

Cakrasaṃvara or Trailokyavijaya: Ascertaining the Identity of a Tantric Deity at Phimai through Sanskrit Manuscripts

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The lintel situated above the eastern portal of the *garbhagrha* (sanctum sanctorum) at Phimai depicts a three-headed deity with eight arms dancing on an elephant's head. As Phimai is confirmed to be a temple for Esoteric Buddhist practices according to the inscriptions attributed to various kings of the Khmer Empire, this deity unquestionably belongs in the Tantric Buddhist pantheon. While most agree that the deity is Tantric, some scholars have mixed opinions about the identity of the deity, which has been thought of as either Cakrasaṃvara or Trailokyavijaya. Hence the primary objective of this paper is to verify the identity of this deity through the studies of Sanskrit texts on Tantric Buddhist iconography. The results demonstrate that Tantric Buddhism once flourished in Thailand and that Buddhist Sanskrit texts on iconography may have been used in the creation of Tantric iconographies at Phimai.

ทับหลังในด้านทิศตะวันออกที่เทวสถานพิมายแสดงประติมากรของเทพเจ้า ซึ่งมีสามพักตร์ แปดกร และประทับยืนอยู่บนหัวช้าง เนื่องจากจารึกที่พิมายได้ยืนยันว่าเทวสถานแห่งนี้เคยเป็นที่เคารพของศาสนาพุทธมหายานลัทธิตันตระ ดังนั้นเทพเจ้าองค์นี้จึงต้องถูกจัดอยู่ในหมวดหมู่ของเทพเจ้าตันตระเช่นกัน และนักประวัติศาสตร์ศิลป์หลายท่านลงความเห็นว่าเทพเจ้าองค์นี้น่าจะเป็นจักรสังวรหรือไตรโลกยวิชัย แต่ทั้งนี้ยังไม่สามารถยืนยันได้ บทความนี้จึงมีจุดประสงค์ที่จะไขปริศนานี้ โดยการศึกษาและค้นหาเอกลักษณ์ของเทพเจ้าดังกล่าว โดยใช้คัมภีร์ประติมากรของศาสนาพุทธมหายานในภาษาสันสกฤต ที่ปกติจะถูกใช้ในการรังสรรค์เทวรูปต่างๆตามคติของลัทธิตันตระ.

Background

Built, patronised and renovated by various Khmer kings from the 10th to 12th century CE, the Phimai Temple complex situated on the Khorat Plateau in North Eastern Thailand is a stone temple that encompasses Khmer architecture of different periods, namely the Baphoun, Angkor Wat and Bayon styles. According to inscriptions (K. 111, K. 397, K. 952, K. 954 and K. 1158) found at the temple and in the surrounding area, the Esoteric/Tantric form of Buddhism was widespread and practised by both the people and kings. The iconography of various deities belonging to the pantheon of Buddhist Tantric deities, such as Buddha with the seven-headed *nāga*, Prajñāpāramitā, Vajrapāṇi, Hevajra, Tārā and various forms of Avalokateśvara as well as ritual objects such as *ghaṇṭās* (bells) with handles decorated with the *vajra* motifs and bronze *śaṅkhas* (conches) also corroborate the presence of Tantrism there.

Esoteric Buddhist Iconographies at Phimai

Images of Tantric Buddhist deities are found on five lintels inside the temple; four are located above the entrance to the central *cella/maṇḍapa* and one above the entrance to the vestibule (*antarāla*). The lintel in the northern direction depicts two rows of deities. The upper row comprises five identical deities seated in the *vīrāsana* pose. The central image, seated on a pedestal above a group of five attending deities, some holding a staff, is bigger than the others. The lower row consists of eight dancing *yoginīs* and other attending deities. The central deities and figures in the upper row have three visible heads and six arms. The two hands in front are placed one above the other showing the *dhyānamudrā* (meditation gesture), the uppermost right hand holds the *akṣamālās* (rosary) and lotus flowers are seen in the hand below that. A *ghaṇṭā* (bell) is held by the uppermost left hand and the remaining left hand seems to hold a jewel. These attributes are misleading as they do not correspond to any particular Sanskrit source. Nevertheless, scholars namely Boisselier (1966: 302), Dagens (1995:

19), Woodward (1981: 171) and Conti (2013: 384) have identified the images as Vajrasattva and the four Jinas while admitting that the attributes do not agree with any textual source.



Fig. 1 Central Image of a Tantric Deity, Eastern Lintel, Phimai. Source: Saran Suebsantiwongse.

The lintel in the eastern direction depicts the protagonist of this paper: a deity with three visible heads, standing (or dancing) with the left foot on an interlocking image of a male and female lying on a head of an elephant (Figure 1). The deity has eight arms; the two front hands clearly show *dharmacakramudrā* (teaching/the wheel of dharma gesture), the two uppermost hands seem to be stretching the skin of the elephant whose head is being trampled by the deity. The rest of the attributes are not easily discernible although I could vaguely make out two of them: one is the *vajra* (thunderbolt) and the other is the *aṅkuśa* (elephant hook). Similar to the northern lintel, the central deity is flanked by two rows of ten Buddhas (top row) and ten *yoginīs* (bottom row). The Buddhas are seated in the *vīrāsana* pose, each sporting the *dhyānāmudrā* – they are probably the images of past and future Buddhas. The *yoginīs* dance in a similar pose to the ones on the northern lintel. This pose is known as the *ardhaparyāṅka* but, in contrast to the northern lintel, the *yoginīs* seen on the eastern lintel stand on the left foot. Moreover, each of them holds a *ghaṅṭā* in the left hand below chest level and the other hand is held above the head, holding a *vajra*. Like the deity on the northern lintel, the standing pose and the attributes of this deity do not entirely match any Sanskrit text. But in contrast to the deity of the northern lintel, earlier scholars seem uncertain of his true identity. Vallibhotama (1961), a Thai art historian expresses this in the following passage:

At the centre of the lintel is represented an image with 4 heads and 8 arms, trampling with his right leg two figures who are lying inversely on an elephant head. Behind this four-headed figure is extended an elephant skin with its tail curving above his head. This central personage

has been identified as Trailokyavijaya, a Mahāyāna god, but this figure differs from other representations of the same god in India and Tibet as it is protected by an elephant skin. In India and Tibet, the god attributed with elephant skin is Saṃvara or Sañvara who has 12 arms. The difference in iconography remains to be further researched (p. 31).

Hence with Vallibhotama's lead, the identification of the deity can be narrowed down to either Trailokyavijaya or Cakrasaṃvara. In a similar manner, Prapanvidya (2017) observes that the *ardhaparyāṅka* pose of the deity does not agree with any Sanskrit text, particularly not with the *Sādhanamālā*, which states that both Trailokyavijaya and Cakrasaṃvara should stand in the *pratyālīḍha* pose¹, but he stops short of identifying the deity. Conti (2013), on the other hand, is the first person to identify the deity, suggesting that the image is of Cakrasaṃvara. She points out that a similar figure (but with twelve arms) is to be seen on a bronze mould found in Poipet (dated 12th-century CE), depicting Vajrasattva at the centre (identified by three heads and the *vajrahumkāramudrā*); this resembles the image on the eastern lintel at Phimai, already identified as Vajrasattva. Next, a Buddha protected by a seven-headed *nāga* is seen at the top of the mould and three more deities are in the bottom row; one of them is probably Padmapāni, identifiable by having the lotus as one of his attributes. In the middle tier, to the right of Vajrasattva, stands a figure unmistakably of Hevajra (with heads in three tiers, standing in *ardhaparyāṅka*) and to the left, a deity standing in the *pratyālīḍha* pose (with right leg bent and left leg stretched out), the two front hands sport the *vajrahumkāramudrā*, while the attributes in the other hands are undeterminable. Collectively, this bronze mould seems to depict the same set of deities seen on the lintels at Phimai. Firstly, Conti argues that the *mudrā* formed at the chest of the deity of the Poipet specimen is the *prajñāliṅgābhīnaya*, which is seen in Indian iconography of Cakrasaṃvara, who is sometimes embracing a consort (*yubyum*). Secondly, she suggests that the number of arms depicted on the Poipet specimen, which is twelve, agrees with some of the Indian versions that possess two, six and twelve arms, but the iconography at Phimai is unique, especially as it has eight arms. Thirdly, Conti refers to a literary source; she is of the opinion that the composition date of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, the main text on the ritual worship of the deity that was popular in India between the 10th and 13th century CE, and coincides with the time that the Phimai Temple was built and flourished. Conti also interestingly suggests that the eastern lintel at Phimai depicts a “spread-out”, horizontal version of the *Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala* mentioned in the Tantra, which prescribes that the deity be at the *bindu* (centre), surrounded by three *āvaraṇas* (enclosures), each comprising eight *yoginīs* or *dākinīs*. Conti finally states that, apart from the bronze mould, the only other iconography of Cakrasaṃvara in Cambodia can be seen in a carving on the stone pedestal at Banteay Samré, but she does not provide an illustration of that image nor a reference to how that image came to be identified as Cakrasaṃvara.

Through a survey of numerous iconographies of Cakrasaṃvara in India, Tibet and Nepal, I have observed that they are quite different from the Phimai example. The first most obvious difference is that nearly all Indian, Tibet and Nepal images depict Cakrasaṃvara embracing his consort, Vajravārāhī. The second difference is the standing pose: all South Asian specimens depict the deity standing in the *pratyālīḍha* pose while the figure at Phimai stands in the *ardhaparyāṅka*. The third major difference is that the male and female figures trampled under the feet of the deity are not interlocked as the ones seen in Phimai. I have also noticed that the numbers of heads depicted in images of Cakrasaṃvara from South Asia, which mostly come as bronzes and thangkās, consist of heads ranging from one to sixteen. The number of heads may vary from text to text or they may be the interpretations of the individual artists who attempted to depict various supernatural powers of the deity.

1 Archer pose; bent front leg and stretched out back leg.

While the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* is the most authoritative text on the worship of Cakrasaṃvara, the text does not give a clear *dhyānaśloka* (visualisation verse) of the deity. Instead, the verse is clearly outlined in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*², thus:

*asya pūrvasyām diśi vajradando nīlo nīlapītaharitamūlasavyetaravakraḥ savyabhujābhyām
vajramudgaramudrānvitasatarjanīvajraṃ vāmābhyām kapālakhatvāṅge dadhānaḥ | 1
uttarasyaṃanalārkaḥ pītaḥ pītanīlaharitamukho vajradaṇḍadharāḥ pradhānapāṇinā va-
jradicīhnāni vajradaṇḍasya vā'sya vakṣyamāṇānām ca | 2
paścimāyām vajroṣṇīṣo rakto raktasitaharitavaktro raktapadmapāṇiḥ | 3
dakṣiṇasyām vajrakuṇḍālī harito haritapūtasitavadano viśvavajrāścitakaraḥ | 4
āgneyyām vajrayakṣo dhūmravarno dhūmrāpītaharitamukho 'nkuśadhārī | 5
nairṛtyām vajrakālo rakto raktapītaharitavakraḥ paraśupāṇiḥ | 6
vāyavyām mahākālo nīlo nīlapītaharitamukhastrīśūlapāṇiḥ | 7
eśānyām vajrabhīṣanaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ kekarakṛṣṇapītaharitavakraḥ khaḍgapāṇiḥ | 8*

He is black and has four faces which are, beginning with the front [and continuing around counter-clockwise], black, green, red, and yellow, each of which has three eyes. He has a tiger skin and has twelve arms. Two arms holding a vajra and a vajra-bell embrace Vajravārāhī. Two of his hands hold up over his back a white elephant hide dripping with blood. His other [right hands hold] a *damaru* drum, an axe, a flaying knife (*kartri*), and a trident. His remaining left [hands hold] a *khatvaṅga* staff marked with a *vajra*, a skull-bowl filled with blood, a *vajra* noose, and the head of Brahma. A garland of fifty moist human heads hangs about his neck. He has the six insignia, and a sacred thread made of human skull. He has a row of five skulls above his forehead, and a crest of black dreadlocks topped by a left-oriented crescent moon and a double vajra. He is endowed with a fierce meditative state and bears his fangs. He brings together in one the nine dramatic sentiments (translation by Gray 2007: 45).

It is evident that the *dhyānaśloka* quoted above matches most South Asian images of Cakrasaṃvara, but only a few of these attributes are included in the image on the eastern lintel at Phimai, namely the stretched elephant skin and possibly the *vajra* and the noose.

Thus, on the basis of the references from South Asian iconography and the *dhyānaśloka* from the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, I disagree with Conti that the deity on the eastern lintel at Phimai is Cakrasaṃvara. I argue that the Phimai image is more akin to various iconographies of Trailokyavijaya from South and Southeast Asia and resonates more with verses from two Sanskrit texts, which will be outlined in the next section. Furthermore, I do not think that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Cakrasaṃvara cult and its text, the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, existed in the ancient Khmer Empire; otherwise the iconography of the deity would have been more widespread and not limited to only two specimens as Conti suggests, namely the bronze mould from Poipet and the carving on the pedestal at Banteay Samré. Additionally, there would have been inscriptions to support both the existence of these images and the worship of Cakrasaṃvara in the area.

The Iconography of Trailokyavijaya and the connection to Phimai

Trailokyavijaya or the “conqueror of the three worlds” is a ferocious Tantric Buddhist deity who came to prominence in India in the second half of the 8th-century CE (Linroth 1999: 270). The deity is regarded as the emanation of Akṣobhya as outlined in Sanskrit texts such as the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (hereafter abbreviated STTS). Of the two, the latter text provides a clear visualisation of the deity in the following verse:

² A Sanskrit work by Abhayākaragupta on maṇḍalas and iconographies of the Vajrayāna pantheon of deities.

*īśānakone trailokyavijaya nīlās caturmukhaḥ mūlaṃ sakrodhaśṅgāraṃ savyaṃ raudraṃ
prṣṭhaṃ vīrarasaṃ vāmaṃ bībhatsaṃ atha caitāni nīlapītaraktasītāni aṣṭabhujo dvābhyāṃ
vajraghaṇṭānvitābhyāṃ ḥṛdi vajrahūmkāramudrāṃ savyaiḥ khaḍgāṅkuśabāṇān vāmaiḥ
kuliśapāśacāpān gr̥hṇan pratyālīḍhena vāmapādākrāntamaheśvaramastako dakṣiṇaca-
raṇenāvṣṭabdomāstanaḥ*

Facing northeast, Trailokyavijaya has four faces; the main face is filled with anger and passion; the right is furious, behind is heroic and left is disgusting. The faces are blue, yellow, red and white respectively. His eight arms hold: sword, goad and arrow on the right and bow, noose and vajra on the left. He shows vajra and bell in *vajrahūmkāramudrā* at his heart. He stands in the *pratyālīḍha* pose with his right foot crushing the breast of Umā and the left, the forehead of Maheśvara (translation mine).

On another sub-continent, a *dhāraṇī* inscribed on a lead-bronze foil called the *Mahāraudranāmahṛdaya* found near Borobudur, Central Java in 1976, also gives a vivid iconography of Trailokyavijaya in a form of a Sanskrit *mālāmantra* (long, garland mantra) written in the Kawi script:

*namo ratna-trayāya svāhā namaś caṇḍa-vajra-pāṇi svāhā mahā-yakṣa-senāpati svāhā namo
bhagavate 'prati-hata-bala-vīrya-vidhi-trividyā-dhara-sahasra svāhā catur-bhujalakṛti-śarīra
svāhā asi-musala-paraśu-pāśa-vajrāgni-jvālatibhīṣamaka-rūpa svāhā paśupati-jatijada-saṅ-
caya-vilambita-dakṣiṇa-pāda svāhā sarva-niyantaka tava viniṣṭha-vāma-caraṇa-uṣṇīṣa svāhā
namo bhagavate mahā-vajrā-dhara svāhā namo rudra namo ḥṛdayaṃ parama-dāruṇaṃ
sarva-bhūta-gaṇa-vinayakaraṃ roṣāstrāśīviśādhah-karaṃ sarva-karma-siddhi-karam āvar-
ta-yiṣyāmi tad yathā: bhoḥ bhoḥ vajra vajra kāla kāla karma karma kampa kampa bandha
bandha marda marda haha hi hi HUM HUM raudrati-raudranusāriṇam imam daṃstrāgra-
caṇḍa-grahaṃ mayi duṣṭa-cittaṃ pravināśaya raudra-dhūpena pravināśaya sarva-vajreṇa
pravināśaya sarva-pāpān pravināśaya sarva-devān pravināśaya sarva-kleśān pravināśaya
sarva-duṣṭa-cittān pravināśaya sarva-vighnān pravināśaya sarva-vināyakān pravināśaya sar-
va-kala-kali-kaluṣa-kalaha-vigraha-vivādān pravināśaya devāsura-garūḍa-gandharva-kin-
nara-mahoragādīn pravināśaya: trāsaya trāsaya kampa kampa bandhaya bandhaya mar-
daya mardaya caṇḍa caṇḍa mara mara hana hana daha daha kuru kuru mahābala mahābala
mahāvīrya mahāvīrya mahādīpta mahādīpta mahātejah mahātejah mahāraudra mahāraudra
mahāśāsana mahāśāsana turu turu dara dara vara vara sthāvara sthāvara svabhāvānta sv-
abhāvānta bhavāmike HUM HUM PHAṬ SVĀHĀ*

Homage to the Lord, [...] who has a body adorned with four arms, who is of terrible appearance due to (his bearing) sword, club, axe, snare, cudgel (vajra), and flaming fire, whose right foot hangs down over the heap of twisted locks of Paśupati (Śiva), whose left foot is placed on the pair of breasts of Pārvatī!

Homage to the Lord, the great cudgel-bearer!

I shall recite the Heart named Mahāraudra, extremely violent, that causes the destruction of all of (Śiva's) Bhūtas and Gaṇas, of ferocious form, that causes terror, fear and conflict, that causes the success of all undertakings!

O ferocious... Chase away the evil seizure! Destroy the evil thought, the bad thought, the angry thought! Destroy all evil, destroy all enemies, destroy all obstacles, destroy all diseases, destroy all illnesses, destroy all Vināyakas, destroy all those who have bad words, destroy all those who have bad thoughts, destroy the Devas, Asuras, Garudas, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Kin-naras, Great Serpents, etc [...]

Fierce one, fierce one! Kill, kill! Tear, tear! Slay, slay! [...] Hail! (translation by Griffiths 2014: 27-28).

Interestingly, many Trailokyavijaya images from India and Java (Figures 2 & 3) are identical in terms of attributes and exactly match the verse from the STTS. The major difference between the aforementioned specimens and the Javanese *dhāraṇī* is the number of their arms and their corre-



Fig. 2 Trailokyavijaya from India, bronze, Patna Museum. Source: Huntington Archives.



Fig. 3 Trailokyavijaya from Java, bronze, British Museum. Source: The Trustees of the British Museum.

sponding attributes (eight in the STTS and four in the *dhāraṇī*). This evidence suggests that it is highly likely the STTS circulated in both India and Southeast Asia and was used as the source for the making of Esoteric Buddhist images.

Like the Indian and Javanese bronze and stone sculptures, the image of the deity on the eastern lintel at Phimai also comprises eight arms, standing on an interlocking couple and has multiple heads. With the iconographical and literary evidence from India and Java, it may now be confirmed, in contrary to Conti's interpretation, that the Phimai deity has four heads instead of three. This is probably be-



Fig. 4 Trailokyavijaya, stone, Mahant Monastery. Source: Rob Linrothe.

cause, unlike on bronze statues, the fourth head is not easily depictable on a bas-relief. On the other hand, the gigantic, 10th-century stone sculpture at the Mahant Monastery at Bodhgayā (Figure 4) has four heads, carved on a single slab of stone, but this is because it is a much larger image than the one at Phimai; the additional space probably made it easier to depict the four heads without the sculpture looking off-balance.

Furthermore, it is evident that the cult of Trailokyavijaya was practised at Phimai: the deity is mentioned in two inscriptions found at the temple. Inscription number 3 (K. 397) records that a dignitary by the name of ‘Kamarateṇ Añ Śrī Vīrendrādhipativarma of Chok Vakula establishes the image of Kamarateṇ Jagat Senāpati Trailokyavijaya who is the *senāpati* (commander in chief) of Kamarateṇ Jagat Vimāya’. Cœdès (1924: 346-350) suggests that Kamarateṇ Jagat Vimāya was presumably the presiding Buddha of the Phimai Temple, situated in the central *garbhagrha* (sanctum sanctorum); this could have been a Buddha image with the seven-headed *nāga*. The second inscription (number 4, K. 954) is found on a stone pedestal with a hole into which the plinth of a standing stone image must have been inserted to secure it. The inscription reads ‘Śrī Vīrendradipati Varma of Chok Vakula establishes Kamarateṇ Jagat Senāpati Trailokyavijaya’, which leads me to speculate that this stone base may have been the pedestal that the statue of Trailokyavijaya once stood on. These two pieces of evidence strongly suggest that there must have been a prominent image of Trailokyavijaya erected by the aforesaid official as the guardian deity of the main Buddha image and the temple precinct. Moreover, a one-headed and two-armed bronze of Trailokyavijaya (Figure 5), now kept at the Bangkok National Museum, was unearthed at Phimai. Finally, Sharrock (2012: 208) states that the inscription³ found at Wat Sithor (K. 111, dated 980 CE, during the reign of Jayavarman V) suggests that not only Tantric Buddhism, but also the cult of Trailokyavijaya was prevalent on the Khorat Plateau. The inscription mentions a text called *Tattvasaṃgrahaṭīkā*, which is a commentary on the STTS in which Trailokyavijaya is the central deity. This archaeological and epigraphical evidence clearly suggests the prominence of the Trailokyavijaya cult in the Phimai area. Thus, I identify the image on the eastern lintel as that of Trailokyavijaya rather than Cakrasaṃvara.



Fig. 5 Trailokyavijaya, bronze, National Museum of Bangkok. Source: Saran Suebsantiwongse.

3 lakṣagraṇṭham abhiprajñam yo nveṣya pararāṣṭrataḥ |
tattvasaṃgrahaṭīkādi tantrañ cādhyāpayad yamī ||
Having searched in a foreign country for a great number of philosophical books and treatises, such as the Tattvasaṃgraha commentary, this sage then spread the study of them (translation by Cœdès 1954: 195-211)

Conclusion/Observation

Inscriptions and iconographies at Phimai confirm that the temple was the hub of Esoteric Buddhist practices, which received important royal patronages between the 10th and 12th centuries CE. Having corroborated the fact that the cult of Trailokyavijaya was prevalent in Phimai and that the deity appearing on the eastern lintel bears similarities to images of Trailokyavijaya in India and Java, the core image of this research, I propose that the central image seen on the eastern lintel is more likely to be Trailokyavijaya than Cakrasaṃvara, even though the image does not adhere exactly to any particular textual rendition. The bronze image of Trailokyavijaya found at the site together with the aforesaid inscriptions also confirm the existence of the cult. Moreover, it is apparent in inscription K. 111 that the STTS, which talks extensively about Trailokyavijaya, was circulated in ancient Cambodia while there is no evidence to suggest the same for the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*.

Although Trailokyavijaya and Cakrasaṃvara are two distinct deities, iconographically speaking they are very similar in terms both of general appearance and attributes. It is by looking into the Sanskrit verses that we get the exact outlines of their characters and attributes. Among the similarities, the most obvious feature always appearing in images of both deities is the *vajrahūṃkāramudrā* held at chest level. Regardless of how many heads and arms the images of either deity may possess, the appearance of this *mudrā* is always consistent.

Among various images of Cakrasaṃvara and Trailokyavijaya, apart from differences in the numbers of heads, arms and attributes, I have observed three, less obvious differences between the two deities, which may help to differentiate them:

- 1) Cakrasaṃvara images from South Asia are always depicted embracing a consort while Trailokyavijaya images are not
- 2) Cakrasaṃvara images stand in *pratyālīḍha* with weight on the left leg; the left leg is bent and the right leg stretched out while Trailokyavijaya images show the opposite
- 3) Trailokyavijaya images are shown trampling on an interlocking couple (including the Phimai image), while the trampled male and female figures under Cakrasaṃvara are separated – male under the right foot and female under the left.

In spite of the differences, Trailokyavijaya and Cakrasaṃvara are closely related esoterically – both are ferocious emanations of Akṣobhya and both have the protective function in Tantric Buddhism as seen in the following verse from the commentary of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* by Indrabhūti:

In the Paranirmitavaivartin [heaven] he disciplined criminals as the Fierce One Trailokyavijaya; the obstacle demons (*vināyaka*) were disciplined in the Nirmanārati [heaven] by the Fierce One Vajrajvalanalarka, in Tuṣita by Vajragarbha, in the Yama [heaven] by the Fierce One Vajrahūṃkāra, and on the peak of Sumeru by Vajrapānī. Then Mahāvajradhara established himself as the manifestation body Śrī Heruka who is inseparable from the Four Bodies [of a buddha] (translation by Gray 2007: 49).

These differences, however, cannot be applied to the image at Phimai because it does not seem to follow any particular text, and even the most common characteristics, such as the *pratyālīḍha* and the *vajrahūṃkāramudrā*, are depicted differently to the Indian and Javanese images. This is perhaps due to the regional interpretation of the texts as well as to the artistic vogue of the place and time. Moreover, the number of heads shown on the Phimai image, which appears in the form of bas-relief, poses another confusion. There is confusion, too, over the number of heads (three or four) as previously mentioned. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated – the verses from the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, the STTS and the *Mahāraudranāmahṛdaya* reveal that the common forms of both Cakrasaṃvara and Trailokyavijaya possess four heads.

In the course of this research, I have also observed that the composition of the Phimai image has a lot in common with the sculpture of Gajasamharamurti (Figure 6) situated on the *prakara* (wall) at the 12th-century Hoysala period temple at Belur, Karnataka: both are standing on an elephant head with multiple arms and are in the *ardhaparyanka* pose although the attributes and details are different. I venture to speculate that if the Khmer artisans were influenced by Hindu imageries while building the Buddhist temple at Phimai, they may have been led to interpret Buddhist iconographical text with a Hindu flair. After all, many Hindu temples existed in the area and we see numerous examples of artistic amalgamation of Hindu and Buddhist motifs in a few Khmer temples. In fact, Phimai is a fine example of this: while it is, in a sense, a strictly Buddhist temple, the temple's *prakaras* (walls) and *vimanas* (dome) are decorated with countless Hindu subjects, most notably the bas-reliefs of scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Garuḍa motifs.

Finally, besides identifying the deity on the eastern lintel at the Phimai Temple as Trailokyavijaya, this paper also suggests that knowledge of the Sanskrit language is useful in ascertaining the identities of Tantric deities who often possess complex and at times subtle characters and attributes, and which can often be determined through the study of Sanskrit texts and inscriptions.



Fig. 6 Gajasamharamurti at the Channakesvara Temple at Belur, Karnataka. Source: Saran Suebsantiwongse

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