bud in the left hand. We can see her also in bas-relief on small monuments or Buddhist caitya where she occupies one or more of the four niches, like that of Thma Puok where she was identified by the inscription.

• **Prajñāpāramitā under the reign of Jayavarman VII**

It was only under the reign of Jayavarman VII that Prajñāpāramitā became really of paramount importance. She was elevated to the rank of highest deity beside the Buddha and Lokeshvara, in the favorite trinity of the sovereign. At the same time, the temple of Tâ Prohm, dedicated to the king's mother, was built for her and is the only Angkorean temple devoted on the whole to a female entity. In the inscriptions, she is named "Mother of Jina", title that she had rarely born previously.

In Bayon art, images of Prajñāpāramitā increase in number and in diversity. First, she is represented, without any doubt, in a triad with the Buddha and Lokeshvara, on many small sandstone and bronze steles. We can also identify her rather easily on lintels or pediments of Jayavarman VII's temples, where she is alone. On most of these representations, we can see a small Buddha in the chignon of Prajñāpāramitā and the hand-held attributes can be identify with exactness: the book in the right hand and the lotus bud in the left one, when they have been kept. Even if it is impossible today to see anything because all the carving have vanished, the same triad was represented in a long and repetitive bas-relief running along the third enclosure at Tâ Prohm.
More significantly, Prajñāpāramitā could be, for the first time, carved in tall life-size sandstone sculptures, in 2 different postures: standing and kneeling, the second one being an original creation of Khmer art. Both have been found in a very few number, 12 copies for the first one and 7 for the second. Due to the small image of Buddha Amitābha in front of their hair, the researcher considered that there were Prajñāpāramitā. Actually, these two kinds of sculpture could be identified as either Prajñāpāramitā or Tārā who shares some iconographic characteristics, like the lotus, and more rarely a small Buddha in their hair. But all these statues have lost both arms, and the lack of hands and attributes deprives us of information of greatest interest in order to identify them.

CONCLUSION

The position of Prajñāpāramitā in Angkorean religious context appears as the opposite of that of India. On one hand, before being a text like in India, she is a divinity that takes place in a pantheon. But as such she has never been venerated in Cambodia as an independent and supreme goddess like in Vajrayāna Buddhism, and in particular under the Pāla dynasty (eighth to twelfth century) where Prajñāpāramitā and especially Tārā knew a real popularity. This allows us to suggest that Tantrism was present but in a minor position in Cambodia.

On the other hand, in Khmer art, Prajñāpāramitā assume characteristic features rather different from the original Indian model. She often wear a small Buddha Amitābha in their hair, which is not the rule in India. Likewise, in India, Prajñāpāramitā is characterized by the book and the vitarka-mudrā while Tārā is often depicted holding a lotus and doing the varada-mudrā. Thus statues of Cambodia seem to have borrowed from the two goddesses insofar as their most common attributes are the book from Prajñāpāramitā and the lotus from Tārā.
Arts Drawing Competition at Angkor National Museum

Yok Pathomrath

Aimed to inspire the young Khmer generations desire to love and protect Khmer arts, culture and especially the National Heritage which is the source of the Khmer golden civilization during the ancient times, Angkor National Museum has performed one of its most important missions. By working actively in cooperation with junior high schools in Siem Reap to provide the chance to students who are talented in drawing to participate in a project called “Arts Drawing Competition.” This project was part of the vision of Angkor National Museum, a center which assembles, conserves and exhibits more than 1300 artifacts of the pre-Angkorian to post-Angkorian era. It is necessary for not only foreign and local visitors, but also youths to tour and learn on the history, culture, tradition, customs and religion of the Khmer empire. The project took place from 11th June to 13th June 2012, under the coordination and leadership of Mr. Yok Pathomrath - Office Assistant to the Managing Director and Mr. Ven Sophorn – Chief Curator.

Beyond receiving reward gifts, “Arts Drawing Competition” project has enhanced the students in gaining comprehensive knowledge from the artifacts exhibition with detailed explanation from experienced museum staff. The project consisted of 28 students (11 males and 17 females), including 10 students from Mittapheap Khmer-Japan Preah Inloksa Junior High School; 3 students from Doun Throh Junior High School; 4 students from Pourk Junior High School; and 11 students from Khnat Junior High School. Remarkably, before starting the drawing competition, the project leader and museum expert conducted a presentation on the background and function of the Angkor National Museum and also on the foundation of Khmer arts. They also led the students for individual visits inside the galleries of the museum to further explain the concept of exhibition and artifacts background.
The opening day on 11th June 2012,
Chaired by Mr. Yok Pathomrath, and Mr. Ven Sophorn

Explanation during the galleries visit by Mr. Yok Pathomrath

The student thoroughly paid attention to the explanations, and furthermore, their drawings were of the artifacts they had seen, learned and studied from the exhibits of the Angkor National Museum.
As a result, we received three highly successful student submissions: 1st prize from Miss Chhong Chamroeun from Khnat Junior High School 2nd from Mr. Chhoeng Tuynuy from Khnat Junior High School and 3rd from Miss Pen Malyneth from Mittapheap Khmer-Japan Preah Inkkosa Junior High School. The rewards given to the successful students were special souvenirs and cash to encourage them in their studies. On the other hand, Angkor National Museum also gave a variety of souvenir gifts for the other students who participated in their drawings.

Although only three winners could be chosen, Angkor National Museum is very proud of the accomplishments of all the student participants and hopes to see them further their knowledge in Khmer arts and culture!
Drawing by Miss Pen Malyneth