

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE *GAJASIMHA* OF SURYAVARMAN II

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ABSTRACT

A distinctive scaly elephant-lion or *gajasimha* originated during the reign of the Khmer king Suryavarman II (1113–ca 1150). It populated the Sea of Milk in the Angkor Wat bas-relief of the “Churning of the Sea of Milk” and replaced the naga Ananta in scenes of Vishnu reclining on the Sea of Milk. After his reign ended and Angkorean Khmer civilization died out, the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II continued as an icon in the religious and popular art traditions of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar.

Key words: Angkorean commemorative stelae, Buddhist and Hinduist temple art, *cho fa*, *devaraja*, Kama, Kaundinya and Soma, *kranock*, *kulen*, *luk kaeo*, *luk nimit*, *makara*, *mankorn*, *naga*, *pancarupa*, *payanak*, royal symbolism, *sema*, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, *Vishnu Anantasayin*, cosmic arch, *makara* arch, rainbow arch.

INTRODUCTION

The reign of the Khmer divine monarch or *devaraja* Suryavarman II lasted more than 30 years, from 1113 to around 1146–1150. This period represents a major watershed in the history of Southeast Asia. It was extraordinarily productive and innovative in architecture, art and religion. Suryavarman II emerged as the godhead of a state religion embracing Vishnuism, Shivaism, and Mahayana Buddhism (ROBERTS, in prep.). Angkor Wat, greatest of all Khmer temples, was initiated and completed. Beng Mealea, one of the few Khmer temples rivaling Angkor Wat in scope and grandeur, probably was also built entirely during this period, as was Banteay Samre. Substantial renovation and reconstruction or redevelopment was done on numerous older temples. Important additions were made to the Bakong and probably also to the Western Mebon, Phnom Rung, Phimai, Koh Ker and other temples.

The extensive temple administration and building programs provided opportunities for Khmer artists and artisans as well as architects. Great bas-reliefs were executed at Angkor Wat. In the greatest, the “Churning of the Sea of Milk”, Suryavarman II is portrayed as Vishnu and also as hundreds of opposing *deva* and *asura* (ROBERTS, 2002). Other bas relief portraits in the Angkor Wat “historical gallery” are labeled with Suryavarman II’s posthumous name Paramavishnuloka. They provide the key to identification of numerous statues of Suryavarman II represented as Vishnu, Shiva, Buddha, and other gods and divinities placed in temples throughout the Khmer Empire (ROBERTS, in prep.).

Statues of Suryavarman II were installed in many older temples as well as in temples built during his reign. Bas-reliefs and lintels above doorways with his symbols also were distributed widely. The most important symbol of Suryavarman II is the *gajasimha*.

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Gajasimha has a long and varied history in India, where it apparently never attained anything like the importance that it had during the reign of Suryavarman II. In Southeast Asia including Cambodia it played only a modest role prior to the reign of Suryavarman II. The earliest known Cambodian occurrences (see below) date from the seventh century.

Suryavarman II's *gajasimha* is quite distinctive and therefore readily recognizable. The head, while enjoying an elephant-like trunk and often elephant-like tusks, is otherwise more like that of a lion. It is smaller than an elephant's head and lacks the elephant's hump. The jaws and teeth are lion-like, and the upper jaw has a sinuous shape. This shape is similar to that displayed by numerous Khmer *makara*. The *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II always has a goatee-like beard. Ancient Khmer *simha* bas-reliefs and statues often have a beard. The beard might have been considered as an attribute of the lion. It might also symbolize brahmanic wisdom.

Once it appeared, apparently early in the reign of Suryavarman II, his *gajasimha* rapidly assumed various guises or roles previously enjoyed by naga. Unlike the statues of Suryavarman II, production of which probably ceased when his reign ended, the *gajasimha* assumed an iconographic life of its own which continues to this day. It has displayed remarkable ability to mutate, evolve into new forms, assume new behavior, and disperse into new geographical areas.

The popularity of the *gajasimha* partly is related to its ability to preempt the mythology of the naga in Buddhism as well as in Hinduism. A crucial period in the history of the *gajasimha* came during the reign of Jayavarman VII (1181–ca 1219), when it was widely used as a *makara* device in Buddhist temples including the Bayon, Banteay Kdei, Ta Som, Preah Khan and Banteay Chhmar.

A specific reason for the popularity of the *gajasimha* has been its employment as a symbol of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand and of their reigning monarchs. The kings of Thailand and Laos, like the ancient and modern kings of Cambodia, are divine kings or *devaraja*.² Thai kings are living reincarnations or *avatar* (*awatan*) of Vishnu. The title for kings of the Chakri dynasty, *Rama*, also is a name for Vishnu. Everything built for a king—his palaces, temples, royal barges, funeral chariot, throne, and on to his crown and clothing—is created for him as Lord Vishnu. It is created while he dreams the cosmic dream while floating on the Sea of Milk. The naga Ananta has been replaced by the *gajasimha* since the time of Suryavarman II.

The other Vishnuite symbol prominently associated with Southeast Asian royalty is Vishnu's mount or *vahana* Garuda. Garuda is the enemy of all snakes including naga. When the Chakri Garuda is depicted as triumphant over naga the naga is in the form of the *gajasimha*. Garuda and *gajasimha* are both supporters of Buddhism and are revered for this reason, as well as for their association with the Thai monarchy.

²The *devaraja* concept was the theme of a talk on "The Thai Royal Family: Reigns, Ranks, and Customs" given at the Siam Society in Bangkok on 28 August 2003 by historian Mom Bonkopriya Yugala. As she said on this occasion "the concept of *devaraja* or god-king, permeated all aspects of the political and social life of royalty in Thailand from Ayutthaya times to the present. Absorbed from the Khmer Empire, the intricate practices associated with the concept help enhance the sense of awe and majesty surrounding the king and his family." She also discussed its many effects on the royal family including its role in determining the ranks of the queens, consorts, and their offspring and the line of succession to the throne.

Another general reason for the *gajasimha*'s popularity is that it lent itself so readily to new iconographic presentations. In comparison the naga offers relatively little scope for adaptation, evolution, or artistic innovation.

The Egg, The Vessel, the Gem, the crystal ball *luk kaeo* and the golden *luk nimit* all represent the Buddha, Buddhism, and the world. *Gajasimha* mediates their creation and is henceforth their guardian. This is the symbolic significance of the *cho fa* of Thai Buddhist temples. *Gajasimha* only acquired such significance due to the reign of Suryavarman II.

NAMES OF GAJASIMHA

Gajasimha is a Sanskrit term for a mythical four-footed beast having the head of an elephant and the body and limbs of a lion. Often the body is covered with scales. The scales usually are circular on the flanks but plate-like on the abdomen, as in snakes including the mythical multi-headed naga. The limbs have lion-like pentadactyl paws with sharp claws.

Gajasimha (alternative *gajasinha*) combines the Sanskrit words *gaja* (elephant) and *simha* or *sinha* (lion). The specific Thai names *gajasingha* and *kochasi* come directly from this term. The generical Thai name most commonly applied to the *gajasimha* is *mankorn*. This word usually is translated as "dragon." *Mankorn* has been mistakenly confused with Chinese dragons, but its etymology is not Thai or Chinese. It comes from the ancient Sanskrit term *makara*, the name of a mythical sea beast. The ancient Khmer used this Sanskrit term and also its Khmer language version *mankuol* (Michael Vickery, pers. comm., June 2003). The Thai word *mankorn* apparently comes directly from this Khmer word. *Makara* is one of the most important creation symbols in the iconography of Hinduist as well as Buddhist art.³ The Thai term *mankorn*, however, is not used in this sense.

Another term associated in Cambodia and Thailand with *gajasimha* is *kulen*. The antiquity of this term in this context is unclear. It might be an adoption of *kilen* or *quilen*, the Chinese name for a supposedly mythical beast. *Quilen* has had a mixed history in China. On the one hand it has been applied to various kinds of mythological beasts including dragons. On the other it has been applied consistently to a peculiar ox-like beast with a shaggy coat and long shaggy up-lifted tail, and the peculiar habit of looking back over its shoulder. This *quilen* is a popular motif in Chinese ceramics including porcelain dishes. It might be based upon an extinct species of Bovidae.

In Cambodia the name *kulen* is applied to the *gajasimha*, to the Kulen Mountains or Phnom Kulen, and to the *kulen* fruit. These uses may be related. Phnom Kulen are the sacred mountains with the sources of the Great Lake, the ancient Khmer equivalent of the Sea of Milk. As indicated by the Angkor Wat bas-relief of the Churning of the Sea of Milk, *gajasimha* were created when the Sea of Milk was created, hence Phnom Kulen represents the birthplace of the *gajasimha*. The ancient Khmer, like some modern Cambodians, perhaps believed that Phnom Kulen is the natural habitat of the *gajasimha* or *mankuol*. Phnom

³The Cambodia, Laotian, and Thai name for the first month of the year is *mokara* or *makara*. It symbolizes the death of the old year as well as the beginning of a new one. This Eastern of Asian idea or meme for the first month of the year is remarkably similar to the Western or European meme January. January comes from the two-faced Roman god Janus, guardian or keeper of doors and gates. One face welcomes the future, the other rejects the past.

Kulen is famous for having the most delicious *kulen* fruit (Bruno Dagens, pers. comm., 2000). People say that *gajasimha* uses its trunk to feed on the fruit. It also is known as *litchi* (BOULBET, 1979: 112). This is the same as the *lychee* or *lynchee* (*Litchi chinensis*, family Sapindaceae).

Two additional Thai terms relevant to *gajasimha* are *rachasi* and *takto*. *Takto* are similar to *gajasimha* but with smaller trunks and tusks. *Rachasi*—based on Khmer *rajasimha* or “royal lions”—are supposed to have bear (Ursidae) ancestors (TAYLOR, 1994: 118). At least some *rajasimha* and *rachasi* probably devolved from *gajasimha* or *takto*.

Burmese versions of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II have been identified as *naga*, *naka* or *niya* (ANON., 1993: 220, 221, 223, figs.) or as the *pancarupa* (personal observation) or *pinca-yupa* (ANON., 1993: 272). The *pancarupa* or *pinca-yupa* is a mythical beast supposedly unique to Myanmar (but see below).

Many individual *naga* in Hindu and Khmer mythology have their own proper names. I have been unable to find such a name for the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II. Some writers have referred to the *gajasimha* in depictions of Vishnu reclining on the Sea of Milk as “Ananta.” This name should only be applied to the *naga*. For the same reason it is somewhat inappropriate to refer to such depictions as “*Vishnu Anantasayin*.”

THAI KRANOCK

Kranock are flamboyant, highly stylized designs popular in Thai art. They were particularly popular during the Ayutthaya period in the eighteenth century (TAYLOR, 1994). At first glance they all appear decidedly floral, but they have diverse inspirations. Animal as well as plant origins are implicit in various technical terms for these designs. Plant terms include “flame-like leaves” (*lai pa-niang*); “crimped leaf” (*phak kut*); “spiral pattern with leaves of *Hibiscus mutabilis*” (*khan kod bai thet*); and one meaning “*kranock* shaped like rice ears” (*kranock lai ruang khao chanid pleo*). Animal terms include a spiraling form with numerous opposing animal heads (*khan kod na sat*); “heads of swans or geese” (*kan kod hongse*); “three-part swan’s tail shape” (*sam tua haeng hongse*); and “a spray carried by a *naga*” (*cho nak khop*). An animal term of particular interest here is “three-part *kranock* in *naga* shape” (*kranock sam tua lai nak*) (from TAYLOR, 1994). Many *kranock* designs undoubtedly were inspired by plants including lotus, ferns, rice, and *Hibiscus*. Other designs perhaps were inspired by birds. Those usually attributed to *naga* seem to be inspired mainly by *gajasimha* (see TAYLOR, 1994: 72, fig. 10 of *kranock sam tua lai nak*).

Because they are used so redundantly and repetitively, *kranock* and *kranock*-like designs surely are the numerically predominant expressions of the *gajasimha* icon. They lurk in all sorts of places. Royal crowns, dance masks and players masks frequently are decorated with them. The *hocks* or spurs on the legs of a magnificent pair of large bronze *hongse* or swans in the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum in Ayutthaya consist of numerous *sam tua lai nak*. Each of these has three *gajasimha* heads alternately facing forwards and backwards. *Gajasimha kranock* replace more “realistic” *gajasimha* figures on the altarpieces of many Buddha. Statues Several examples of this are figured in CHACHAWANTHIPAKORN (2000).

Particularly spectacular *kranock* that might represent *gajasimha* ornament a number of standing adorned Buddha in the collection of Buddha images in the Grand Palace in Bangkok (see below).

MAKARA COSMIC CREATION DEVICES

Figure 1

The most frequent cosmic creation-destruction icon in Hinduist art is the *makara* arch. Temple gates, doorways and gables, bas-reliefs and statues usually are surrounded or surmounted by such a device. Its full expression consists of a head at either end joined by an arching body. The main part or body of the arch is variously said to be the body of a naga, a lotus stem, or a rainbow. Its shape conforms to the objects passing through it as well as to that of the doorway or gable it adorns. The open-mouthed *makara* heads at other end of the arch may be in the form of a crocodile, lion or *simha*, *gajasimha*, Kirtimukha, Rahu, or other mythical entity. Multiheaded naga or multiheaded *gajasimha* often are depicted issuing from their mouths.

The entire device can be regarded as a multidimensional representation of a single *makara* mouth through which everything that is created or destroyed must pass.

The *makara* arch as a rainbow or “the rainbow of Indra” is discussed by MUS (1937), SNODGRASS (1985), LEFFERTS (1994), and TAYLOR (1994). An explicit representation of the *makara* arch rainbow conveying Bodhisattva between Tavatimsa Heaven and earth is seen in the tabernacle of the Angkorean Khmer Buddha from Chaiyaphum now in the Kimbell Art Museum (Fig. 1). The Buddha in this piece appears to be a portrait of Suryavarman II. The *makara* at the base of the rainbow arch are *gajasimha*.

The *makara* arch as a ladder or staircase is represented in a mural in the Buddhaisawan Chapel in Bangkok (TAYLOR, 1994: 51, fig. 51). Buddha, standing on a lotus pedestal, descends from Tavatimsa Heaven on a triple ladder. The rails of the ladders consist of a snakelike body with *gajasimha* heads extending downwards onto the earth. Their tails project upwards into heaven.

Ancient Khmer cosmic arches or *makara* arches exhibit three basic shapes: inverted U or \cap -shaped; sinuous; and inverted V or Λ -shaped. Pre-Angkorean and the earliest Angkorean arches, of individual statues as well as of lintel bas-reliefs and temple doorways are \cap -shaped. The Pre-Angkorean temple Asram Maharosei has doorways of this shape. The arches surrounding Pre-Angkorean royal statues, such as those of the Phnom Da monarch or *devaraja* are a modified \cap -shaped often referred to as horseshoe-shaped. Some Angkorean *makara* arches are broadly \cap -shaped (Fig. 15). Most Angkorean period arches are sinuous (Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, 9). This shape also is seen in bas-reliefs decorating ancient Indian temples and might be the oldest. The Λ -shaped arches apparently are relatively late. They seem not to occur in India or Pre-Angkorean Cambodia. Thai Theravadan Buddhist temples have Λ -shaped arches. The sides are often concave. Similarly shaped arches were present in ancient Angkorean period palaces and other buildings made of wood, as depicted in bas-reliefs on some Angkorean stone temples. The Angkorean period stone temples of Banteay Srei and Wat Preah Vihear exhibit sinuous and Λ -shaped arches, sometimes in nested series. Λ -shaped arches with straight sides are present at Sule Pagoda in Yangon (Fig. 27).

No ancient Khmer wood buildings have survived. We know about them mainly from Bayon bas-reliefs. One from an internal gallery depicts a two-tiered building, perhaps not a palace but quite elegant (DUMARÇAY, 1998: 16, fig. 6). A *makara* arch on the upper tier is sinuous, while three arches on the lower tier are A-shaped. Several more wood buildings with straight-sided A-shaped *makara* arches are depicted in several more Bayon bas-reliefs (DUMARÇAY & ROYÉRE, 2001). One with a woman selling a fish appears to be a market (ROBERTS, 2002: 169, fig. 27). Another, with a concave arch (IBID: 173, fig. 32) might represent one of the 102 hospitals built during the reign of Jayavarman VII.⁴

The gable wall within the *makara* arches on the sides and ends of many Thai Buddhist temples encloses a blank space with plain white paint. This presumably is due to the influence of Theravada Buddhism. The space may represent *arupaphum*, the realm of nothingness or formlessness. This presumably is an expression of the aniconic tradition that began during the life of Buddha. This may also explain the lack of any inscription, bas-relief or other decoration on the surface of many of the few surviving earlier examples of Thai *sema* (see more on *sema* below).

KIRTIMUKHA

Figures 2

Kirtimukha is a mythological beast or monster that has had a long and continuous vogue in India as well as in Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian countries. Its name is from the Sanskrit words *kirti*, glory, and *mukha*, therefore meaning “face of glory” (MAJUPURIA, 2000: 211).

Legend has it that Shiva created a nameless monster to fight Rahu. The powerful demon king Jalandara had sent Rahu to tell Shiva not to marry Parvati, because only he, Jalandara, was fit to marry her. This so enraged Shiva that a terrifying creature sprang from his eyebrow. It had the face of a lion, with flaming eyes and a jutting tongue, but the body was weak and starving. Shiva asked it to devour Rahu, who pleaded for mercy. The Ever Merciful One pardoned Rahu. After Rahu was pardoned, Shiva’s creature asked for food. He commanded it to eat the flesh of its own limbs and body. It then devoured itself until only the mouth and face were left (MAJUPURIA, 2000: 211). Pleased with the obliging creature, Shiva blessed it with the name *Kirtimukha* and incorporated it into the doorways of his temples so that it could devour all that entered.

The *Kirtimukha* motif spread to Hindu temples throughout India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Java and Bali. In ancient Khmer temples it is often depicted engorging or disgorging Rahu, as at Banteay Chhmar, or a naga, as at Banteay Srei. Rahu and *Kirtimukha* often exchange places at the apex of Indian, Khmer, Lao and Thai *makara*.

During or shortly after Suryavarman II’s reign, Khmer artisans began depicting *Kirtimukha* with *gajasimha* in its mouth. This is observable in bas-reliefs of the Bayon-style temples Ta Som and Banteay Chhmar (Fig. 2). In many doorways of earlier Khmer temples the place of the *Kirtimukha* had been taken by a naga. After the reign of Suryavarman

⁴No existing buildings or ruins have been identified with the hospitals built by Jayavarman VII. Probably they were constructed mainly of wood.



Figure 1. Suryavarman II as Buddha subduing Mara. Tabernacle with *makara* arch or rainbow arch including *gajasingha*. From Chaiyaphum province, Thailand, now in Kimbell Art Museum, Texas (photograph copyright© Kimbell Art Museum, reproduced with permission). The forelimbs of the *gajasingha* are extended forward with the palms upwards in the attitude of *abhaya mudra*, dispelling fear. The hind limbs, with the paws pressed against the animal's sides, do not stand out but they definitely are present.



Figure 2. *Gajasingha* issuing from *makara* mouths on *makara* arches of Bayon-style Mahayana Buddhist temples in Cambodia. Left, Ta Sohm, Angkor Thom. Right, Banteay Chhmar.



Figure 3. Ancient Khmer slab-shaped commemorative stelae. Left, Preangkorean stela, seventh-eighth century, Kandal province, Cambodia, now in National Museum of Cambodia. Middle and right, Angkorean stela, with bas-relief of Ganesh and inscription dated 1024–1025, from War Prah Theat, Kampong Cham, Cambodia, now in Cambodian National Museum. Note correspondence between shape of the upper border of the stela and that of the borders of the *makara* arch enclosing Ganesh. (photos from Dalsheimer, 2001).



Figure 4. Rectangular Angkorean stelae. Left, stela commemorating the birth year of Suryavarman II with Vishnu reclining on *gajasimha* bas-relief, now in Musée Guimet. Right from Samrong, Cambodia, now in the Angkor Conservancy. Note nib or nipple at the apex of the accolade on top of the stela. Each of the four sides of these stelae represents a *makara* arch (see text for explanation) (photos by author).



Figure 5. Lintel with bas-relief of *Vishnu Anantasayin*, with Vishnu reclining on the naga Ananta, Wat Chi Sao, Cambodia. Only the lower left-hand of three large pieces is actually in place. The other two pieces are lying nearby on the ground. The pieces were photographed separately by the author and then pieced together electronically by Manu Wintavorn.



Figure 6. *Vishnu Anantasayin* in a remote ravine near southwest escarpment of Phnom Kulen (photo by author).



Figure 7. Lintel bas-relief of Suryavarman II as Vishnu reclining on *gajasimha*, Preah Khan, Angkor Thom (photo by author).



Figure 8. Bas-relief lintel of Vishnu reclining on a *gajasimha*, Wat Phanom Ta Mau. This temple, now in utter ruins, supposedly dates back to as early as the sixth century. Whether it originally had any bas-reliefs is unclear. Only a few bas-reliefs are present today (photo by author).

II its place was taken increasingly by the *gajasimha*. This prepared the way for numerous later manifestations of the *gajasimha* and its emergence as the most important *makara* figure in Southeast Asia.

THAI *SEMA* AND KHMER COMMEMORATIVE STELAE

Representation of the space or void inside the *makara* arch by a correspondingly-shaped physical object is a widespread but little studied theme in Southeast Asian art. It finds expression in such diverse objects as ancient Khmer stelae, Thai *sema* or *bai sema*, the hood of the naga, votive tablets, amulets, fans, screens, door panels, gable boards, decorative petals of lotus flowers and leaves of the *bodhi* tree, and so on. We shall discuss briefly here only the *sema* and some Khmer stelae.

Thai *bai sema* or *sema* (pronounced “see-mah”) generally are known as “temple boundary markers.” They are slab-shaped stele-like stones typically placed at the four ordinal points on the consecrated ground in the immediate vicinity of a temple. Their surfaces may or may not be ornamented. They do not bear inscriptions.

The Siam Society in Bangkok held a day-long symposium on Buddhist art and architecture on 1 November 2003. There were two formal presentations on *bai sema*. A panelist suggested that *sema* are inspired by the *linga*. He noted the *linga*-like shape of their outline and also a pair of *glans*-shaped incisions separated by a frenum-like *gam* or core incision present in some examples. This hypothesis is weakened by two observations. First, except for the outline, the shape of *sema* is not like that of *linga*. Second, the *glans*-shaped incisions appear in *sema* only at a relatively late date. A more general objection is that traditionally only one *linga* is installed in a temple, and that usually it is installed in the center of the temple or of its main tower.

A better hypothesis for the origin of *sema* may be that it is a physical representation of the open space in a *makara* arch. The shape of *sema* conforms very well to that of many simple *makara* arch openings. The shape of early Thai *sema* is virtually identical to that of the slab-shaped or stele-like background stone in various ancient Khmer statues. In the Khmer statues, such as one of Surya at Koh Ker, they certainly represent *makara* devices. Some Thai Buddha statues have similar stone backgrounds with shapes like the inner opening of *makara* arches. Interpretation of these backgrounds as *makara* cosmic creation devices is supported by the presence of *makara* heads, often in the shape of *gajasimha*, at the base of each side. Similar *makara* devices are present on *sema*. These have been referred to as “feet” or “spurs”. If the present interpretation of *sema* as *makara* devices is correct a proper Thai term for them might be *naksadung*. While naga- or *gajasimha*-like feet or spurs only appear in *sema* of a relatively late date this may be due to omission or suppression of these devices in the earlier *sema*.

Resemblance of the shape of numerous ancient Khmer stelae with that of the space formed by the *makara* arch is very strong (see figures of stelae in DALSHIMER, 2001: 202–210). The shapes of these Pre-Angkorean and Angkorean stelae is also very similar to that observed in some Thai *sema*. The six *makara*-shaped stelae figured by Dalsheimer all bear bas-reliefs and lengthy inscriptions. Five of them are Hinduist and one is Buddhist. The Buddhist and two of the Hinduist bas-reliefs are themselves enclosed in *makara* arches similar in shape to the upper outline of the stelae (Fig. 3). The stelae date from the seventh

or eighth to the eleventh centuries. These observations on stelae and *sema* support the hypothesis that the *makara* arch is a Buddhist as well as a Hinduist cosmic creation device. This idea fits well with the placement of *sema* surrounding an ordination hall or *bot*. Modifications in the upper outline of *sema* may be compared to comparable variations in the shapes of the openings of Khmer *makara* arches.

Some important ancient Khmer stelae are rectangular rather than slab-shaped. They are three-dimensional representations of *makara* arches in the same sense as the two-dimensional representations observed in the slab-shaped stelae and in *sema*. Three examples may be cited here.

The first is a stele commemorating 1098, the year of Suryavarman II's birth (ROBERTS, 2002) (Fig. 4 left). Inset on the top of this stele are four Vishnuite *makara* arches, one for each of the four cardinal directions. One of them encloses Vishnu reclining on a *gajasimha*.

The second example, also Vishnuite and perhaps from the reign of Suryavarman II, has lengthy inscriptions (as yet untranslated) on three sides and a bas-relief of Vishnu standing on the shoulders of Garuda on the fourth side (Fig. 4 right). The top of the stele, hitherto described as an accolade, represents *makara* arches opening in the four cardinal directions. At the very apex of the steel, at the meeting point of the four *makara* arches, is a single small nib or nipple. This is essentially the same as the apical nibs or nipples present in many ancient Khmer stelae and in the great majority of *sema*. It is now in the Angkor Conservancy (DCA no. 21/92, from Samrong, Angkor Thom district).

The third and last example is the "stele of a thousand Buddhas" recently excavated from the Bayon-style Buddhist temple Banteay Kdei (ISHIZAWA, 2001; ISHIZAWA AND MARUI, 2002: 214, fig. 20).

Returning to the Thai *sema*, it seems that some of them have a very complex history. It has been suggested that many of the simple early *sema*, with little or no surface decoration, were modified by later artisans to produce more decorative styles as they became popular (Khun Pithaya Bunnag in a talk on *sema* at the Siam Society, 1 November 2003). Some of these early Thai *sema* might have been produced by planing off inscriptions, bas-reliefs and other designs from Angkorean or pre-Angkorean stelae. This hypothesis is weakened by the observation that while Khmer artisans usually produced only a single commemorative or commendatory stele at a time, the Thai artisans usually produced eight bai-sema at a time. Making several *bai sema* from a single slab-like stele would be impossible, but it would be possible from a single rectangular or oblong stele.

VISHNU ANANTASAYIN

Figures 5–6

In classic Indian and early Khmer versions of Vishnu reclining on the Sea of Milk, Vishnu is shown reclining on the back of the naga Ananta (Fig. 5). Such scenes are called "*Vishnu Anantasayin*". They include early Khmer versions in the mountainous headwaters of streams flowing into Cambodia's Great Lake from Kobal Spean and Phnom Kulen (BOULBET & DAGENS, 1973; Fig. 6). They presumably were placed in these sites to insure that Vishnu's dreaming would keep the streams flowing, not only to water the lake but also the *baray* or reservoirs built by Pre-Angkorean and Angkorean kings. Other Khmer *Vishnu Anantasayin* bas-reliefs are documented and figured by BÉNISTI, 1965.

VISHNU RECLINING ON THE *GAJASIMHA*

Figures 7–9

The most outstanding iconographic innovation in the history of Angkor civilization probably is the replacement of the naga Ananta in scenes of *Vishnu Anantasayin* by a *gajasimha* (BÉNISTI, 1965; ROBERTS, 2002; 2003a) (Figs. 7–9). A list of images of Vishnu reclining on a *gajasimha* is provided in the Appendix. One of the objectives of the present article is to provide documentation for the claim made in previous papers by me that this innovation was a product of the reign of Suryavarman II, the Khmer king who built Angkor Wat. Before continuing with the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II and its history after Suryavarman II, a brief account of Cham *gajasimha* and earlier Khmer *gajasimha* is in order.

CHAM *GAJASIMHA*

Figure 10

The ‘elephant lions’ (*gajasimha*), shown sometimes as vehicles of the gods, were always favored by the Cham sculptors but these mythical beasts are almost unknown in other Southeast Asian art traditions.

—EMMANUEL GUILLON, 2001: 152

The ancient Khmer *gajasimha* apparently has not been recognized as such or called by that name until recently (ROBERTS, 2002; 2003a). When previously illustrated or discussed, it usually has been identified as a *makara* (COEDS, 1913: 24), or as a naga, *kulen*, or dragon (BHATTACHARYA, 1961; BÉNISTI, 1965).

Guillon’s statement about the relative absence of *gajasimha* in Southeast Asian art traditions other than that of the Cham is quoted here not to discredit this distinguished scholar, but to praise him. Such bold statements are like good hypotheses (ROBERTS, 2002: 138). They challenge us to test them. Is the statement true? If so, under what historical circumstances did the situation arise? It turns out that the statement is not true. The *gajasimha* is a significant element in the art traditions of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. Why has it been overlooked?

The Khmer, Laotian, Thai, and Myanmar *gajasimha* have not been recognized previously as such probably because they are so different in appearance from the *gajasimha* of Indian and Cham traditions. The former are more lion-like in overall appearance, including the head, while the latter have a more elephant-like head and sometimes a more elephantine body. The former have small heads, slender bodies, and shortened limbs (or no limbs at all). The latter have large heads, relatively massive bodies, and larger, longer limbs.

In the Cham and Khmer *gajasimha* these distinctions are taken to extremes. Thus in Cham *gajasimha* (GUILLON, 2001: 135) the head, body and limbs are massively elephantine. The head is entirely elephant-like, with a prominent bump on top, a massive upturned trunk, and short, thick tusks. There is no beard. The body is extremely short and stout. There are no scales. The limbs are stout and columnar like those of the elephant. The only features identifying the Cham *gajasimha* as a *gajasimha* rather than as an elephant or *gaja* are the massive lion-like paws and claws. Perhaps the Chams and the Khmers intentionally made their respective *gajasimha* as different from each other as they could manage.

Cham and Khmer *gajasimha* share one important character: a triumphantly erect elephant-like trunk. This feature has played a remarkable role in the later development and spread of *gajasimha* symbolism in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. With the passing of the Cham, *gajasimha* makes no further appearances in Vietnam.

KHMER GAJASIMHA BEFORE THE REIGN OF SURYAVARMAN II

Figures 11–12

The earliest Khmer *gajasimha*, barely recognizable as such, apparently are those on seventh-century temples at Sambor Prei Kuk and Tuol Ang. They occur as Kirtimukha at the ends of *makara* gables or lintels (see DALSHEIMER, 2001: 184–187). Their body-less figures consist only of the head, or the head and forelimbs. In the classical Kirtimukha of India the head usually is entirely lion-like or more lion-like than anything else (MAJUPURIA, 2000: 11), and there are no elephantine features. In these Sambor Prei Kuk and Tuol Ang Kirtimukha, however, the heads have a rising elephant-like trunk and short elephant-like tusks. I am not aware of *gajasimha*-like Kirtimukha in Indian or Cham art, but they persist in later Khmer, Thai, Javanese, and Burmese traditions.

The Khmer *gajasimha* appears in its full form perhaps for the first time in the ninth century, at the ends of a lintel on a temple of the East Mebon (Fig. 11 left, middle). This well-executed sculpture, still in near perfect condition, shows the *gajasimha* mounted by a king or god. The head is distinctly more elephant- than lion-like, with a large upturned trunk and short, stout tusks. It differs from later Khmer *gajasimha*, identified here with the reign of Suryavarman II, in having the head and body more massive, the body devoid of scales, and the limbs better developed. It is altogether a handsome and striking beast.

The mounted *gajasimha* of the East Mebon just referred to is also of interest because its head evidently served, down to virtually the last detail, as the model for a splendid Kirtimukha *makara* end-piece from Prasat Sok Kraup, northwest of Phnom Bakheng (end of ninth or early tenth century). This piece is displayed in the Musée Guimet (Fig. 12 right). It is very similar to the Pre-Angkorean *gajasimha* Kirtimukha mentioned above.

A third kind of ancient Khmer *gajasimha* predating the Angkor Wat period (i.e., the reign of Suryavarman II) may be cited from the Baphuon period of Khmer art. The Baphuon itself probably was constructed mainly or entirely during the reign of Udayadityavarman II, 1050–1066. A *gajasimha* bas-relief occurs on the main entranceway. It shows a distinctive large-headed crowned *gajasimha* engaging a *simha* (Fig. 12, left). A very similar Baphuon-style *gajasimha*, this one mounted by Kubera on a highly ornamented saddle, from Prasat Phanom Rung, is now in the National Museum Phimai (Fig 12, right). Both these *gajasimha* differ from the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II in having large, crowned heads, no beards, and scaleless bodies. This Kubera is not a likeness of Suryavarman II, who is not found mounted on his *gajasimha* in this posture.

Additional Baphuon-style *gajasimha* are likely to be found when it is possible to explore the newly reconstructed Baphuon temple more extensively and at remote temples with Baphuon-style reliefs such as Prasat Khna Sen Kaeo (Pascal Royère, pers. commun June 2003) and Ta Muen Thom, situated in Thailand near the Cambodian border on one of the principal passes through the Dangreks (FREEMAN, 1998: 145–150). A search for *gajasimha* among the few remaining Baphuon-style bas-reliefs of the Western Mebon



Figure 9. Banteay Samre, Vishnu reclining on *gajasimha*. Left, bas-relief on lintel. Lotus arising from Vishnu's navel in the form of the columnar Mt. Meru in some versions of the Churning of the Sea of Milk. Right, bas-relief on pilaster (photos by author).



Figure 10. Cham *gajasimha*, Thap Mam style, about 12th century, in Da Nang Museum, Vietnam (from Guillon, 2001).



Figure 11. Early Angkorean *gajasimha*. Left and center, East Mebon lintel. Right, *gajasimha*-type Kirtimukha, Prasat Sok Kraup (now in Musée Guimet) (photos by author).



Figure 12. Baphuon style *gajasimha*, ca. middle eleventh century. Left, bas-relief on Baphuon main entranceway (photo by author). Right, bas-relief from Prasat Phanom Rung, Thailand, now in National Museum Phimai (photo from NMP website).



Figure 13. Angkorean balustrades. Left, classical naga balustrade, Beng Melea. Middle, classical naga balustrade, Wat Chu San south of Phnom Penh. Right, Garuda-*gajasimha* balustrade, Wat Banon near Battambang. In the latter Garuda is shown with his arms extended forward in the attitude of *abhayamudra*. He is standing on a three-headed naga figures but the heads at his sides are *gajasimha* (photos by author).



Figure 14. Scene enclosed by *gajasimha makara* arch, Banteay Chhmar. Kama has shot a love arrow through the necks of a pair of sarus cranes (photos by author). The enlargement on the right was generated electronically. The damaged heads of the two live cranes were replaced by copies of the undamaged head of the crane decoy. Kamadeva's missing head was replaced by a copy of the Kamadeva head from the Banteay Chhmar bas-relief of the marriage of Kaundinya and Soma (Fig. 15). For detail of *gajasimha* see Fig. 2, right).



Figure 15. Scene enclosed by *gajasimha makara* arch, Banteay Chhmar. Marriage of Kaundinya and Soma. Kama is about to shoot a love-arrow into Soma's neck (photo by author).



Figure 16. Glazed ceramic *cho fa* in the form of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II. Left, provenance unknown, now in Thailand National Museum Ramkhamhaeng (from a National Museum postcard). Middle, probably produced in Sawankalok in the fourteenth or fifteenth century (from RICHARDS, 1995). Right, provenance unknown, Thailand National Museum Bangkok (photo from RINGIS, 1995). These *gajasimha* with their highly ornamented manes resemble the *gajasimha* of the late fourteenth century Buddha tabernacle of Wat Mahatat in Phitsanulok. The *gajasimha* on the left and in middle have the *luk kao* or crystal ball in their mouths and the one on the right has it in his brain.



Figure 17. Bird-beak *cho fa*. Wat Benjamabopit, Bangkok (photo by author).

temple was unsuccessful (a small bas-relief with a Suryavarman II type *gajasimha* found at the West Mebon site is documented by a photograph in archives of EFEO in Paris; ROBERTS, 2002a: 152, 156, figs. 12–13).

The examples just mentioned from Sambor Prei Kuk, Tuol Ang, East Mebon, Prasat Sok Kraup, and Baphuon and Prasat Phnom Rung are the only pre-Angkorean and Angkorean Khmer *gajasimha* known to me that clearly predate the distinctive *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II. They all differ from *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II in structural details and also usually in the mythological context in which they are displayed. While the Suryavarman II *gajasimha* persisted, it seems that no new Angkorean versions of *gajasimha* arose after his reign.

THE *GAJASIMHA* OF SURYAVARMAN II DURING HIS REIGN

The most notable early manifestation of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II is in bas-reliefs of Suryavarman II as Vishnu reclining on the Sea of Milk. As he reclines on the back of a *gajasimha* with an elongate body, he dreams the creation of the Sea of Milk, the birth of Brahma, and the rest of the cosmos. The implication presumably is that Suryavarman II created a new universal order (and a new religion). His attainments included unification of the formerly divided Khmer empire under a single monarch and the inauguration of a religion in which Shivaism, Vishnuism, and Buddhism were combined (ROBERTS, in prep.). Bas-reliefs of Vishnu reclining on the *gajasimha* are listed in the Appendix. Vishnu reclining on *gajasimha* are known only from Cambodia. They all are assigned tentatively to the reign of Suryavarman II. Since they evidently are all done in Angkor Wat style they tentatively are all assigned to the Angkor Wat period. In every one of them Vishnu is wearing the same kind of ornate Angkor Wat style conical *mukuta* displayed by most Vishnu statues of Suryavarman II.⁵ So far as I am aware, there are no representations of Suryavarman II as Vishnu reclining on a naga.

The *gajasimha* on which Suryavarman II reclines while he dreams the creation is readily distinguished from the multi-headed Ananta by its single, bearded, lion-like head, elephant-like trunk, and four limbs with pentadactyl claw-bearing paws. In several well-preserved examples all of these attributes are present. Other examples, on the Bakong or on Wat Baset (BÉNISTI, 1965, fig. 15) are badly damaged or broken but enough remains to be sure of their identification as *gajasimha*.

All depictions of Vishnu reclining on the back of a *gajasimha* probably are representations of Suryavarman II. A number of bas-reliefs depict the naga being pushed aside or pushed into the Sea of Milk. This may symbolize the end of the old age or *kalpa* and the initiation of a new one by Suryavarman II.

A miniature figure of Suryavarman II mounted on his *gajasimha* decorates a stele or stone pillar commemorating the year of his birth (ROBERTS, 2002b, fig. 2) (Fig. 4 left). This artifact is displayed in the Musée Guimet in Paris.

⁵The conical *mukuta* seen in all statues of Suryavarman II as Buddha and most of his statues as Vishnu apparently represents Mt. Meru. The cylindrical *mukuta* he wears as Shiva and Brahma apparently represents the *linga*.

Numerous juvenile Suryavarman II *gajasimha* are present in the Sea of Milk in the Angkor Wat bas-relief of the Churning of the Sea of Milk in which Vishnu is represented by Suryavarman II (ROBERTS, 2003a, fig. 6). Their juvenile condition is indicated by the shortness of their elephant-like trunk, beard, and body. Many of them, like the fish and other animals in the scene, have been cut in half by Vishnu's sword (ROBERTS, 2003a:145, fig. 7). A single *gajasimha* of this type occurs in the naval battle scene bas-relief of the Bayon (ROBERTS, 2003a: 166, fig. 21).

Ancient Khmer boats of all kinds, including but not limited to war boats, often had decorated prows. Many such boats are depicted in bas-reliefs of the Bayon and Banteay Chhmar. Frequently encountered prow devices include the lion or *simha*, Garuda, and naga. Only a single instance of a boat prow decorated by *gajasimha* has come to my attention. This is in the uppermost pleasure boat in the Angkor Wat bas-relief known as "fête nautique des Dvaravati." The central pair in the boat, sitting under a splendid canopy, are engaged in a game of chess. Since the *gajasimha*, although somewhat damaged, is clearly of the kind associated with Suryavarman II, I have suggested he is represented as one of the chess-players (ROBERTS, 2003a: 151, 153, fig. 10).

Several other notable manifestations of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II involve replacement of naga, or its appearance in situations in which naga also occur. In other instances the *gajasimha* has replaced *Kirtimukha*. These changes are exemplified and discussed below.

GARUDA-GAJASIMHA BALUSTRADES

Figure 13

Balustrades are stone railings placed along walkways, causeways, or staircases. In South India they are often associated with staircases. Huge balustrades in the form of naga are unique to ancient Khmer art (Fig. 13 left, middle). Particularly spectacular examples occur beside the entrances to the Bayon and along the causeway to the main entrance to Angkor Wat.

Khmer balustrades commonly occur in other situations, notably on both sides of numerous bridges spanning rivers along the royal roads throughout the kingdom. A stunning and apparently unique pair of semicircular naga balustrades completely encircles the central monument of Neak Pean.

Earlier balustrades, for which ancient Khmer art is famous, are all naga balustrades, with the multi-headed hood and body of the naga. The main differences involve the representation of the naga faces. Some balustrades, such as those at Wat Phra Vihear, have extremely naturalistic heads clearly based upon living cobras. In others the head is more or less anthropomorphic.

A distinctive type of balustrade, termed "Garuda-*gajasimha* balustrade", apparently originated during the reign of Suryavarman II (ROBERTS, 2003a) (Fig. 13 right). Garuda-*gajasimha* balustrades underwent a great deal of experimentation resulting in numerous varieties. The central figure is always a Garuda. In some of the balustrades Garuda is standing on the head of a naga. In others the naga is absent. The figures flanking Garuda, previously identified as naga, are in fact entirely or mainly *gajasimha*, with elephant-like snouts and short beards. Whereas in the old naga balustrades the number of naga heads,

disposed on a single hood, is almost always either five or seven, the number of *gajasimha* heads in Garuda-*gajasimha* balustrades is highly variable.

In some images Garuda is depicted with its arms raised above its head. These have been referred to as *Garuda atlantide*, in reference to the Greek god Atlas who holds up the world. This kind is often seen holding up an arch, wall, or temple. In some Garuda-*gajasimha* figures, the Garuda is shown with its arms extending forward over the shoulders of a pair of *gajasimha* with the hands held upwards in the Buddhist *mudra* or hand gesture of protection, *abhayamudra* (dispelling fear). This apparently first occurs in images produced during the reign of Suryavarman II. This may be the earliest Khmer visualization of a Buddhist role for Garuda.

GAJASIMHA AND KAMA AT BANTEAY CHHMAR

Figures 14–15

The magnificent Bayon-style temple of Banteay Chhmar in northwest Cambodia has two fine *gajasimha-makara* lintels featuring Kama, the Hindu Cupid or God of Love. In one of them Lord Kama or Kamadeva has just shot a love arrow through the necks of a pair of Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*), thus mating them for life. He has employed a decoy made from the head of a crane to sneak up on them. Brahma, Lord of Creation, is looking on while being serenaded by a pair of musicians (Fig. 14). Three-headed *gajasimha* emerge from a *makara*-mouth on each end of the lintel.

In the second Banteay Chhmar lintel featuring Kamadeva the central figure is a bearded brahmin. The scene represents the marriage of the Indian brahmin Kaundinya with the nagi Princess Soma (Fig. 15). This is a foundation myth of Khmer civilization. On Kaundinya's right side are the two musicians similar to those attending Brahma in the bas-relief described above. On his left side Kama is about to shoot an arrow into Soma's neck. Her expanded headdress in the form of a multi-headed naga-hood identifies her as a *nagi* or female naga. The marriage of Kaundinya and Soma also appears in a Bayon bas-relief (ROBERTS, 2003a: 160–163, figs. 16–17).

This Banteay Chhmar bas-relief clears up some confusion in earlier accounts of the Kaundinya-Soma marriage pointed out by BRIGGS (1951:26). According to a mid-seventh century Cham inscription, Kaundinya drives his spear into the ground and then marries Soma. In an earlier Chinese account of the story, Kaundinya shoots an arrow from his bow, frightening Soma, who then marries him. As suggested by Briggs, the original story probably involved an arrow rather than a spear. The present bas-reliefs indicate that the arrow came not from the bow of Kaundinya but from that of Kamadeva. An interesting point is that Kama shoots his arrow, not into the heart as in western myths of Eros and Cupid, but into the neck.

The large continuing theft of Khmer artifacts, often resulting in defacement and other damage to bas-reliefs, has been particularly severe at Banteay Chhmar (NAGASHIMA, 2002). My photograph of the two Banteay Chhmar bas-reliefs described here were taken on 15 May 2002. The photo of the bas-relief of Kama shooting an arrow into the sarus cranes documents the recent loss of the splendid head of the Brahmin musician nearest Brahma. The head can be seen in a photograph of the same bas-relief taken only a few years earlier by Michael Freeman (JACQUES & FREEMAN, 2000, fig. on p. 241). Further damage to these

and other Banteay Chhmar bas-reliefs is likely unless adequate measures are taken to protect them.

PAYANAK OF LAOS AND THAILAND

Modification of the *gajasimha* into the elongate, limbless and snake-like or fish-like *payanak* of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand has been documented recently (ROBERTS, 2003b). That paper describes how the *payanak* became identified with the naga and took over much of naga mythology or folklore, and how it also came to be identified with a living fish species, the giant oceanic oarfish *Regalecus glesne*. A similar but apparently independent modification of the Burmese *gajasimha* or *pancarupa* into a snake-like beast, mentioned in that paper, is documented below.

THAILAND'S CHO FA

Figures 16–17

Cho fa: a decorative architectural element which sits on the roof ridge at the gable top. It is gracefully curving in form and ends in a pointed spire. It usually represents the 'naga' head with a distinctive beak.

—CHOTI KALANAMITR, 1993: 81

The definition of *cho fa* by Choti Kalanamitr cited above captures the purported essence of the origin and significance of the apical finial of Thai temples. Scholars have conflated the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II with the naga. The only change in the definition needed to bring Kalanamitr's definition into line with the hypothesis presented here is to change the last sentence to read "it usually represents the elephant-like trunk or else the mane of the *gajasimha* [of Suryavarman II]." It may be noted that Kalanamitr's 1993 definition basically agrees with the more extensive discussion of *cho fa* by another Thai scholar (KRAIRIKSH, 1987: 12–13).⁶

The so-called "naga" on the lower parts of the barge rails of Thai temples, whether single or multiple-headed, nearly always are representations of the *gajasimha* or of its derivative form the *payanak* (ROBERTS, 2003a, b; see also KRAIRIKSH, 1987: 13).

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries large numbers of glazed ceramic *gajasimha* finials were produced in kilns in Sukhothai and Sawankalok. These finials were standardized versions of the *gajasimha* (Fig. 16). They evidently were based upon the *gajasimha* of the fourteenth century Wat Mahatat Buddha statue of Phitsnulok. It is not known whether they were placed only as lateral finials (antefixes) or also as apical finials or *cho fa* on

⁶Another definition from Kalanamitr's dictionary merits clarification. The meaning of *sum na nang* is given as "the niche whose gable is gently curving and fashioned after the coronet of royalty." The similarity in shape of the opening of the coronet that frames the royal face and the opening of the *makara*-device of the gables of ancient temples is real. It is the shape of the crown, however, that is based on the shape of the frontal opening of the *makara*-device (ROBERTS, 2003a: 143). This shape also is observed in some headdresses in Thai *khon* theatre.

contemporary Thai temples. This version of the *makara* seems to have served as the starting point or inspiration for nearly all subsequent Thai *cho fa*.

There are certain deviants or innovative variants of the *cho fa* leading away from its historical origin (Fig. 17). Such include hybrid versions in which the elephant-like trunk of the *gajasimha* is combined with a *deva*, a Garuda, or a *hatsadaling* ("the bird carrying the mark of an elephant") (PUNJABHAN & NA NAKHONPHANOM, 1992). Each of these have their own story to tell, but they represent a minor branch of the main story of the *gajasimha* presented here. They should not be misinterpreted as indicating the origin of *cho fa* from a bird such as a swan or goose or from Garuda because their first appearance is much later.

Cho fa such as those illustrated in Figure 17 are so stylized or abstract that viewed by themselves it is impossible to determine their origin. They could represent a bird, Garuda, a serpent, an elephant, or any number of other things. But the point to be made—and it must be stressed—is that the finials include a large number of intergraded forms linking definite images of *gajasimha* to the most extreme *cho fa*. There is no comparable series of finial intergrades linking *cho fa* to birds, Garuda, *naga sensu stricto*, or to other things.

THAI AND LAO GAJANAGA

Figure 18

The new 'neosanskrit' term "*gajanaga*" may be employed for a small number of Lao and Thai images in which a more or less realistic elephant head is wedded to a snake body. A stunning example occurs in a Lao temple on the banks of the Mekong just upstream from Vientiane (Fig. 18).

A *gajanaga* is depicted on a black and gold lacquer cabinet in the National Museum Bangkok (TAYLOR, 1994: 29, fig. 235). A *gajanaga* forming a *cho fa* on a temple in northern Thailand is illustrated by FREEMAN, 2001: 29, fig. 25).

Gajanaga are included here because they evidently represent the association of the elephant and the naga in the minds of the artisans who made them. The naga and the elephant do enjoy an ancient historical association. In India the name naga may mean either naga or elephant. In Thailand and Laos the association is likely to date from the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II.

TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA

Figures 19–21

Bangkok's early eighteenth century Wat Phra Kaeo or Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the temple complex associated with it has thousands of roof and gable finials, pediments, and other ornaments with naga-like decorations. These generally are referred to as "naga" but virtually all are *gajasimha* or derived from *gajasimha*. Classical naga, based upon the cobra, apparently are absent at Wat Phra Kaeo. The transition from obvious *gajasimha* finials, with elephant-like trunk, elephant-like tusks and beard, to more abstract *cho fa* representing the elephant-like trunk or the mane of the *gajasimha* is evident in many places.

A spectacular array of *cho fa* and *gajasimha* occurs on the roof of the *mondop* or “Repository of the Canon of Buddhism.” (Fig. 19). This and similar displays elsewhere may represent the heavenly waters produced by the naga flowing down the slopes of Mt Meru.

The base of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha is surrounded by gilded statues of “Garuda triumphant over naga” (Fig. 20 left). Such Garuda, typically holding the tail of a slain naga in each hand, is part of the ancient Khmer and Cham Hinduist artistic tradition. In Khmer examples (e.g., surrounding Preah Khan of Angkor) the naga are of the classical multi-headed cobra kind, with separate bodies and separate multi-headed cobra hoods. In the Wat Phra Kaeo Garuda the two “naga” bodies arise from a single multi-headed hood with *gajasimha* heads lying between Garuda’s feet (Fig. 20 right).

The guardian statues of Wat Phra Kaeo include *yaek* or demons, *kinnari*, and other mythical creatures ornamented with *gajasimha*-shaped *kranock* (Fig. 21 left, middle).

The richly symbolic *sema* of Wat Phra Kaeo are unusual in several respects (Fig. 21 right). The shape is suggestive of the hood of the naga Mucilinda in images of Buddha protected by the traditional naga. It also suggests the shape of the Bodhi tree. The feet are multiheaded *gajasimha*. Their bodies form a *makara* arch or Indra’s rainbow ascending to the top of the *sema*, at the apex of which is Mt Meru.

Bai sema stylistically similar to those of Wat Phra Kaeo are at Wat Bovarnevés, Bangkok (INDORF, 2000: 51, fig. 21); Wat Rajnadda, Bangkok (*op cit.*: 50, fig. 18); and Wat Nam Plum, Ayuthhaya (*op cit.*: 50, fig. 19). In these also the so-called “naga” are *gajasimha*.

The ancestry of Wat Phra Kaeo’s “naga”—including those populating the *mondop* roof, held in Gartuda’s talons, on the *sema*, and many others—can be traced back through the fifteenth and sixteenth century ceramic *gajasimha* finials of Sukhothai and Sawannkalok and the late fourteenth century *gajasimha* of the Phitsanulok Wat Mahatat Jinabuddha to the *gajasimha* of the reign of Suryavarman II.

GAJASIMHA IN THE THAI RAMAGIEN

Figure 22

Ramagien is the innovative Thai version of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. It is regarded as a parable of the lives of Thailand’s kings or *Rama*. *Gajasimha* appear as part of the design of the masks worn by the players. The masks are *makara* devices surrounding the player’s face. When a player dons the mask he or she changes from their own person into the *persona dramatis*. When the performance ends and the mask is removed, the player becomes himself or herself again. A mask of the demon Mankornkan (remember that “mankorn” is a Thai word for *makara*) is decorated with a *gajasimha* (Fig. 22).

Among the demons in *Ramagien* is one Tosakiriwan, son of the demon chief Tosagan and an elephant. Tosakiriwan’s somewhat human face, as depicted in a Wat Khra Kaeo panel painting celebrating the *Ramagien*, has a small upturned elephant-like snout and *makara*-shaped mouth with a small tusk at each corner. The impression of *gajasimha* is supported by *gajasimha kranock* figures adorning his crown and other paraphernalia.

BANGKOK'S ROYAL BARGES

Figure 23

The graceful royal barges housed in the Pinklao Royal Barge museum on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya include three with *gajasimha*-type "naga" on their prows. These are the "*Anantanagaraja*", "*Narai Song Suban Garuda*", and "*Garuda Het Hern*". As with the Wat Phra Kaeo *gajasimha* "naga", the ancestry of the royal barge *gajasimha* naga can be traced back to the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II.

In *Anantanagaraja* the elephant-like trunks of the multiheaded *gajasimha* naga has an ascending curved device on the snout comparable in shape to the apical finials or *cho fa* of many Thai Buddhist temples (Fig. 23 left). The *gajasimha* naga held in the hands and feet of the *Narai Song Suban Garuda* have small elephant-like trunks (Fig. 23 right). The *Narai Song Suban* of Rama 9, constructed in 1996, goes back to a prototype built during the reign of Rama III. The prow of the prototype is displayed in the Royal Barge Museum. The elephantine shape of the *gajasimha* snout is very clearly portrayed in this older example. The *Anantanagaraja* goes back even earlier.

GAJASIMHA AND THAI BUDDHA STATUES

Figure 24

Gajasimha are involved with Thai Buddha statues in two main ways. First, they often appear at the ends of *makara* arches within which the Buddha image appears. Second, *gajasimha* heads have replaced the heads in some Thai statues of Buddha Mucilenda.

One of the earliest known appearances of *gajasimha makara* in connection with Thai Buddhas is in the arcature investing the Jinabuddha of Wat Mahathat in Phitsanulok (ROBERTS, 2003b: 217, fig. 6). This is thought to have been made around 1363–1369 (WOODWARD, 1997: 143). The *gajasimha* on either end of its *makara* arch are quite different from the highly ornate *gajasimha* in the *makara* arch of the Khmer-style Chaiyaphum enthroned Buddha mentioned above. They resemble *gajasimha* ceramic finials produced in Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, and Sawankalok during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. This and numerous later Thai Buddha statues invested by *gajasimha makara* arches are illustrated in CHACHAWANTHIPAKORN (2000).

As noted above, the *gajasimha* did not replace the naga in any Angkorean Khmer statues of Buddha Mucilenda. While most Thai Buddha Mucilenda statues exhibit naga heads clearly based upon classical cobra-like naga (Fig. 24 left), fair numbers have been produced in which the heads clearly are those of *gajasimha* (Fig. 24 right). Several others are illustrated in CHACHAWANTHIPAKORN (2000).

The collection of Buddha images in the Grand Palace in Bangkok (DISKUL, 1992; HOSKIN, 1994) includes two miniature Buddha Mucilenda protected by *gajasimha*. One is the Buddha protected by naga image in the attitude for Saturday (DISKUL, 1992; HOSKIN, 1994: 224). According to tradition it was consecrated by King Rama VI on Saturday, 1 January 1880. The richly bejewelled seven-headed *gajasimha*, a separate piece from the Buddha image, is 11.8 cm high. Its seven coils surround the Buddha to shoulder height to protect him from the rising waters of the flood created by Mara. The *gajasimha* nature of its heads is indicated by several characters. There is a small elephant-like trunk on the tip

of the snout. An elaborate mane rises well above the head. An up-turned elephant-like tusk arises from each side of the mouth. The goatee-like beard of *gajasimha* is present. There are also mammal-shaped earlobes and a simple (not forked) tongue. This piece is located on the Third Floor of *Phra Thinang Chakri Maha Prasat*.

A second miniature Buddha Mucilinda in the Grand Palace collection has a seven-headed *gajasimha* naga 7.8 cm high made of gold embedded with diamonds and other gems (HOSKIN, 1994: 260). The crystal Buddha is in Lanna style. Its *gajasimha* was made in the Third Reign of the Bangkok period. It is located in *Ho Phra Sulalai Phiman*.

Gajasimha might also be involved with Thai Buddha statues as *kranock*. Large and highly elaborate *kranock* devices adorn the crowns and gowns of numerous richly adorned standing Buddha images produced in the early Bangkok period. These statues are located in the ordination hall or *ubosoth* of the Grand Palace together with the Emerald Buddha and in *Ho Phra Sulalai Phiman* (DISKUL, 1992: 115–151). One of the best known is the Buddha as the Universal Monarch, *Phra Phuttha Chakraphat*, consecrated by King Rama I (HOSKIN, 1994: 50–51). It is located in *Ho Phra Sulalai Phiman*. The orientation and shape of their distinctive *kranock*, as well as their disposition in opposing pairs, suggests that they are a *makara* device. They might represent *kranock* of the kind known as *sam tua lai nak*. If they do, they are likely to be based upon *gajasimha*. This suggestion is offered in the apparent absence of any other. Perhaps a better hypothesis is that the *kranock* of these Buddha images represents ears of rice (see TAYLOR, 1994: 107, fig. 216 of *kranock lai ruang khao chanid pleo*). Other explanations, especially if based upon contemporaneous Thai language sources, would be welcome.

BURMESE PANCARUPA AND GAJASIMHA

Figures 25, 28

Pancarupa, from the Sanskrit *panca*, “five”, and *rupa* (“forms”, “bodies”, or “colors”) is found on Buddhist temples and other buildings throughout Myanmar. It is frequently called *pincaiyupa* (from Sanskrit *pinca*, five, and *yupa*, columns or pillars). This is a fabulous beast composed of five or more animals that is directly derived from the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II. It first appeared in Myanmar perhaps as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century. It apparently was based upon contemporary or nearly contemporary Thai versions of the *gajasimha* such as that of the Jina Buddha shrine of Wat Mahatat in Phitsanulok (ROBERTS, 2003b: 217, fig. 6) and the somewhat later ceramic *gajasimha* temple finials produced in Ayutthaya, Sukhothai and Sawannkalok in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (Fig. 16).

A bronze bell weighing 42 tons was cast for the Burmese King Tharawaddy Min in 1841. The *Maha Tithadaganda* or “Great Three-toned Bell” is housed in a pavillion of the Shwedagon in Yangon. Two magnificent pairs of gilded *pancarupa* with upturned bodies ascend the four columns surrounding the bell (Fig. 25). The lion-like head and face, with well-developed elephant-like trunk, short tusks, and *makara*-shaped mouth opening, is essentially that of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II. The main departures are the wings, antlers, horse-like hooved-limbs, and a bipartite rather than simple beard with the parts flared to either side. The first three additions sometimes occur on earlier Laotian and Thai versions of *gajasimha*. A bipartite beard apparently occurs only in Burmese versions. In



Figure 18. *Gajanaaga*. Temple on bank of Mekong River, Thaphabat district, Bolikhamsai province, Laos, across the river and just upstream from Pak Khat, Nongkhai province, Thailand (photo by JOHN J. S. BURTON).



Figure 19. Wat Phra Kaeo. *Cho fa* and *gajasimha* on roof of *mondop* (photo by author).



Figure 20. Wat Phra Kaeo. Garuda holding up a pair of subdued naga with *gajasimha*-like heads by their tails (photos by author).



Figure 21. Wat Phra Kaeo. Left, *yaek*. Middle, *kinnari*. Right, *sema* (photos by author).



Figure 22. *Khon* mask of Mankornkan as a demon with *gajasimha*. National Museum Bangkok (from a postcard printed by River Books, Bangkok).



Figure 23. Royal barges, Bangkok. Left, *Anantanagaraja*. Right, *Narai Song Suban Garuda*. Photos by author. The manes of each head of the *Anantanagaraja* multi-headed *gajasimha* consists of nested series of *gajasimha* heads. The large apical head has an ascending curvy process as in many *cho fa* based upon *gajasimha*.



Figure 24. Buddha Mucilenda. Left, with classic naga heads, Lopburi or Khmer style, Lopburi. Right, with *gajasimha* heads, Bangkok style, Wat Monkolbawpit, Ayutthaya (photos by author).



Figure 25. One of the four gilded *gajasimha*-like *pancarupa* with upturned bodies ascending the columns on either side of King Tharawaddy Min's Bell at Shwedagon Paya (photos by author). The *pancarupa* or *pincayupa* and columns together constitute a *makara* cosmic creation device.

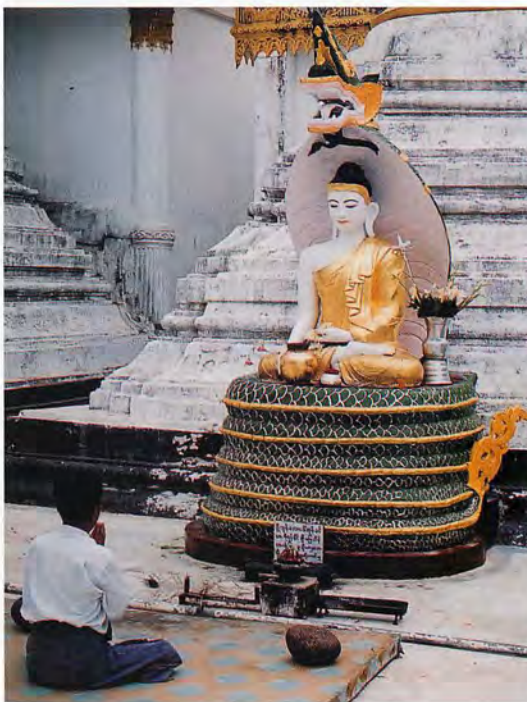


Figure 26. Buddha Mucilinda with single *gajasimha*-like head. Shwedagon Paya, Yangon (photo by author). The beard is divided into two diverging parts.



Figure 27. Sule Pagoda, Yangon. Left, *gajasimha*. With well-developed elephant-like trunk issuing from *makara* mouth. Right, finial in the form of an elephant's trunk (photos by author).



Figure 28. Left, Suryavarman II as Buddha with the naga Mucilinda radiating the colors of the rainbow. Compare the face of Suryavarman II in this Buddha image with the face of Suryavarman II in the Buddha image in Fig. 1. Right, Burmese *pancarupa*: "Five Forms, Five Directions, and Five Colors." At entrance to a monastery near Shwedagon in Yangon (photo by author).

some examples of *pancarupa* the two parts of its beard diverge. In others they coil around each other like the tails of a pair of naga.

Images similar to those of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II were employed in the Arakanese Buddhist kingdom of Mrauk-U (flourished 1430–1825), situated in Rakhine district of Myanmar on the Bay of Bengal. A large wooden throne from the late Mrauk-U period now in Sitthaung Temple in Mrauk-U displays a particularly fine pair of *gajasimha* arm rests. *Gajasimha*-like figures are displayed on the *makara* arch entrances to many Buddhist temples in Sittway, the present capital of Rakhine. Shwenandaw Kyaung Temple in Mandalay, built in 1895, has a row of four wooden images strikingly similar to the two *gajasimha* forming the *makara* archway of the tabernacle of the Phitsanulok Wat Mahatata Buddha statue (MOILANEN & OZHEGOV, 1999: fig. 136).

BURMESE NAGA

Figure 26

The *pancarupa* or Burmese *gajasimha*, like the *gajasimha* of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, underwent mutation or evolution into a limbless snake-like form. Conflation of this form with naga was perhaps inevitable. The snakelike version of the *pancarupa* apparently evolved independently from or parallel to the *payanak*. This is evident because Burmese versions invariably exhibit the bipartite beard otherwise observed only in the *pancarupa*. Versions of *pancarupa* and its snake-like version, like the *gajasimha* and *payanak*, include numerous transitional forms in which the body is increasingly elongated and the limbs progressively reduced or absent. Also as in transitional forms between *gajasimha* and *payanak*, the front limbs persist more frequently than the hind limbs.

The snakelike version of the *pancarupa* evidently has taken for itself such earlier Burmese folklore and mythology as pertained to the naga. It has been the inspiration for new folklore and mythology that is erroneously attributed to naga, such as a myth about the origin of Lake Indawgyi. It has entirely replaced or pre-empted true naga throughout Myanmar, a feat that *payanak* was unable to duplicate in Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia.

Naga, while forced to share the stage with *payanak*, still figure significantly in temples and other situations throughout Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Perhaps the most notable persisting manifestation of the naga in these countries is the popular image of Buddha shielded by the naga Mucilinda. In all Burmese versions of Buddha Mucilinda seen by me, however, the multi-headed naga is replaced by a single-headed snake-like *pancarupa*. The Myanmar *gajasimha*-naga usually has a horn- or spike-like process in place of the elephant-like trunk of the *gajasimha* but it sometimes retains the original form. The invariable presence of a bipartite beard indicates that the Burmese naga evolved from the *pancarupa* rather than from a true naga. The two parts of the beard may diverge, or they may wrap around each other like the tails of a pair of naga, as in most images of *pancarupa*.

Examples of Myanmar *gajasimha*-naga or *payanak* with the body directed upwards posteriorly are seen on either side of the main entrance to the Yangon Municipal Hall opposite Sule Pagoda and on the Maha Ganda Bell and Hair Relics Well of Shwedagon. In these and many other instances they are painted green (Fig. 26).

BURMESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE FINIALS

Figure 27

My first impression of the multitudinous ornamental decorations of Buddhist temples in Myanmar was that they belong to a religious art tradition entirely different from those of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Further study, however, leads me to consider that they are an extension of the tradition. The *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II is one of the models for numerous features of Burmese temple art. The late fourteenth century Wat Mahatata Jina Buddha altarpiece and perhaps even the tabernacle of the Suryavarman II bronze sitting Buddha that evidently inspired it may have played an important role in the transmission of the Cambodian art traditions to Myanmar via Thailand. Such a development may have been mediated by Thai artisans and craftsmen of the Lopburi and Sukhothai style traditions who traveled to Myanmar.

The relationship between the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II, the Wat Phitsanulok Jina Buddha, and the Burmese *pancarupa* has been pointed out above. A similar relation exists between the decorations of Burmese temple gables. This can be seen especially well at the Sule Pagoda in Yangon. In this pagoda we find a *makara* or Kirtimukha with elephant-like tusks and an up-raised elephant-like trunk (Fig. 27 left). The apical finials of the gables surrounding pagoda (Fig. 27 right) are shaped like the elephant-like trunk of the pagoda's *gajasimha*-Kirtimukha. Similar apical finials occur in temples throughout Myanmar. It seems that the finials of Burmese temples sprang from the same inspiration as those of Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai temples: the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II.

GAJASIMHA, LUK KEAO, AND LUK NIMIT

No consideration of *gajasimha* is complete without taking account of the round object found in the mouth or in the center of the head in the majority of the ceramic *gajasimha* finials produced in Thailand in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (Fig. 16). This is commonly referred to in Thai as the *luk keao*, "glass ball" or "crystal ball." The *luk keao* of our *gajasimha* represents an outstanding example of the dovetailing of symbols, functional objects, and abstract concepts that is so characteristic of both Hinduism and Buddhism.

Buddhist concepts of Cosmology, Birth, Existence, Rebirth, and Enlightenment (Deliverance) are all represented by symbols that in their simplest expression are featureless globes or balls. The balls are equivalent to the microcosmic atom, the earth, the moon, the sun, and the macrocosmic universe. They are equated with the cosmic reproductive organs including the Egg (*garbha* or *anta*) the Womb or Uterus (again *garbha*), and the Navel (*nabhos*). They also symbolize the Ultimate, Knowledge and the attainment of Enlightenment or of Nirvana (cessation of rebirth).

The *luk keao* apparently represents three basic symbols. Each of these, in its simplest form, is represented by a round seemingly featureless ball: 1) the egg, 2) the bowl or vase, and 3) the jewel. The *luk nimit* or root of the sema, a round stone ball covered with gold leaf buried in 9 holes surrounding and in the middle of the Thai *ubosoth* or Ordination Hall evidently has similar significance. They both represent the Sun and the Diamond.

The egg is the Cosmic Egg, also known as the Golden Egg (*hiranyagarbha*) Microcosmically the Egg represents the fundamental particle, the atom or *atomos*, or the

most basic subatomic particle, the smallest object in the universe. It is the first manifestation of physicality. On a macrocosmic level the Egg represents the Universe or the Cosmos. Between these extremes it represents the Earth, the Moon, and the Sun. It also represents the Wheel (*dhamma*). Literally meaning egg, *anta* also refers to the hemispherical dome of the ancient Indian Buddhist *stupa*; the Thai *chedi* is a bell-shaped version (BUNCE, 1997: 10). *Andarupa* (synonyms *brahmada*, *hiranyagarbha*) represent Brahma or the Buddha in the form of the Golden Egg or the Cosmic Egg (*op cit.*).

The container, vessel or vase (*kalasha*) is the bowl, the womb or uterus. Its physical manifestations include bowls of all sorts including the alms bowl of the monks (*boht*), containers of the *amrita* and of the *soma*, cinerary urns, incense burners, lime containers, flower bowls (especially but not only for lotus). It may also represent the Ordination Hall (*ubosoth* or *bot*), the Temple, the Earth, and the Cosmos. An empty vase symbolizes *sunyata*, the Void. A Buddhist should empty himself of all thoughts in order to become an empty vessel or container ready to receive the Wisdom of the Buddha. A full Vase symbolizes the fullness of the Enlightened Mind.

The jewel (*mani*) is most often the diamond (*vajra*), but it can be some other jewel, a round piece of quartz or glass, or a pearl.⁷ As diamond the jewel may represent the Three Jewels of Buddhist Wisdom (*triratna*). The Triple Jewel (also known as *triratna*) symbolizes the Buddhist Triad of Buddha, Prajnaparamita (Mother of Buddha) and Avalokiteshvara. As the Pearl it symbolizes the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* (the Perfect or Supreme Wisdom, the Doctrine of the Void, also known as *The Jewel or Pearl of the Sunyata*). As the Magic Jewel (*cintamani* or *chintamani*) it grants all wishes to its possessor. The *cintamani* represents the Buddhist sixth sense, the vehicle of the divine essence (BUNCE, 1997: 63). Cognate with the Sun, the Jewel is the cornerstone of the unseen cupola, the "four-cornered" or "eight-cornered" *vajra*. The *vajra*-jewel is the unique principle of the Cosmos. It is the *aksara*: the indestructible and indivisible unity of the Principle of Manifestation (SNODGRASS, 1985: 352).

The Pearl and the Vase are the symbols of Perfect Enlightenment, the ultimate goal of all Buddhist doctrines and practices (SNODGRASS, 1985: 342).

Equivalence of the Golden Egg with the Cosmic Tree (from the branches of which spring all gods) and the *axis mundi* is discussed by BOSCH (1960). The Egg is the germ or the seed from which springs the Tree of Life. It can represent the Cosmic Turtle or the navel of a divinity. It may be all three of these things at once. The Tree of Life is sometimes identified as the bodhi tree and sometimes as a lotus. The Tree of Life usually is symbolized as a lotus in Buddhist cosmology (*op cit.*: 65). In Buddhism the round shape of the Egg, the Jewel, and the Vessel or Bowl may be combined into one all-embracing symbol of cosmic plenitude.

These symbols represent different objects with different functions that are also largely interchangeable. The three round balls in all of their meanings have been linked by literature and by art to the nagas and to the *gajasimha*. When it is located at the summit of the World Axis the Jewel is identified with the Sun. When it is located at the base of the World Axis

⁷Most ancient cultures regarded glass, crystal, and diamond as forms of the same substance. Only in the late eighteenth century did western scientists elucidate the differences between them (TEMPLE, 2000). Pure glass and pure (quartz) crystal are forms of sand or silicon dioxide. Diamond, the hardest known substance, is a crystal form of the element carbon.

it is identified with the Moon and the Pearl. The Pearl represents the Diamond Sutra (*Prajnaparamita Sutra*), kept by the *gajasimha* on behalf of mankind. As the “Jewel of Diamond Wisdom” the Pearl is located within the brain of a giant *makara* (SNODGRASS, 1985: 351). This giant *makara* does not correspond to the naga but to the *gajasimha* (Fig. 16 right). So far as I am aware, while they are represented with them shining from their breastplate, naga are not depicted with Pearls or round objects in their mouths or in their heads.

According to Indian tradition the nagas are the guardians of the Pearl or the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*. Realizing that mankind was unable or unwilling to understand the Doctrine of the Void, the nagas spirited it away to their underworld palace. Since the reign of Suryavarman II the guardianship of the jewels of the earth, the pearls of the ocean, and other precious things including holy texts and relicts of the Buddha has been assumed by the *gajasimha*. They are also the keepers of mundane wealth, including gold and other precious metals. They are the bestowers of water and all other vital or miraculous liquids, including *amritsa* and *soma*. They cause the rain to fall, making rain clouds before the rain and rainbows afterwards. According to Indian Hinduist tradition the rays shining forth from the jewels in the breastplates of the seven-headed *nagaraja* Vasuki become the seven colors of Indra’s Rainbow.

It is by means of this miraculous rainbow that Buddha ascended from Earth to Tavatimsa Heaven and returned again to earth. Bodhisattva make the same journey.

Only a resolute and very brave person can take a pearl or alms bowl away from a naga or *gajasimha* against its will, but it will readily turn over its prize to a wise king or a Bodhisattva.

The alms bowl arose at a turning point in the Buddha’s life when he decided to stop his extreme and fruitless austerities, to continue his search by a middle way, and to beg for his food accepting whatever was given. The Buddha ate his first meal after his Enlightenment out of a golden bowl, which he then threw into a pond, where it was seized by the naga Sagara. According to another version the Buddha began begging when he returned to earth after having preached to his mother for 30 days in Tavatimsa Heaven. Given food in a golden bowl, he ate the food and then placed the bowl on a river. The bowl floated upstream into a whirlpool where it was carried into the subaquatic realm of a *nagaraja* who kept the alms bowls of successive Buddhas (MUNIER, 1998: 119). When supplicants asked the Buddha how they should venerate his relics, he indicated that they should build a reliquary in the shape of his begging bowl (*op cit.*). Placing food into a monk’s begging bowl (his *boht*) is also placing it symbolically in his temple or *ubosoth* (*bot*).

Luk kaeo presumably obtained its name from round balls or spheres made of glass or crystal (such as quartz). They would have been used as magnifying glasses and for starting fires by focusing sun-light, as in other ancient cultures (see TEMPLE, 2000). The ancient Khmer would have regarded such miraculous properties with appropriate awe and religious significance.

Thai devotees affix gold leaf (*thawng bai*, literally “gold leaf”) to the most sacred religious images including Buddha statues, *bai sema*, and *luk nimit*. Its covering of gold confirms the identity of *luk nimit* with *hiranya garbha* (PICHARD, 2000: 27–28), with the sun and also with the Golden Egg or Cosmic Egg within which the Buddha is formed.

A linkage has been identified of *luk nimit* and Shiva linga (SNODGRASS, 1985). The

highly graphic phallic form or penis-shape characteristic of the original or earliest Indian linga seems to be an exceptionally conservative religious symbol. It apparently originated at a relatively late date within Indian Hinduism. It apparently did not spread beyond the geographic confines of India. A more abstract geometrically rich version perhaps has lasted longest and had the greatest distribution. It consists of a square base, an octagonal middle section, and a cylindrical upper part with rounded apex. The three parts symbolize the Hinduist *trimurti* of, respectively, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. When the linga is installed only the cylindrical part appears above the ground. This linga style originated in India and spread throughout so-called Greater India including ancient Cambodia. It is still widely in use in India today. It is easy to see in the hemispherical apex a counterpart or inclusion of the spherical Cosmic Egg or *luk nimit*. The entire cylindrical part of the linga with its hemispherical apex can be identified with the Golden Egg mounted on top of the column (*yupa*), an important Buddhist architectural feature. The linga was often buried in the middle of a Hindu temple just as the ninth *luk nimit* or *Indakila* is buried in the center of the Thai *bot* or *ubosoth*.

Luk nimit and *luk kaeo* evidently symbolize much the same things. One of the most striking congruences or linkages of the two symbols is their representation of the sun. Identification of the gold-leaf covered *luk nimit* with the sun already has been mentioned. Many ancient philosophers considered the sun to be a gigantic crystal ball. This Crystal Sun produced no light itself but rather gathered or focused light from other sources and reflected or refracted it onto the earth and the moon (TEMPLE, 2000: 365–388).

Vishnu reclines on the *gajasimha* as he generates the *luk kaeo* from his navel. Later the *gajasimha* guards the *luk kaeo* in his mouth. *Gajasimha* forms the *makara* arch of the *bai sema* standing over the *luk nimit* buried around the *ubosoth*.

When it is located at the summit of the world axis the jewel [or crystal ball] is identified with the sun. When it is located at the base of the world axis it is identified with the moon and the pearl. The pearl represents the Diamond Sutra or Prajnaparamita Sutra, kept by the naga on behalf of mankind. As the “Jewel of Diamond Wisdom” it is located within the brain of a giant *makara* (SNODGRASS, 1985: 351) (see Fig. 16 right).

NAGA, GAJASIMHA, AND THE RAINBOW

Figure 28

The information provided above on *luk kaeo* and *luk nimit* and their transiconic symbolic significance in Hinduism and Buddhism provides some useful background for an understanding of the relationship between the naga and thus the *gajasimha* and the rainbow. The ancient philosophers, scholars, and scientists (the terms are nearly synonymous or coincidental) realized that pure light was composed of the colors of the rainbow, or at least, that under the appropriate weather conditions sunlight could break down into the colors of the rainbow (SNODGRASS, 1985; TEMPLE, 2000). The six colors are the three primaries (red, yellow, and blue) and the three complementaries (orange, green, and purple). Children who have played with paints know that the complementary colors can be generated by mixing the primaries but that no amount of mixing of complementaries can produce the primaries. They also know that mixing all of the primaries or all of the complementaries together results in increasingly darker brown color that finally turns black.

The ancient Indians and ancient Khmer associated the rainbow with the divine serpents, the naga. In his compendium of Indian naga mythology VOGEL (1926: 29, footnoted references) provides three short quotations from ancient authors relating naga to rainbows. According to the astrologer Varahamirhira "some Masters say that the rainbow arises out of the exhalations of the naga." Kalidasa said that the rainbow issues from the top of an ant-hill (i.e. termite hill) during the rainy season because it is 'pregnant with snakes'. Another commentator said "the rays of the rainbow shining forth from the jewels in the heads of the great naga Vasuki penetrate into the sky from the Nether Regions through a fissure of the ant-hill, and coming into contact with the rain cloud, they assume the form of Indra's bow [i.e. the rainbow]." Indra's bow or rainbow has one foot on earth and the other in heaven. It serves as the "bridge" by means of which the Buddha traveled between Heaven and earth and by means of which Bodhisattva do the same (MUS, 1937; SNODGRASS, 1985).

Ancient Khmer naga are almost always depicted wearing jewelled escutcheons or breastplates. Sometimes these take the form of necklaces or pendants. The naga Mucilinda that protects Buddha from the storm and the rising flood waters generated by Mara is almost invariably depicted with seven heads. Each of the heads has its own breastplate or pendant. In most instances a hemispherical jewel is depicted in the center. The central naga head is the largest and also has the largest breastplate. It seems a reasonable hypothesis that the jewel of this breastplate radiates white light, while these of the other breastplates radiate the six colors of the rainbow (Fig. 28 left).

In Thailand young men in the process of becoming Theravadin Buddhist monks or Bodhisattva pass through an unordained liminal stage in which they are known as naga. Readers interested in this topic are referred to the articles by WRIGHT (1990: 46–47) and LEFFERTS (1994). The point of concern here is that during a period of a few hours immediately prior to their becoming ordained naga novitiates wear brilliantly colored items of clothing identifying them with the rainbow (LEFFERTS, 1994: 25). The naga becomes the rainbow or perhaps a part of the rainbow, which he then ascends (Fig. 1 right).

A variation on the theme of the colors occurs in the *Vajrayana* (SNODGRASS, 1985: 288). Here the five Jina Buddhas, each representing an aspect of total knowledge and each ruling over one of the Five Directions of space, are correlated with the Five Colors or *pancarupa*. These are the three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) and black and white. In the same way that all physical phenomena issue from the Five Elements, so all colors are produced by the mixtures of the five Colors. To indicate that he comprises within himself the Five Types of Knowledge, the Five Elements, and the Five Directions, the Buddha Mahavairocana sits on a white lotus and his body radiates a light of five colors. With similar meaning the Bodhisattva is shown with a nimbus and aureole of five colors. The Burmese *gajasimha* or *pancarupa*, usually portrayed as green over-all, is sometimes displayed radiating the Five Colors (Fig. 28 right).

DISCUSSION

How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service!

—CHARLES DARWIN

This discussion may begin with a brief recounting of the discovery of the relationship between Suryavarman II and *gajasimha*. I was trained in biology and particularly ichthyology. My first of many trips to Cambodia, made in 1994, was to study migratory habits of fish species in the Mekong basin. Dr. Imre Csavas, the FAO colleague who arranged it, suggested that I look at the fish scenes in the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat and the Bayon. The Angkor Wat "Churning of the Sea of Milk" bas-relief attracted me because it depicts a great variety of fish and other aquatic organisms.

Upon looking at this great bas-relief for the first time, my attention was drawn to the numerous *gajasimha*. This was for me a "crucial observation": the one "pure" observation, made without any preconceived ideas or hypotheses, that led to all of my subsequent observations on *gajasimha*.

Taking note of the apparent absence of *gajasimha* from other depictions of the Churning, and also from the aquatic scenes in the Bayon bas-reliefs (only much later did I discover the presence of a lone Suryavarman II *gajasimha* in a Bayon bas-relief), I surmised that the presence of *gajasimha* in the Angkor Wat Churning scene was linked to Suryavarman II. A short time later I learned that a *gajasimha* replaced the naga in some ancient Khmer lintel bas-reliefs of *Vishnu Anantasayin*. Then I saw that the Vishnu in these bas-reliefs had characteristic shared with other images of Suryavarman II.

Some of my research methods, especially the use of chains or nested series of working hypotheses, are explained in the paper I subsequently wrote about fish, symbolism and kingship in the bas-reliefs of the Bayon and Angkor Wat (ROBERTS, 2003a). The present study of the *gajasimha*, like a previous one on the *payanak* (ROBERTS, 2003b), is a "thematic study" (ROBERTS, 2003a) and also an interdisciplinary study. The mythological animals and other Khmer symbols and the statues of Hindu gods and Buddhist divinities display a broad range of morphological characters. There is also great variation of these characters. Like the characters of living organisms, they may be subject to systematic interpretation and phylogenetic analysis.

Khmerologists and art historians failed to recognize the *gajasimha* as a separate entity in Khmer iconography perhaps because they generally have little knowledge of living organisms or of how to distinguish and describe them. Unrelated mythological beasts often are lumped in meaningless catch-all categories such as "dragons", "beasts", and "monsters". One eminent colleague, informed that the *gajasimha* had been adopted as a symbol of Suryavarman II, reacted by saying "So what? Who cares what symbol he adopted?"

My training as systematist and evolutionary biologist prepared me to recognize the essentially mammalian hybrid nature of the *gajasimha* and the complicated history of its subsequent evolutionary radiation from a four-limbed tetrapod to a two-limbed and then limbless reptilian or ophidian and also fish- or eel-like forms (*payanak*). Thinking of these transitions as if they resulted from phylogeny has made it easier to follow them because similar or parallel changes characterize the evolution of living organisms. Parallels in the evolution of *gajasimha* and living vertebrate animals are quite striking.

Rituals or ceremonies associated with *luk nimit*.—After the *luk nimit* are produced by traditional artisans they are kept in a temple while waiting for the preparation of the site of the new *ubosoth* for which they were made. During this time they are on public view. Devotees stick bits of gold leaf on them until they are thoroughly covered with it.

Consecration of the *luk nimit* or *nimitta* is described by GITEAU, 1969; WRIGHT, 1990; INDORF, 2000; and PICHARD, 2000: fig. 19). The *luk nimit* covered with gold leaf (*bai tawng*) are transported from the parent temple to the site of the new *ubosoth*. They are there suspended by vines made of rattan (Palmeaceae, *Calamus* spp) over the nine holes in which they are to be buried. The eight outer *luk nimit* are consecrated with a ritual formula beginning with the one in the E position and continuing in order with the SE, S, SW, NW, N, and NE, and then the E again.

This last is essential to “close the loop” uniting the *luk nimit* into an integrated unit. After the eight outer *luk nimit* have been consecrated, consecration is done for the inner (ninth) one (GITEAU, 1969: 47).

After the recitation a signal is given and the rattans suspending the nine *luk nimit* over their holes are simultaneously cut with a knife (GITEAU, 1969; PICHARD, 2000: 146, fig. 19). It has been suggested that the ritual cutting of the *wai* (*that wai luk nimit*) is a relict or hold-over of a pre-Buddhist animistic sacrifice of a living being (human or animal) (WRIGHT, 1990). An alternative or additional hypothesis, one apparently not previously advanced, is that it represents the cutting of the umbilical cord attaching the Golden Egg to Vishnu’s navel. The two hypotheses are not necessarily exclusive; both might be valid.

The point upon the ground selected to be the center of the stupa symbolizes the *Omphalos*. *Omphalos* is the navel and the fulcrum of the world. It is the progenitive source point of all physical manifestation (SNODGRASS, 1985: 19). By means of his *omphalos* Vishnu reclining on the naga or *gajasimha* gives rise to the Golden Egg and the world axis. The Cosmic Umbilical Cord often is symbolized as a lotus stem and the Golden Egg with Brahma or Buddha inside as a lotus bud. The rattan vine suspending the *luk nimit* evidently symbolizes the lotus stem.

The Cosmic Egg (*garbha*) originates in the Cosmic Uterus (also called *garbha*) which is the equivalent of the Cosmic Ocean or Sea of Milk. It is the earliest manifestation of physical existence. Before it is only the featureless and unlit, object-less, and void-like Sea of Milk. Before the Sea of Milk there is Nothingness, and before that Nothingness Beyond Nothingness for eons upon eons. The Cosmic Egg rises as a bubble to the surface of the Sea of Milk. It opens like a lotus to reveal Brahma the God of Creation. The Egg is identified with the navel of the universe (*nabhos*). “The waters contained the primordial Egg in which all of the gods are come together. In the navel of the unborn the One was implanted in which all beings stood” (*Rig Veda* X.82.6, quoted in SNODGRASS, 1985: 193). The Golden Egg, lying on the surface of the waters, contains the Lord Isvara [Shiva]. He dwells therein for a thousand years, after which a lotus as splendid as a thousand suns springs from his navel. From this lotus, the abode of all living things, is born Brahma (*Bhagavad Purana* III. 20. 14ff, quoted in SNODGRASS, 1985: 193). In these myths the Golden Egg and the Cosmic Navel are homologous or at least intimately related.

Why does the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II have scales?—The *gajasimha*, as implied by its name, is an essentially mammalian beast, a hybrid of elephant and lion. Neither of these animals has scales. Lions, like most felines or cats, are well known for their dislike of entering the water. Thus they are regarded as strictly terrestrial animals. Elephants, while they enjoy water, generally also as regarded as terrestrial. Angkorean Khmer *gajasimha* earlier than the reign of Suryavarman II are scaleless and also terrestrial. Why does Suryavarman II’s *gajasimha* have scales?

The scales of the *gajasimha* are not fish scales or lizard scales, but snake scales. We know this because the scales across the belly are transversely elongated, like the specialized abdominal scales or *gastrosteiges* of nearly all snakes including cobras (the original model of the nagas).⁸ Cambodians, Thais, and Southeast Asian tribal people generally regard aquatic vertebrates as having scales. They regard snakes, which spend a lot of time in the water and usually have scales, as essentially aquatic animals.

There are several different kinds of fishes with snake-like bodies. They generally are called eels, and they evolved from several different scaled ancestors. Some of them have retained scales and some have lost them. But no eels evolved anything like the transversely elongate rib-like abdominal scales characteristic of the order Serpentes (snakes). The scales of eels, when present, usually are so small that a magnifying glass or microscope is necessary in order to see them.

The most iconographically and symbolically original manifestation of the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II is its replacement of the naga Ananta in scenes of Vishnu reclining on the Sea of Milk. Thus perhaps for the first time, the *gajasimha* is associated with water and is an essentially aquatic beast. As such it has a scaled body.

Khmer creation mythology.—Recognition of the Banteay Chhmar *gajasimha-makara* bas-reliefs featuring Brahma and Kama provides the opportunity for a summary of the ancient Khmer version of Creation. As in Indian Hinduism, the Khmer concept involves repeated creations at long intervals. Between creations there is Nothingness or a Void, conceptualized as a featureless, objectless sea with no living creatures, the Sea of Milk. Vishnu and the naga Ananta arise out of the void, by the force of Vishnu's imagination, and float on the Sea of Milk. Vishnu creates his wife Laksmi, who helps him to dream of creation by massaging his legs. Vishnu dreams of the sources of the Sea of Milk (Cambodia's Great Lake) causing them to flow from the Sacred Mountains (Phnom Kulen).

Vishnu then dreams that a lotus springs from his navel and floats on the surface of the Sea of Milk, and that Lord Brahma arises from it. Brahma then plays a large role in the creation. He dreams into existence his wife Sarasvati and a host of minor gods and goddesses including Kama, the God of Love. Sarasvati invents language, including Sanskrit and Khmer. Sarasvati and Brahma assist at the birth of Buddha, an avatar of Vishnu. Lord Kama shoots his love arrows into living beings, causing them to become amorous and reproduce. An arrow from his bow causes the nagi Princess Soma to fall in love with the Indian brahmin Kaundinya. Their union results in the foundation of Khmer civilization. Kaundinya teaches the Khmer how to cultivate rice.

The reign of Suryavarman II marked the beginning of a new Age of Creation (*kalpa*). Suryavarman II, as Vishnu, causes the *gajasimha* to be created by the force of his imagination. The *gajasimha* then takes over the role of Ananta. The *gajasimha* pushes Ananta under the Sea of Milk, thus ending of the previous age and ushering in the new age. Suryavarman II as Vishnu cutting the bodies of fish, naga, *gajasimha* and other

⁸Since writing this I have noticed that in Angkor Wat and Bayon bas-reliefs the belly plates of crocodiles are depicted in the same fashion as those of naga and *gajasimha*. In reality crocodile body plates and belly plates are quite different from snake scales. The square or slightly rectangular crocodilian plates or osteoderms, rather than overlapping, lie flush with the body on all sides. They do extend in straight rows across the belly but it takes several of them to make a row.

aquatic animals in half with his sword symbolizes the end of the old *kalpa* and beginning of a new one presided over by Suryavarman II.

Persistence of naga.—During and after the reign of Suryavarman II naga were replaced in many of their roles by *gajasimha*. There were, however, at least two important exceptions. Naga retained their prominent roles as Mucilinda in statues of Buddha protected by the naga and as Vasuki in the Churning of the Sea of Milk.

Portraits of Suryavarman II, Jayavarman VII and other Khmer kings as Buddha Mucilinda always have classical multiheaded naga hoods. *Gajasimha* do not replace naga in any ancient Khmer or modern Cambodian Buddha Mucilinda. They did not replace naga in the railings of bridges on the ancient Angkorean royal roads.

Reversion of *gajasimha* to naga.—The story of the *gajasimha* and its adaptive radiation into forms like *payanak* and *pancarupa* is complicated by the frequent devolution back to forms resembling the naga. Sometimes this reversion is so complete that the modified *gajasimha* does look more like a naga. In such instances the presence of vestigial characters, such as a very small elephant-like trunk, indicates the origin from *gajasimha*.

The mythological naga, while based on the living species of cobra *Naja naja*, is almost invariably written about and depicted as having multiple heads. In written accounts there may be as many as 100,000 heads. In stone images, including Khmer balustrades and bas-reliefs, naga are generally depicted with three to nine heads, the number increasing with age and rank (young naga with only a single head are depicted in the Angkor Wat Churning of the Sea of Milk). The number of heads is always uneven. The heads usually are displayed across the expanded hood of a single cobra-like snake body. The middle head usually is larger than the others.

One of the earliest instances of the reversion of the *gajasimha* to a naga-like form occurred during the Angkor Wat period while Suryavarman II was still alive. The original or primitive form of the *gajasimha* is of course single-headed. Almost as soon as the *gajasimha* replaced the naga coming out of the mouth of *makara* in bas-relief lintels it was depicted with multiple heads like the naga. These “naga-like *gajasimha*” or *gajasimha-naga* usually can be readily identified. Since the heads only come out of the *makara* mouth the legs are not displayed, but the *gajasimha* are recognizable by their elephant-like trunks, a beard, and forelimbs. In addition the heads are usually separate, with short necks, rather than united on a hood. This multiple-headed form of the *gajasimha*, rather than the original single-headed form, was widely adopted during the Bayon period of the reign of Jayavarman VII (Fig. 2).

Another early occurrence of multiple headed *gajasimha* was in the Garuda-*gajasimha* balustrades. This kind of balustrade apparently also originated while Suryavarman II was still alive but it was much more popular during the reign of Jayavarman VII.

One of the reasons why the *gajasimha* lost its legs was its use in elongate *makara* arches in the bas-relief scenes of lintels over portals or investing Buddha statues. The body of the *gajasimha* became so elongate that it was rope-like or snake-like and the hind limbs were left off. In many instances the forelimbs were retained, but then they too started disappearing, sometimes transformed into floral designs or other symbols. These transitions are readily apparent in the series of Thai Buddha statue and their tabernacles photographically illustrated in CHACHAWANTHIPAKORN, 2000.

There seem to be several reasons for reversion of the *gajasimha* to naga-like forms. The *gajasimha*, although completely distinct from naga, perhaps from its earliest appearance was referred to as *nak*, *naak*, *naya*, or *niya*, all words related to naga. *Gajasimha* gained strength from preempting naga mythology, but at the same time they remained associated in the minds of the people with the older naga. Artisans wishing to depict the *gajasimha* would all be familiar with living cobras to serve as a model but not with living *gajasimha*. *Gajasimha* live in remote places like the Kulen mountains or underwater, are reclusive, and seldom show themselves to ordinary people.

It probably is not necessary to seek historical or religious reasons for some reversion of *gajasimha* back to naga-like forms. *Gajasimha* in bas-reliefs or in ceramics frequently have lost projecting parts such as the elephant-like trunk, the beard, and the limbs. Frequently the head is broken off above the forelimbs. Artisans unfamiliar with the original form of the *gajasimha* basing their work on such damaged *gajasimha* are likely to produce something looking more like a naga.

The naga might also persist because they are deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of the indigenous peoples of Southeast Asia since prehistoric times when they believed in the Mother God and the naga god of the underworld (WRIGHT, 1990).

Verbal transiconic symbolism.—Sharing or transfer of meanings from one visual icon or symbol to another is mentioned repeatedly above. It should be noted that a comparable phenomenon evidently also occurs in vocabulary. Apparently the ancient etymologically inclined word-coining philosophers and priests enjoyed engaging in word play or punning just as we moderns do. The example of Thai *boht* (Monk's begging bowl) and *bot* (for Ordination Hall or *Ubosoth*) is mentioned above.

Many have tried, with little or no consensus reached, to explain the etymological origin of the Thai term *cho fa* (alternative spelling *chaw fa*). The meaning of *fa* as sky or celestial is not in doubt but the meaning of *cho* (or *chaw*) is less agreed upon. The reason for choosing this word may not be related so much to its specific meaning (however appropriate it might be whatever it is) as to the play upon words it permits with the term *chao fa*, "celestial person" or king.

CONCLUSION

This thematic and comparative study of *gajasimha* indicates the extensive cultural connectivity among the religious and artistic traditions of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. During the reign of Suryavarman II a distinctive *gajasimha* was associated with a state-sponsored religion fusing Shivaism, Vishnuism, and Buddhism (ROBERTS, in prep.). When Hinduism subsequently declined and Buddhism prospered, this *gajasimha* survived in the Buddhist and popular art traditions of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar.

The *gajasimha*, originally part of the Indian art tradition, has been distinct from the Chinese dragon and Chinese *quilen* throughout nearly its entire history. Only in recent years, especially in Myanmar, has there been a conflation of the Chinese dragon and the *gajasimha*.

Based upon the information provided here, and in ROBERTS, 2002; 2003a,b; and in prep., the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. A distinctive *gajasimha* appeared for the first time during the reign of Suryavarman II (1113–ca 1150).
2. This *gajasimha* was initially a potent symbol of Suryavarman II's identification with the Hindu god Vishnu, and the new age or kalpa he initiated as the living reincarnation of Vishnu.
3. It also came to symbolize the new syncretic religion embracing Hinduism and Buddhism with Suryavarman II as its godhead.
4. During the reign of Jayavarman VII (1181–ca 1219) the *gajasimha* became a predominantly Buddhist symbol.
5. Earlier Khmer *gajasimha* are morphologically quite different from the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II and played relatively unimportant roles.
6. Images of Vishnu reclining on a *gajasimha* are characteristic of the Angkor Wat period of Khmer art.
7. Bas-reliefs of Vishnu dreaming the creation while reclining on the back of *gajasimha* all represent Suryavarman II in the guise of Vishnu.
8. Beginning in the reign of Suryavarman II, *gajasimha* progressively replaced naga in nearly all of the roles formerly played only by naga.
9. Most finial decorations of the gables of Buddhist temples in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand (the apical finials or *cho fa* as well as the lateral finials or antefixes) and Myanmar are based upon *gajasimha*.
10. In Thai statues of Buddha Mucilinda, Mucilinda is most often represented by a naga but even here it sometimes is replaced by a multiheaded *gajasimha*.
11. The *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II evolved into the *payanak* of Laos and Thailand.
12. *Gajasimha* is an important inspiration for the Thai decorative devices known as *kranock*.
13. Thai and Lao "*gajanaga*" and the Thai *Ramayana* or *Ramagien* character Tosakiriwan were inspired by the *gajasimha*.
14. The Burmese *pancarupa* was inspired by the *gajasimha* of Suryavarman II.
15. Mucilinda in Burmese statues of Buddha Mucilinda has a naga-like body with the single head of a *gajasimha*.
16. Multiheaded naga—true Hindu naga based on the cobra—are absent in Burmese art.
17. *Gajasimha* and Garuda are guardian spirits of Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.
18. *Gajasimha* as well as Garuda symbolizes the Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai monarchies.
19. The Buddhism of Southeast countries sharing the *gajasimha* is suffused with Hinduist art forms and mythology.

Appendix. Bas-reliefs of Vishnu reclining on a *gajasimha*.

Bakong. Lintel on tower of main temple. The *gajasimha*, unfortunately badly damaged, rests incongruously on top of a row of three Shiva Nataraj bas-reliefs. Such dancing Shiva bas-reliefs occurred on the top of the now badly broken surrounding wall of the original temple. This lintel is part of the evidence that the tower was reconstructed during the reign of Suryavarman II.

Banteay Samre. Bas-relief on temple lintel (Fig. 12, left) and small bas-relief on sanctuary pilaster (Fig. 12, right).

Bayon. Lintel at west portal (ROBERTS, 2003a: 139, fig. 3).

Beng Mealea (COEDÈS, 1913: 24; BHATTACHARYA, 1961: 110).

Phnom Da. Sanctuary lintel (BÉNISTI, 1965: fig. 17).

Phra Theat Baray. Lintel (BÉNISTI, 1965: 117, fig. 21).

Prang Ku Suan Taeng, Buriram province, Thailand. Lintel now in National Museum, Bangkok (RINGIS, 1995: 32, fig. 40).

Prasat Phnom Rung. Lintel. Thailand's famous *Taplong Narai* (ROBERTS, 2003b: fig. 5)

Preah Khan at Angkor Thom. Lintel (Fig. 7).

Preah Khan at Kampong Svay. Stele commemorating the birth year of Suryavarman II (JESSEP & ZÉPHIR, 1997: figs. 72–74; ROBERTS, 2002: 14, figs. 1–2).

Wat Baset (BÉNISTI, 1965: fig. 15)

Wat Ta Mau. Isolated lintel (Fig. 8).

Western Mebon. Vishnuite lintel. A small version scene of Vishnu mounted on a *gajasimha* (ROBERTS, 2003a: 152, 155–156, fig. 13) is part of the evidence that the monumental West Mebon bronze bust of Vishnu may have been mounted on a *gajasimha*.

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