

Integrating the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu: The Archaeology and Art History of a Forgotten Image¹

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ABSTRACT—This paper situates the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, a lesser-known Dvāravatī sculpture from western Thailand, in its archaeological and art historical context in order to demonstrate 7th to 8th century artistic and political connections across mainland Southeast Asia. The circumstances of the Viṣṇu’s rediscovery in the early 1950s, as well as its subsequent “restoration” and preservation at Wat Dong Sak, are examined through reappraisal of documentary evidence, new field reconnaissance, interviews of local residents, and systematic examination of the sculpture itself. Detailed stylistic analysis and conjectural reconstruction of the sculpture’s original appearance place the image within the broader development of the mitred Viṣṇu iconographic type known from sites throughout Southeast Asia. With particular emphasis on the details of the headdress and garment, specific comparisons are made to related sculpture from Thailand, Arakan (Myanmar), Preangkorian Cambodia, and the Cham civilization of Vietnam. The Phong Tuek Viṣṇu’s idiosyncratic features and geographically dispersed stylistic relationships suggest a probable early 8th century date following the mid-to-late 7th century expansion of Khmer elites out of the Kampong Thom area of Cambodia. The Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, therefore, provides valuable testimony of a particularly intense period of interactions spanning mainland Southeast Asia from Arakan in the west to central Vietnam in the east.

Introduction

Among the overlooked examples of Dvāravatī sculpture is a statue of Viṣṇu (Figure 1) from the site of Phong Tuek in what is today southern Kanchanaburi province, Thailand (see map, Figure 2). In spite of its relatively large size and quality, it has been completely ignored in the scholarly literature since it was uncovered in

¹ Portions of this essay were presented as “The P’ong Tuk Viṣṇu: Re-Integrating an Early ‘Aberrant’ Image from Thailand” at the 20th Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Congress, Siem Reap, Cambodia, January 13, 2014. A variety of other transliterations of “Phong Tuek” have been used in scholarly publications (e.g., P’ong Tuk, P’ong Tük, Bang Tæk, Phong Dük, Phong Tuk, Pong Tük). Thai transliterations in this paper generally follow the modern conventions adopted by the Royal Institute of Thailand.

the early 1950s. Lack of attention to the Viṣṇu has limited understanding of Phong Tuek's role as a ritual, political, and perhaps artistic center, and it has contributed to the longstanding misperception that Phong Tuek was exclusively Buddhist in religious orientation. That view stems from the primary archaeological excavations undertaken at the site, first by George Cœdès and subsequently by H. G. Quaritch Wales. Discovery of the Viṣṇu should have changed these early perceptions, but it did not.

The present essay aims to provide a detailed description, historical contextualization, and a thorough stylistic study of this important ritual image. It is based on formal visual analysis, as well as new information and documentation acquired onsite and through interviews of residents and monks connected with the initial recovery of the Viṣṇu and its subsequent restoration and installation at Wat Dong Sak in the modern town of Phong Tuek. We argue here that (1) the occurrence of a substantial Brahmanical object places Phong Tuek among several important Dvāravatī sites that contain both Buddhist and Brahmanical material; and (2) that the stylistic affiliations of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu indicate distant relationships and trans-regional artistic connections related to the expansion of Khmer power and cultural influence during the mid-to-late 7th century.

The Phong Tuek site

The high terrace of the Phong Tuek subdistrict (Tha Maka district), occupying the western bank of the Mae Klong River in southern Kanchanaburi province, has retained much of the rural character that existed during the archaeological investigations of French scholar George Cœdès in 1927 and the English antiquarian H. G. Quaritch Wales in 1936 (Figure 3).² Banana groves and fields of sugar cane, corn, and chilies continue to predominate, and local residents still encounter ancient artifacts, turned up as they cultivate the land. Random finds such as these first drew the attention of Cœdès, as reports of Buddha figures in very old styles and other unusual items filtered back to his post as General Secretary of the Royal Institute of Siam in Bangkok. Excavations subsequently undertaken in 1927 focused on the most productive villager find-spots and several low mounds of structural rubble, but this fieldwork ceased after less than four months (Cœdès 1928a and 1928b).

In January 1936, while waiting for the end of unseasonably late rains to gain passage to the still virtually unexplored site of Si Thep in Phetchabun province, Quaritch Wales spent two weeks at Phong Tuek. His excavations focused on several rubble-mounds left unexplored by Cœdès (Quaritch Wales 1936, 1937a, 1937b). Both of these brief investigations uncovered well-preserved foundations of brick and laterite architecture, and collected Buddha sculptures in various sizes and materials,

² At the time of the earliest investigation in 1927, Phong Tuek was in Ratburi (Ratchaburi) province.



Figure 1. Viṣṣu, found in Phong Tuek, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand, ca. early 8th cent. CE, stone with modern cement additions, H. 80 cm. (without pedestal), currently resides at Wat Dong Sak, Phong Tuek. Photograph by Wesley Clarke.



Figure 2. Map with locations mentioned in the text. Courtesy of Matthew D. Gallon.

Figure 3. Google Earth satellite image of the Phong Tuek area (map data: Google and DigitalGlobe). Locations are approximate. Prepared by Wesley Clarke and Paul Lavy.



so-called votive tablets and other ritual objects, decorative stucco and terracotta, and a few categories of domestic items. Quaritch Wales also uncovered a series of inhumation burials which, unfortunately, received only cursory attention during evaluation of the site assemblage (Clarke 2014).

As key early enunciators of the Dvāravatī phenomenon, Cœdès and Quaritch Wales drew extensively from the discoveries at Phong Tuek, in combination with other archaeological and textual sources, to describe an early historic, predominantly Buddhist culture that reflected significant ideational and material interaction with South Asia in the early to middle centuries of the 1st millennium CE. Indeed, Phong Tuek was long considered to be the earliest known Dvāravatī settlement (e.g., Le May 2004 [1938]: 15; Briggs 1945: 99-100). Two objects attributed to the early 1st millennium by Cœdès—a small bronze Buddha said to be in the Amarāvātī style of ca. 2nd century CE, and a so-called “Greco-Roman” metal lamp said to derive from the 1st-2nd centuries CE—were taken as evidence that the Phong Tuek occupation commenced early in the millennium (Cœdès 1928a: 203-207, pls. 17 and 19). Subsequent reanalysis of these objects, however, has convincingly placed them in later periods more congruent with the other ritual objects from the site. The lamp is likely of early Byzantine origin, ca. 5th-6th century CE (Brown and Macdonnell 1989: 10-12; Borell 2008a: 168-169 and 2008b: 1-26).³ The current state of evidence probably best supports an 8th century date for the Buddha (Griswold 1966: 71-73, fig. 31).⁴ Approximately contemporary, or perhaps slightly later, are four additional bronze Buddha images found at Phong Tuek. Cœdès dated them to the 6th century (Cœdès 1928a: 202, pls. 15, 16-right), but they probably date to the 8th or 9th century (Griswold 1966: 71; Quaritch Wales 1969: 65; Boisselier 1975: 69, 76).⁵ These later dates accord well with the early 8th-century date that will be advanced here for the Phong Tuek Viṣṣu.

Rediscovery of the Phong Tuek Viṣṣu

A comprehensive reevaluation of these previous investigations at Phong Tuek, combined with new information developed by a field reconnaissance in 2008, has recently been completed by Clarke (2011). This review was enhanced by the “rediscovery” of Quaritch Wales’ field notes at the Royal Asiatic Society archives in

³ The Phong Tuek lamp (L. 29.5 cm., H. 26.7 cm) is housed in the Bangkok National Museum (inv. no. TP.1). It is usually identified as bronze, but Borell (2008b: 3, n. 7) raises the possibility that it may be made of brass.

⁴ Griswold (1966: 71-73) argued that the Phong Tuek Buddha (H. variably listed as 20.5 cm. and 25 cm.) today in the Bangkok National Museum (inv. no. DV.41), is “a Dvāravatī copy of a Pāla model, most likely a Nālandā bronze” and thus dates to the second half of the 8th century. Over the years, a variety of other dates and stylistic associations have been advanced by scholars; several of these are noted by Griswold. See also Dupont 1959: 112, 170.

⁵ Two of them are published in Dupont 1959: 217, 223, figs. 453, 460.

London, which provided substantial new information regarding the 1936 excavations.⁶ New data generated in 2008 for Phong Tuek's site morphology and content included details regarding the Viṣṇu figure uncovered during roadway improvement in the early 1950s.⁷ Residents and monks connected with the recovery, restoration and curation of this figure were interviewed, and detailed observations of the figure's stylistic and iconographic elements were recorded. Only minimal information on the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu had been previously published (Subhadradis 1962: 109; FAD 1993: 22), and a preliminary description of this significant Brahmanical image was undertaken after the 2008 reconnaissance (Clarke 2009, 2011).

None of the remains described for Phong Tuek by Cœdès or Quaritch Wales were ascribed to a Brahmanical, non-Buddhist component, and the site has been characterized since those investigations as exclusively Buddhist in character. The discovery of the Viṣṇu image should have changed this perception, particularly since the image in question is a relatively major piece in both size and quality of execution.⁸ Moreover, among the laterite foundational remains at the Phong Tuek site of "Ban Nai Ma" ("Nai Ma's house"), there appears to have been a large stone pedestal (Dupont 1959: 109), either for a Śiva *liṅga* or an image, and possibly therefore a *yonī* or *snānadronī* (lustration receptacle); although a plan and photograph were published by Cœdès (1928a, pls. 2-3), he mentioned this object only briefly in his text. Also worth mentioning in the context of substantial Brahmanical remains is a large, but poorly preserved, ca. 7th-8th century sculpture of Śiva found at Wat Khao Luea in the Mueang district of Ratchaburi province, which is less than 60 km. south of Phong Tuek (Baptiste and Zéphir 2009: 192, fig. 1).⁹ Both Śiva and Viṣṇu were, therefore, worshipped in western Thailand, and the occurrence of a large Viṣṇu sculpture at Phong Tuek places the site among several additional Dvāravatī sites that contain both Buddhist and Brahmanical material.¹⁰ The very notion of

⁶ These materials, along with a few items of furniture, were donated by Quaritch Wales' widow, Dorothy C. Wales (Royal Asiatic Society 1995: 169-170; Guy 1995: 91-92).

⁷ This general date of discovery is based on the statement by Subhadradis Diskul (1962: 109): "About 10 years ago, when the cart-track in Tambol Pong Tuk was replaced by a road, a stone image of Vishnu . . . was discovered."

⁸ The current height of the image, from the reconstructed feet to the top of the headpiece, is approximately 80 cm.

⁹ Carved in relief out of limestone or schist, the surviving portion of the Śiva sculpture measures 1.14 m. in height. It is now housed in the Ratchaburi National Museum.

¹⁰ Large Dvāravatī or Dvāravatī-related sites that have produced both Brahmanical and Buddhist material include Mueang Si Mahosot (also known as Dong Si Maha Phot or Dong Si Maha Pho) and Mueang Phra Rot in eastern Thailand; Khu Bua in western Thailand; U Thong and Nakhon Pathom in central Thailand; Si Thep to the northeast; and Chaiya on the Thai Peninsula (cf. Brown 1996: 48, 56-61). For example, the moated and walled center at U Thong in north-central Thailand has been described as "preponderantly Buddhist" in its content (Quaritch Wales 1969: 12), but also found there and in the vicinity have been Dvāravatī-era *liṅgas* and Viṣṇu sculptures. These Viṣṇu images are today dispersed and in circumstances that make them difficult to study (Lunet de Lajonquière 1909: 224-225, figs. 19-20; Arunsak, Wasan, and Phattaraphong 2002:



Figure 4. Detail of Viṣṇu (Figure 1), found in Phong Tuek, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. The areas within the circles and beneath the lines may have been subject to substantial alteration with cement. Photograph by Wesley Clarke.



Figure 5. Conjectural “restoration” of Viṣṇu (Figure 1), found in Phong Tuek, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. Photograph by Wesley Clarke.



Figure 6. A king (?) prostrates himself in front of a statue of Viṣṇu, inner south gallery, Bayon, Angkor Thom, Siem Reap province, Cambodia, ca. late 12th-early 13th cent. CE, sandstone relief. Photograph by Paul Lavy.



Figure 7. Viṣṇu, first observed in Ayutthaya, Thailand, but believed to have come from Wiang Sa district, Surat Thani province, Thailand, ca. late 6th-early 7th cent. CE, stone, H. 1.31 m., Bangkok National Museum, inv. no. KKH 13. Photograph by Paul Lavy.



Figure 8. Viṣṇu, found at Wat Tho, Ratchaburi province, Thailand, ca. 7th cent. CE, stone, H. 1.52 m., Bangkok National Museum, inv. no. KKH 7. Photograph by Paul Lavy.

a religious dichotomy between Buddhism and Brahmanism is indeed misleading (Brown 1996: 48, 56-61; Revire: forthcoming).

According to M.C. Subhadradis Diskul, the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu was discovered during road improvement “at 200 m[eters] east of San Chao” – the latter a so-called “*vihāra*” foundation excavated by Cœdès (Subhadradis 1962: 109).¹¹ Because the improved roadway followed the northwest-southeast course of the earlier road, a distance of 200 meters southeast from the San Chao location appears to place the Viṣṇu find-spot in the vicinity of a small rubble-mound mapped by Cœdès but not explored by his team, nor by Quaritch Wales (Cœdès 1928a: pl. 1 compared with current satellite imagery in Figure 3). That the Viṣṇu image was actually located near the roadway to the southeast of San Chao, instead of at a location due east, was recently confirmed by local informants.

During the 2008 field reconnaissance, two elderly residents of Phong Tuek provided information about the circumstances of the Viṣṇu discovery in the early 1950s, and identified the find location.¹² They stated that the fragmented Viṣṇu was found while scraping for fill dirt to create the adjacent modern roadway embankment. The location of the find-spot, currently in an agricultural field, is approximately twelve meters west of the modern roadway centerline and 282 meters southeast of the San Chao structure. This distance is at substantial variance from the 200 meter distance given by Subhadradis, but the 1962 notation is presumed to be a general estimate. Both of the informants had strong personal recollections of this discovery and readily agreed on the specific location, so a reasonable confidence level is assigned to this information.

The find-spot of the Viṣṇu image is in proximity to two potential structural sites, neither of which has been excavated. Approximately 117 meters to the northwest of the Viṣṇu find-spot (but east of the roadway) was the aforementioned small rubble-mound mapped by Cœdès but today seemingly subsumed by a private residential compound. In addition, the elderly informants recalled that, in the area immediately west of the Viṣṇu find-spot, many old (i.e., large) bricks used to be found. The presence of the mound to the northwest and bricks to the west suggests two possible candidates for a shrine where the Viṣṇu image may originally have been housed and hint at an architectural context that would be expected for a sculpture

75-76; Wannasarn 2013: 86-89, figs. 2.14-2.16). Carved in high relief on stelae, they continue to be important objects of devotion and are now obscured beneath heavy layers of gold foil (and plaster). Although Quaritch Wales (1946: 147, pl. XVII, right, and 1969: 23) was inclined to date them to the 9th century or earlier, it is impossible given their current condition to date them with any certainty or even to assess with any degree of certainty their style and iconography, which have likely been subject to comparatively recent alterations.

¹¹ Ongoing research and archaeological investigations hint at the possibility that the “*vihāra*” may not be a Buddhist monastic structure after all (Indorf, Gudur, and Clarke 2014).

¹² The Viṣṇu find-spot was recorded by handheld GPS in 2008, accuracy factor \pm 4.3 meters, at latitude N13° 53.526' longitude E99° 47.207'.

of its size. In either case, the find-spot is significant as it places the image and its potentially affiliated architecture near an “old cart track” that intersects with the main roadway and adjacent to what may have been an ancient crossroads and therefore at a location with potential political and economic importance (Indorf, Gudur, and Clarke 2014).

Reassembling the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu

The Viṣṇu has been preserved and is now presented, together with a nearly identical replica, at the local monastery, Wat Dong Sak, about 565 meters from its find-spot. It is mounted on a multi-tiered marble pedestal and given a place of prominence on the proper left of the central Buddha image in an old assembly hall. Steps have been taken to permanently anchor the image at its position in the shrine and attempts have been made to assure its security with a heavy and lockable retractable metal gate. During the 2008 visit to Phong Tuek, there was ample evidence of the image’s status as an active element in worship at Wat Dong Sak. Offerings of fresh flowers, fruit, incense and gilt leaf were regularly made, and visitation specifically to the Viṣṇu image by lay practitioners was observed. By May 2013 the situation had changed substantially. The Viṣṇu mounting and placement next to the large Buddha image continued, but activity in the old assembly hall appeared to have been greatly reduced, with many activities moving to other locations at the *wat*.

Given its respectable size, the Viṣṇu was probably originally enshrined as the principal image of a small temple. While the circumstances of its contemporary placement and veneration may distantly echo its ancient ritual context, the appearance of the Viṣṇu is much altered from its original state. Today, it appears to be carved in high relief on a large flat stele. As the abbot reported to Subhadradis in the early 1960s, however, the image is actually “sculptured in the round” (1962: 109). Because it was uncovered in a fragmented condition, monks from Wat Dong Sak, including one of the 2008 informants, attempted to restore the sculpture as a free-standing image, but “the stone was too hard to drill” (*ibid.*).¹³ A cement back slab was then created by the monks to hold the refitted pieces together, thus embedding the three-dimensional statue in a cement matrix. It was also reported to Subhadradis that the “shoes” and the pedestal beneath the feet were newly created.¹⁴ Firsthand

¹³ The type of stone on which the image was formed is unknown. The hardness noted by the abbot may suggest a material other than the “blue limestone” used on many Dvāraṇī images, including some other items documented at Phong Tuek.

¹⁴ The pedestal of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, approximately 13 cm. in height, is a small rectangular form with what appear to be crude floral motifs in a recessed panel on the front. Both the slippers and the pedestal are incongruent with the style of the original image. A similarly shaped miniature replica of a slipper, made of gold inlaid with precious stones, was reportedly found among the ritual deposits in the crypt of the main tower at Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya, and probably dates to the 15th century (Prathum 1987: 26-27; Fontein 1996: 73, 83, no. 38; Chiraphon 2007: 72, 157,

investigation suggests, moreover, that a significantly larger portion of the figure probably consists of cement replacement, including the arch that joins the upper hands to the head, most of the long vertical element beneath the proper right hand, the garment and legs of the figure from approximately mid-thigh level down, and the lower half of the mace upon which the lower proper left hand rests (Figure 4).

It also appears that, in the process of reattachment, the lower proper left forearm may have been unnaturally elongated and modified by being turned so that the fingers resting on the pommel of the mace are oriented away from the body and towards the figure's left, rather than forward, as would likely have been the case in its original state. There are instances of Viṣṇu images with such an out-turned hand-on-mace position, including small-scale images embossed on gold sheets, perhaps most famously from Si Thep, and stone Viṣṇus from Myanmar (Figures 15 and 16; see discussion below).¹⁵ However, no significant stone or bronze sculptures from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, or Vietnam with this hand-on-mace position are known to the authors. A turning of the hand may have been necessitated by the absence of the original base and the inability to restore the image to the degree of forward projection that it originally had.

As this discussion demonstrates, the manner in which the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu was reassembled using cement, as well as the recent accretions of gold leaf, complicate art historical analysis and obscure several key aspects of the sculpture. Any attempt to discern its "original" appearance must proceed with caution and the recognition that perhaps only technical analysis may resolve some of the questions that surround the image and its present configuration. It is, nevertheless, possible to propose a hypothetical reconstruction (Figure 5) of the image and to trace with some precision its rather unusual stylistic features and their far-flung relationships.

no. 14). Today it is in the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum (inv. no. K.S.K.26). The Viṣṇu's added shoes appear to emulate the upturned royal slippers found on crowned and adorned Buddha images in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. Buddha images wearing slippers may have first appeared during the Ayutthaya and Post-Angkorian periods, but became common only in the late 18th-19th centuries (Giteau 1975: 195; Giteau 2001: 163-167, fig. 132; Somkiat 1997: 64, 69, 79, 81, 84-86, 92, 113-114, 141-143, 167-169, 202, 229, 233).

¹⁵ Embossed (or repoussé) gold sheets or plaques, associated with Si Thep and bearing depictions of Viṣṇu with an outward-turned lower proper left arm, include examples in the Norton Simon Museum (acc. no. F.1972.19.2.S, H. 30.2 cm.) and the Cleveland Museum of Art (acc. no. 1973.75, H. 7.6 cm.), both dating to ca. late 7th-early 8th century. For the former, see Dofflemeyer 1982: 83-89, pl. 1; Pal 2004: 116-117, no. 84; Bunker and Latchford 2008: 17, fig. 3.4. For the latter, see Bunker and Latchford 2008: 29, fig. 3.17. A similar position of the lower left hand can be seen on a ca. 8th-9th century gold embossed Viṣṇu from the hamlet of Gemuruh, near Wonosobo in Central Java and now in the National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta (inv. no. A31/486a, H. 34 cm.; see Brandes 1904: 556-563, 569-570, pl. 4; Fontein 1990: 206-207, no. 54). It is worth noting that the outward-turned left arm does not appear on all early Southeast Asian gold embossed Viṣṇu images. In those cases in which the details are legible, examples from Gò Tháp and Đá Nổi in southern Vietnam are portrayed with the arm oriented frontally in the manner of larger-scale sculpture (Lê 2005: fig. 5.9, 7.4; Lê 2008: 89, fig. 7, Lê 2011: 425-417, figs. 20.11-12).

The mitred Viṣṇu image in Southeast Asia

In spite of its idiosyncrasies, each discussed below, it is clear that the Phong Tuek image depicts Viṣṇu and belongs to a large corpus of Vaiṣṇava images from Southeast Asia that are generally characterized by a frontal standing position (*sthānaka* or *samabhaṅga*), four arms (*caturbhujā*), a bare torso, a garment wrapped around the waist, and a cylindrical mitred crown or headpiece (*kirītamakuṭa* or *kirītamakuṭa*). Proceeding clockwise from the lower proper right hand, the figure holds an earth orb (*bhū*, *mahī*, *pṛthivī*, or *dhāraṇī*), discus or wheel (*cakra*), conch (*śaṅkha*), and mace or club (*gadā*).¹⁶ A different configuration of these attributes characterized the earliest Southeast Asian Vaiṣṇava images, four sculptures from peninsular Thailand that date from ca. 500 CE to the early-to-mid 6th century (Lavy 2014). These sculptures are notable for holding the conch akimbo against the proper left hip, hence the designation “conch-on-hip” to refer to an image type that in Southeast Asia seems to have been exclusively early in date and limited in geographic range to peninsular (and possibly central) Thailand and to southern Cambodia and Vietnam. The latest of these Southeast Asian conch-on-hip images probably dates to the early 7th century. By contrast, while it may have appeared as early as the late 6th century CE, the arrangement of the four attributes seen on the Phong Tuek image occurred in many regions of Southeast Asia and, by the 7th century, became the standard iconography for Viṣṇu images in much of what are today Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and southern Vietnam. This iconography persisted for many centuries in Khmer art, perhaps as late as the 16th century. The same iconography occurs, for example, in several late 12th or early 13th century relief sculptures from the Bayon, including depictions of enshrined standing four-armed Viṣṇu statues equipped with the same configuration of four attributes (Figure 6).

Art historians and archaeologists have long noted stylistic and iconographic relationships that spanned Southeast Asia, particularly the coastal areas, during the mid-to-late 1st millennium CE. Pierre-Yves Manguin (2010: 171) characterizes this phenomenon as “a pan-Southeast Asian response to South Asian input” while Robert Brown (1992: 49) suggests that there were not only extensive interactions taking place among early Southeast Asian polities, but that a few major Southeast Asian centers may have been responsible for the development and dissemination of early artistic styles within the region. Areas situated on or near the coast often participated in a “common vocabulary” of Brahmanical and Buddhist artistic forms (Albert Le Bonheur cited in Manguin 2010: 171). A notable component of this shared visual culture was the standing four-armed and mitred Viṣṇu image, which has been found widely dispersed in a “pan-Southeast Asian Vaiṣṇava network” that

¹⁶ With a lotus (*padma*), rather than—or synonymous with—the orb, this configuration is identified in the Indian iconographical texts that enumerate the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu as either Janārdana or Vāsudeva (Bidyabinod 1920: 23-33).

included Arakan (now Rakhine state) in Myanmar; peninsular, western, central, eastern, and northeastern Thailand; southern Laos; various sites in Cambodia's Siem Reap province; central Vietnam; the lower Mekong River delta area of Cambodia and Vietnam; and, in Indonesia, western Java, Bangka, and Bali (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 87-110; Lavy 2003: 21-5 and 2004: 121-179; Indradjaya 2014: 116-117).

Sculpting technique and composition

Most early Southeast Asian Vaiṣṇava images, with the notable exception of some from Si Thep, rely on stone reserve elements that were intended, perhaps among other objectives, to provide supplementary structural support for the figures. Among these techniques are various degrees of relief carving, arches used to join the socle to the back of the posterior (elevated) arms and the back of the head, cross-pieces linking the attributes held in the upper arms to the back of the head, and various types of vertical supports used to secure the attributes held in the lowered (waist-level) hands and/or to buttress the legs. On the proper left of Viṣṇu sculptures, vertical supports are incorporated into the iconography as Viṣṇu's *gadā*, whereas between the legs and on the proper right, they are often disguised as drapery.

Beginning with the work of Pierre Dupont, the types and configurations of these reinforcements have served as an important index for the classification and dating of early Southeast Asian sculpture.¹⁷ His guiding principle was that figural sculpture evolved from relief to carving in “ronde bosse” or what Philip Rawson has called “deep forward projection” and “projecting roundly far forward” (Rawson 1997: 67, 70).¹⁸ For Dupont (1955: 37-42), the history of Preangkorian sculpture was a series of attempts to transcend the constraints of relief carving, to “liberate” sculpture from its stone background, and to achieve sculpture “en ronde bosse.” The full realization of *ronde bosse* occurred accordingly during the 9th and 10th centuries when “the difficulties of equilibrium and size” were overcome and auxiliary supporting elements were completely eliminated (ibid.: 39-40). There is indeed a discernible trend, particularly among works associated with the 9th-early 10th century styles of Kulen and Preah Ko, in which artists seem to have progressively sought to minimize structural supports. Dupont's emphasis on technique at the expense of other considerations has been criticized (Rawson 1957: 33-34; Boisselier 1966: 229-230; Lavy 2004: 208-211), but the idea of a general overall progression from relief to *ronde bosse* and/or sculpture-in-the-

¹⁷ Dupont 1936: 97-106; 1941: 234; 1951: 136-137; 1955: 26, 33, 37-42, 128.

¹⁸ According to Rawson (1997: 70), “ronde bosse” should be distinguished from relief and carving in full-round by the fact that while it is cut completely, or nearly completely, from its stone matrix and “stands separate,” it nevertheless retains “a pronounced frontal aspect, its receding side surfaces being exaggerated in length to lift the frontal presentation face far forward.”

round remains a fundamental principle employed to understand the development of Southeast Asian stone sculpture.¹⁹

Due to the fragmentary condition of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu and the presence of the cement backing slab, the degree to which the figure was originally sculpted-in-the-round and the number and type(s) of auxiliary supports cannot be ascertained on visual evidence alone. Confusion over these features may also have led to hesitation in the “restoration” of the lateral, nearly vertical, elements beneath the figure’s lower hands. In the end, the monks left these forms incomplete and dangling awkwardly in space, rather than extending them all the way to the modern pedestal (Figure 4). The upper portions of the *gadā* and the lateral strut beneath the earth-ball seem to be original to the statue. Based on the appearance of the great majority of mitred Viṣṇu images from early Southeast Asia (e.g., Figures 7 and 8), it would be expected that these vertical elements would have extended to the base. However, in the absence of the original pedestal, and in light of the aforementioned suggestion that the position of the proper left arm has been modified, it cannot be certain that they did. The Viṣṇu from Sathing Phra presents an unusual example in which lateral elements apparently did not extend to the base and thus seem to have served no stabilizing or supporting function at all (Lavy 2004: 312).²⁰

Unlike the tentative handling of the lateral vertical supports, the “restoration” of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu equipped it with a clearly delineated cement arch bridging the back of the head with the *cakra* and conch. To what extent this may correspond to the actual use of an arch or supporting cross-pieces in the original composition is unknown. While early Brahmanical stone sculpture in Thailand often includes the lateral and central vertical supports in association with the lower body, very few examples found in Thailand are equipped with arches or braces for the upper arms and head (e.g., Figure 8); one exception, not by the inclusion of braces but by virtue of being carved in high relief, is the Viṣṇu from Wieng Sa (Figure 7).²¹ Perhaps as a result, most stone Viṣṇus from Thailand have suffered the loss of their posterior (elevated) arms (Lavy 2004: 221-222, 263) (e.g., Figure 8). Illustrated

¹⁹ Following Dupont, other scholars have to varying degrees and with some adjustments from study to study, adopted a similar methodology; see e.g., Boisselier 1955: 154-160; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 116-125; Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 92.

²⁰ Regarding the Sathing Phra Viṣṇu (Songkhla National Museum, limestone [?], H. 75 cm.), Dupont (1941: 235, pl. XXX-B) and Boisselier (1959: 218; fig. 5) erroneously associated it with Dong Si Maha Phot. Like Dupont and Boisselier, O’Connor (1966: 138, 141, fig. 2 and 1972: fig. 18) and Piriya (2012: 106, fig. 1.104) date it to the 8th century. Various earlier dates have also been advocated: early 6th century (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 120, fig. 5), late 6th or early 7th century (Lavy 2004: 307-312, figs. 12-13), and ca. mid-7th century (Woodward 2005: 55).

²¹ Other exceptions include (1) the aforementioned Viṣṇu from Sathing Phra, (2) a small Viṣṇu from Ban Phang Kam (Nakhon Si Thammarat National Museum, H. 42 cm.; see Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: fig. 4), and (3) a late 7th-century sandstone Harihara head from the Mueang Phaniat area of Chanthaburi province (Prachin Buri National Museum; see Mollerup 2012: cover and 9-10).

most impressively by the Viṣṇu of Takua Pa, this tendency to not secure the upper arms stands in dramatic contrast to four-armed Brahmanical-Buddhist sculptures of Preangkorian Cambodia and southern Vietnam, which often make extensive use of supporting elements for the upper arms, attributes, and head.²² The question thus remains as to whether the monks “restored” the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu with certain examples of Preangkorian sculpture in mind or, alternately, whether it was originally equipped with supporting elements that would tend to align it more closely to the Preangkorian sculpture of Cambodia and southern Vietnam than to the early sculpture of central, eastern, and peninsular Thailand. Irrespective of whether these elements were truly restored or newly created, many of the closest stylistic associations—for those portions of the image that are likely original to the piece—are with Preangkorian sculpture of the mid-to-late 7th and early 8th centuries.

With its cement backing slab, the present-day appearance of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu superficially resembles the aforementioned high-relief Viṣṇu image associated with the Wiang Sa district of Surat Thani province in peninsular Thailand (Figure 7).²³ Based on the preceding observations and caveats, however, we are in a position to use conjecture to strip away the modern accretions of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu and arrive at a better sense of how the image probably originally appeared as a figure carved fully in the round (Figure 5). The angle of the hips suggests that, unlike the stiff frontality of the Wieng Sa Viṣṇu, the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu probably stood with its weight slightly shifted to the proper left leg with the lower hands cut free from the hips but supported by vertical lateral braces joining the base. In other words, it likely stood in a manner similar to the early-to-mid 7th century Tuol Dai Buon Viṣṇu from Prei Veng province, Cambodia.²⁴

While the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu may have shared the gentle hip-sway stance,

²² The ca. mid-to-late 7th century Viṣṇu of Takua Pa (stone, H. 2.02 m.) was found on Khao Phra Noe, Takua Pa district, Phang-nga province, Thailand, and is today in the Bangkok National Museum; see O’Connor 1972: figs. 14a-c; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: fig. 18. Among the notable contrasting examples from Cambodia and Vietnam with surviving arches to secure the upper arms and head are: (1) the eight-armed Viṣṇu from Phnom Da, Angkor Borei, Ta Keo province, Cambodia (National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, inv. no. Ka. 1639, sandstone, H. 2.7 m.); (2) the Viṣṇu from Tuy Hòa, Phú Yên province, Vietnam (National Museum of Vietnamese History, Hanoi, stone, H. 63 cm.); (3) a Harihara from Trapeang Phong, Siem Reap province, Cambodia (National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, inv. no. Ka. 951, sandstone, H. 99 cm.); and (4) the Viṣṇu from Chót Mạt, Tây Ninh province, Vietnam (Fine Arts Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, inv. no. BTMT 187, sandstone, H. 56 cm.). For illustrations of the first three, see Dupont 1955: pls. IIIA-B, IVA-B, XLI-A, and XLII-B. For the fourth, see Guy 2014: 140, cat. no. 67.

²³ This stone sculpture (H. 1.31 m.), now displayed in the Bangkok National Museum, was first noted among the Chantharakasem Palace collections in Ayutthaya, but it is often said to have come from Wieng Sa (e.g., Lunet de Lajonquière 1909: 228-229; pl. III, fig. 9; Dupont 1941: 235-237 and n. 2, pl. XXXI-B; O’Connor 1972: 42, fig. 15; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 121 and n. 4, fig. 7; but cf. Piriya 2012: 103, fig. 1.98).

²⁴ For the Tuol Dai Buon Viṣṇu (National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, inv. no. Ka 1597, sandstone, H. 1.83 m.), see Dupont 1955: pl. X-A, B; Dalsheimer 2001: 82-83, cat. no. 25.

and possibly a similar system of structural support, with the Tuol Dai Buon Viṣṇu, the two images otherwise have little in common in terms of style. We must look elsewhere for the salient artistic relationships, which appear to have been distant and diverse. The most distinctive features of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu are the form of the mitre and the arrangement of the garment. Firsthand observation and available evidence suggests that they are, for the most part, original to the piece, and they can be traced with some precision. It is these features, moreover, that permit us to suggest a provisional date for the image.

The head and mitred headdress

It is understood here that the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu wears a mitre (Figures 9 and 10), but there is also the less likely possibility that the headdress is a combination of a diadem and a highly stylized coiffeur (*jaṭāmukuta*) with the hair constricted in a sheath. Either way, the mitre does bear some resemblance to a bun-like hairstyle in which the hair was pulled back from the face and gathered into a tubular form held in place with tightly wound encircling braids. Hairstyles somewhat similar in shape to the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu's mitre can be seen, for example, on approximately contemporary stucco reliefs from Khu Bua in Ratchaburi province (Figure 11). Additionally, numerous examples of Khu Bua sculpture exhibit a facial morphology that is closely comparable to the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu (compare Figures 9 and 11).²⁵ Shared features include continuous and arching eyebrows, long and broad noses with pronounced nasal ridge, and similarly shaped eyes and lips. This formal consanguinity firmly connects the Viṣṇu to the Dvāravatī sculpture of western and central Thailand and hints at the possibility of common underlying ethnic points of reference, presumably Mon. It also demonstrates that, while the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu was clearly the product of numerous and often distant stylistic influences, it was also a locally embedded artistic expression and must have been carved in or near western Thailand, if not at Phong Tuek itself.

The constricted hour-glass shape of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu's mitre (Figures 9 and 10) has been likened to a lotus (FAD 1993: 22). Its form is also similar to other Viṣṇu mitres that have been characterized as “onion-shaped” (Guillon 2001: 165). Rather than the smoothly contoured cylindrical mitre characteristic of most early Viṣṇu images from Thailand and Cambodia (e.g., Figures 7 and 8), its mitre consists of a multi-tiered series of elements. Running across the forehead, from ear to ear, is a narrow band of striations indicating either a beaded fillet or, more likely, a strip of hair beneath the lip of the mitre. The wide lower edge of the mitre, raised in slight relief, is ornamented with three triangular florettes, or leaf-shaped forms,

²⁵ For additional examples from Khu Bua, see Baptiste and Zéphir 2009: 202-203, cat. nos. 93-94 and 206-207, cat. no. 103. We thank Nicolas Revire (personal communications) for drawing our attention to the stucco images from Khu Bua.



Figure 9. Frontal detail of the head and mitre of Viṣṇu (Figure 1), found in Phong Tuek, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. Photograph by Wesley Clarke.



Figure 10. Oblique detail of the head and mitre of Viṣṇu (Figure 1), found in Phong Tuek, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. Photograph by Wesley Clarke.



Figure 12. Head of Viṣṇu, Si Thep, Phetchabun province, Thailand, ca. late 7th-8th cent. CE, sandstone, H. 25.4 cm., Honolulu Museum of Art, Purchase, Selden Washington Bequest, 2003, 12, 595.1. Photograph courtesy of the Honolulu Museum of Art.



Figure 11. Detail of a relief of female musicians, excavated at Stūpa no. 10, Khu Bua, Ratchaburi province, Thailand, ca. 7th-8th cent. CE, stucco, H. 66 cm., Bangkok National Museum, inv. no. 311/2511. Photograph by Nicolas Revire.

one in front of each ear and one at the center of the forehead.²⁶ The mitre fits tightly over the cranium and then narrows to a short column before broadening to a series of three layered elements: a narrow, undecorated strip followed by a thick row of heavy circular bosses, and then a narrow, possibly beaded, band. Finally, the entire headpiece is crowned at the top by a convex subconical protuberance. While the total ensemble of mitre elements appears to be entirely unique in Southeast Asian sculpture, the individual elements all have precedent in the corpus of early mitred images from the region.

Perhaps originally inspired by the Pallava sculpture of southeastern India, a convex protuberance on the top of the mitre is encountered on a number of three-dimensional sculptures from early Cambodia and Thailand, i.e., 7th-8th centuries.²⁷ The few examples from Cambodia include a goddess from Kampong Khleang in Siem Reap province and a Viṣṣu found at Phnom Thon Mon in Kandal province.²⁸ A flatter disc-like protuberance tops the mitre of a head, probably Viṣṣu and reportedly from Cambodia, in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.²⁹ Western Thailand has also yielded an example in the Viṣṣu from Ratchaburi province (Figure 8).³⁰

²⁶ Bands or diadems adorned with leaves are sometimes called *patrapaṭṭa* (“band of leaves”). Bejeweled variations may be referred to as *ratnapaṭṭa* (“band of jewels”). A brief discussion of “head-gear” in Hindu iconography can be found in Rao 1993 [1914-1916]: 26-30.

²⁷ Pallava mitres in stone sculpture of the 7th-8th centuries vary and change over time, but they are typically taller, narrower, and more tapering than their Southeast Asian counterparts, which, in contrast to Pallava examples, often flare outward. Examples of tall Pallava mitres are worn, for example, by the Trivikrama in the Varāha Cave (Beck 2006: 143); the Viṣṣu Anantāsāyana at the Mahiṣamardinī Cave (Beck 2006: 132-133); images of Viṣṣu and the portrait of King Narasiṃhavarman I at the Dharmarājaratha (Beck 2006: 103, 196, 204); and the Viṣṣu in the Ādivarāha Cave (Krishna 1980: pl. 17), all at Māmallapuram (or Mahābalipuram). These Pallava mitres are often capped by a disc, or diminishing series of discs, culminating in a convex protuberance with what appear, at least in some cases, to be floral decorative forms. A squatter variation consists of a truncated cylinder or cone surmounted by a steep conical crowning peak; these occur most notably on the royal portraits in the Ādivarāha Cave (Beck 2006: 154-157). Bronze images that may be assignable to the Pallava period, are topped by a multi-tiered cone-like element or, alternately, by a finial-like knob that resembles a floral element or bud (Pal 1969/1970: 24-26; Srinivasan 2013: 173-175).

²⁸ For the Kampong Khleang goddess (National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, sandstone, H. 62.5 cm.), see Dupont 1955: 135, 165-166, pl. XXXVIIA; Dalsheimer 2001: 90, cat. no. 29. For the Phnom Thon Mon Viṣṣu (sandstone, present whereabouts and dimensions unknown), see Haksrea 1981/1982: 74-77.

²⁹ Acc. no. 26.206, sandstone, H. 24.6 cm.; see Coomaraswamy 1928: 16.

³⁰ The image was reportedly found at Wat Tho in Ratchaburi province and is now in the Bangkok National Museum (inv. no. KKH 7, stone, H. 1.52 m.). Dupont (1941: 235-237, pl. XXVIII B), Boisselier (1959: 216-17, fig. 4, and 1975: 99), and O’Connor (1972: 47-8, fig. 19) mistakenly, it seems, identified the image as having come from Phetchaburi. Opinions on the date of the Ratchaburi Viṣṣu differ. Dupont and O’Connor do not explicitly advance a date, but imply 7th century or later. Boisselier and Piriya consider it to be a relatively late example of the mitred Viṣṣu tradition, ca. 2nd half of the 7th century. In contrast, Lavy (2004: 312-315) has emphasized features that suggest the possibility of an earlier date, ca. late 6th-early 7th century.

It wears a mitre that terminates in two diminishing discs that swell outward like flat cushions but are otherwise unadorned. This feature is comparable to the mitres worn by two of the attendant maidens in the mid-to-late 7th-century Gajalakṣmī scene in the Ādivarāha Cave at Māmallapuram in Tamil Nadu, India (Piriya 2012: 107, fig. 1.105a-b).

In Southeast Asia, similar crowning discs are more commonly encountered on images from, or associated with, the site of Si Thep in Phetchabun province, Thailand. These include, for example, a Kṛṣṇa Govārdhana and a fragmentary goddess, the latter of which wears a mitre and ear adornments that also resemble the aforementioned attendants in the Ādivarāha Cave.³¹ A Viṣṇu head in the Honolulu Museum of Art, probably from Si Thep, wears a polygonal mitre with a precisely defined knob-like finial that appears to consist of several bands or tiers. Like the Phong Tuek image, the Honolulu mitre is decorated with similar, albeit more intricate, triangular shaped florettes above the ears and forehead (Figure 12).³²

Better approximating the complete headdress of the Phong Tuek image, however, are rare images that combine three elements: the floriated diadem, the concave or constricted mitre, and the subconical crowning protuberance. Such images have little to no formal relationship with Pallava art. They include, for example, a stucco head of a male deity from Nakhon Pathom with a crowning protuberance that resembles a bun of hair and a mitre that includes a diadem robustly decorated with jewels and flowers above the forehead and temples.³³ Stylistically closer to the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu is another head of a male deity from Surat Thani province (Figure 13).³⁴ Both images wear a mitre with diminishing tiers perhaps intended to represent a lotus bud and both include a band of hair running across the forehead beneath the floriated edge of the mitre. Unlike the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, however, the Surat Thani diadem is adorned not with triangular leaf-like forms (*patrapaṭṭa*), but with circular florettes consisting of prominent “buds” surrounded by round petals.

Striking similarities to the Surat Thani head, on the one hand, and to the

³¹ For the goddess in the Linden-Museum Stuttgart (acc. no. SA 34 180L, sandstone, H. 1.35 cm.), see Thomsen 1982: 160, fig. E46; Kreisel 1987: 104-105, fig. 115. For the Kṛṣṇa Govārdhana (National Museum, Bangkok, sandstone, H. 92 cm.), see Piriya 2012: 108, fig. 1.107.

³² An older photograph of the Si Thep Viṣṇu head was published by Bunker and Latchford (2008: 30, fig. 3.18) with no mention of its current location in the Honolulu Museum of Art (12595.1), which acquired it in 2003.

³³ The ca. 7th-8th century stucco head (H. 17 cm.) is in the Bangkok National Museum (inv. no. Y4, 59 (2/6). Among other suggestions, it has been variously identified as a “Vaishnava deity” (Piriya 2012: 117, fig. 1.122) and the Bodhisattva born as a “Śaiva hermit” (Valérie Zaleski in Baptiste and Zéphir 2009: 160, no. 53; Guy 2014: 244-245, cat. no. 150).

³⁴ The head from Wat Phra Phikanet, Surat Thani province (Chaiya National Museum, stone, H. 15 cm.) is commonly identified as Viṣṇu. Piriya [1980: (7), color pl. III] dates it to the 7th century, however, the date of late 7th or early 8th century advocated by Jacq-Hergoualc’h (2002: 127-8, fig. 20) is accepted here.

Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, on the other, occur on the headpiece of a small gold image of a mitred, four-armed standing Viṣṇu, perhaps dating to ca. 9th-10th century. It was discovered in 1840 at Muara Kaman in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, but later mounted on addorsed peacocks or Garuḍa forms and incorporated into a necklace.³⁵ The diadem of the Muara Kaman Viṣṇu is decorated with circular florettes similar to the Surat Thani head, however, unlike the latter, there are also florettes on the upper band of the mitre that occupy a similar position as the bosses of the Phong Tuek image.³⁶ The high, narrow form and constricted waist of the Muara Kaman mitre also resemble the Phong Tuek image, as does the long, slender shape of the head and face. Given the tiny size of the Muara Kaman image, however, there is probably little significance that can be drawn from morphological similarities and, while it has the same iconography as the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, other aspects of style differ quite markedly. These differences include, for example, the type, disposition, and details of the jewelry; the arrangement of the garments; the details of the attribute in each hand, and the manner in which each attribute is held. But the similarities it shares with the Surat Thani and Phong Tuek images, as well as its ready portability, make the Muara Kaman image important evidence of the complex webs of artistic interconnections that have characterized Southeast Asia for millennia.

West to Arakan

While still poorly understood, it is increasingly clear that there were important mid-to-late 1st millennium artistic relationships between various areas of what is today Myanmar and other regions of mainland Southeast Asia, including, for example, between the Pyu art of central and upper Myanmar and Dvāravatī (Brown

³⁵ The solid gold Viṣṇu from Muara Kaman, Kutai regency, East Kalimantan, measures approximately 10 cm. in height and is today housed in the Mulawarman Museum in Tenggarong, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. An excellent photograph was published by Edwards McKinnon (2000: 227). It was previously part of the regalia of the Sultanate of Kutai (also spelled Kutei) and was photographed worn by a crown-prince in ca. 1883 (Guy 2011: 170-171, figs. 3.7-3.8).

³⁶ Related variations of this type of mitre can be seen, for example, on the following: (1) an andesite seated Viṣṇu (H. 65 cm.) from Central Java dated by Fontein (2007: 104-105, no. 44) to the 8th-9th century (Museum Rietberg Zürich, inv. no. RIN 4); and (2) an unusual bronze standing Viṣṇu (H. 13 cm.), perhaps from Central Java, tentatively dated by Le Bonheur (1971: 218-220) to the 9th-10th century (Musée national des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, inv. no. MG 3626). On the other hand, these three mitres lack some of the distinguishing features of other images from, or attributed to, Central Java. Mitres of the latter are taller, more slender, and, in addition to the floriated diadem, the main cylindrical portion is decorated with three tall, prominent triangular florettes. They also have a thick coil of hair or rolled strap of fabric that encircles the crown of the head and out of which the cylinder projects upwards. For examples of this type, see, e.g., (1) the ca. 8th-9th century Candi Banon Viṣṇu (National Museum, Jakarta, inv. no. 4847/18e, andesite, H. 2.06 m.) (Bernet Kempers 1959: pl. 42); and (2) a bronze Bodhisattva head (private collection, H. 20 cm.) dated by Bernet Kempers (1959: 64-65, pl. 178) to the second half of the 9th or early 10th century.

2001; Galloway 2010); Arakan and Dvāravatī (Gutman 1986: 281-282; Tiffin and Stuart-Fox 2002); lower Myanmar and northeast Thailand (Murphy 2014); and lower Myanmar and Preangkorian/Angkorian art (Gutman 2001: 44-48; 2008: 135-139; 2013: 134-138). As people moved between what are today Thailand and Myanmar, they would probably have relied not only on coastal connections but also on overland routes; this would likely have included what has become known as the Three Pagodas Pass (Wheatley 1961: 10, 195; Dhida 1999: 59). The nearby Phong Tuek area of western Thailand would therefore have been situated in a strategic location beneficial to artistic transmissions and exchanges.

Perhaps the closest counterparts to the unique Phong Tuek mitre can be found in sculpture from ancient Arakan. A well-known head from Vesali (Figure 14), related to Gupta and post-Gupta forms, may be equipped with a similar mitre that is rendered in greater skill and detail than that of the Phong Tuek image.³⁷ Most likely an image of Viṣṇu, it likewise includes a band of small hair curls above the forehead, a diadem topped by three leaf-shaped protuberances, a constricted mid-section, and a multiple tiered upper portion culminating in a convex crowning protuberance. Other less accomplished Viṣṇu sculptures from Arakan, one from Dhanyawadi (Figure 15) and another from Mrauk U (Figure 16), combine all of these elements with the upper band of circular bosses.³⁸ The Dhanyawadi mitre is a particularly close, but not identical, match to the Phong Tuek image.

It is also noteworthy that these and other standing Vaiṣṇava images from Myanmar tend to be positioned with their lowered hands oriented away from the body, whether resting on weapons (*cakra* and *gadā*) like the examples here, on the heads of personified weapons (*āyudhapuruṣas*), or holding the mace like a staff.³⁹ As previously noted, this hand position resembles the turned-out position of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu's lower left hand. The similarity, however, may very well be a

³⁷ Gutman (1999: 32-33, fig. 4) dates the red sandstone head (H. 29 cm.) from Vesali (also Vesālī, Veśālī, or Wethali) to ca. 6th century. It is housed in the Mrauk U Museum, Myanmar. See also Gutman 1976: 264-266, pls. LXXVI-LXXVII; Gutman 2001: 12, pl. 9; Singer 2008: 111 and unnumbered fig.

³⁸ The sandstone Mrauk U Viṣṇu (H. 40 cm.), originally found on the grounds of the Pharabaw monastery and now in the Mrauk U Museum, has been dated by style to the 8th century (Gutman 1976: pl. LXXIXa; Gutman 2001: 60, fig. 46; Singer 2008: 111-112 and unnumbered fig.). Originally four-armed, its frontal, or upper, arms have broken away at the elbows. Of similar size (Gutman: personal communication), the sandstone Dhanyawadi (or Dhañyawaddy) Viṣṇu, now in the Mahamuni Museum, is probably slightly earlier, ca. late 7th-8th century (Singer 2008: 111 and unnumbered fig.). In spite of potential differences in the identity and placement of the attributes in the anterior hands, both are referred to here simply as "Viṣṇu" for convenience.

³⁹ Personified weapons (*āyudhapuruṣas*) occur, for example, on the ca. 6th-7th century red sandstone sculpture of Viṣṇu (H. 50 cm.) from Wuntitaung, Arakan, Myanmar, and now in the Mrauk U Museum (Gutman 1999: 31-32, fig. 3; Gutman 2001: 58, pl. 44). A stone Viṣṇu image from Śrīkṣetra (H. 1 m.), perhaps dating to the 9th century, grips the mace below the pommel, rather than placing the hand on top (Gutman 1999: 33, fig. 5). Both are fragmentary, so an identification more precise than "Viṣṇu" is not attempted here.

coincidence and, as suggested above, the result of the extension and reorientation of the forearm during the course of “restoration.” In terms of this particular feature, there are several factors that argue against a stylistic relationship with Viṣṇus from Myanmar. First, the Arakan images (Figures 15 and 16), as well as others from Myanmar, exhibit greater symmetry with both of the lowered hands turned out, rather than sharing the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu’s awkward and mismatched juxtaposition of a forward-facing right hand and an out-turned left hand (Figure 1). Second, the lowered arms of the Arakan Viṣṇus are of even length, but the left forearm of the Phong Tuek image is unnaturally and disproportionately elongated relative to its right arm. Third, the elbows of the out-turned arms of Viṣṇus from Myanmar tend to be pulled closer to the body (e.g., Figure 16), whereas a wider gap is maintained between the body and arms of the Phong Tuek image. All of these factors support the hypothesis that the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu has been modified and that the original position of the arms would have been consistent with the known examples from Thailand, Cambodia, and southern Vietnam, rather than those from Myanmar.

A major distinguishing feature of the Arakan Viṣṇus is the lowering of the posterior arms so that they extend well below the waist or hip-level of the anterior arms. This can be seen on both the Dhanyawadi (Figure 15) and Mrauk U Viṣṇus, although the anterior arms of the latter (Figure 16) no longer survive. In both images, the lowered proper right hand rests on a *cakra*, in turn supported by a pedestal, and the left on the pommel of an inverted *gadā*. The iconographical development of lowering the posterior arms to rest on weapons first occurred in early Gupta period India but, outside of Myanmar, is rarely encountered in Southeast Asian art. The only other stone example known to the authors is a ca. 9th-century Javanese Viṣṇu (Craven 1984: no. 47). In contrast, the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu—like virtually all standing Viṣṇus from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam—exhibits the raised position of the posterior arms (e.g., Figures 1, 6, 7, and 21). Thus, the overall conception and iconography of the Arakan Viṣṇus (and others from Myanmar) differ substantially from those made elsewhere in mainland Southeast Asia. Other than the form and decoration of the mitre, there is therefore little evidence that the Vaiṣṇava images from Arakan had much influence towards the east and Phong Tuek.

On the other hand, although many of the features of the Dhanyawadi and Mrauk U mitres appear to have been the product of “internal” development following the Vesali Viṣṇu (Figure 14), it is not inconceivable that the appearance of the upper band of circular bosses on the Arakan mitres was the product of stylistic influences that were spreading from east to west, that is, from Phong Tuek to Arakan. Other westward moving artistic transmission is suggested by two, perhaps three, lintels found in the Mrauk U area that seem to exhibit influences from the Preangkorian Sambor Prei Kuk style of the early-to-mid 7th century, but which appear to have been carved in the stone typical of Arakan sculpture and in a localized idiom (Gutman 2001: 48, pls. 32-33; Singer 2008: 112-113). As further discussed below, lintels in

the Sambor Prei Kuk style have been found in eastern Thailand. Artisans working in this and other Preangkorian styles may have traveled from eastern Thailand to Arakan via western Thailand, Phong Tuek, and the Three Pagodas Pass. Such westward movement would help explain not only the traits shared by both the Phong Tuek and Arakan Viṣṇu, but also the appearance of a Preangkorian style in Arakan and the significant influence that Preangkorian styles exerted on the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu itself.

East to Preangkorian Khmer and Cham art

Khmer and Cham artistic influences of the mid-7th to early 8th century are crucial for understanding the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu, particularly its headdress and the arrangement of its garment. Similar elaborate mitres with floriated diadems, constricted midsections, multiple diminishing tiers, and a crowning finial-like protuberance occur on several mid-7th century Prei Kmeng style lintels bearing reliefs of Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana (Viṣṇu reclining upon the serpent Ananta), including a lintel from Tuol Baset in Battambang province (Figure 17), and another at Phnom Han Chey in Kampong Cham province (Figure 18).⁴⁰ A very similar, albeit eroded, mitre also occurs on the Wat Eng Khna lintel that depicts a royal consecration (*abhiṣeka*) and Viṣṇu and Brahmā flanking Śiva as Liṅgodbhavamūrti (representation of the origin of the *liṅga*).⁴¹ Like the Phong Tuek image, these mitres are embellished with florettes above the forehead and temples.⁴² Some of these decorative elements probably correspond to removable diadems and metal attachments that likely adorned the mitres of three-dimensional stone sculpture when in worship (Dupont 1955: 134-138; Bunker and Latchford 2008: 27, 31, fig. 3.20). Conspicuously absent from these mitres rendered in relief, however, are the circular bosses that only seem to occur on the Phong Tuek image and, in more miniature form, on the two examples from Arakan.

The Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana images depicted on the Prei Kmeng style lintels are closely related to similar depictions of Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana in the Cham art of Vietnam designated as the Mỹ Sơn E1 style, as well as this style's variants and extensions (Boisselier 1956). Somewhat similar constricted mitres with multiple

⁴⁰ For the lintel from Tuol Baset in Baset village (formerly in the Wat Po Veal museum and Battambang Museum and now in the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, inv. no. Ka. 3218, sandstone, H. 63 cm., L. 1.58 m.), see Dupont 1955: 136-138, pl. XXVIA; Guy 2014: 151-152, cat. no. 75. For the Han Chey lintel (*in situ* on the small sandstone shrine), see Bénisti 1964: 93-95, figs. 1-2. In addition to the Tuol Baset and Phnom Han Chey examples illustrated here, lintels depicting Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana also include those from Vat Tang Kasang, Tuol Ang, and Robang Romeah (Dupont 1952: figs. 24, 31; Bénisti 1974: 132-135, fig. 1).

⁴¹ For the lintel found at Wat Eng Khna in Kampong Thom province (National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, inv. no. Ka. 1774, sandstone, H. 55 cm., L. 1.85 m.), see Guy 2014: 165-167, cat. no. 88.

⁴² A very similar type of mitre also occurs, rather unusually, on a small bronze Avalokiteśvara (?) (H. 21 cm.) found at Wat Kompong Luong in Angkor Borei, Cambodia; see Dupont 1955: 138, pl. XXII-A.

Figure 13. Head of a deity (Viṣṣu?), found at Wat Phra Phikanet, Tha Chana District, Surat Thani province, Thailand, ca. late 7th-early 8th cent CE, stone, H. 15 cm., Chaiya National Museum. Photograph by Paul Lavy.



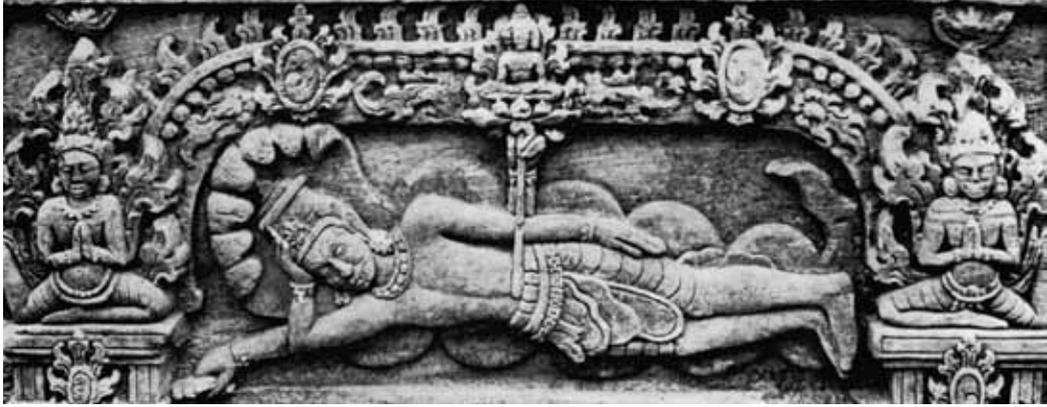
Figure 14. Head of Viṣṣu, Vesali (or Wethali), Rakhine state, Myanmar, ca. 6th century CE, red sandstone, H. 29 cm., Mrauk U Museum. Photograph by Pamela Gutman.



Figure 15. Viṣṣu, Dhanyawadi, Rakhine state, Myanmar, ca. late 7th-8th cent. CE, sandstone, H. ca. 46 cm., Mahamuni Museum. Photograph by Don Stadtner.



Figure 16. Viṣṣu, found at Pharabaw monastery, Mrauk U, Rakhine state, Myanmar, ca. 8th cent. CE, sandstone now limed and painted, H. 40 cm., Mrauk U Museum. Photograph by Don Stadtner.



tiers and a crowning finial-like protuberance can be seen on tympana from Mỹ Sơn (Figure 19), Phú Thọ (Figure 20), and Mỹ Xuyên.⁴³ By the 8th century, Cham mitres begin to take on a polygonal form as seen for example on the post-Mỹ Sơn E1 style Đa Nghi Viṣṇu (Figures 21 and 22) and a ca. early 9th century Viṣṇu Garuḍāsana (Viṣṇu mounted on Garuḍa) found in the Marble Mountains of Đà Nẵng province, Vietnam.⁴⁴ They bear some resemblance to the Phong Tuek mitre, again particularly in terms of the floriated diadem, constricted mid-section, and protuberant apex.⁴⁵

The relationships between the art of Champa (or Campā) and other regions of Southeast Asia have long been a subject of scholarship (Baptiste 2014). There is convincing evidence, for example, of 7th-8th century artistic interactions between Champa and Dvāravatī (Guy 2009: 142-143) and ca. 9th-century Cham influence in the Chaiya area of peninsular Thailand (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 267-269, 302-306, but contra, 315-316). It is not inconceivable that this influence on the Thai-Malay Peninsula could have extended north into western Thailand and the Phong Tuek area, however there is as yet little corroborating evidence for such a scenario. It is likely

⁴³ For the tympanum originally from temple E1 at Mỹ Sơn, Quảng Nam province (Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 17.8, sandstone, H. 1.15 m., L. 2.40 m.), see Baptiste and Zéphir 2005: 183-185, cat. no. 5; Guy 2014: 152-153, cat. no. 76. For the tympanum (or lintel?) from Phú Thọ, Quảng Ngãi province (Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 17.4, sandstone, H. 72 cm., L. 1.85 cm.), see Guillon 2001: 80, cat. no. 18. The Mỹ Xuyên tympanum from Thừa Thiên-Huế province is only known through a drawing first published in Parmentier 1918: 423, fig. 125.

⁴⁴ For the Viṣṇu (formerly in the Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 8.1, sandstone, H. 1.80 m.) from Đa Nghi in Quảng Trị province, see Boisselier 1963: 55-57, fig. 22, pls. III-a, VI-d. For the Viṣṇu Garuḍāsana (Musée national des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, inv. no. MA 3572, sandstone with modern polychrome, H. 58 cm.), see Baptiste and Zéphir 2005: 198-199, cat. no. 12; Guy 2014: 154-155, cat. no. 78. One may add an additional example worn by a deity that has been identified as Śiva (sandstone, H. 78 cm.), associated with the Mỹ Sơn E1 style, and dated on stylistic grounds to the 8th century (Hubert 2005: 58, fig. 49). Its provenance is unknown to the authors and it is approached here with a high degree of caution.

⁴⁵ A closely related mitre can be seen on a bronze Viṣṇu (H. 30 cm.) in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (inv. no. AK-MAK-265, 1959). The origins of this sculpture are unknown, but arguments may be made for associating it both with Central Javanese and Cham art (Dupont 1953: 21-26; Lunsingh Scheurleer and Klokke 1988: 60, cat. no. 8).

(Opposite page)

Figure 17. Lintel depicting Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana and the Birth of Brahmā, Tuol Baset, Battambang province, Cambodia, Prei Kmeng style, ca. mid-7th cent. CE, sandstone, H. 63 cm., W. 1.58 m., National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Ka. 3218. Photograph courtesy of Artibus Asiae, after Dupont 1955: pl. XXVI-A.

Figure 18. Detail of lintel depicting Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana, Phnom Han Chey, Kampong Cham province, Cambodia, Prei Kmeng style, ca. mid-7th cent. CE, sandstone, in situ. Photograph by Paul Lavy.

Figure 19. Detail of tympanum depicting Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana and the Birth of Brahmā, Mỹ Sơn temple E1, Quảng Nam province, Vietnam, Mỹ Sơn E1 style, ca. mid-7th cent. CE, gray sandstone, H. 1.15 m., L. 2.40 m., Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 17.8. Photograph by Paul Lavy.

Figure 20. Detail of tympanum (or lintel?) depicting Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana and the Birth of Brahmā, Phú Thọ, Quảng Ngãi, Vietnam, related to the Mỹ Sơn E1 style, ca. 8th cent. CE, sandstone, H. 72 cm.; L. 1.85 m., Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 17.4. Photograph by Paul Lavy.

that overland connections between Cham kingdoms, northeast Thailand, and central Thailand (or Dvāravatī) were involved (Murphy forthcoming). The distinctive form of mitre seen in 7th-8th century Cham sculpture appears on several 8th-century *sema* stones in northeast Thailand and particularly on examples from Mueang Fa Daet in Kalasin province, i.e., the mitres worn by Indra (also Śakra/Sakka) on the *sema* stone share the cylindrical or polygonal shape, floriated diadem, constricted mid-section, and protuberant apex (Piriya 1974: 57-58; Murphy forthcoming). This particular configuration of elements was widespread in mainland Southeast Asia by the mid-7th century, continued through the 8th century, and developed into different headdress styles during the 9th and 10th centuries.

In addition to the mitres, the garments and girdles worn by the Tuol Baset (Figure 17) and Đa Nghi Viṣṇu (Figures 21 and 22) have clear relationships with those of the Phong Tuek image. Like the Đa Nghi image the Phong Tuek garment hangs in a series of tight folds over the lower part of the proper right thigh and plunges past the knees in a “v-shaped” panel of fabric.⁴⁶ The two figures also have a similar elongated anatomy with very high pinched waists and narrow hips. Indeed the similarities between these two images are compelling and would seem to defy coincidence.

It is unfortunate that the Đa Nghi Viṣṇu was stolen from the Museum of Cham Sculpture in 1988 (Guillon 2001: 165, no. 176). Its whereabouts are presently unknown, and it is therefore unavailable for firsthand examination and comparison. However, it is crucial to note that some of the apparent similarities between these two sculptures may be the result of the 1950s “restoration” of the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu; it appears that substantial portions of the garment, from about mid-thigh level down, may have been touched-up with cement. If this visual observation is correct, the restoration may have affected, or involved alterations to, those portions of the garment with the idiosyncratic Đa Nghi-related traits (i.e., the small accordion folds on the thigh and the deep “v-shaped” extension of fabric).

The garment and the style of Prasat Andet

The questions surrounding the Đa Nghi Viṣṇu aside, the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu’s garment is directly related to the Preangkorian style of Prasat Andet, ca. late 7th to early 8th century (Dupont 1955: 166-179; Boisselier 1981: 18-21). A defining feature of this style is the so-called “pocket-fold” arrangement of the garment, or *sampot* (Lavy 2004: 214-215). The Cleveland Museum of Art deity (Figure 23, probably Viṣṇu), one of the earliest images associated with the Prasat Andet style, wears a garment with an arrangement that seems to stand at the transition from the

⁴⁶ A remarkably similar configuration of garment occurs on an adorant figure carved in high-relief on a sandstone block (H. 92 cm.) that is probably from an image or *liṅga* pedestal. Held in private collections since at least the 1940s, including previously that of Joseph Inguimberty, the image has been attributed to the Mý Son E1 style of the 7th-8th centuries (Hubert 2005: 19, fig. 13).



Figure 21. Viṣṇu (frontal view), Đa Nghi, Quảng Trị province, Vietnam, ca. 8th cent. CE, sandstone, H. 1.08 m., formerly Museum of Cham Sculpture, Đà Nẵng, inv. no. 8.1 (stolen in 1988). Photograph after Parmentier 1922: pl. XXVI, “no. 8,1 (face).”



Figure 22. Viṣṇu (profile view), Đa Nghi, Quảng Trị province, Vietnam. Photograph after Parmentier 1922: pl. XXVI, “no. 8,1 (profil).”



Figure 23. Hindu God probably Viṣṇu, Cambodia, Prasat Andet style, ca. 2nd half of 7th cent. CE, gray sandstone, H. 87.0 cm., The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Fund, 1942.562. Photograph courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Figure 24. Harihara, found in the cella of Prasat Andet, Kampong Thom province, Cambodia, Prasat Andet style, ca. late 7th-early 8th cent. CE, sandstone, H. 1.97 m., National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Ka. 1635. Photograph courtesy of Artibus Asiae, after Dupont 1955: pl.XXXIII-A.

Prei Kmeng (ca. 625/30-700) to the Prasat Andet style (Dupont 1955: 168-171, pl. XXXIII-B). Characteristic of both styles is its cinching of the garment on the hip, in this case on the proper left. To this relatively simple and straightforward form of drapery are added the “pocket-fold” and a sash worn horizontally around the hips in the fashion of some early 7th century images, with the exception that, unlike those earlier images, the sash is knotted at the waist rather than terminating in a bow at the right hip.⁴⁷ In the fully developed Prasat Andet style, the horizontal sash is replaced with a belt that occasionally, as with the Prasat Andet Harihara (Figure 24), consists of square chain-links, presumably in imitation of metal accessories that are known to have been donated to deities and which seemingly survive to the present (Bunker and Latchford 2008: 13-24). A similar type of belt was anticipated by the ca. mid-7th century image of Viṣṇu on the Tuol Baset lintel (Figure 17). In short, the *sampot* of the Cleveland Museum of Art deity (Figure 23) combines a variation of the earlier type of horizontal sash (ca. early-to-mid 7th century) with the lateral waist-knot of the Prei Kmeng style (mid-7th century) and a key distinguishing feature of the Prasat Andet style, the “pocket-fold” (late 7th-early 8th century).

The Phong Tuek Viṣṇu similarly presents an array of sartorial elements that seem to span the 7th and early 8th centuries (Figure 4). It is attired in a variation of the more fully developed Prasat Andet drapery style with a chain-link belt, but it combines these features with a horizontal coiled sash worn just above, and parallel with, the belt. Somewhat similar, but not identical, “stacking” of sashes and belts occurs on the Tuol Baset and Han Chey lintels (Figures 17 and 18) and the Đa Nghi Viṣṇu (Figure 21). As noted above, the horizontal sash is present in early 7th-century sculpture from Cambodia, but the coiled variety was particularly common in the late 6th-early 7th century sculpture of peninsular and eastern Thailand (Lavy 2004: 314). It then fades out over the course of the 7th century. The singular presence of the coiled sash on the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu in conjunction with the fully developed Prasat Andet style of garment (Figure 24) may be the last vestige of a prevalent local motif that was likely becoming archaic by the time the image was made under late 7th-early 8th century influences emanating from the Prasat Andet style and approximately contemporary Cham art.

Conclusions and cross-cultural connections

The Phong Tuek Viṣṇu represents an idiosyncratic spectrum of stylistic influences ranging from Champa and Preangkorian inputs to longstanding stylistic features of peninsular and eastern Thailand to potential relationships with Arakan

⁴⁷ Examples of the earlier type include two Viṣṇus of ca. 600, both in the National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh (Dalsheimer 2001: 46-9, cat. nos. 2-3). These are (1) the Viṣṇu from Tuol Chu, Kandal province, Cambodia (inv. no. Ka. 1610, sandstone, H. 94 cm.); and (2) the Viṣṇu from Kompong Cham Kau, Stung Treng province, Cambodia (inv. no. Ka. 1598, sandstone, 1.95 m.).

that deserve further research (see map, Figure 2). The preponderance of evidence places the Phong Tuek Viṣṇu in the late 7th or, more likely, the early 8th century, though, given the current state of evidence, a date somewhat later in the 8th century cannot be completely ruled out as a possibility. In any case, it likely dates to a time not far removed from the mid-to-late 7th century expansion of elites, presumably Khmer and associated with the polity of “Zhenla,” out of the Kampong Thom area of north central Cambodia (Brown 1996: 52; Vickery 1998: 33-47). Initial forays from this region toward the north and west began earlier, ca. the very late 6th-early 7th century, under the so-called “Mun Valley Chiefs” or “Dangrek Chieftains.” Most prominent among them was Citrasena-Mahendravarman, who undertook a series of military expeditions up the middle Mekong River as far north as Champasak province in southern Laos, westward up the Mun River Valley of Thailand, and south to Ta Phraya in Sa Kaeo province of eastern Thailand (Vickery 1998: 71-78, 335; Lorrillard 2014: 197-198).⁴⁸ These expeditions or “exploratory probes” may have had little political effect (Vickery 1998: 21, 79). However, more prolonged and engaged political intervention in eastern Thailand began with Mahendravarman’s son, Īśānavarman I (r. ca. 616-637), and continued in turn with Īśānavarman’s son, Bhavavarman II (r. ca. late 630s-650s), and great grandson, Jayavarman I (r. ca. 657-681).⁴⁹ Each of these three kings seems to have endeavored to maintain similar territorial realms, albeit possibly ruling from different capitals, and each of them maintained, or sought to maintain, relatively strong control of eastern Thailand (Vickery 1998: 337, 342-3, 350).⁵⁰

Four inscriptions provide evidence of this illustrious family’s mid-to-late 7th century authority in what is today eastern Thailand. Two of these inscriptions were found in the vicinity of Prasat Khao Noi (near Aranyaprathet, Sa Kaeo province); this area, together with ancient Mueang Phai, probably corresponds to the polity referred to in the inscriptions as Jyeṣṭhapura. The badly worn Khao Noi Inscription I (K. 506 / P.Ch. 16 / 637 CE) records the Vaiṣṇava dedications of Īśvarakumāra, a *svāmi* (“master”) of Jyeṣṭhapura and *bhr̥tya* (“servant”) of either Īśānavarman I (Vickery 1998: 129-30, 198-199, 338, 341) or perhaps Bhavavarman II (Jacques 1986: 81; 1990: 256). The undated Wat Kut Tae Inscription (K. 1150 / P.Ch. 26) mentions Śivadatta, a son of Īśānavarman I and elder brother of *mahārāja* Bhavavarman II, as *svāmi* of

⁴⁸ Mahendravarman’s presence at Ta Phraya is indicated by an inscription (K. 969 / P.Ch. 5) found at Prasat Khao Chong Sa Chaeng, Ta Phraya district, Sa Kaeo province. It records the excavation of a water tank called the “Śāṅkara Taṭāka” (Chhabra 1961: 110-111; Cœdès 1964: 152).

⁴⁹ Varying dates have been postulated for Īśānavarman’s death: ca. 628, ca. 635, or ca. 637. For a comprehensive review with bibliography, see Vickery 1998: 340-342.

⁵⁰ Īśānavarman I can be closely linked to his capital at Īśānapura/Sambor Prei Kuk (Vickery 1998: 335-339; Lavy 2003: 29-30). What little evidence there is for Bhavavarman II’s capital (Bhavapura?) favors Sambor Prei Kuk (Jacques 1986: 82-84; cf. Vickery 1998: 330-333). Jayavarman I’s capital remains unknown but it seems not to have been Īśānapura/Sambor Prei Kuk; it may have been located in southern Cambodia or in the region of Angkor (Vickery 1998: 350-356).

Jyeṣṭhapura (Jacques 1986: 79-81 and 1989: 17; Vickery 1998: 130, 198, 338, 341).⁵¹

Two additional inscriptions indicate that, during the reign of Jayavarman I, the authority of this lineage was reasserted, or extended, to the Battambang area of present-day western Cambodia, into what is today eastern Thailand via the Watthana Gap and what has been called the “Mahosot Route,” and then south to the sea in Chanthaburi province (Mollerup 2012: 149-150).⁵² Charles Higham (2002: 297) has suggested that the overland route to the sea through Chanthaburi may have been exploited as an alternative to “restricted or second-hand access to the coastal trade and associated religious and political changes” enjoyed by the polities located in the Mekong River delta and on the Gulf of Thailand. Among the cumulative related art historical evidence, there are at least three lintels in the style of Sambor Prei Kuk (first half of the 7th century) and four in the style of Prei Kmeng (second half of the 7th century) that seem to correspond to this mid-to-late 7th century activity in eastern Thailand and that bear witness to Preangkorian artistic influence in the region (Smitthi and Mayurie 1989: 65-73, figs. 14-16, 19-20, 23, 27; Mollerup 2012: 10, 60-61).⁵³

The possibility that the importance of this extended elite family may have reached further to the west, and into central Thailand, is suggested by the copper plate inscription from U Thong (K. 964), near Suphan Buri, approximately 100 kilometers northeast of Phong Tuek. This inscription records the succession to the throne (*simhāsana* or “lion seat”) by Harṣavarman, a grandson of a king named Īśānavarman. Although George Cœdès (1958: 129-131) and Claude Jacques (1986: 84-85 and 1989: 17) raised questions about the identity of this Īśānavarman, Robert Brown (1996: 49-52) has argued that it must be the king of that name ruling from Sambor Prei Kuk. According to Michael Vickery (1998: 132), Harṣavarman “probably represented a branch of Cambodian royalty who had established their own center in what is now central or eastern Thailand” during the mid-7th century. In this context, it is interesting to note that K. 964 also commemorates offerings made to two *lingas* by Harṣavarman (Cœdès 1958: 131), actions that may reflect the extension of Sambor Prei Kuk’s predominantly Śaiva religious orientation westward into what is now central Thailand (Lavy 2003: 32-33).

Around this time in Champa, a Sanskrit inscription from M̃y Son (C. 96/657 or 658 CE) indicates that another grandson of Īśānavarman I, Prakāśadharmā, assumed the throne of M̃y Son as King Vikrāntavarman I (r. ca. 653-687 or later). According to this inscription, Prakāśadharmā’s (presumably Cham) father, Jagaddharma,

⁵¹ Jacques and Vickery differ regarding the relative sequence of these two inscriptions.

⁵² The relevant inscriptions are K. 447 (Cœdès 1942: 193-195; Vickery 1998: 350-351), reportedly from Wat Baset in the Battambang area, and K. 502 (or Ch.B. 3-4), found in two fragments at Wat Thong Thua and Wat Chai Chumphon (or Wat Sa Bap), Mueang Chanthaburi district, Chanthaburi province. Cœdès (1924: 352-358) associated K. 502 directly with Īśānavarman I, but Vickery (1998: 131-132, 338) has advanced compelling arguments in favor of dating it to the time of Jayavarman I with retrospective mention of Īśānavarman I.

⁵³ For a more complete bibliography on these lintels, see Lavy 2004: 152-155.

traveled to the town of “Bhava” – probably Bhavapura and perhaps a reference to Sambor Prei Kuk in Cambodia – where he married a daughter of Īśānavarman (I), princess Śarvāṇī (Boisselier 1956: 207-209 and 1963: 34-40; Golzio 2004: 13-21). Thus two divergent branches of the same family may have briefly ruled Sambor Prei Kuk/Zhenla’s neighbors to the east (M̃y Son in Champa) and west (possibly the U Thong area or some polity associated with what we call Dvāravatī culture). For Jean Boisselier (1956: 208), these family relations are sufficient to explain the artistic relationships between Zhenla and Champa. Accordingly, Vikrāntavarman may be credited with importing Khmer traditions and mid-7th century stylistic influences into the M̃y Son area. The influence of the Prei Kmeng style and related Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana lintels is, by this line of reasoning, reflected in the proliferation of Viṣṇu images in Cham art during the second half of the 7th century and into the 8th century (e.g., Figures 19-22).⁵⁴ While the religious orientation among Īśānapura/Zhenla elites was predominantly towards Śaivism, Viṣṇu remained an important divinity and focus of devotion (Lavy 2003: 32-34), with Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana lintels perhaps appearing on temples dedicated to Śiva. More broadly speaking, Vaiṣṇava mythological and literary traditions continued to circulate and gain popularity in many parts of Southeast Asia.⁵⁵

As Boisselier (1956: 212) admits, however, his arguments do not explain how Cham artistic influences came to be felt in Preangkorian art. Thus, this unidirectional model and the wide-ranging elite family ties issuing from Īśānavarman I do not entirely clarify the particular mechanisms through which shared artistic expressions were being developed. More recent research that destabilizes earlier notions of fixed ethnic, religious, and cultural boundaries has begun to provide alternate ways of envisioning the dynamic interplay that characterized the art of the period. Thus, we can regard northeastern and southern Thailand as “interface regions” between Preangkorian and Dvāravatī art (Brown 1996: 19-45) and the relationship between Dvāravatī and Īśānapura/Zhenla as a “transregional ritual complex” (Revire forthcoming). Promising ongoing research by a number of scholars is also expanding knowledge about the various prehistoric and historic linkages made

⁵⁴ Southworth (2001: 148) has advanced an interesting argument to the reverse, specifically, that the appearance of Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana in Preangkorian art may have been the result of Cham influences. Here is not the place to weigh the evidence, but suffice it to say that Vaiṣṇava devotionalism appears to have been considerably stronger, and Viṣṇu images far more common, in 6th-7th century Cambodia and southern Vietnam than at any point in Cham history, notwithstanding scattered Cham Viṣṇu images and periodic references to the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Cham sculpture and epigraphy. Viṣṇu Anantāśāyana is referenced, but not named, in one of the earliest inscriptions thus far found in Cambodia, K. 875 (Neak Ta Dambang Dek, Ta Keo province), which is considered to date to the late 5th or early 6th century CE on the basis of the shape of the script (Cœdès 1937; Goodall 2012: 345-348).

⁵⁵ For the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in particular, and further bibliography in general, see: Zéphir 1996; Griffiths et al. 2012: 237-239; Goodall and Griffiths 2013: 434-437.

via inland communication and transportation networks.⁵⁶ Elite family connections do, nonetheless, provide a social and political context that would potentially have facilitated transregional and transcultural interactions across a vast swath of territory from central Vietnam in the east to central Thailand in the west.

The Phong Tuek Viṣṣu probably dates to a time just after this particularly intense period of elite interactions, i.e., to ca. early 8th century, and was likely a product of the vibrant artistic activities that would have ensued alongside the events, dedications, and political developments recorded in the inscriptions. Phong Tuek occupies the western fringes of an extensive web of relationships reaching from central and eastern Thailand through western and northern Cambodia and into central Vietnam. And, as evidence continues to emerge that Phong Tuek may have been a more important Brahmanical center than previously realized (Indorf, Gudur, and Clarke 2014), it is also becoming clear that the Phong Tuek Viṣṣu stood directly astride cultural interactions between Preangkorian Cambodia to the east and ancient Arakan to the west.

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⁵⁶ E.g., Hendrickson 2010 and Trần 2013. Moore (2013: 24) includes a useful selected bibliography of publications stemming from the “East-West Corridor” initiative and the “Living Angkor Road Project.” Such networks were in place well before the historical period. For a useful and up-to-date discussion of the Iron Age with extensive bibliography, see Carter 2013.

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