# THE BUDDHIST TUTELARY COUPLE HĀRĪTĪ AND PĀÑCIKA, PROTECTORS OF CHILDREN, FROM A RELIEF AT THE KHMER SANCTUARY IN PIMAI<sup>1</sup>

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The representation of the Buddhist tutelary couple Hārīti and Pāncika, neither gods nor human beings, but rākṣasa by origin, is well known in the iconography of mahāyāna and vajrayāna in India, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and Java (Chaṇḍi Mendut) but so far not encountered in Thailand or, as far as we know, in Cambodia.

The lintel above the northern inner door of the main  $pr\bar{a}s\bar{a}da$  of the recently restored Khmer sanctuary at Pimai, however, seems to show a representation of this tutelary couple in the two figures, male and female, standing in opposite corners of its upper part or, rather, just outside the mandala (laukika)—see figure 1.

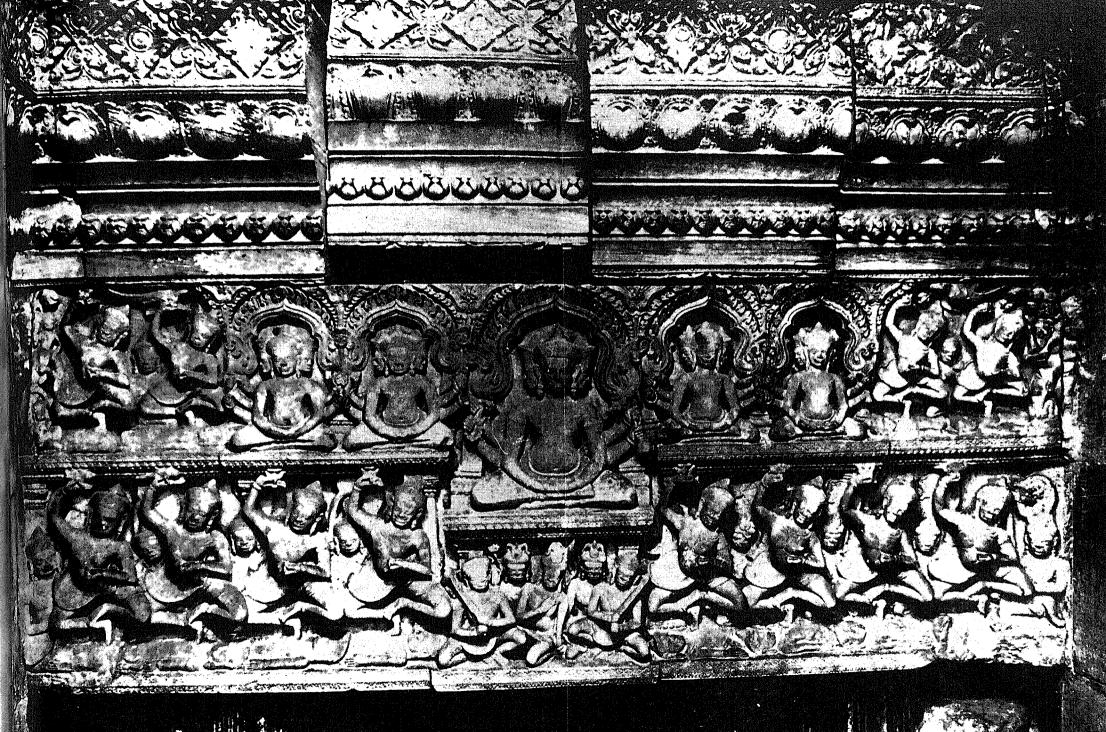
<sup>1)</sup> Research for this paper was made possible through a grant received from the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) of the Netherlands Government. Several visits were made to the Khmer sanctuary at Pimai, situated on the right bank of the Mun River some 350 kilometres by road from Bangkok, and the author is much indebted to Acharn Dhanit Yupho, Director General of the Fine Arts Department for his permission, each time readily granted, to visit the monument which is still closed to the public and for the Department's hospitality. The restoration of this monument is being carried out by the Fine Arts Department under Prince Yachai Chitrabongs of the Fine Arts University, supported by a SEATO grant under Dr. B. Groslier. Sources for the iconography of Hariti and Pañcika: Foucher, A., l'Art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhara Paris 1918 vols 1 & 2 parts 2, 3 & 4 pp 102-154 and The Beginnings of Buddhist Art London 1917 chapters 5,8 & 9 (The Buddhist Madonna); Lulius van Goor, M.E., 'De Kuwera in het voorportaal van Tjandi Mendoet' Handelingen van het Eerste Congres voor Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde van Java 1919 (1921) pp 325-48; Krom, N.J., Inleiding tot de Hindoe-Javaanse Kunst The Hague 1923 vol 1 p 315. Getty, Alice The Gods of Northern Buddhism Paris 1927 Tokyo reprint edition 1962 pp 84-87&156-60; Bernet Kempers, A.J., Ancient Indonesian Art Amsterdam 1959 plates 56 & 57 pages 39 & 40.

Identification of the figures inside the mandala—though representing one system in the vajrayāna—has not been established satisfactorily through lack of a relevant text, sādhana or tantra.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it seems fruitful to describe here two 'minor' figures of the relief for which several authoritative Buddhist texts are available in attempting a satisfactory identification.

## Description of the Yaksi Hārītī (see figures 2 & 3):

The female deity with a peaceful face but bulging eyes is seen standing in the upper left corner of the lintel. A vertical crack in the sandstone monolith splits the figure in two. The deity wears a crown (mukuta) consisting of a band with pearls that holds her curly hair in sections. She wears no ornaments that one can see and her only garment is a long skirt with designs and a flap hanging down to the left, the end of which is held by the kneeling child in front. The breasts of the deity are partly damaged by the vertical crack; the right breast is touched by one of the children and it seems that the left breast is long and flabby, characteristic in representations of yakṣī, rākṣasī or yakkinī. Her nose is prominent and her mouth is very full and wide; at one time opened to devour small children. From behind her, the long bent stalk of a plant rises above her head, bearing a fruit that as yet defies identification-apparently not a pomegranate or taptim as this red fruit is called in Thailand. It seems as if this stalk with fruit is her only attribute. The deity is carrying three children and a fourth is half kneeling in front of her with raised left leg and with the right hand holding the inside of the deity's right leg. One child seems to stand on the deity's right shoulder, keeping a balance by resting the right

<sup>2)</sup> For a tentative identification: Seidenfaden, E., 'An Excursion to Pimai, a temple in the Khorat province' Journal of the Siam Society vol 17 pt 1 pp 1-19 and 'A Siamese account of the construction of the temple on Khao Phanom Rung' Journal of the Siam Society vol 25 pp 83-106 (for Pimai see pp 102-03); Manit Vallibhotama, Guide to Pimai and Antquities in the Province of Nagara Rajasima (Khorat) Bangkok 1961; and Boeles, J.J., 'Two Yoginis of Hevajra from Thailand' in Essays offered to G.H. Luce, Artibus Asiae vol 2 1966 pp 14-29.



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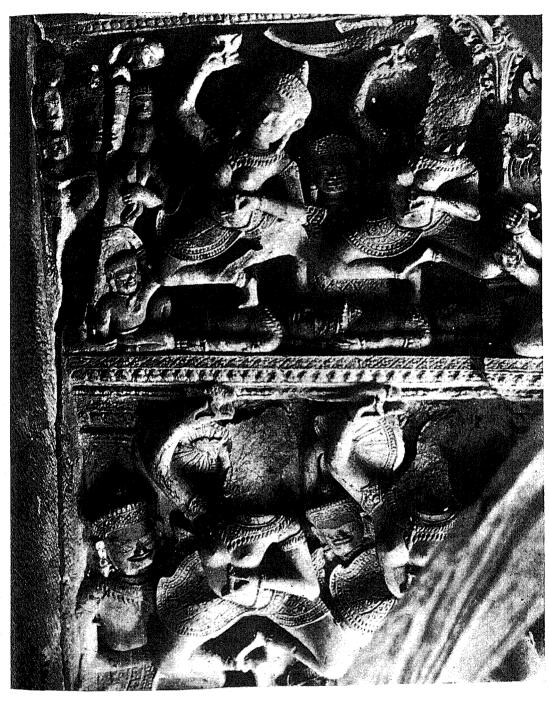


Figure 2

Hārītī and her children, Pimai. Part of sandstone lintel, figure 1, after damage. Photo courtesy of M. Pierre Pichard.

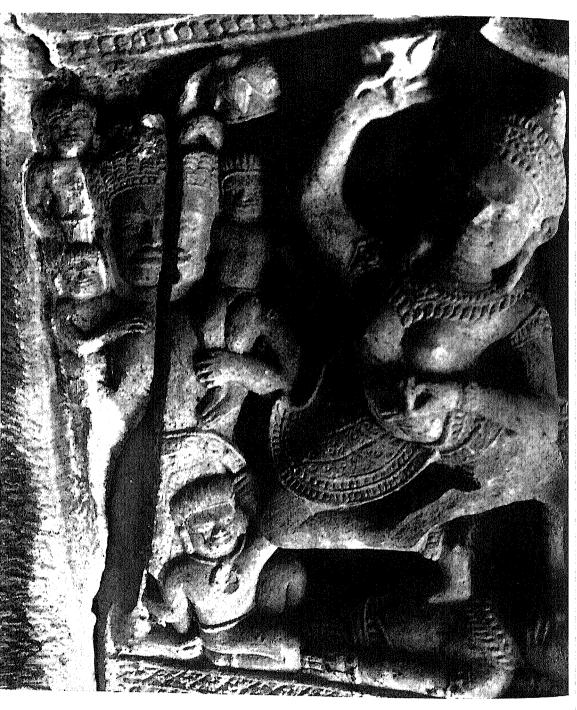


Figure 3 Hārītī and her children, Pimai. Detail of figure 2. Inside the maṇḍala, a  $d\bar{a}ki\bar{m}$  is dancing on the stiff corpse of a slain Hindu deity.

hand on the head of the child below who is held in the deity's right arm as if carried on her right hip. Another child is seated on the deity's left shoulder. The hair of all children is combed back and they seem to be of the same sex: one wears a string around the neck, ending possibly in a knot or ornament. It seems that one child wears a piece of cloth between the legs held up by a string around the hips. (The kneeling child is not wearing a short skirt). The deity is protecting this child with the large toe of her right foot.

The total impression is that of a female deity as a mother protecting four very young children of equal age and sex. We propose to identify her as the  $Yak\bar{n}$  Hārītī, transformed by the Lord Buddha from a devourer of small children into a protectress of children, particularly against diseases.

#### The Yaksa Pancika as a Brahman (see figure 4):

Her bearded male opposite number with bulging eyes and long beard, stands on the same level in the upper right corner of this monolith lintel, and is portrayed also protecting four very young children of equal age and the same sex, possibly male-though they look rather frightened. This personage is a Brahman judging from his long pointed beard and from the jata, with a broad band holding his hair together in conical shape. This Brahmán then, wears only an undergarment (sampot) with a short flap in front. In combination with the female deity on the opposite side we identify him here as her husband, the Yaksa Pancika in his aspect as protector of children in accordance with authoritative Buddhist texts such as the Mahavamsa. Though, admittedly, we do not know of any other representation of Pancika as a Brahman. children protected by Pancika are arranged around his figure as are the four children of Hariti. The crack through Pancika's Two children seem to figure does not obscure the scene. straddle his shoulders; the child straddling his left shoulder holds the left hand on the  $jat\bar{a}$  while its left leg is held by the diety's right hand. Pancika carries the third child on his left

The fourth child is squatting in front of the deity with both arms raised holding Pancika's right leg. Like Hariti, Pancika carries three children (he is rather stooped as a result) and also protects the squatting fourth child. Each child seems to wear a kind of band around the head and no hair seems visible. The arrangement of hair, then, is quite different from that of the four children of Hariti and may indicate a different sex. Though Pancika's children look rather like boys, we do not feel justified to say that Harītī's children are girls; they also could be boys though with different attire. The texts say that Hārītī has 500 or even 1000 sons of equal age. All children wear a kind of loin cloth and show no ornaments. Above the head of the Brahman we see a large bird in flight with spread wings. In its beak is a twig from which three unidentified fruits (mangos?) hang that touch the head of the dancing dakini placed next to the Brahman. The bird could be a parrot. It is not certain whether this bird is connected with the Brahman or with the two dancing dakini to his right; each dancing on a dead body in rigor mortis and belonging to the mandala proper. There are actually two parrot-like birds flying toward the outstretched right hands of the two  $d\bar{a}kin\bar{i}$  each of whom is holding an empty receptacle. On the opposite side we see, however, only one parrot-like bird flying above the outstretched right hand of the second dakini. The texts dealing with Pancika and Hariti give no clue in this regard so that the positions of the birds cannot be defined with more certainty.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the rough description of the tutelary couple as seen on the lintel above the northern inner door of the main  $pr\bar{a}s\bar{a}da$  of the Khmer sanctuary at Pimai. The main inscription of this sanctuary gives as a latest date 1112 A.D. equivalent.

### The legend of the yaksi Hārītī and the yaksa Pāñcika

The ancient legend of the ogress Hariti, devourer of small children, her conversion by the Lord Buddha and her ogre husband

<sup>3)</sup> The same type of bird is noticed above the figures of Hārītī and Āṭavaka, also called Pāñcika, on the north and south walls, respectively, of Chandi Mendut in Central Java; cf. Bernet Kempers, op. cit. plates 56 & 57.

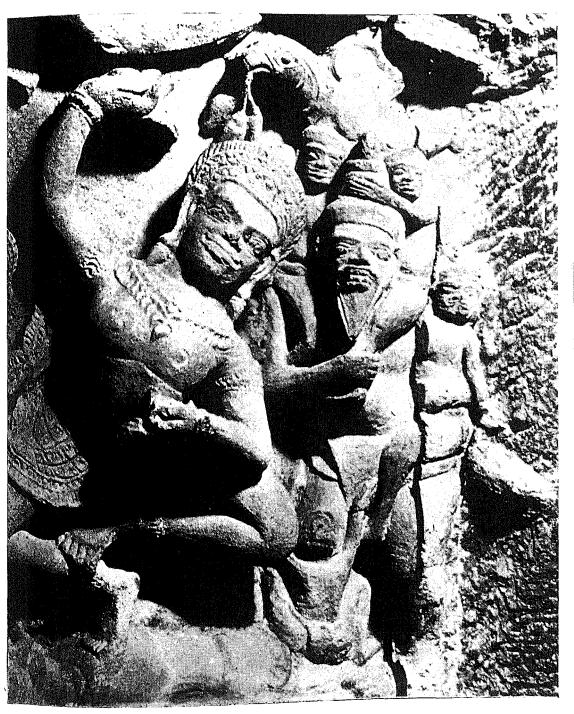


Figure 4
Pāncika and his children, Pimai. Detail of figure 1.

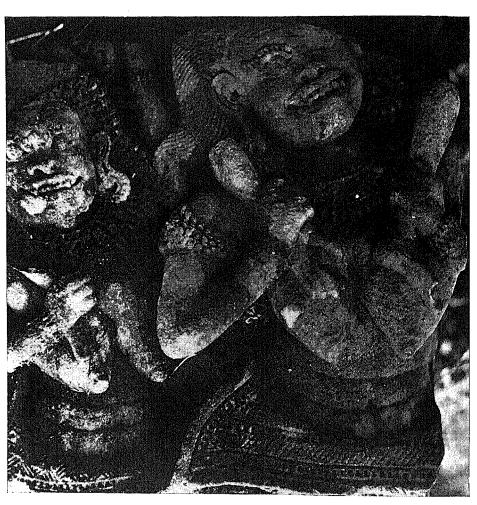


Figure 5
Two yakṣī devouring small children. Part of a sandstone relief from Prāsāt Khao Panom Rung, Northeast Thailand. Possibly early 12th century. Photo by J.J. Boeles.

the yakşa Pāncika, also converted by the Lord Buddha, is well attested in several Buddhist texts including the Mahavamsa where it says:

A certain yakkha called Pañcaka together with his wife Hārita and five hundred youths, attained sowān (the first stage of sanctification). He then thus addressed them: 'Do not hereafter, as formerly, give way to pride of power and vindictive anger; but evincing your solicitude for the happiness of living creatures, abstain from the destruction of crops; extend your benevolence towards all living creatures; live protecting mankind'. They who had been thus exhorted by him regulated their conduct accordingly.

This legend is recorded in the twelfth chapter in the Mahāvaṃsa, entitled 'The conversion of the several foreign countries'. It is this very chapter that also records the mission of the disciple Sona accompanied by the thera Uttara to Suvaṇṇabhūmi. According to Thai tradition this 'Land of Gold' may have covered the whole Southeast Asian Peninsula. The introduction of Buddhism in this country is traditionally attributed to the monks Sona and Uttara and their voyage was a result of the missionary efforts of Aśoka, Emperor of Magadha in India. An exhaustive monograph by Peri entitled 'Hārītī, La Mère-de-Démons', gives the full story and its several variations. The most recent summary of the legend is given by Lamotte, a Buddhologist, from whom we understand that the couple Hārītī and

<sup>4)</sup> The Mahāvansa transl. L.C. Wijesinha and G. Turnour, Colombo 1909 chapter 12 pp 47-49. The first fruit obtained by Hārītī and Pāñcika is the srotaā pattiphala, here called sowān and of which the first of the five precepts forbids the killing of living creatures.

<sup>5)</sup> Dhani Niwat, Kromamun Bidyalabh, A History of Buddhism in Siam Bangkok 1965 p 2.

<sup>6)</sup> Peri, N., 'Hārītī La Mère-de-Démons 'Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient vol 17, 1917 pp 2-101.

<sup>7)</sup> Lamotte, Étienne, Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien Louvain 1958 pp 368,448 & 763-64. Lamotte mentions that Pāncika when represented on the monuments at Gandhāra may also appear 'Sous l'aspect d'un génie adulte, barbu, hirsute, plus qu'à demi nu'. See also Foucher, l'Art Gréco-Bouddhique du Ganhāra, op. cit. vol 2 p 102 sq & Lamotte, op. cit. p 763.

Pāncika may be considered as tutelary deities or  $istadevat\bar{a}$ . In condensed form Foucher<sup>8</sup> renders the legend as follows:

Buddha in person had once converted the yakshini who decimated, or (as is metaphorically written) pitilessly 'devoured', the children of the town of Rajagriha (now Rajgir, in Behar). In order to convert her to more human feelings, he decided to deprive her for a time of Pingala, the last and most loved of Some even relate that the Master hid her five hundred sons. Pingala under his inverted alms-vase: and on Chinese paintings we do, in fact, see hordes of demons vainly endeavouring by the help of cranes and levers to turn over the huge bowl, in which the little genius is imprisoned. However this may be, the stratagem succeeded. The grief caused to Hariti by this momentary separation made her return to herself, or, better, put herself in the place of simple mortals whom she had at times robbed of their sole offspring: she swore never to do so again. However, every one must live, even the wicked who As soon as she is converted, the ogress mother repent. respectfully calls the attention of the Master to the fact that the first precept of his morality, by interdicting all homicide, really condemns her and her five hundred sons to die of hunger, and Buddha, much struck by the justice of this remark, promises that henceforth in all convents his monks shall offer a daily pittance, of course on condition that she and hers faithfully observe their vows . . . .

This monastic legend, very skilfully composed. endeavours, as we see, not merely to conciliate the contradictory notions attached to this deity, at once both cruel and propitious: in order completely to reassure the faithful, it also stands as a guarantee against any relapse of the converted yakshini into her ancient errors. Last and in regard to decorum most important, it claims to vindicate, under colour of a contract long ago made with the Master, the installation of this former ogress in the convent, and the propriety of the worship offered to her. It is,

<sup>8)</sup> Foucher, The Beginnings of Buddhist Art, op. cit. pp 280-81.

in fact, only too clear that it is from pure concession to popular superstitions that, according to the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Yi-tsing, the image of Harītī was to be "found either in the porch or in a corner of the dining-hall Indian monasteries".

As regards the representation of Hariti in Pimai, it seems that she is to be considered less a giver of fertility than a protector of small children and, in particular as in Nepal today, a protector against diseases like smallpox, a dreaded killer in Asia. In Pimai we see Hariti and her husband Pancika each in the act of protecting four young children with their bodies. The 'Madonna' aspect becomes vague and, as regards the figure of Hariti in Pimai, this is indicated by at least one flabby breast which accentuates her origin as vaksī. And as a yaksī (yakkinī) she is a powerful figure to worship as a tutelary deity. Under these circumstances we are not permitted to make a comparison between the Hariti at Pimai and Foucher's concept of the virgo lactans. In Pimai we do not see Hariti suckling her last born son and dearest child Pingala. The identification of the yaksa Pancika rests mainly on the fact that his position on the lintel at Pimai warrants him to be Hariti's husband who is usually. but not always, identified as Pancika. In this case we base ourselves on the Mahavamsa. We admit that Pancika in the aspect of Brahman is unusual and supporting pictorial evidence from elsewhere seems unavailable. Pancika is often portrayed as a general (Senāpati) and later we see this deified yaksa develop into Kuvera, the Buddhist god of riches and a guardian of the North, also known as the lokapāla Vaisravana. According to Vālmikī's Rāmāyana, Kuvera is a descendent of the god Brahma and this seems some justification for portraying Pancika in Pimai as a Brahman. Since the position of the vaksa Pāncika in Pimai as consort of the yaksī Hārītī is well established, both in the text as in the Buddhist iconography since the Gandhara style of art, it seems justified to give the name Pancika to our Brahman in Pimai who is protecting four children-most likely borrowed from Hārītī. In her turn Hārītī may have borrowed the lemon (?) fruit placed behind her from Pāñcika. The Pāñcika in Pimai shows no connection with the God of Riches: no money bags, no attributes and no fat belly.

#### The two Yakşī from Prasat Khao Panom Rung9

It appears that not all vaksī from Thailand have been converted by Lord Buddha from their evil habit of devouring human flesh. 10 A fragment of a stone lintel from Prāsāt Khao Panom Rung in Province Buriram in Northeast Thailand makes this clear-see figure 5. We see here two uncrowned female ogres or vaksī, each in the act of devouring a small child with great gusto. Their main characteristics are: a broad face, bushy eyebrows, broad nose, wide mouth with prominent display of upper frontal teeth and both upper incisors protruding. They have long wavy hair—the left figure shows curly hair; heavy, round ear pendants for ornament; and a broad heavy necklace and large upper and lower armbands on an otherwise naked torso. An undergarment showing patterns, with a fold at the top, covers the lower part of the body. The joyful expression on their faces indicates the great delight of gluttons having just devoured two live children of which only the legs of their victims remain in their hands. Another characteristic of the yaksī is the pair of long, hanging and pointed breasts. Two folds go around each torso between the breasts and the navel.

<sup>9)</sup> This monument dates possibly from the early part of the 12th century and as such would be contemporary to the sanctuary at Pimai with which it has several elements of Khmer style in common. At one time there was a road leading from Pimai, passing Prāsāt Khao Panom Rung, over the Dang Rek mountains-where the author encountered more than one Khmer sanctuary-in the direction of Angkor Thom. For the monuments situated in Thailand see: Report of the survey and excavations of Ancient Monuments in North-eastern Thailand Part 2: 1960-1961, Fine Arts Department, Bangkok 1967. For the lintel with the two yakṣī see ibid., fig 13. On the reliefs in Pimai the deities are not yet represented with the prabhā-mandala (nimbus).

<sup>10)</sup> In that sense the western expression 'cannibalism' is not applicable here and these ferocious giantesses are better described as 'eaters of human flesh'.

This haunting scene, sculptured almost in the round, of two roaring giant ogresses seen in the inhuman act of devouring two small children alive—yakṣa and yakṣī or yakkinī are not considered human beings<sup>11</sup>—was intended to frighten the beholder.

The ancient and almost global substratum of authochtonic giants as eaters of human flesh is well established. In India yakṣa and yakṣā as eaters of human flesh existed long before Buddhism. The Lord Buddha himself converted the yakṣā Hārītī. In the Jātaka more conversions are to be found, and of these the Sutasoma Jātaka has been of particular importance in Southeast Asia as was demonstrated by the late Heine-Geldern. Recently, Kraisri Nimminahaeminda has explained how the ancestral and

<sup>11)</sup> In our interpretation of this act it seems unjustified to attempt further conclusions since the sculpture is only a section and we are, therefore, not permitted to see as yet a possible sequence. In view of the magnitude of this mountainous Khmer sanctuary and the 'grandeur' of its setting on the lava strewn Panom Rung, we may hope for a reconstruction as in Pimai.

<sup>12)</sup> See 'cannibalism' in Hastings, J., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Edinburgh 1910 pp 194-208.

<sup>13)</sup> Heine-Geldern R., Eine Szene aus dem Sutasoma-Jataka auf Hinter-indischen und indonesischen Schwertgriffen Ipek (Jahrbuch fur prähistorische und ethnographische Kunst) 1925 pp 198-238. Ensink, J., On the old Javanese cantakaparwa and its Tale of Sutosoma The Hague 1967. The description of Purusada on page 21: 'The hairs on the body on this son were iron needles .... reminds us of the image of Prah Bua Kem (พระบันขึ้น) from Thailand. This image is of wood, black lacquered and gilt. It shows a Burmese type of a seated Buddha (?) with a lotus leaf on his head, raised on a stem along the back from a simple pedestal on which one or more fishes are usually seen. We have noticed images that show also long, thin iron needles sticking from the shoulders (and also all over the body) like tattoo needles. According to tradition the Prah Bua Kem (the Lotus Buddha with needles) is worshipped when placed in the centre of a bowl with water, symbolizing a lotus pond. The images are venerated also for their sacred power or saksit (ศักดิ์สิทธิ์). On the basis of the Sutasoma texts it seems justified to interpret the Prah Bua Kem images either as the converted man-eating ogre Purusada or as a product-figure, combining the Bodhisattva Sutasoma with the converted yakşa Puruşada or Porisada. The conversion of Puruşada is told in the Maha-Sutasoma-Jataka number 537.

guardian spirits of Chiengmai, Pu Saeh (ปูกเสะ) and Yā Saeh (ปาแสะ) and their sons-originally called yak (giants)—at one time took great delight in consuming human flesh and were converted by Lord Buddha. Their connection with the buffalo sacrifice still being made in some places in North Thailand opens a new avenue for research.<sup>14</sup> In Thailand naughty children who do not obey orders to go to bed are still often warned by servants that they better come inside the house quickly and go to sleep, as otherwise in the darkness the yakṣī will come to eat them. And young flesh tastes so sweet! In general, the Thai believe that all Yak are basically eaters of human flesh yak kin kon (บักษ์กินคน).

In Indonesia the ancient legend of the conversion of the Yakṣ̄̄ Hārītī and her husband Pāncika or Āṭavaka (Ālavika) identified also as Kuvera, is represented on Chaṇḍi Mendut in Central Java (situated not far from the Barabuḍur) as early as the beginning of the 9th century. Hārītī is portrayed on the north wall of the antechamber and Pāncika or Āṭavaka on the south wall of the antechamber that leads to the inner sanctum of this Buddhist monument dedicated to the mahāyāna—see figures 6 & 7. Hārītī is in the aspect of a protector of children but her original character as yakṣ̄̄ is hardly recognizable. The relief shows many small children playing around her and one child is on her lap. Her husband Pāncika is seen also with many young children playing around him, but his yakṣa character is preserved in his long curly hair. He is here also the God of Riches as shown by the money bags or pots in front of his seat. Thus, at

<sup>14)</sup> Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda, 'The Lawa Guardian Spirits of Chiengmai'

Journal of The Siam Society vol 55 pt 2 pp 185-225.

<sup>15)</sup> A complete description and interpretation of this tutelary couple on Chandi Mendut has been given by Lulius van Goor, op. cit. pp 325-48. Her identification of the figure—by Krom also interpreted as Kuvera—as the yakṣa Āṭavaka or Ālavika, rests on her reading of Peri's fundamental treatment of the tutelary couple: 'Hārītī La Mère-de-Démons' op. cit. The reading of this source, in the author's opinion, leaves sufficient evidence that would justify an identification of this yakṣa figure with the money bags as Pāncika and, therefore, we shall continue to follow here our interpretation of Peri's essay. We may not exclude, however, the possibility of an identification as Āṭavaka or Ālavika or Kuvera. See Krom, op. cit. vol 1 pp 315; for a later discussion see Bernet Kempers, op. cit. pp 39, 40 & 116.

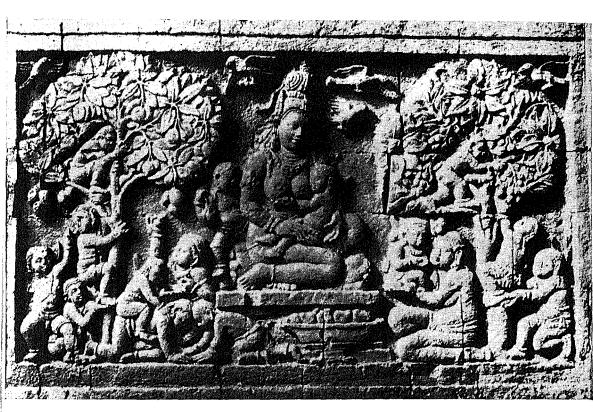


Figure 6
Chandi Mendut (Java). Hārītī on the north wall of the antechamber.
From A.J. Bernet Kempers, Ancient Indonesian Art plate 56.

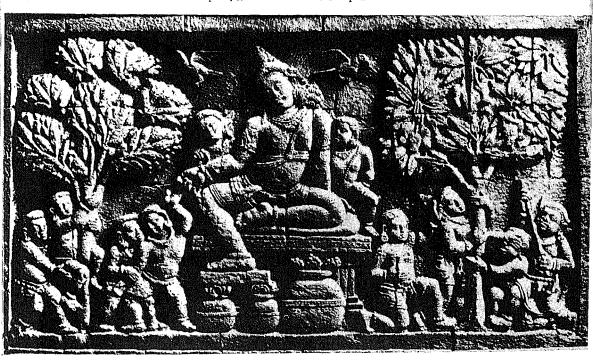


Figure 7
Chandi Mendut (Java). The yakṣa Pāncika or Aṭavaka on the south wall of the antechamber. From A.J. Bernet Kempers, Ancient Indonesian Art plate 57.

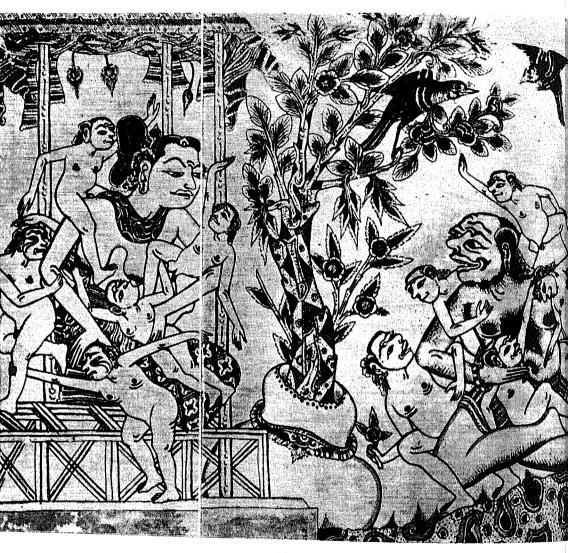


Figure 8

Men and Pan Brayut. Drawing by I. Dewa Njoman Moera. Height: 34.5 cm. Batuan, about 1927. From: Verrre naasten naderbij vol I no 3 page 18-19 fig 9. Courtesy of the State Museum for Ethnology, Leiden.

once he is the protector of children and the guardian of wealth. In any case, that these figures represent Hariti and her husband Pancika as a tutelary couple and protectors of small children has long been established with certainty. As such, a comparison with the Hariti and Pancika representations at Pimai is justified in a general sense. Today in Indonesia, the tradition of the representation of this tutelary couple, some thousand years after Chandi Mendut, is still alive, though now known by Indonesian names, Men and Pan Brayut, and specifically in Bali. The couple appears in a drawing of 1927 see figure 8. The Indonesian development of the tutelary couple from Chandi Mendut to Men and Pan Brayut is told in a recent study in Dutch from which we also owe the above mentioned drawing.16 The similarity to the tutelary couple at Pimai is evident. the left Men Brayut protects five male children, of which one is still being suckled on the left breast. The long hanging breasts show her origin as a rāksasī but her hair ornaments show her as a devi. The figure to the right, her husband Pan Brayut, protects also five male children one of whom holds a flower in his right hand. Pan Brayut betrays his origin as rākşasa by his large bulging eyes and his hairy appearance. Is it a coincidence that two parrot-like birds are placed above his head? One bird is sitting on a branch of a tree and the other is flying hither. The tree itself grows, magically, from a gourd; the tree is thought to be a symbol of fertility.17 This may be the case because the gourd in Southeast Asian folklore is often the origin of a miraculous birth; the gourd-luk nam tao (ถูกน้ำเค้า) may in that case The hilltribes of North Thailand use the gourd resemble the womb. as a water container. It is not surprising that the figures of Men and Pan Brayut are here represented both as protectors of small children and symbols of fertility.18

<sup>16)</sup> J. Terwen-De Loos, 'Brajoet of het nieuwe leven' Verre naasten naderbij vol 1 no 3 pp 9-21 fig 9, 1967, Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden.

<sup>17)</sup> Ibid., p 20.

<sup>18)</sup> Men Brayut is also known to have a demonic aspect and as such is often sculptured in wood—see *ibid.*, fig 8; consideration of this aspect would bring us outside the scope of our present subject.

