

## A NEW KHMER AND SANSKRIT INSCRIPTION AT BANTEAY CHMAR

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A previously known but largely ignored five-line inscription at Pràsàt Bantãy Ćhmàr (Maxwell N1 / Cunin 17)<sup>1</sup>, composed in Khmer and Sanskrit, has begun to draw the attention of researchers visiting the site. To my knowledge no serious attempts have been made to decipher and translate it, and no specific measures have been undertaken to protect and preserve either this or the numerous other inscriptions remaining in the temple. Its existence and location have now been documented by the AIS, by Olivier Cunin, and by the EFEO, and estampages have been prepared both by the École française and by the Cambodian archaeological authority APSARA. These recent efforts began with an epigraphic survey of the temple made in February 2000 by Christophe Pottier, followed in April of the same year by the making of estampages by specialists from the EFEO and the Conservation d'Angkor, but this particular inscription and its text have received focused attention only since 2008, the year following the first AIS survey of the site. At the time of writing no K. number has been assigned to it. In response to a number of requests for information I will here attempt to situate this small inscription historically and architecturally in relation to others at Bantãy Ćhmàr and elsewhere, to transliterate and translate it, and finally to comment on and interpret its content.

### 1. ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The ruined temple of Bantãy Ćhmàr lies 110 kilometres northwest of Angkor, in the Thmar Puok (Thma Pùok) District of Banteay Meanchey Province; it is not located on either of the major ancient roads

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<sup>1</sup> Inscription references are explained below (Section 2).

leading to the west and northwest, but between them, above Phnom Srok and Pràsàt Prohm Kel (Bruguier 2000: 545, 546, maps 1 and 4; Hendrickson 2008: 64, Figure 1). However remains are reported of old unsurfaced access roads connecting the temple to the Angkor–Phimai highway on the east and to the Angkor–Sdok Kak Thom route on the south (see Appendix 2). The outermost fifth enclosure of the temple, bounded by earthworks, measures 2.2 by 1.7 kilometres and contains a large rectangular moat, 63 metres wide, surrounding the main temple buildings in an area of 770 by 690 metres. There are four satellite temples in the cardinal directions between the earth rampart and the moat, plus an additional temple in the south, and one in the southeast, six in all. Outside the earth rampart stand two further axially-located satellite temples, in the north and west. The rampart itself is penetrated on its eastern side by a large rectangular man-made reservoir or *baray*, known as the Rahal, which has an island-temple (*mebon*) at its centre. The waters of the moat were crossed by four axial causeways having as balustrades statues of gods and demons pulling on *nāgas*, as at Ankor Thom and Prāḥ Khān at Angkor. This architectural deployment of the epic Churning of the Ocean theme, *Amṛtamanthana*, was part of a gigantic metaphor identifying the moat as the universal ocean, source of deathlessness, and the ramparts and walls of the temple it surrounded as the mountain-gateway to the immortals (Coedès 1928: 88–89, Maxwell and Poncar 2006: 15–31). Each causeway led to a stone gateway (*gopura* in current parlance, *dvāra* in the inscriptions) in the fourth enclosure wall, and within this enclosure roads led from the gates to the triple-towered entrances leading into the third enclosure. A structure of the roadside fire-house type (see below, footnote 6 and Figure 15 [D], and Maxwell 2007 [2]: 40-45, 84-85) still stands in isolation on the north side of the eastern axial approach road in the fourth enclosure (structure 178).

The rectangular third enclosure is bounded by walls fronted by open-sided, roofed sandstone galleries sheltering the famous series of large reliefs, punctuated by doorways and corner-aedicules designed to house staelae inscribed with the Sanskrit foundation texts. Within this enclosure wall there were six artificial pools, three temple complexes in the north, west and south, two elevated “library” structures flanking the east–west axis at the eastern end, and on the same axis a large pillared hall, the so-called “hall of dancers”, which probably comprised the *caṅkramas* (mentioned in K. 908, the stele inscription of Prāḥ Khān), a walled system of walkways for physical exercise and secluded meditation (Maxwell 2007 [2]: 40-42). The walls of the second enclosure are penetrated by the north and south temple complexes, which are laid out on the same north-south axis as the triple towers of the central sanctuary at the core of the entire temple.

It is important to recognise that the core ritual complex of Bantāy Čhmār in fact consists of an east–west chain of three constituent complexes or clusters of religious buildings (Figures 4, 13, 14), each organised differently around its own central temple. To emphasise the unity of these three clusters as the sacred centre, an outer wall (defining the second enclosure) was erected around them. The Khmer inscriptions are concentrated within this triple complex. The western cluster (containing another north-south group of three towers) and the eastern cluster (containing two adjacent towers on its east-west axis) were erected as extensions of the original central complex, but having their own identities, being separated from it by walls

and gatehouses. In the third enclosure, the *caṅkrama* structure was built on to the front of the eastern complex, and the entrance to the isolated second west complex was located outside the extreme western gatehouse of the second enclosure. This chain of buildings creates a very long architectural axis measuring about 200 metres east–west and composed of five structural complexes, all different, spanning the entire length of the second enclosure and extending across most of the third.

## 2. EPIGRAPHIC SURVEYS AND DOCUMENTATION AT BANTEAY CHMAR

A brief introduction to the character of the inscriptions and their distribution within the architectural context is necessary here. The inscriptions so far found at Bantāy Čhmàr are all located in the eastern, central and western complexes of the second enclosure (see Appendix 1), with the exception of the stelae which were placed in the corner-structures of the third enclosure. All the second-enclosure inscriptions were engraved directly in the stone of the temple buildings themselves, in doorframes or window-frames at the entrances to areas within the temple that were employed as shrines or chapels. These short texts name the deity or deities whose statues were set up inside the shrines, and also name persons who were identified with these deities or associated with the installation of the images. Where several images were placed in a single shrine-area (for example the five statues mentioned in K. 227, the four listed in Coedès 12 / Pottier 14, or the three named in Maxwell N3, for which see Figure 3), the inscription also stated their locations relative to each other by reference to the points of the compass. Although there are exceptions, these inscriptions normally contained no other information.

The language of the inscriptions is Old Khmer, but the names of nearly all the deities and persons mentioned in them are Sanskritic, that is, they are Sanskrit names but used in their uninflected Khmer forms. In the inscription texts they are therefore treated linguistically as Khmer words, although their Sanskrit meanings were perfectly well understood. In the Bantāy Čhmàr corpus there are only two exceptions. In K. 226 (structure 30), the name of the deity is Sanskritic (Mahīdharadeva), but the deceased individual whom this god represents is referred to by his Khmer name (<sup>A</sup>so). The other exception is the name of the Fire-god in inscription N1, the main subject of this paper. Although called Agni in the Sanskrit part of the text, this deity is named first in Khmer (Vraḥ Vleñ Svarga).

The titles both of deities and persons are written in Khmer. However, the Khmer language contained (and contains) a great many Sanskrit loanwords, so that these titles are normally constituted of Khmer [Khm.] and Sanskritic [Sk.] elements run together. As encountered in the Bantāy Čhmàr inscriptions these titles are chiefly *Kamrateñ* [Khm.] *Jaḡat* [Sk.] *Śrī-* [Sk.] and *Kamrateñ Añ* [Khm.] *Śrī-* [Sk.], but Khmer *Vraḥ*, “sacred”, may replace both of these, especially before feminine names or words (*Vraḥ kaṅloñ*, *Vraḥ Bhagavatī*, *Vraḥ Prajñāpāramitā*, *Vraḥ Kāntī*, also *Vraḥ Vleñ*), and more complicated examples exist, as in K. 226 (structure 3, central complex) where the royal preceptor is given the title *Dhūli* [Sk.] *Jeñ Vraḥ Kamrateñ Añ* [Khm.], while his position at court is that of *Vraḥ* [Khm.] *Guru* [Sk.].

The Sanskritic names of the Khmer deities sometimes correspond to names known in Indian Buddhist or Hindu pantheons, but frequently they do not, in which case they are either unique to the gods and goddesses of Jayavarman's temples or signify other Cambodian deities for whom Sanskritic names were coined. Most of the deities at Bantāy Čhmār, male and female, were styled *Kamrateñ Jagat* ("Lord of the World") and represented particular deceased individuals or ancestral / historical figures after whom they were named, for example the god Vijayadeva representing a man named Vijayavardhana ( K. 226, structure 41, east complex), or the god Sūryadeva, "Sun-god", representing a man named Prabhākara, "Light-maker", a common Sanskrit epithet of the sun ( K. 696-3, east complex). Out of the twenty-seven deities listed in Appendix 1, more than half belonged explicitly to the category of *rūpa* or *vraḥ rūpa* ("image" or "sacred image" of a human being). This term is applied to thirteen of the statues whose names are still legible, followed in each case by the respective name of the person whom the deity represented. Other deified persons seem to have been beyond living memory but so renowned (the three royal names in N3, for example) that the personal names of their human counterparts were not given. It is impossible in all these cases to know with certainty, from the epigraphy alone, the iconography of the statues to which the names referred, because the images themselves were destroyed or removed from their inscribed shrines long ago. A great many of them were certainly statues of Buddhist iconography, as one would expect (for example K. 226, structure 32, west complex, Prajñāpāramitā; cf. Ishizawa and Marui 2002), while others would equally certainly have been identifiably Hindu (G.C.12, structure 73, west complex, Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇī, Śrī), but not a single example of a shrine with its inscription intact and its statues *in situ* has survived, nor has any attempt been made to reconstitute these shrines from the scattered archaeological material on the basis of the inscriptions. In these circumstances the study of the cults performed in Jayavarman's temples is largely reduced to iconographic speculations and typological analyses of the inscription texts. This last method, a useful if somewhat abstract exercise, was applied to the inscriptions by Coedès (1951: 97–103).

What we can determine from the study of these inscriptions, however, is the purpose for which the triple complex at the core of Bantāy Čhmār was used in 1216 CE. The east complex contained, apart from the sacred fire, exclusively male *rūpa* deities, that is, statues representing the god in whose form (*rūpa*) a man who died heroically in the performance of his duty to the crown was believed to exist in the afterlife (Appendix 1, nos. 1–11). This Khmer cult probably derived in part from a very old, pre-Hindu concept, *sarīpatā*, concerning the transfiguration of the body of the deceased in the form of a particular deity of the Vedic pantheon such as Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, or Āditya. The concept developed and was first recorded in the late Vedic eschatology of India, where it was mentioned along with other after-death states, *sāyujya* and *salokatā*, in three of the most famous *Brahmaṇa* texts (*Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Śatapatha*; references in Deussen 1915: 291). In post-Vedic Khmer parallels, the belief in posthumous transfiguration – combined with the veneration of elders, ancestors, seers, heroes, kings and supernatural beings – gave rise to cults centred on personal deity statues erected for worship in temples and became exceedingly widespread among the élite under Jayavarman VII (Phīmānākàs K. 485, verses 92–93). At Bantāy Čhmār we can see

from the inscriptions that the central complex was intended chiefly for the cult of gods and goddesses representing historical figures of particularly elevated royal status such as kings, queens, and royal gurus (Appendix 1, nos. 12–18). The west complex mainly housed strongly independent deities enshrined along with Mahāyānist images in order to demonstrate their buddhisation (Appendix 1, nos. 19–27). This was certainly the case with nos. 22 and 24, Prajñāpāramitā and Jayamahānātha, whose images were used to dominate two *rūpa* cults (names unfortunately now illegible) and three Hindu cults respectively. In the same complex, the goddess Trailokyarājacūḍāmaṇī (no. 19) was used to dominate two Hindu goddess cults. Also in the west, on the west wall of the third enclosure, this theme is re-emphasised in the large Lokeśvara reliefs, which depict the Bodhisattva in various forms emanating from his own anatomy the Hindu deities Sūrya, Candra, Maheśvara, Nārāyaṇa, Sarasvatī, Vāyu, Pṛthivī, Brahmā, and the Vaitaraṇī goddesses, or being worshiped by Pañcamukha Śiva and Umā as they receive the *vyākaraṇa* (elucidation) concerning their future forms as Tathāgatas bearing the Śaiva names B[h]asmeśvara and Umeśvara (see Boisselier 1965: 75–78). Like the groupings of statues in the west complex of the second enclosure, these west-wall Lokeśvara reliefs represent the absorption and domination of Hindu cults and eschatological beliefs by Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The chief function of the Bantāy Čhmār inscriptions was clearly organisational. They assigned the available compartments of the temple to selected gods from the multiplex pantheon of the time and grouped them into three distinct clusters, not on the basis of religious denomination (Buddhist or Hindu), but on the basis of cult, which for most of the deities in the temple was a Khmer cult, hence the use of the Khmer language in the Short Inscriptions. It is this that explains the tripartite division of the second enclosure. Hero cults for deified agents of the crown were operated in the east complex; royal cults for deified kings, queens and royal gurus were concentrated in the centre; and buddhisation cults for independent deities predominated in the west complex. Most of the deities throughout the temple were regarded as spiritualised persons rather than as abstract cosmic forces. (The central temple in each complex, on the other hand, housed a supreme or cosmic deity, a Buddha or Bodhisattva or Prajñā – or all three – to which an appropriate cult involving the Sanskrit scriptures of the Mahāyāna must have been offered. This explains why these central temples were not provided with Short Inscriptions in Khmer.) The tripartite division of the Khmer cults into three separate complexes was no doubt designed to ensure the efficient ritual functioning of the temple as a whole. The three different types of cult mentioned presumably involved differences in offerings, ritual equipment and behaviour, and perhaps class or caste distinctions among their adherents and practitioners. Coedès (1951: 98) commented on the seemingly unregulated distribution of the categories (devised by himself) of Kamrateṅ Jagat deities in Jayavarman's temples. As I have shown this criticism is irrelevant to Bantāy Čhmār, where other categories applied, on the basis of which the distribution of deities in the temple was thoroughly organised from end to end. The unity in this diversity of cults was provided on three levels: at the cult level by the three fire shrines, one in each complex, which all housed the same sacred fire; at the level of current religious orthodoxy by the Mahāyāna deities installed in the central temples of the three complexes; and at what I will call, for want of a better term, the symbolic political level by the

universal introduction of face-towers. The fire-cult of inscription N1 is the main focus of this paper, but the other two factors mentioned here will also need to be discussed briefly in connection with it.

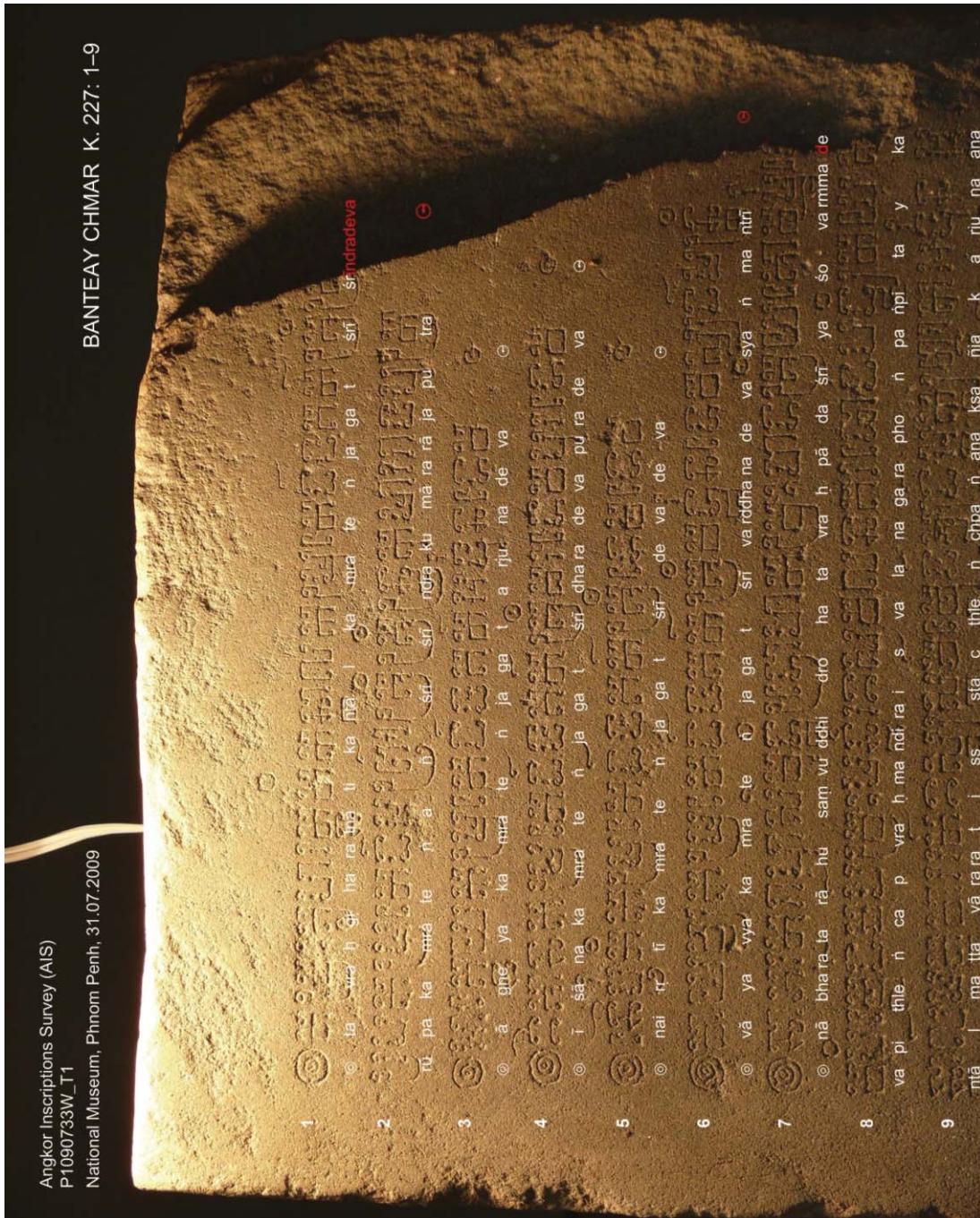
For obvious reasons all the very succinct inscriptions in the second enclosure are today classified as Short Inscriptions or Petites Inscriptions, to distinguish them from other more substantial types such as Foundation Inscriptions. They are characteristic of all the temples of Jayavarman VII (Maxwell 2007 [1]: 122–135) and are not known in the same form from other periods. Two exceptional texts of this Short Inscription category (K. 227 and N1), of considerable literary and historical interest, have been found at Bantãy Ćhmàr. Before discussing their contents, it will be useful to place them in context by giving a summary review of all the inscriptions known to date, both on and off the site<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.A. Inscriptions no longer in situ

With regard to the Bantãy Ćhmàr corpus established by Coedès in 1950 and 1951 [1], inscriptions 2–11 (all in the eastern and central complexes) are still in situ and accessible, sometimes with difficulty because of collapsed masonry. Their condition ranges from good to deplorable. Their texts, where still legible, correspond with almost complete exactitude to Coedès' published transcriptions. Other significant inscriptions however are today missing from the site. Inscription 1 of Coedès (K. 227) was stolen in 1998. It was subsequently recovered and now, having sustained some minor damage to the ends of lines 1, 7 and 8 at the top right corner, stands in the National Museum, Phnom Penh (Figure 1). The word at the end of line 1, now missing because of the recent damage, originally gave the name of the deity representing the prince Śrīndrakumāra Rājaputra, which was Kamratenġ Jagat Śrī-Śrīndradeva.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be mentioned here that no less than five numbering systems are currently in use to reference these inscriptions: (1.) Coedès (1951 [1]) numbered those known to him 1–12; (2.) Pottier (2000) assigned further numbers to inscriptions and cartouches that he found, starting with Pottier 12 which replaced Coedès 12 since the latter could not be located at that time; (3.) my own numbers (2008), prefixed with the letter N, which are temporary project-internal references used by the AIS to signify inscriptions on the active list (presently being researched); (4.) Cunin, who maintains a database of all Bantãy Ćhmàr rubbings and inscription references, started his own numbering from Cunin 17, which is the same as Maxwell N1; and (5.) the EFEO continues to maintain the register of K. numbers. EFEO K. numbers have not yet been assigned to all the inscriptions that have been found. Retaining this multiple numbering system is useful for historical reasons, to refer back to the stages of exploration and research in the existing documentation. To simplify matters in this paper I will chiefly use my own N numbers, with their equivalents in other systems where appropriate.



Angkor Inscriptions Survey (AIS)  
P1090733W\_T1  
National Museum, Phnom Penh, 31.07.2009

BANTEAY CHMAR K. 227: 1-9

Figure 1. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 2: East complex: Structure 44: East entrance: South door pillar, detail: Inscription K. 227 (Khmer): Lines 1-9, with transcription. The Short Inscription text (ta vraḥ ḡḥharatna ti kantāl . . .) is on lines 1-6. The first of two commentaries (nā bhara ta rāhu . . .) begins on line 7. Text and punctuation lost through recent damage is shown in red. [ Photograph and transcription by AIS 2009. Courtesy of the National Museum, Phnom Penh.]



Figure 2. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 3: N.E. and N.W. corner stelae, comparative details: [A] Beginning of the 18-line text, K. 1206. [B] Auspicious symbol and first akṣara (sa-) of the abandoned first line of K. 1209. [ Photograph and transcription by AIS 2008. Photography by courtesy of the Conservation d'Angkor, Siem Reap.]

Four stelae were discovered between 1997 and 2000 in the corner structures of the third enclosure and have now been removed to the Conservation d'Angkor, Siem Reap. Two of these are without inscriptions and deliberately damaged (the southwest stele is said originally to have been inscribed on three sides, but the text has been completely effaced). Another, from the northwest corner (Pottier S4, K. 1209), has only the opening symbol and first akṣara (// @ // sa . . ., see Figure 2 [B]) of a text that was never engraved but which was probably to have been a copy of K. 1206 (Figure 2 [A]). The latter stele, from the northeast corner (Pottier S1), was not broken and has the remains of eighteen lines of Sanskrit verse on one of its sides. Its total height, including the lotus carved on the top and the tenon at the base, is 265 cm. Most of the eighteen lines (4–18) are seriously damaged by two large patches of erosion affecting chiefly the left-hand column of text. The remains correspond to the first eighteen lines of the Tà Prohm and Prāḥ Khàn foundation inscriptions and contain the well-known opening invocations of Buddha–Dharma–Saṅgha (= the Triratna, images of which were installed in temples by Jayavarman VII [Maxwell 2007 [2]: 80), Lokeśvara, and Prajñāpāramitā, followed by the first half of the account of Jayavarman VII's maternal ancestry, from *āsīd akhaṇḍa* . . . down to *tāpabaraḥ prajānām*. For the record, the following is a transcription of these lines on the Bantāy Čhmār stele S1, in which those parts of the text that I found to be damaged and illegible in August 2008 are indicated in italics:



1 //◎// sambhāra-vistara-vibhāvita-dharmmakāya-	sambhoga-nirmmiti-vapur bhagavān vibhaktaḥ
2 yo gocaro jina-jinātmaja-deha-bhājāṃ	vuddhāya bhūta-śaraṇāya namo 'stu tasmai
3 ◎ vande niruttaram anuttara-vodhi-mārggaṃ	bhūtārtha-darśana-nirāvaraṇaikadṛṣṭim
4 dharmman triloka-vi[ <i>dītāmara-vandya-vandyam</i> ]	<i>anta</i> ]rvasat-ṣaḍ-ari-ṣaṇḍa-vikhaṇḍa-khaḍgam
5 ◎ samyag-vimukti[ <i>-paripanthitayā vimukta-</i>	<i>saṅgo</i> ] 'pi santata-grhīta-parārtha-saṅgaḥ
6 saṅgīyamāna[ <i>-jina-śāsana-śāsītānyān</i> ]	<i>saṅgo</i> ] 'bhisamhita-hita-prabhavo 'vatād vaḥ
7 ◎ trailokya[ <i>-kāṅkṣita-phala-prasavaikayoni</i> ]	r agrāṅgulī-vitapa-bhūṣita-vāhu-śākhaḥ
8 hemopavīta[ <i>-latikā-parivīta-kā</i> ]yo	lokeśvaro jayati jaṅgama-pārijātaḥ
9 ◎ munīndra-dharmmā[ <i>gra-sarīm gnāḍhya</i> ]	n dhīmadbhir adhyātma-dṛṣā nirīkṣyām
10 nirasta-niśṣeṣa-vika[ <i>ḥpa-jālām</i> ]	bhaktiyā jinānān janānīn namadhvam
11 ◎ āsīd akhaṇḍa-manu-da[ <i>ṇḍa-dhara</i> ]vanīndra-	vandyo varaś śrutavatām śruta-varmma-sūnuḥ
12 śrī-śreṣṭhavarmma-nṛpatīś śuc[ <i>ibhir ya</i> ]śobhiś	śreṣṭho 'vadāta-vasudhā-dhara-vaṃśa-yoniḥ
13 ◎ śrī-kamvu-vaṃśāmvara-bhāskaro [yo]	jāto jayādityapurodayādrau
14 prāvodhayat prāṇi[ <i>-hṛd-amvujāni</i> ]	tejo-nidhiś śreṣṭhapurādhirājaḥ
15 ◎ jātā tadīye [ <i>'navagīta-kīrtti-</i>	candrollasan-mātṛ-kulāmvu-rāśau
16 rarāja lakṣmīr iva [ <i>yā satānām</i> ]	agresarī kamvuja-rāja-lakṣmī
17 ◎ bharttā bhuvo [ <i>bhavaṇpure bhavavarmma-devo</i> ]	vibhrājamāna-ruci-rañjita-maṇḍalo yaḥ
18 pūrṇaḥ kal[ <i>ābhir avanīndra-kula-prasūte</i> ]ḥ	karttāmṛtāmśur iva tāpa-haraḥ prajānām

For an English translation of the full text of these lines, as preserved in the Prāḥ Khān stele inscription, see Maxwell 2007 [2]: 3-10.

## 2.B. Inscriptions in situ

Christophe Pottier made a survey of the in-situ Bantāy Čhmār inscriptions in 2000 and the subsequent report (Pottier 2000<sup>3</sup>) listed six that were unpublished. These were numbered 12–17 in continuation of the first eleven published by Coedès in 1951, discounting the important no.12 of Coedès (see

<sup>3</sup> See also Pottier 2004.

below) presumably because at first its location at Bantây Čhmàr could not be pinpointed (“emplacement indéterminé”), its text being known only from an Aymonier estampage (cited in 1951 as no. 5 F) in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. This inscription subsequently became inaccessible due to structural collapse (see below). Of the six unpublished inscriptions that Pottier reported, two (nos. 15 and 16 = K. 1061 and K. 1062) were declared illegible and no estampages were made of them at that time. This has since been rectified but to my eye the available rubbings of these and of Pottier 13 are largely illegible too. Of the remaining three listed as unpublished, I found Pottier’s no. 12 in the collapsed southeast tower of the central complex (structure 17) to be in legible condition. This is a typical Short Inscription in Khmer, occupying three lines at the top of a large cartouche (34 x 52 cm) on the inner east doorframe (Figure 3). It names three statues of personal deities in the form of a god named Tribhuvanavarmesvara, flanked by two goddesses (in whose names the word *cūḍāmaṇī*, meaning “crest jewel,” is written with *-ddā-* in place of *-ḍā-*). The words *dakṣiṇa* and *uttara*, meaning south and north, refer to the positioning of these goddess statues relative to the god whose image was erected at the centre facing east. Thus Tribhuvanacūḍāmaṇī stood to the right of Tribhuvanavarmesvara and Yaśorājacūḍāmaṇī to his left. My reading of the text is as follows:

1. [⊙] *kamrateñ jagat śrītribhuvanavarmmeśvara*
2. [⊙] *dakṣiṇa ° vraḥ kanloñ kamrateñ añ śrītribhuvanacūḍāmaṇī ⊙*
3. ⊙ *uttara ° vraḥ kanloñ kamrateñ añ śrīyaśorājacūḍāmaṇī ⊙*

This inscription is now documented by the AIS as Maxwell N3.



Figure 3. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 1 (Central complex): Structure 17: Inner east door, south: Inscription Pottier 12 / Maxwell N3. For the reading, see above. [Transcription by AIS. Rubbing by APSARA]

No. 17 of Pottier’s survey had in fact already been published (inscription 3 of Coedès, *BEFEO* 44: 117) and in Cunin’s documentation its number has now been transferred to the AIS inscription Maxwell N1, the subject of this paper, in structure 45. The existence of this inscription was not recorded by Coedès

(1951) or by Pottier (2000). While surveying the site in 2008 and 2009, I found this and one more unpublished legible inscription, which has been documented under the AIS project number Maxwell N2 (not reported by Pottier in 2000, now referenced by Cunin as no. 18). This will be discussed below in connection with inscription N1.

Coedès 11 (K. 827), at the extreme eastern end of the east complex, in the entrance area located in the so-called hall of dancers, is severely eroded and the text so faint that Pottier's 2000 survey failed to find it. To the naked eye it is indeed almost completely illegible. The EFEO rubbing 1062 enables one to read it only in part. The exact location of Coedès 12 / Pottier 14, mentioned above, which is an important three-line inscription concerning the Buddha Jayamahānātha and Hindu deities, was not known when Coedès published his reading of the Aymonier estampage. The inscription consequently went unnoticed for many years, but was then located by Cunin in structure 73, the western axial gopura of the west complex, on the south (left) jamb of the inner east door. On the basis of this information we can confirm that one of Jayavarman VII's many Jaya(buddha)mahānātha statues was introduced into the central chamber of this Viṣṇuite gateway-shrine, conventionally located at the western extremity of the main Bantāy Čhmār complex and containing images of Vraḥ Bhagavatī Śrī, Vraḥ Bhagavatī Nārāyaṇī, and Vraḥ Kamrateṅ Añ Nārāyaṇa (see K. 908, verses 115-121 and 159; Maxwell 2007 [2]: 80-84, 95-96<sup>4</sup>). Gopura 73 collapsed in about 2004 (the exact date was not recorded) and the inscription is therefore inaccessible today.

The locations of cartouches not containing inscriptions (whether uninscribed or rendered illegible through damage) are important and they are being recorded by the EFEO and other researchers. By plotting these as well as the legible inscriptions, a coherent picture of at least some parts of the inscription programme can theoretically be established (see for example Figures 4, 13, 14). In comparing this programme with those of other Jayavarman VII temples, an understanding of the placement patterns, sequence and chronology of the inscriptions may be achievable. With regard to their chronology, N1 at Bantāy Čhmār is the only Short Inscription so far discovered which gives a date. Note that the 29-line K. 227 (Figure 1), which comes from the building adjacent to N1, contains no dates, either for the ostensibly historical events it reports or for the inscription itself.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The text of Coedès 12 / Pottier 14 at Bantāy Čhmār was incorrectly printed in Maxwell 2007 [1]: 127 and 135. I am grateful to Michael Vickery for pointing out this error, and take the opportunity here to correct line 2, which should read as follows:

○ *daḥṣiṇa* ○ *vraḥ bhagavatī śrī* ○ *vraḥ bhagavatī nārāyaṇī* ○, “In the south [of the shrine; or, on the proper right of the Jayamahānātha statue], the holy Goddess Śrī (=Lakṣmī) [and] the holy Goddess Nārāyaṇī.”

<sup>5</sup> On the text of the Bharata Rāhu episode in K. 227 (lines 7–14), and the west-wall reliefs at Bantāy Čhmār purportedly illustrating such an event, see Lowman 2010.

### 3. INSCRIPTION LOCATIONS

The original distribution of all currently known Bantãy Ćhmàr inscription locations (inscribed and uninscribed, legible and illegible, on or off the site) is as follows.

#### *Distribution Table*

##### *Enclosure 1:*

*Central complex:* 10 Short Inscriptions (five grouped under K. 226, and K. 696-1, K. 1062, K. 696-2, Maxwell N2 / Cunin 18, Maxwell N3 / Pottier 12) plus 4 cartouches in the enclosure galleries.

##### *Enclosure 2:*

*Eastern complex:* 5 Short Inscriptions ( K. 226 [again], K. 227, K. 696-3, K. 827, Maxwell N1 / Cunin 17) plus 1 cartouche.

*Western complex:* 4 legible Short Inscriptions ( K. 226 = Coedès 8, 9, 10, and Pottier 14 / Coedès 12), plus 2 illegible Short Inscriptions, plus 3 cartouches, two in the enclosure galleries and one in free-standing structure 64.

[No inscriptions have so far been found in the north and south complexes, or in the second west complex.]

##### *Enclosure 3:*

*Corner pavilions NE and NW:* 2 incomplete Stele Inscriptions ( K. 1206, K. 1209).

*Corner pavilions SE and SW:* 2 planned Stele Inscriptions (texts erased or uninscribed).

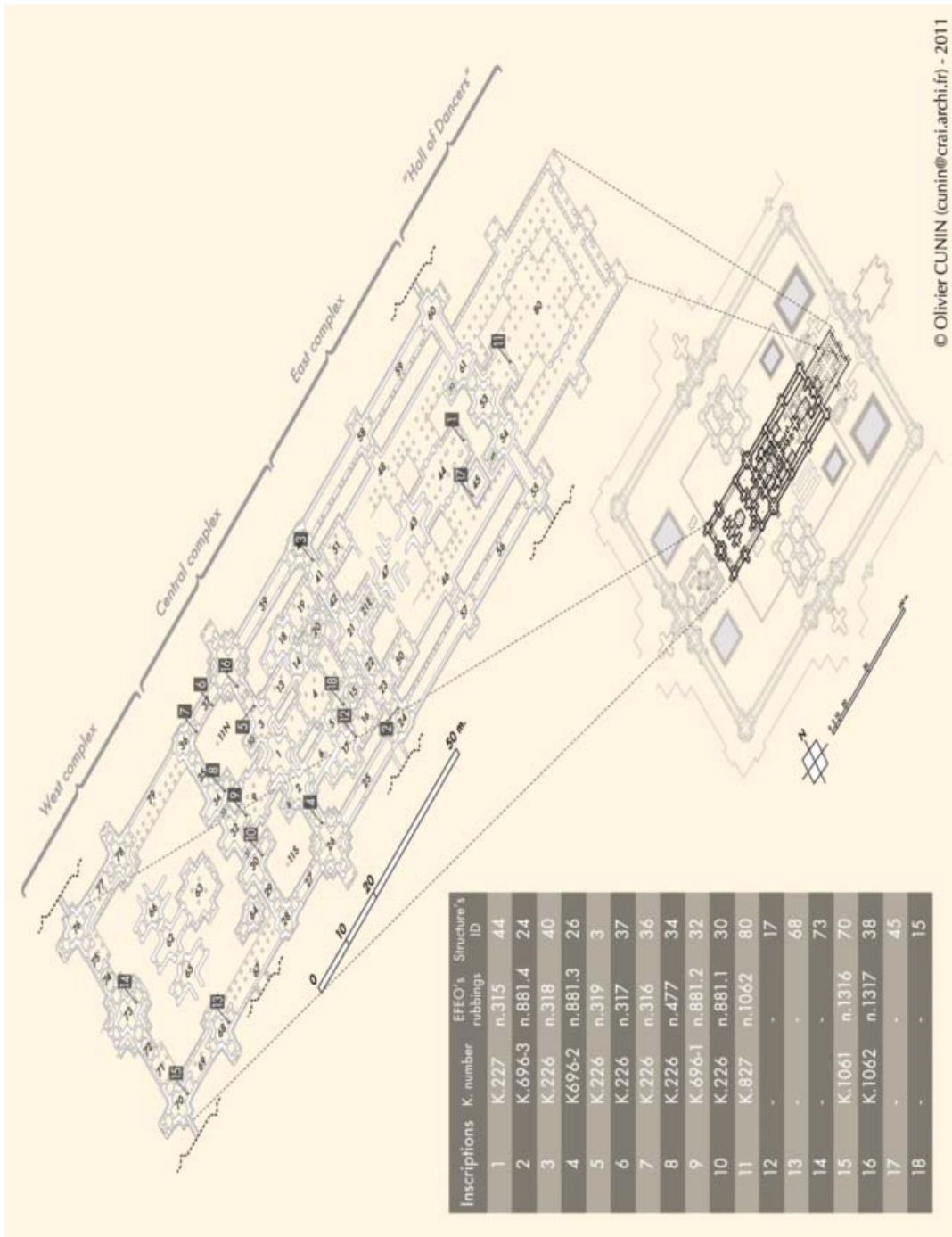
[There appear to be no inscriptions on the visible reliefs of the third enclosure wall.]

Note that the east and west boundaries of the three axial complexes are shared with those of the adjacent complexes. The locations given above for inscriptions found on those boundaries are therefore to a certain extent arbitrary. They are useful for fieldwork but do not necessarily imply an interpretation of the original ritual divisions of the temple. The locations assigned to inscriptions on free-standing structures within these boundaries, on the other hand, are of course definitive. This applies in the present context to inscriptions K. 227 and N1 (east complex), N2 and N3 (central complex), and the cartouche in structure 64 (west complex). The distribution table, which represents a neutral epigraphic survey, should be compared to Appendix 1, where the assignment of legible inscriptions to complexes is intentionally interpretative (see above, Section 2). While the precise locations of all inscriptions and cartouches within this crowded architectural system are significant for our understanding of the functioning of the temple, in this paper I will deal chiefly with the locations of the five which are mentioned above and underlined in the distribution table. On Cunin's plan illustrated in Figure 4, these correspond respectively to the numbers 1 (= K. 227), 17 (= N1), 18 (= N2), 12 (= N3) and the structure numbered 64.

The first enclosure contained, as central sanctuary of the entire Bantāy Čhmār complex, three towers aligned north-south, of which the main middle tower has collapsed. These three towers were interconnected, forming in effect a single temple divided into three shrines, and this seems to have been the original plan, not the result of later alteration (Cunin 2004: Tome I, 404-405; Annexe I, 276). As Cunin notes, this does not accord with Coedès' hypothesis that the central temple of Bantāy Čhmār was dedicated to a quincunx of shrines for Śrīndrakumāra and the four Sañjaks who were killed ( K. 227). But Cunin accepts that the connection is between K. 227 and the central complex, whereas in fact both the character and the location of this inscription strongly suggest that it refers only to the eastern complex. This east complex, in Cunin's architectural analysis, was erected as an extension of the central complex in a secondary phase of construction.

The 29-line Khmer inscription K. 227 was located just inside the eastern complex, slightly to the west of its main east gatehouse (structure 53), at the entrance to a long pillared building (44), the walls of which were connected directly with the north and south wings of the cruciform central temple of the east complex (43). It was not engraved on a stele, but on a door-pillar. This inscription, being architecturally connected to the front of the main sanctuary in the east, cannot be dated to the time when the chief sanctuary of the central complex (structure 1) was erected. K. 227 belongs to the east complex, which was a secondary construction, and within that complex its text (*ta vraḥ gr̥ha ratna ti kantā*) clearly must refer to structure 43, the central temple in the east, and 44, the hall joined to its front, not to structure 1. It is a Khmer-language inscription beginning with a typical text of the Short Inscription type (lines 1–6), and it is therefore impossible to regard it as the dedication of the entire temple (although Coedès assumed that it was). The character of K. 227 is indeed that of a Short Inscription in Khmer, with a long Khmer commentary appended to it, not of a royal foundation inscription in Sanskrit, and it cannot therefore refer to the foundation of Bantāy Čhmār as a whole, but only to specific shrines within that whole. Despite popular belief to the contrary, Bantāy Čhmār was therefore not dedicated to the prince Śrī-Śrīndrakumāra and the four loyal Sañjaks, whose memorial cult was performed in the eastern complex only.

The true foundation texts were to have been inscribed in Sanskrit on stelae erected in the four corners of the vast third enclosure that incorporated the whole of the main ritual complex. The concept of positioning four stele inscriptions in the angles of a walled enclosure was not applied by Jayavarman VII only to Bantāy Čhmār, of course, but also, on a far grander scale, to Añkor Thom itself (Coedès 1952: 207–253). As Coedès noted, the undated stelae from the Pràsats Čruñ of Angkor were engraved in a rapidly deteriorating script and evidence a fast-declining mastery of Sanskrit poetry, which together with the fact that two of them were never completed (as also at Bantāy Čhmār) he takes as a sure sign of their being set up so late in the reign that work on them was interrupted by the death of the king. The late date of Madhurendrasūri's inscription N1 (1216 CE) suggests that the abandonment of work on the stelae of Bantāy Čhmār could have been due to the same cause. The full texts of these stelae (which undoubtedly would have named the deities in the triple central temple, represented by structures 1–2–3, and the date of their consecration) can therefore not be known. We can only say, on the basis of the partially preserved



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Figure 4. BANTEAY CHMAR: Plan of the triple temple complex in enclosure 2, showing locations of the inscriptions known to date. The smaller plan shows the situation of this complex within enclosure 3. The table gives the inscription and structure references, with K. numbers where assigned, and also the index numbers of the EFEO rubbings.  
[Graphics and table courtesy of Olivier Cunin]

eighteen lines on the northeastern stele, that their opening invocations in lines 1–10 were Mahāyānist (and identical to those of Tà Prohm, Prāḥ Khñ, and the Pràsàts Čruñ of Añkor Thoṃ), and that their genealogical content was modelled on that given in the foundation inscriptions of Jayavarman's first two major temples in Angkor, though perhaps amended in certain details (see Ishizawa, Jacques, Khin Sok 2007: 95, 102–105, 110 n.26). Their texts were certainly composed in Sanskrit verse, either by a son of the king or by pandits such as those who signed the Pràsàt Čruñ verses, and were formatted in columns and structured as praśastis, in which specific information concerning the founding of Bantāy Čhmàr and the consecration of its principal deities would probably not have been given until around line 60, near the bottom of the first side of each stele. The date equivalent to 1216 CE in inscription N1, inside the eastern complex, provides a chronological foothold for the later stages of construction of the main temple buildings. The erection of the third enclosure wall to surround all these constructions, complete with its reliefs and corner-pavilions and stelae, was accomplished. But the inscribing of the foundation texts on those corner stelae was started last and left unfinished, as it was also at Añkor Thoṃ. Only further external evidence, from other inscriptions as yet undiscovered, could now indicate what specific information was intended for inclusion in the texts of these four stelae. The three deities of the central complex, to whom Bantāy Čhmàr was principally dedicated, therefore remain unidentified. Such triads as Buddha–Dharma–Saṅgha (the *Ratnatraya*, installed at Jayantapura, Vindhya-parvata and Markhalpura, see K. 908 Prāḥ Khñ, verse 114), the widespread Buddha–Lokesvara–Prajñāpāramitā combination, and the Buddhas Vīraśakti and Rājapatīśvara along with Jayamaṅgalārthacūḍāmaṇī (K. 908, verses 112–113) obviously suggest themselves, but I prefer to leave the question of their real identities open until a controlled clearance of the debris in the courtyards of Bantāy Čhmàr has been undertaken and the search for further inscriptions finally completed.

Short Inscription N1 / 17, with which we are chiefly concerned here, is located in very close proximity to the original position of K. 227, in the entrance of a west-facing structure (45) immediately adjacent to the long hypostyle building (44) which is connected to the central tower of the east complex (43). Like K. 227, it also begins with a typical Short Inscription in Khmer (one line, reading © *vrah vleiñ svargga*), which is followed, exceptionally, by a brief commentary in Sanskrit verse. This is dated 1138 Śaka (1216 CE) and contains a reference to the appearance in Bantāy Čhmàr of Śrī-Vīraśakti (the Buddha Śrī-Vīraśaktisugata) in that year, a deity whose portable form is mentioned in the stele inscriptions of Tà Prohm and Prāḥ Khñ in Angkor (K. 273, verse 85, line C26; K. 908, verses 112 and 159, lines C64 and D39). The Sanskrit text is written entirely in the first person by a man naming himself Śrī-Madhurendrasūri, who relates a personal experience to explain the nature of the deity enshrined in the structure on which the inscription is engraved.

In March 2009, in the central complex, I discovered the same Khmer text (© *vrah vleiñ svargga* ©) in a Short Inscription (Maxwell N2 / Cunin 18, no K. number currently assigned), without commentary, in the collapsed outer western entrance of structure 15, one of the twelve surviving face-towers at Bantāy Čhmàr (Figure 12; cf. Baku and Cunin 2005: 25, 111-140). This building was therefore used as the fire-shrine

of the triple central sanctuary itself, the oldest and most sacred centre of the entire temple<sup>6</sup>. The cartouche of N2 was made large enough to contain only one more line of text, and this extra space remained uninscribed (Figures 5 and 11), showing that no significant commentary was intended in this case. Both buildings that contain the name of this deity, the vaulted structure 45 and face-tower 15, are located in the southeast quadrants of the eastern and central complexes respectively. It is not possible to assert that one or the other inscription was engraved first. If the inscription programme kept pace with construction, which seems unlikely, N2 in the central complex may have been the first. On the other hand, if Madhurendra's inscription (N1) marks the inauguration of the fire-cult at Bantāy Čhmār, which appears clearly to be the case, then N2 would have been inscribed second but in the same year, 1216 CE.

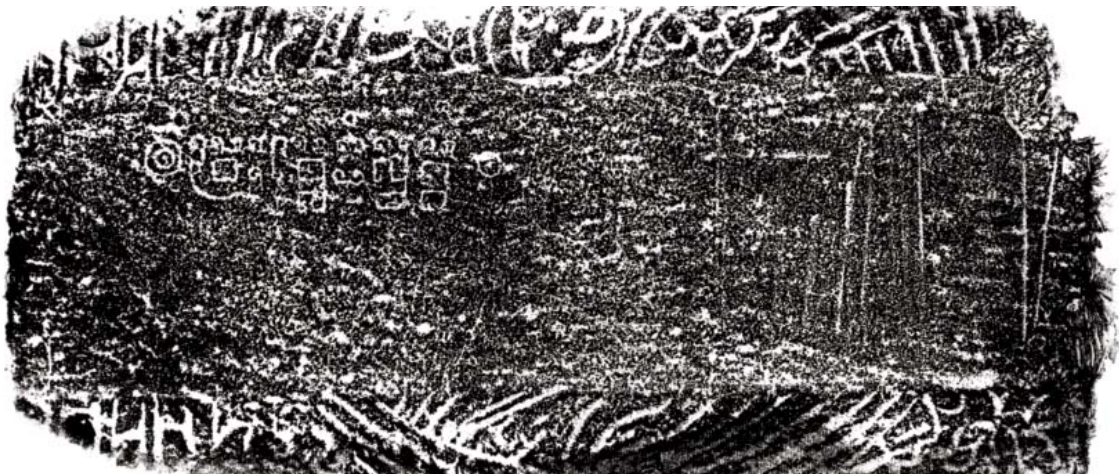


Figure 5. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 1 (Central complex): Structure 15 (face tower): West door: Inscription N2, rubbing. The cartouche measures 9.5 x 37 cm. The text reads: vrah vlen svargga. [Rubbing courtesy of APSARA]

<sup>6</sup> It is useful to draw a distinction at this point between “staging posts with fire” or “gîtes d’étape avec du feu” located along the cross-country highways, on the one hand, and “fire-shrines” built within a particular ritual complex inside a temple, on the other. These differ in architecture and in location, and this signifies a difference of function. Briefly, I see the distinction between them as follows:

- (1.) The roadside fire-houses (*adhvasu upakāryā hutabbujah* . . . *ālayāḥ*, also less precisely termed *vahnigghāṇi* or *vabneh* . . . *ālayāḥ*) could house both statues (in the sanctum under the tower) and fires (in their long *maṇḍapas* ventilated by large windows). These were located both alongside the roads at regular intervals, to house portable sacred fires during transportation from the home temple to others, and in the outermost enclosures of temples where the travelling fires could be received on arrival. To the best of my knowledge none of these buildings was inscribed. At Bantāy Čhmār this *upakāryā* type is represented by structure 178 in enclosure 4 (see above, section 1, and Figure 15 [D] below).
- (2.) The fire-shrines (*agnyaḡāra*, *agnisaraṇa*, *agnigṛha*) constructed as part of distinct ritual complexes within the inner enclosures of temples were for housing fixed permanent sacred fires to which regular sacrifices were made (*homa*) to complement the entirely different rituals of worship (*pūjā*) performed in the temples containing statues. These fire-shrines were located near the main temple, in the southeast quadrant of its enclosure. They were either inscribed or referred to in separate inscriptions. At Bantāy



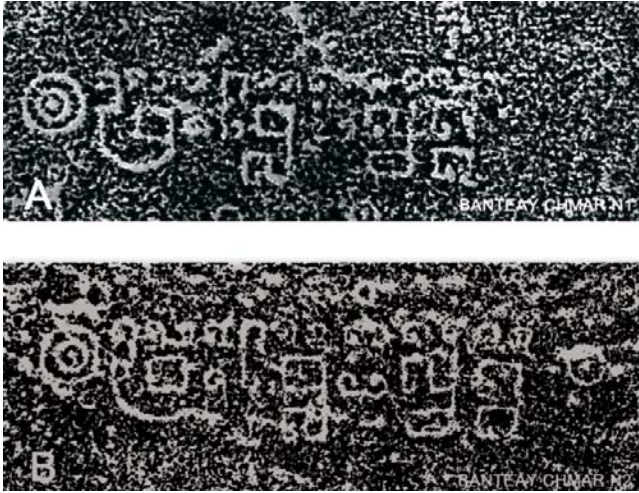


Figure 6. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosures 1 and 2: East and central complexes: The Khmer name of the sacred fire, *vrah vlei svargga*, as inscribed [A.] in structure 45 (inscription N1 / 17, line 1), and [B.] in structure 15 (inscription N2 / 18). The name and the style of writing are identical in both versions, suggesting that these two buildings were consecrated as the fire-shrines of the eastern and central complexes almost simultaneously in 1216 CE. [Rubblings courtesy of APSARA]

#### 4. BANTEAY CHMAR INSCRIPTION N1

As mentioned above, all legible inscriptions so far found inside the three complexes of the second enclosure at Bantāy Čhmār are formally of the Short Inscription type. Depending on the width of the surface to be inscribed, and the number of deities, persons, and places to be listed, the number of lines of text in inscriptions of this type varies between one and nine. Many contain only one or two lines. Apart from the exceptional K. 227 of Bantāy Čhmār (29 lines), the two longest, having nine lines each, are found in the outer enclosure of the Bāyon (inscription 7, listing eleven deities – *phsaṃ anle tap mva* – in one of the eastern courtyard shrines), and at Tà Nei (inscription 10, in the south doorway of the northeast corner-shrine of the first enclosure, listing nine deities<sup>7</sup>).

Short Inscription N1 at Bantāy Čhmār (Figures 7–9) is located on the south or right-hand door-pillar of the west-facing structure 45 in the eastern enclosure, a nearly square building originally having a vaulted barrel-roof and a row of ventilation holes along the tops of the walls. The text inscribed at the entrance begins as a typical one-line Short inscription in Khmer identifying the deity inside the building as *Vrah Vlei*. This, the normal Khmer designation of the fire-god (usually translated as “the sacred fire”), is qualified by the nearly obliterated word *svargga* (= *svarga*) which means “sky” or “heaven” in both Sanskrit and

Čhmār this type is represented by structure 45 in enclosure 2 (Figure 15 [C]), although the inscriptions (compare N1 with N2) show that other architectural types, but located always in the southeast, could also be used for the same purpose (Figure 15 [A], [B]). It is this *agnyaḡāra* category of sacred-fire shrine which is chiefly referred to in the present article. Cf. Maxwell 2007 [2]: 40-45, 84-85.

<sup>7</sup> The Ta Nei text (no. 10 is one of eight inscriptions grouped under K. 284) is the most perfectly preserved in-situ example of a “long” Short Inscription now in existence. It provides the best possible opportunity to study the official calligraphy of Jayavarman VII’s reign in its original architectural setting and urgently requires conservation measures and protection at the site.

Khmer. This same designation is found also in Structure 15 of the central complex (inscription N2). Both N1 and N2 are in the west-facing doorways of structures located in the southeast quadrant of their respective complexes, the Southeast being the quarter traditionally ruled by the fire-god in his function of *dikpāla* or *lokapāla*.

Appended to this name in N1 are two Sanskrit stanzas (lines 2–5), in both of which the fire-god is named Agni. The author of these verses calls himself Śrī-Madhurendrasūri. He refers to the kingdom of Jayavarman and to the arrival of the Buddha Vīraśakti at Bantāy Čhmār. His text is cast in the form of a brief first-person narrative recounting an occurrence that he witnessed there on a specific date. The Sanskrit is divided into two columns in accordance with standard practice in inscribing verse, the blank space between them indicating the caesura in the metre employed. Most of the left-hand column has been severely eroded by rainwater due to a break in the lintel directly above this part of the inscription. The right-hand column is better preserved although adjacent to the entrance. The cartouche prepared for this five-line text measures 19.5 x 45.5 cm, on which the inscription itself covers an area of 17.5 x 39.5 cm.



Figure 7. BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 2: Eastern complex: Structure 45: West door: South door-pillar: Inscription N1, seen from inside the fire-shrine. Cartouche: 19.5 x 45.5 cm. [Photograph by AIS P1110903, 05-03-2010]

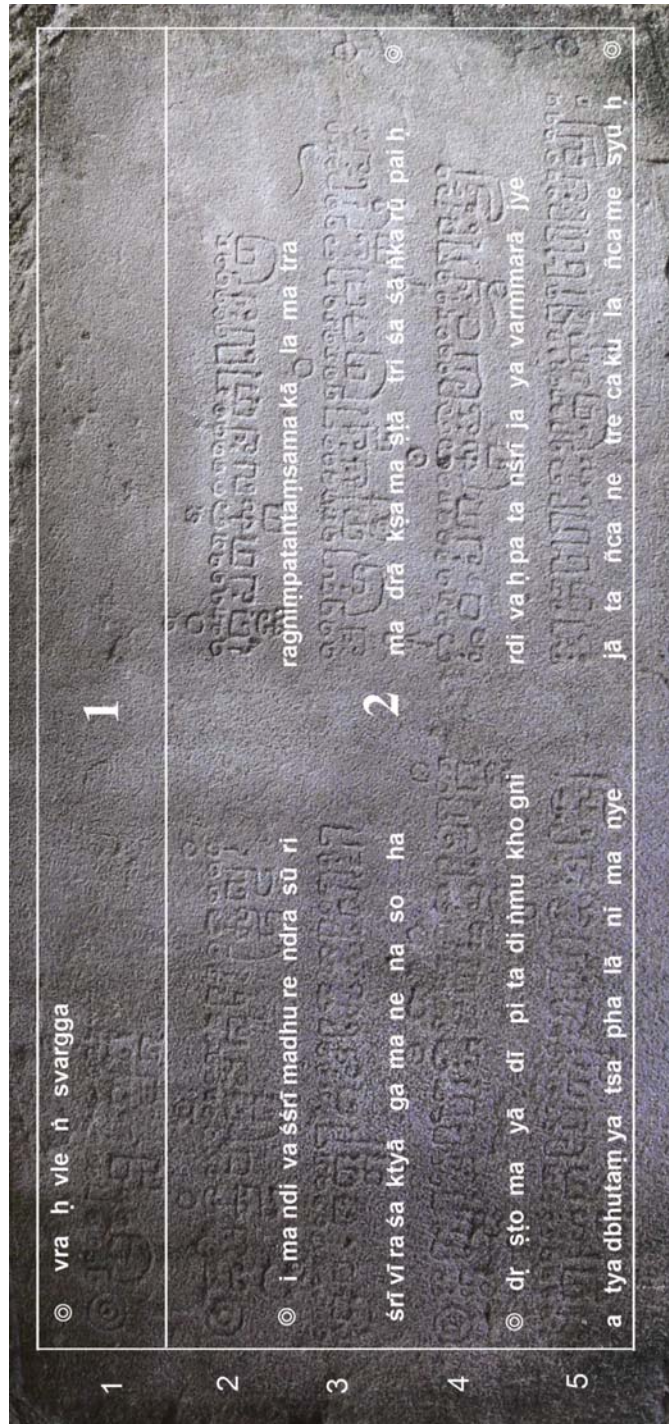


Figure 8: BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 2: Eastern complex: Structure 45: Inscription N1, with transcription. The figures in the centre refer to the two distinct parts of the inscription. Part 1 is the Short Inscription naming the deity in Khmer, part 2 consists of a commentary in Sanskrit. [Photograph and transcription by AIS P1060239 01-08-2008]



Figure 9: BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 2: Eastern complex: Structure 45: Inscription N1, rubbing. [Courtesy of APSARA]

TEXT

Line	Verse		
1		⊙ <i>vraḥ vleṅ svargga</i>	
2	1	⊙ <i>imaṅ divaś śrīmadbhurendrasūri</i>	<i>r agniṃ patantaṃ samakālam atra</i>
3	1	<i>śrīvīraśaktyāgamanena so 'ha</i>	<i>m adrākṣam aṣṭātriśasāṅkarūpaiḥ</i> ⊙
4	2	⊙ <i>dr̥ṣṭo mayā dīpitadīṃkṣo 'gni</i>	<i>r divaḥ patan śrījayavarmmarāṅje</i>
5	2	<i>atyadbhutaṃ yatsaphalāni manye</i>	<i>jātañ ca netre ca kulañ ca me syuḥ</i> ⊙

TRANSLATION

Line	Verse	
1		The Sacred Fire from heaven.
2-3	1	I myself, Śrī-Madhurendrasūri, saw this Fire falling from heaven, here, at the time of the arrival of Śrī-Vīraśakti in 1138 [Śaka].
4-5	2	I have seen the Fire lighting up the directions of space [and] falling from heaven into the kingdom of Śrī-Jayavarman – a great wonder, which I believe will entail good results, [namely] high birth, two [good] eyes, and eminent family. May these be mine!

5. NOTES

(I) READING OF THE N1 TEXT

The reading given here is based on a number of brief field inspections made between 2008 and 2010 in the course of survey and monitoring work, supplemented by photographs and a rubbing. Before the APSARA rubbing became available, a definitive reading was delayed by the eroded condition of the left-hand column of text, and by preliminary caution in assessing the content due the unusual nature, for a Short Inscription, of the subject matter. First attempts at a partial reading from the original, including the Śaka date in line 3, the verbal constructions and the names Vraḥ Vleṅ Svargga, Agni Divaḥ Patan, Madhurendrasūri, Vīraśakti and Jayavarman, were announced in my annual AIS reports to the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) organised by UNESCO in 2009 and 2010 in Siem Reap, and at some specialist conferences held in Siem Reap by the EFEO and the University of Sydney and in Washington DC by the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>8</sup> The complete reading with translation and notes, published here, was drafted at the end of the AIS 2010–2011 monitoring season, in February–March 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Announced by myself in papers read at the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Technical Sessions of the UNESCO-ICC, Siem Reap, 3 June 2009 and 8 June 2010, and at the international epigraphy conference “New Approaches to Old Texts: Cambodian Inscriptions in the Digital Age”, EFEO Centre, Siem Reap, 12 December 2009, and by my colleague Dr. Cunin in his paper “‘The Small Citadel’: Reconstructing the Ruined Buddhist Complex of Banteay Chhmar”, read at the Sackler Gallery, Washington DC, 24 October 2010.

(II) EXTERNAL FEATURES AND CHARACTER OF THE TEXT

At first sight, N1 presents the typical appearance of a Khmer Short Inscription in a Jayavarman VII temple, in that it is engraved on a prepared surface, interrupting the ornamental relief, at eye-level on a doorjamb at the entrance to the building. The greater part of the text (lines 2–5), however, is written not in Khmer but in Sanskrit verse, the beginning of each stanza being indicated by the circular mark © and its end by ⊙. Each line, representing a half-verse, is conventionally divided into two parts on either side of the caesura between two pādas (feet or quarter-verses). The caesurae thus divide the written text into two columns, a feature seen also in Pāli verse inscriptions but not in Khmer texts (except sometimes in lists of servants in doorframe inscriptions, e.g. K. 218, in which the separation of the columns is organisational, unrelated to metre since such inscriptions are of course not in verse). The metre selected by the author was Upajāti, one of the most frequently employed metres in royal stele inscriptions of the time at Angkor, including those of Tà Prohm, Prāḥ Khān, Phīmānākās, and the partially preserved Prāsāt Čruñ texts. In this form a stanza consists of four pādas of eleven syllables each. The 3 + 3 + 3 + 2 syllables of an Upajāti pāda can be represented as follows:

$\mathbf{X} - \cup | - - \cup | \cup - \cup | - \mathbf{X}$  (where the value of  $\mathbf{X}$  can be  $\cup$  or  $-$ ). Resolved into sequences of light and heavy syllables, the Sanskrit text of inscription N1 conforms to this model and scans as follows:

Verse 1	Pādas 1-2									Line 2
$\cup$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $-$ $\cup$   $\cup$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $\cup$										
<i>im</i> <i>and</i> <i>iv</i>   <i>aśśr</i> <i>īm</i> <i>adb</i>   <i>ur</i> <i>endr</i> <i>as</i>   <i>ūr</i> <i>ir</i>										
$-$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $-$ $\cup$   $\cup$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $\cup$										
<i>agn</i> <i>imṣ</i> <i>at</i>   <i>ant</i> <i>aṃs</i> <i>am</i>   <i>ak</i> <i>āl</i> <i>am</i>   <i>atr</i> <i>a</i>										
	Pādas 3-4									Line 3
$-$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $-$ $\cup$   $\cup$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $\cup$										
<i>śrīv</i> <i>īr</i> <i>aś</i>   <i>akty</i> <i>āg</i> <i>am</i>   <i>an</i> <i>en</i> <i>a</i>   <i>so</i> <i>ham</i>										
$-$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $-$ $\cup$   $\cup$ $-$ $\cup$   $-$ $-$										
<i>adr</i> <i>ākṣ</i> <i>am</i>   <i>aṣṭ</i> <i>ātr</i> <i>is</i>   <i>aś</i> <i>āṅk</i> <i>ar</i>   <i>uṣ</i> <i>aiḥ</i>										

Verse	Pādas									Line			
2	1-2									4			
–	–	◡		–	–	◡		◡	–	◡		–	◡
<i>dṛṣṭ</i>	<i>om</i>	<i>ay</i>		<i>ād</i>	<i>īp</i>	<i>it</i>		<i>ad</i>	<i>īm</i>	<i>ukḥ</i>		<i>ogn</i>	<i>ir</i>
◡	–	◡		–	–	◡		◡	–	◡		–	–
<i>div</i>	<i>aḥp</i>	<i>at</i>		<i>anśr</i>	<i>ij</i>	<i>ay</i>		<i>av</i>	<i>armm</i>	<i>ar</i>		<i>ājy</i>	<i>e</i>
	Pādas									Line			
	3-4									5			
–	–	◡		–	–	◡		◡	–	◡		–	–
<i>aty</i>	<i>adbh</i>	<i>ut</i>		<i>aṅy</i>	<i>ats</i>	<i>apḥ</i>		<i>al</i>	<i>ān</i>	<i>im</i>		<i>any</i>	<i>e</i>
–	–	◡		–	–	◡		◡	–	◡		–	◡
<i>jāt</i>	<i>añc</i>	<i>an</i>		<i>etr</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ca</i>		<i>kuḥ</i>	<i>añc</i>	<i>am</i>		<i>esy</i>	<i>uḥ</i>

The structure of the Sanskrit part of the inscription is thus entirely conventional, both metrically and in the formatting of its written presentation. Further questions relating to placement, script, vocabulary and the character of the text will be dealt with below.

The location of the inscription on the building to which it refers (structure 45) is also conventional, though at first sight it may not appear so. The norm obtaining at Bantāy Čhmār for the placement of Short Inscriptions is always-left, that is, the inscription belongs on the south door pillar in east-facing shrines, and on the north side of the doorframe in west-facing shrines. The same left-hand rule generally applies also to doorways facing north or south (west for south-facing entrances, east for north-facing). The origin of this rule probably lay in avoidance of turning one's back on – showing disrespect toward – an inscription containing the name of a deity while performing the ritual *pradakṣiṇa* (clockwise) circumambulation around the exterior of a free-standing shrine. Madhurendra's inscription, being located on the south side of a west-facing doorway, breaks with this convention. The visitor to structure 45 would find himself turning his back on the inscription during a circumambulation, whereas in the other two fire-shrines (face-towers 15 and 64) the *pradakṣiṇa* convention is obeyed. The reason for making such an obvious exception in the case of Madhurendra's inscription is not immediately clear, even when standing in front of structure 45 on site. This is because of the almost total destruction of other buildings in the immediate area. On examining the archaeological groundplans of the temple, however, one observes that not only was the south wall of this building lined with part of an east-west colonnade,<sup>9</sup> but the front part of its north wall was erected

<sup>9</sup> One can still see the tops of four pillars aligned east–west, capped by their original architrave, running parallel to the south wall of structure 45 and only 50–60 cm from it. The rest of the original gallery to which these remains belong is buried under two-metre deep debris.

almost contiguously with the south salient of structure 44.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the reason for this contiguity, its effect was to make unobstructed circumambulation of the shrine impossible, and thus the logical basis for the left-hand rule regarding the placement of inscriptions was removed. With only an axial approach to the shrine available, between a double row of pillars leading to its west façade, Madhurendra selected the auspicious side of the entrance, that is, the right-hand (*dakṣiṇa*) door pillar, for the placement of his text. In the very tight structural circumstances, and given the ritual constraints, this is the only location possible.

Like all Short Inscriptions, N1 is engraved in a cartouche on the built architecture.<sup>11</sup> The fact that this cartouche so obviously interrupts the repetitive motifs of the door-pillar décor (pairs of confronting birds) is quite normal. In Jayavarman's temples generally these Short Inscriptions were engraved at shrine entrances wherever required, whether the dressing of the stone and its ornamentation had been completed or not. It is not unusual, for example, to find such inscriptions carved on door jambs that are merely rough-hatched slabs, as well as on the delicately carved reliefs of fully prepared doorframes. In the present case, the cartouche for N1 was left as an uncarved rectangular band, across the whole width of the jamb, at the time the reliefs were being sculpted. This can be seen from the facts that ornamentation and inscription are carved on one continuously flat surface, and that the upper parts of the last circular bird-motif were deliberately not completed in order to leave space for the text (Figure 7). What this means is that both the location and the dimensions of inscription N1 had been planned in advance, showing that the text had already been formulated and the number of lines required for it was known, before work began on the reliefs. Indeed, except for inscribing the text itself, work on this door-pillar stopped altogether once the cartouche had been prepared, leaving ornament on the lower part of the jamb and rough-hatched stone above, as the photograph shows. The carving of a part of the decoration with the creation of the cartouche was carried out first, but only in order to locate the inscription, which had prior importance. It is clear from this sequence and from the content of the inscription that the five lines of N1 belong to the initial construction-and-ornamentation phase of structure 45, dated to 1216 CE by the text, and that the ritual purpose of this building, as shrine of the sacred fire three times named in the text, was also intended from the beginning. The inscription does not signify a later change in the function of this building. In all these respects, N1 is an authentic and conventional Short Inscription.

The more original qualities of the inscription, which give it its unique character, are discovered only on reading the text in detail. Firstly, it is exceptional to find a Short Inscription having its invocation in Old Khmer, to be followed by Sanskrit verse in which the name of the deity is translated from Khmer into Sanskrit and interpreted in the process. In longer bilingual inscriptions Sanskrit equivalents of Khmer terms do occur, of course, the most obviously relevant example here being K. 258 (the Saṃròṅ stele)

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<sup>10</sup> The north wall of structure 45 is 80 cm from the south wall of structure 44 at this point, as measured above the debris. The base mouldings of both these walls, and the projection of the south salient, would have reduced this distance on the ground almost to zero.

<sup>11</sup> Noted in Cunin 2004: 265, Ph. 723.



which, in describing land purchased in 1083 CE by the fire-priest Yogīśvarapaṇḍita, lists “a piece of land which is called Vraḥ Vleñ”, *bhūmi ti bau vraḥ vleñ* (C.16), which is subsequently translated in the Sanskrit part as “the single field [named] Devāgni”, *devāgnikṣetram ekan tu* (C.51). Since *vraḥ vleñ* was the established Khmer term for the sacred fire, and *devāgni* (*deva\_agni*, “divine fire” or “fire as a god”) its standard Sanskrit equivalent,<sup>12</sup> Madhurendra’s quite different Khmer and Sanskrit versions of these terms in his Bantāy Čhmār inscription, namely *vraḥ vleñ svargga* rendered twice as *agnir divaḥ patan* (“the fire[-god] falling from heaven”, lines 1, 2 and 4) – in which, I suggest, the name Agni alone translates *vraḥ vleñ* and *divaḥ patan* is an interpretation of the Khmer use of *svargga* – were clearly intended to convey an alternative conception of the fire-god, one that had special significance for him as the expression of what he had witnessed. The first among the unusual aspects of this inscription is, therefore, that the individual fire named in it was a particular manifestation of sacred fire that is not mentioned in any other Jayavarman VII inscription.

Secondly, it is unique to encounter a Short Inscription text of such an insistently personal nature, in which the author both names himself and writes in the first person singular throughout. The subject of verse 1 is *so ’ham*, “I myself” and the verb is *adrākṣam*, aorist 1<sup>st</sup> singular parasmaipada of √*drś*, “I saw, I have seen”; the main verbal construction of verse 2 is *dr̥ṣṭo mayā*, using a passive participle of the same √*drś* and having much the same meaning (literally “was seen by me”); *manye* in that verse means “I think” or “I believe”; and finally *me syuḥ*, at the end of the inscription, is optative 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural parasmaipada of √*as* with the pronoun *me*, meaning “may they be for me”, or “may I have [plural objects]”. In longer inscriptions which contain brief references to the establishment of sacred fires (see for example K. 258 cited above), however, texts written in the first person were not unusual (they chiefly concerned donations of land to temple deities and the merit thereby acquired by the donor), and Madhurendra’s brief Sanskrit commentary should be viewed as the only example of a Jayavarman VII Short Inscription which derives from that larger context.

Thirdly, no other Short Inscription describes a manifestation of sacred fire – or the manifestation of any deity – as taking place before the author’s eyes, and auguring his after-death circumstances in the physical world (line 5). This karmic view of the fire-priest’s vision with its desired material rewards in terms of family and status (*jātañ ca . . . kulañ ca me syuḥ*) looks like a deliberate parallel to the titles, wealth and standing bestowed by royalty on the slain Sañjaks and their families in the adjacent K. 227 (*pre oy nāma ar̥ṇṭeñ . . . is kulapakeṣa phoñ stac prakop sampat nu kerama*, “[the prince] ordered the conferral of the title of *ar̥ṇṭeñ* . . . he bestowed on all branches of their families fortune and rank”, lines 11–14, 29). As an ascetic fire-priest, Madhurendra wished for these same things in his own next life, as equal reward<sup>13</sup> for the extreme asceticism

<sup>12</sup> Also *devavāgni* (K. 258, verse 6, line C.27).

<sup>13</sup> His right to a reward derives from the nature of his vision as a moment of insight communicated to him directly by a god. In both verses he emphasises that he has seen (√ *drś*) the divine source of the sacred fire, and we should understand the “great wonder” or “miracle” that he mentions (*atyadbhutam*) as referring to this perception, experienced and interpreted as a self-willed manifestation of the deity. On the same line he lists the rewards (*phala*, “fruit”, “consequence”) for this “seeing” Madhurendra was not the first to record this kind of religious perception and its fruits in an inscription. We find the same connection between *darśana* in the

of a *tapasvin*, which meant spiritual power through voluntary death to the (material) world, just as the ultimate act of loyalty for a Sañjak meant transfiguration as a god through voluntary self-sacrifice for the (Khmer) world.<sup>14</sup> Clearly there was interaction here between the authors of the Khmer and Sanskrit texts of K. 227 and N1, and a shared conception of the after-death state, despite the very different cults they represented. Both priest and hero may anticipate an afterlife structured in terms of the hierarchical rankings of

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sense of “insight” or “revelation” and *phala* in the sense of “consequent reward” expressed in K. 254 (Dón Ón, NW of Añkor Thom, near Kòk Pò), where in verse 30 the author, referring to himself in the third person as Nanda, in charge of the sacred cow (*gopanāyaka*) at royal ceremonies and a devoted servant of the king, lists among his pious works a donation of land and personnel to the Buddha of the Bamboo Grove in 1117 CE (*aṣṭavedaśūnyendau*, 1038 Śaka [Golzio 2006: 176]). He expresses this in the following terms:

*vaṃśārāmajñe 'py asti dāsakṣetraṃ yadarpitam  
bhaktiyā rajñe śivaikatvadarśanāt phaladattaye.*

Coedès (1951 [2]: 189 n.2) found this verse difficult and Bhattacharya thinks that the existing translation needs modifying. On this and on *datti* (*dattaye*) see Bhattacharya 1991: 54, no. 173. I take the verse to mean: “He offered fields and servants to the Buddha of the Bamboo Grove also, for the sake of being given a reward (*phala-dattaye*), through his attachment to the king, for his perception – or for the revelation – (*darśanāt*) of the identity [of this Buddha] with Śiva.” This perception or revelation seems to refer to the fact, recorded in verse 3 of K. 237 (Prāḥ Khsèt, farther NW from Angkor, near Spān Tūp [Lajonquière 1911, No. 79, Spean Töp / Barth 1893, XIX, Spean Teip], in the region of Bantāy Čhmār), that some fifty years previously in 1067 CE (*navamūrttivile*, 989 Śaka) four gods had been installed there as a group, namely a damaged and restored Liṅga, a Brahmā, a Viṣṇu, and a Buddha. The old Śivaliṅga (called *bbinnas śiva[h]*), “The Broken Śiva,” although restored) and the two Hindu statues were erected in the three towers of Prāsāt Prāḥ Khsèt itself (*[a]tra dvau*), while the Buddha was installed separately in a Vaṃśārāma, a bamboo grove (*vaṃśārāme tathā—aparām*). Despite this separation, all four together, as a single foundation including the Buddha, were regarded as forming a *caturmūrtiś śaivi*, a “Fourfold Image of Śiva” (verse 4). It had long been a tenet of Śaiva belief (already in the *Mahābhārata*, see Maxwell 1988: 46–55, 280) that the gods Brahmā and Viṣṇu emanated from the left and right sides of Śiva as aspects of himself, an article of faith that had been depicted in Khmer statuary at least since the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Lobo 2006: 132–133). In the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Prāḥ Khsèt text added the Vaṃśārāma Buddha as a fourth emanation of Śiva, and the author of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Dón Ón inscription, having himself perceived Śiva in that Buddha image (*śivaikatvadarśana*), like Madhurendra perceiving the celestial Agni in the sacred fire in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, expected his insight to entail material rewards, to be provided by the king, in this world. Inscription N1 at Bantāy Čhmār reflects this tradition of revelation and reward in Khmer belief. Cf. late Vedic eschatology (“As a reward for knowing a certain mystery, a man is born again, in this world”, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.5.3.14; see Macdonnell 1897: 165–168, compare Deussen 1915: 290–291, 308).

<sup>14</sup> For the extreme religious asceticism (*tapas*) of a *tapasvin* fire-priest there is no more eloquent testimony than the depiction of the *rajabotā* (inscription 21), weak and emaciated, carried on a litter behind the *vraḥ vleñ* (inscription 22), in the west-wing reliefs of the south galleries at Angkor Wat (Roveda 1997: Figure 157). On the expectation that officers of the crown would, in the heroic sense, sacrifice their lives for the king, see the normative text of the oaths of allegiance in the east gateway of the royal palace in Añkor Thom (K. 292, Coedès 1951 [2]: 208).

Khmer society, and both might be immortalised as Khmer cult-statues (*rūpa, mūrti*)<sup>15</sup> in a royal temple, but for neither of them is escape from the karmic shackles of the world into Brahmaloḥa, Nirvāṇa, or a Mahāyāna paradise foreseen in these inscriptions. Both will be reborn, their reward consisting of improved material circumstances to be provided by a future king. Although written in Sanskrit and concerned with the Indic fire-god in a Mahāyāna context, Madhurendra’s text – like the Khmer text of K. 227 – thus preserves an essentially earthbound character. The only escape clause in this contract with *samsāra*, inserted between his stated desires for worldly high birth and eminent family, is *netre ca*, his wish to retain the percipience and insight that link him to the gods.

### (III) VRAḤ VLEṆ SVARGA

What exactly it was that Madhurendra observed in the sky over Bantāy Čhmār in 1216 CE is not easy to define precisely. In his brief text he employs no single term for the phenomenon except the proper noun *vraḥ vleṇ* or *agni*, “the god Fire” (lines 1, 2, and 4). If we, unlike Madhurendra, wish to classify this spectacle in terms of natural phenomena, the obvious possibilities that present themselves are either a meteorite or a bolt of forked lightning. And indeed, the expression “fire falling from heaven”, which he uses twice (lines 2 and 4), sounds very like a traditional definition of *ulkeā*, the Sanskrit word for a meteor, but it can of course refer equally to any fiery phenomenon in the sky including lightning (*vidyut, aśani*), which in some Indian astronomical texts is regarded as a type of *ulkeā* (Monier-Williams 1899: 112, 218). It is clear from the inscription text that Madhurendra spontaneously understands his own perception of this spectacle to be a revelation of the divine Fire, a vision or supernatural insight accorded to him by the deity (*atyadbhutam*, line 5), and therefore does not attempt to define or describe the physical phenomenon. Viewing it in retrospect as an event having three aspects (the Fire falls from the sky, this occurs before his eyes, and it strikes in Jayavarman’s kingdom), he construes these on the basis of his Vedic education and Khmer culture, focusing on them as a set of predictive omens. For him, the origination of the Fire in heaven (*divas . . . patantam, divaḥ patan*) portends high birth (*jātam*), his witnessing of its descent (*so ’ham adrākṣam, dṛṣṭo mayā*) is an omen of percipience or good eyesight (*netre*), and the rule of Jayavarman in his homeland, where the heaven-born Fire falls to earth (*śrījayavarmmarāḷje*), is the sign of a noble family (*kuḷam*). As witness to the revelation, and interpreter of these portents, he desires to be reborn possessing the three foretold advantages.

This subjective thought that the author expresses in the last line does not imply that he composed these verses merely because he was an old man idly contemplating his death, but it probably does imply

<sup>15</sup> For heroes: *oy nāma amṭeṇ anak sañjak ta vyar sthāpanā rūpa* (Bantāy Čhmār, K. 227, lines 13–14). For scholar-priests: *dideśa yaś śrījayamaṅgalārthadevābbidānaṃ . . . gurau . . . so ’tiṣṭhīpac chrījayamaṅgalār[tha]devaṃ tathā śrījayakīrttīdevam mūrtti guror dakṣiṇavāmato ’jya[h]* (Ia Prohm, K. 273, verses 30, 37; [a]jyāḥ refers to the central image of Śrī-Jayarājacūḍamaṇi [°cūddamaṇi], named in the previous verse).

that the disciplined austerities of a *tapasvin* fire-priest made him sharply aware of his mortality and concerned about the afterlife (Note II). His text is carefully constructed and shows that he was actively involved in religious matters at Bantāy Čhmār, evidently responsible for establishing and maintaining the fire-cult, which was an essential part of the functioning of all temples, in the three linked complexes of one of Jayavarman's largest architectural undertakings. He was certainly a man of high status and learning, as the suffix to his name, *suri*, indicates, and Madhurendra itself was an illustrious name in Cambodia, both before and after his time, as we shall see. The confidence and scholarship required to compose a poem, however brief, in Sanskrit, the language of power, and in the first person, to be published in stone as an open declaration, all points in the same direction. Moreover the right to have a personal inscription engraved on the fabric of a royal temple was an exceptional privilege. This is the only known inscription of its time and class which is not anonymous.

Nor should one suppose, from its personal character, that N1 is a mere graffito. The script, though worn and in places almost illegible, is recognisably that of Jayavarman VII's time, a somewhat plainer version of the writing seen in that king's official stele inscriptions (including the northeast stele from Bantāy Čhmār itself, Pottier S1 / K. 1206) – the same script, in fact, as that employed in the many other Short Inscriptions throughout this temple. Its placement, at the entrance to the building, conforms to the positioning of Short Inscriptions in general, the first line, *vraḥ vleṅ svargga*, in itself constituting a typical inscription of this type (as confirmed by an identical one-line text, N2, in another building of Bantāy Čhmār, mentioned above and discussed further below), while the format and orthography of the Sanskrit part obey the rules for official inscriptions and its vocabulary imitates certain expressions used in those inscriptions. The Khmer and Sanskrit parts were clearly engraved at the same time, since the script is the same throughout, the cartouche was prepared for the whole five lines, and the Sanskrit text specifically relates to the Khmer.

The essential reason for engraving this text on the temple at all was, then, to explain and define the sacred fire of Bantāy Čhmār known as *Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga*, and in so doing to record its establishment. The same explanatory function was served, on a far grander narrative scale and for a different kind of cult, by the twenty-three lines of Khmer text appended to the six-line Short Inscription at the top of the nearby K. 227 (which was not a foundation inscription in my view, see below, footnote 29). As noted above, there are two extant Short Inscriptions naming this fire-deity in Bantāy Čhmār (N1 and N2). These two inscriptions leave us in no doubt that structures 15 and 45 were the fire-shrines of the central and eastern complexes, where the sacred fire, to which offerings were regularly made to the accompaniment of chanted mantras, was kept burning (Maxwell 2007 [2]: 43–44, with reference to Bhattacharya 1961).

Sacred fires were a ubiquitous feature of religious life in ancient Cambodia, in temples, in the staging posts along the highways, and in portable shrines of the kind depicted in the Angkor Wat reliefs (Maxwell and Poncar 2006: 132). Like the gods that were represented by statues, each *vraḥ vleṅ* or *devāgni* was also regarded as an individual deity, a particular manifestation of fire which had been instituted by, and which could even be named after, a person of rank in the religious establishment. Probably one of the oldest extant references to this tradition is a short preangkorian inscription of six lines (K. 937), in Sanskrit, on

the left door-pillar of the fire-shrine (“bibliothèque”) at Pràsàt Sraṅè near Prāḥ Kô in Hariharālaya (Rolùoh). The first verse (lines 1–2) names the king, Indravarman, and introduces his fire-priest (*botṛ, botā*), the *ācārya* named Nandika (*nandikācāryya*), a man of great asceticism (*sumahātapāḥ*), later named in the stele inscription ( K. 933) as *ācārya pradhāna* and *vraḥ guru* of Indravarman. Verse 2 continues:

*śarakhāṣṭāṅkīte śāke devāgnir ṅmandikeśvaraḥ*  
*sthāpito vidhinā tena butvāgniṅ ca sadārcayet*

“In the Śaka [year] 805 (883 CE), he (Nandika) established, according to precept, the sacred fire (*devāgni*) [named] Nandikeśvara. May he always worship [the god] after sacrificing to the fire!”

The main points of interest here in connection with Madhurendra’s inscription at Bantāy Čhmār are (1) that the founder, the ascetic fire-priest who established a particular sacred fire, remained personally associated with it (*ācāryyo nandika\_ācāryyaḥ, devāgnir nandika\_īśvaraḥ*); (2) that the foundation inscription for a sacred fire, including the date, could be inscribed directly on the doorframe of the fire-shrine, which served and was annexed to a larger temple; (3) that this short foundation inscription was composed in Sanskrit; and (4) that Nandika, in his third and final verse, writes of granting all desires and rich rewards (fans of gold, *suvarṇanavyajanāni*) to those who will fan his sacred fire, be it only with a simple palm-leaf (*patreṇa*). Madhurendra, writing in Bantāy Čhmār 333 years after Nandika, likewise boldly states his name, *śrī-madhurendrasūrir . . . so ’ham* (although, unlike Nandika, he does not call his sacred fire “Madhurendra’s Īśvara”, he does name it after his personal vision), carves his inscription on the fire-shrine complete with date, writes in Sanskrit, and also ends his text with a list of anticipated rewards (in his case for himself, in his next rebirth). Bantāy Čhmār N1 thus belongs to a long epigraphic tradition of fire-shrine dedications.

Some 120 years later to the west of Siem Reap, the west-facing building annexed to Pràsàt Trapāṅ Ropou (= Travāṅ Rvvau), in the southeast corner of the enclosure (BEFEO 31, Chronique, with pl. CXV.B), received an eight-line Khmer inscription on its south door-pillar ( K. 691). It stated that in 924 Śaka (1002 CE) a certain Loṅ Dān established a sacred fire (*sthāpanā vraḥ vleṅ*) there. He presented eight servants to tend the ricefields belonging to this fire-shrine and to deliver a fixed quantity of husked rice daily as sacrifice to the sacred fire (*oy raṅko . . . yajña vraḥ vleṅ pratidina*). This terminology, and the archaeology of the site, show that the fire-shrine was an independent building erected in proximity to, but separately from, the southeast corner of the main temple, like structure 45 in the east complex of Bantāy Čhmār.

An additional point of relevance is introduced by K. 258 (the Saṃròṅ stele), dating from the later 11<sup>th</sup> century, in that its Sanskrit text is largely written in the first person singular (as is Madhurendra’s inscription) and this is reflected also in the Khmer portion. As Coedès suggested (1952: 177), the Khmer text is a compilation of texts copied from a number of originally separate palm-leaf documents. This is a phenomenon to be observed in many Khmer inscriptions that outwardly present a unitary appearance. Lines A.55–65 of the Saṃròṅ inscription represent two short documents dealing with the establishment of a sacred fire in the *tapovana* (“grove for the practice of asceticism”) at the *āśrama* of the temple of Śiva

Bhadreśvara by a paṇḍita named Yogīśvara, fire-priest<sup>16</sup> to Harṣavarman III and Jayavarman VI, in 1079 CE (1001 śaka gī nu sthāpanā vraḥ vleñ nā tapovana śribhadreśvaraśrama). At the end of the first document (lines A.60–63 in the inscription) Yogīśvara says: *bhūmi vraḥ vleñ noḥ . . . āyatta ta kaṃ śribhadreśvaraśrama vvaṃ āc ti āyatta ta kule añ*, “These lands belonging to the sacred fire . . . come under the authority of the officer-in-charge of the āśrama of Śrī-Bhadreśvara, they are not under the authority of my own family (*kule añ*).” And at the end of the corresponding Sanskrit verse passage (lines C.67–68, verses 38–39) he reiterates this in similar terms:

*śadvimśa bhūmayas sarvvaḥ mayā kritā mahābhanaih  
śribhadreśvaragaurīśe bhaktyā dattāḥ mayākhiḻāḥ  
śribhadreśādbhīpāyattā matkulena na cāhṛtāḥ*

“All the twenty-six pieces of land, which I (*mayā*) have purchased at the cost of great riches, I (*mayā*), out of devotion, have given entirely to Śrī-Bhadreśvara Śiva. They are at the disposal of the director of Śrī-Bhadreśa and may not be appropriated by my family (*mat-kulena*<sup>17</sup>).”

These two K. 258 passages, from a stele engraved with no less than 239 lines of text, demonstrate that it was accepted practice for a highly placed fire-priest, living well before Madhurendra’s time, while listing his good works, to include the record of his foundation of a sacred fire – a record which took the form of a short personal declaration written in the first person, copied from an original document in Khmer but also recapitulated in Sanskrit – in a major temple inscription. Clearly Short Inscription N1, written 137 years later in first-person Sanskrit and also concerning a new sacred fire, is a continuation of this same practice. Like Yogīśvara before him at the temple of Bhadreśvara, its author Madhurendra thus writes as founder and *botṛ* of the Vraḥ Vleñ at Bantāy Čhmàr.

But his addition of the word *svargga* alters the meaning of the name of this fire, and without a commentary it is not clear in precisely what sense this new Khmer designation, *vraḥ vleñ svargga*, is to be understood. Madhurendra’s Sanskrit text is there to provide the explanation. By the repeated use of a simple construction (*agni + √pat + an ablative + a locative*), he makes it clear, with an exactitude lacking in the Khmer name alone, who this god really is. Vraḥ Vleñ Svarga is *iman divas’ . . . agniṃ patantam* (accusative), literally “This Agni falling from heaven” (line 2) or, in the nominative, *dīpīdīnimukho ’gnir divaḥ patan*, literally “Agni, having illuminated the directions of space, falling from heaven” (line 4). By using the present active participle of the Sanskrit root *pat* (*patan*, *patantam*) in conjunction with the ablative of *div* (*divaḥ*), he translates the Khmer name of the god, Vleñ Svarga, as “Fire from the Sky”, and in so doing interprets this “falling fire” as a thunderbolt or fireball that emanates from heaven and falls on to or strikes the earth in Jayavarman’s kingdom (*śrījayavarmmarājye*<sup>18</sup>).

<sup>16</sup> “Fire-priest and chief preceptor of the keepers of the most venerable sacred fire,” *botā sattama-devavahni-vasatām ācāryyaka—adbīśvaraḥ* (Sanskrit text of K. 258, verse 6).

<sup>17</sup> On further uses of *kula* (in the senses of *munikula*, *devakulā*) see Bhattacharya 1991: 45, no.112.

<sup>18</sup> On the locative, Whitney 1889: §301.c.

Bantāy Čhmār contained at least two shrines dedicated to this form of the deity, whose cult might well have been practised, one would think, at least in part as an apotropaic measure to protect the many high towers in the east and central complexes – all of them still quite new in 1216 CE – against damage by lightning and other phenomena from the sky. Occurrences of such damage were probably not at all uncommon, the towers being topped by three- or five-pronged metal finials (*triśūla, pañcaśūla*<sup>19</sup>), and there were rituals designed to appease the deity, after the thunderbolt had struck, through expiation and atonement (*prāyaścita, prāyaścitta, prāyaścitti*) for those faults of one’s own which might have caused the god to descend on the temple in anger. Inscription K. 277 in the second-level east entrance of Tà Keo (Tà Kèv) at Angkor, for example, recorded in lines 30-31 (north) that the royal paṇḍita Yogīśvara, in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century under Sūryavarman I, “performed an expiatory ceremony when a thunderbolt fell . . . on the temple, after which he began completing the holy temple, buying stone and elephants” (*man cuḥ asuni . . . prāsāda gi nu thve prāyaścitti man prārambha samrac vraḥ prāsāda duñ thma nu tamrya*). Again, in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Saṃròn stele ( K. 258) speaks in line A.76 of an offering of land made to the Aṣṭasiddhi *tapovana* near the *aśrama* of Bhadreśvara (east of Pràsàt Čār) in 1096 CE following “a ceremony of expiation consequent upon the falling of a thunderbolt on the temple” (*prāyaścitta phle cuḥ . . . asuni ta prāsāda*)<sup>20</sup>.

Madhurendra’s inscription at Bantāy Čhmār might therefore seem to identify the deity housed inside structure 45, Vraḥ Vleñ Svarga, as the fire-god in potentially destructive form, the form most likely to endanger the new temple. But he does not use a word meaning lightning as an uncontrollable natural phenomenon (Skt. *aśani*, Khm. *aśuni, asuni*), as in the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Khmer inscriptions of Tà Kèv and Saṃròn just mentioned, although the fire descends into the temple. Instead he gives a lengthy Sanskrit interpretation of the Khmer name for that phenomenon regarded as a deity, which he reiterates word for word in both verses, using the description of a personal visionary experience as his narrative vehicle. In this he avoids any suggestion of damage and expiation in connection with the fire, regarding it on the contrary as an auspicious deity, and emphasising the “great wonder” (*aty-adbhatam*<sup>21</sup>) of being favoured with a visionary perception of it.

This does not mean that his text marks some dramatic change of attitude toward “fire from heaven” – from the perception of it as divine retribution to seeing it as a benevolent divinity – for both of these attitudes already coexisted, as the preceding discussion of the inscriptions demonstrates. Madhurendra reports the lightning, and the fact that it strikes or falls “here”, meaning “in the temple,”<sup>22</sup> but ignores

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<sup>19</sup> For references see Bhattacharya 1991: 15, 60.

<sup>20</sup> These brief reports of such incidents and the subsequent rituals, made in passing as part of much longer temple inscriptions in Khmer, are two which chanced to survive in the fragile epigraphic record long enough for Coedès to decipher the rubbings. As the first AIS Angkor Monitoring programme noted in March 2007, the key passage in line 30 of the Tà Kèv inscription K. 277, cited above, has already been obliterated. One presumes that many more such references were contained in the inscriptions than have survived.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hopkins (1915: 100–101, 104) on Adbhuta Agni in the *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>22</sup> This is generally the literal meaning of *atru* in the inscriptions, which were of course located in temples. Cf. *ima[ṅ] . . . agnim* in line 1.

completely its dangerous side, which is axiomatic and seems to have been implied in the inscriptions only obliquely, the subsequent *prāyaścitta* ritual being the real subject of the reports (above, K. 277 and 258) because organising it was a meritorious act. If the thunderbolt that Madhurendra saw did indeed cause a fire, as suggested below, with a brand or smouldering log from which the permanent sacred fire in structure 45 was ignited,<sup>23</sup> then presumably it struck trees in the precincts, not the stone structures themselves, so that no damage was done, which would explain why he makes no allusion to *prāyaścitta*, a matter in any case more properly mentioned in Khmer texts.

Inscription N1 implies no change of attitude but is rather a reaffirmation of Vedic conceptions of the sacrificial fire. In the Vedic literature, Agni is chiefly regarded as threefold depending on his origin: terrestrial (ignited by human effort using two fire-sticks), aquatic (born of the aerial waters, meaning rainclouds), and celestial (descending or being brought from heaven to earth by divine agency). Subsequent Sanskrit literature regarded the three fires of the Vedic sacrificial arena as derived from this earth–atmosphere–sky triad and associated them with further triads (mother–father–guru etc.). The lightning form of the Vedic fire-god, Agni Vaidyuta (= “fire born of lightning”) seems to have been seen as partly an aquatic (*apsumat*) but chiefly a celestial (*divya*) manifestation of Agni. “The myth, too, of the descent of fire from heaven to earth, due undoubtedly to the actual observation of conflagrations caused by the stroke of lightning, implies the identity of the celestial Agni and lightning” (Macdonell 1897: 91–94). In terms of this tripartite origin, of which he must have been aware as fire-priest since brahmin *tapasvins* were well versed in the Veda, Madhurendra can only have intended his inscription to identify the sacred fire of Bantāy Čhmār with lightning, not as the destroyer of temples, but as the celestial Agni descending to earth to reside in the temple. His view of Agni as giver of rewards is also Vedic (*ratnadhātamam*, “most generous bestower of riches”, is the first epithet of the fire-god in the first verse of the first hymn of the *Rgveda*). Since the text of N1 contains the only indication of the identity of lightning with the sacred fire as Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga / Agnir Divaḥ Patan known to me in the Cambodian epigraphic record, I assume for the moment that this particular cult was practised at Bantāy Čhmār alone. Madhurendra’s emphasis on his personal vision, experienced in the temple, as origin of the cult clearly indicates its uniqueness and alludes to his being the founder of this fire. We know for certain that it was of great ritual importance at Bantāy Čhmār, being housed primarily in the fire-shrine serving the central sanctuary in the east and secondarily in face-tower 15, where it served the main sanctuary of the entire temple (Figures 11 and 12, and see Appendix 3).

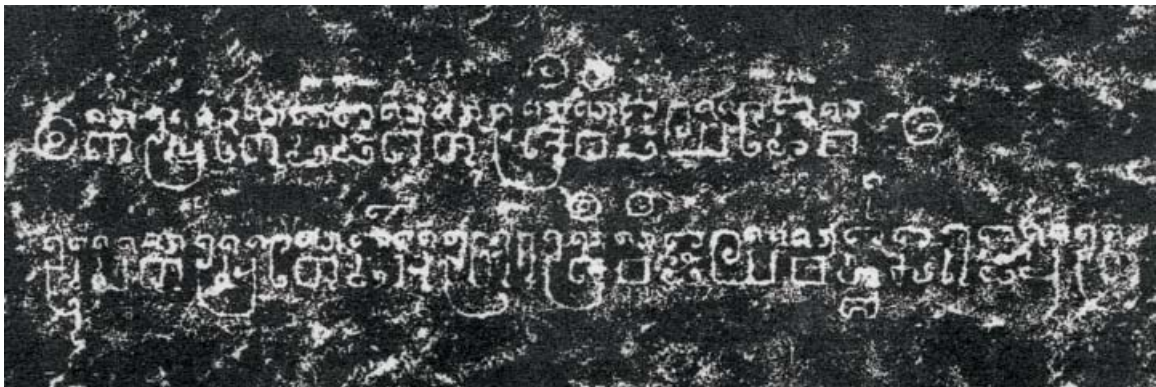
In attempting to answer in objective terms the question posed at the top of this section, the evidence discussed suggests that the manifestation of fire which Madhurendra saw descending from the sky was a

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<sup>23</sup> Numerous examples of a permanent sacred fire in the form of a very large slow-burning log from the forest, called by its priest *akhaṇḍa-dhūna*, “Perpetually Flickering” or “Eternal Fire”, in a stone fireplace in the SE corner of the *maṇḍapa*, were encountered during archaeological fieldwork in the Western Himalayas between 2001 and 2005, for example at the temple site of Māmleśvara Mahādeva (c. 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century) in Maṇḍī District, Himachal Pradesh, India. The Māmleśvara sacred fire is believed by its priest to have been burning continuously since the time of the *Mahābhārata*. Maxwell 2006: 26, 60; for context see Maxwell 2007 [3].



spectacular bolt of lightning, a commonplace enough sight on the open plain at the foot of the Dangrek, made remarkable in this instance by its location and timing. Lightning, as we have seen, was generally regarded as a negative sign, at least in connection with temple-building, and in 1216 CE the construction of Bantāy Čhmār’s third enclosure with its large-scale royal reliefs was probably very recently completed, with the inscribing of the king’s foundation stelae at the northern corners of the work site just beginning. In view of the evidence from Tà Kèv and Saṃròṅ adduced above we may speculate that the lightning, though causing no structural damage and giving rise to the fire-priest’s positive vision, was nevertheless regarded as an ill omen by the labour force, and may have been the immediate cause of suspending work on the stele inscriptions. If the king then died shortly afterward, that would have put a final stop to these royal inscriptions. However that may be, on the day of the thunderbolt Madhurendra insists on perceiving it as a positive sign. He sees it strike the earth and opens his text with the words *iman divaś . . . agniṃ patantaṃ . . . atra . . . adrakṣam*, “I saw this fire falling from heaven here”, which is a clear reference to the fire kept burning inside the fire-shrine on which the inscription is engraved (see footnotes 22 and 24). By this choice of words he leads the reader to suppose that “this Agni,” the sacred fire of Bantāy Čhmār, was initially kindled, as a fragment of the *divya* or celestial Agni, from a wildfire ignited in the temple precincts by the thunderbolt whose descent he witnessed.<sup>24</sup> He ignores any question of a causal connection between the



**Figure 10.** BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 2 (East complex): Northwest quadrant: Structure 41: North door: East door-pillar: Estampage of inscription K. 226 / Coedès 3. The text reads © kamrateṅ jagat śrīvijayadeva © rūpa kamrateṅ aṅ śrīvijayavarddhana rājaputra. This inscription is preserved in situ today and is in legible condition.

[Estampage: Inscriptions du Cambodge, publiées sous les auspices de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, t. III, pl. CXIII, Paris 1927]

<sup>24</sup> Although in ancient Vedic terms an unconventional means of lighting a sacred fire, this would have been quite possible in the Mahāyāna temple of Bantāy Čhmār. The total domain inside the earth rampart is vast, 2.2 x 1.7 km (first estimated by Lajonquière at “environ 4 kilomètres carrés”, 1911: 401), and in uncultivated areas thick with trees even today, despite the water shortage. As Lajonquière described the area a hundred years ago, “La forêt-clairière recouvre de son manteau troué de savanes cette zone intermédiaire désolée où les anciens avaient pendant édifié le Banteai Chhmar, un de leurs monuments les plus importants”, 1911: 370). Apart from access roads and worksite clearings, large tracts of this land must have remained under forest while the temple and its satellites were being built, and the risk of bushfires have been correspondingly high.

lightning and a temporary disruption of building work to focus on the lightning itself as a divine manifestation, the flames from which he maintains in his fire-shrine as Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga.

This was the fire-shrine that served the eastern complex, which was replete with royal and heroic associations (Vraḥ Pāda Śrī-Yaśovarmadeva, the posthumous forms of prince Śrīndrakumāra Rājaputra and the four Sañjaks in K. 227, Śrī-Jayavarman on line 4 of N1, and also a statue of the god Śrī-Vijayadeva representing the Rājaputra Śrī-Vijayavardhana in the northwest corner shrine, named in K. 226 / Coedès 3, for which see Figure 10). In view of these associations it seems sure that Madhurendra's function in the east complex was that of Rājahotr, and the deification there of men who had died in defence of Khmer royalty, some of whom were appointed to the status of Rājaputra, suggests that Jayavarman had an urgent political interest in making Bantāy Čhmār operational. The temple established unequivocally his presence in the Northwest of the country south of the Dangrek, amid the tangible remains of a people he may have thought of as the most ancient Khmer ancestors<sup>25</sup>, in a location that brought the long, exposed highways leading to the north and west under his direct influence. Those highways were lined with fire-houses, and these were now linked by secondary roads (Appendix 2) with the four fire-shrines concentrated at Bantāy Čhmār (Figures 12–15) under Madhurendra's control, a perfect deployment of religion in the service of political strategy. The importance of the fire-cult there may be judged from the fact that N1 is the only Short Inscription of Jayavarman's reign to record the establishment of a sacred fire in one of his temples. Although in his text he interprets the word in terms of augury, we can be reasonably sure that when Madhurendra refers to Bantāy Čhmār as the destination of the celestial Agni with the term “in the kingdom of Jayavarman” (*śrī-jayavarmma-rājye*), he is making a political assertion. The Northwest had for centuries been seen as unstable (Coedès 1962: 192, 311).

The very brief narrative elements of his text, recording his observation of the fiery phenomenon and the circumstances in which it occurred, lend a sense of immediacy and authenticity to the commentary, no doubt engaging the contemporary reader with the author. That is, the writing of this inscription was not a perfunctory formality, it was an original poetic composition that was made to be read, and indeed Bantāy Čhmār N1 and K. 227 are the only “literary” Short Inscriptions of Jayavarman VII's reign so far discovered. Madhurendra's Sanskrit text, short and compact and limited in setting to a single locality though it is, contains a fairly complex narrative set in the temple of Bantāy Čhmār. In verse 1 of his text, Madhurendra is himself the active subject (*so 'ham adrakṣam*), the place and time of the action being stated (*samakālam atra śrīvīraśaktyāgamena . . . aṣṭātriśaśāṅkarūpaiḥ*), and Fire is the object (*iman divaś . . . agniṃ patantam*). In verse 2, Fire becomes the active subject (*agnir divaḥ patan*) and Madhurendra the witness of its action (*dṛṣṭo mayā*), which he is left to interpret (*manye*) as hopeful recipient (*me syuh*) of the ensuing rewards (*yatsaphalāni*). That is, after he first sees the lightning, in his mind it changes from an object of his optical

<sup>25</sup> Large scale temple building activities at Bantāy Čhmār cannot have failed to reveal the numerous prehistoric burial sites in the immediate area. The manner of disposal of the dead and the nature of the grave goods, plus the complete absence of stone structures and inscriptions, would have been sufficient to indicate their great antiquity. These sites are generally labeled “Iron Age” and recent radiocarbon dating places them between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

perception to a self-willed deity. In both verses the action of Fire is the same (falling from heaven) but only in the second is the objective of its descent named (Jayavarman's kingdom). The three movements of this compressed narrative are the three shifts between:

- [1.] the author's past perception of the lightning in the sky at a moment clearly framed in time and space, along with his concurrent identification of it in the present with the fire in the fire-shrine<sup>26</sup> (verse 1, lines 2–3);
- [2.] the lightning itself, while still in the sky, blazing and facing all directions (illuminating the horizon), and then descending into the Khmer kingdom, *dīpitadiīmukho 'gnir divaḥ patan śrījayavarmmarājye* (verse 2, line 4); and
- [3.] the declaration of his perception of the celestial in the terrestrial fire as a supernatural event (*atyadbhutam*) – a moment of revelation – with identification of its three significant elements (the descent from on high, the witness, the strike in Jayavarman's territory) and the subjective interpretation of these as a prediction of human destiny (verse 2, line 5).

The fall of the thunderbolt is instantaneous. The narrative lies in the sequence of Madhurendra's changing perceptions during and immediately following this instant.

The exclusiveness implied by his use of Sanskrit in preference to Khmer, suggesting that explanations of the founding and significance of the fire-cult were restricted to the classically educated élite, should come as no surprise. The chants recited during the oblations to the fire were Vedic or Sanskrit mantras (or a combination of both), and the terminology used in ancient Cambodia for the ritual equipment of this cult was Vedic. It was a duty of all Khmer kings, including the Buddhist Jayavarman, to perform regular fire-sacrifices (*homa*) in separately constructed shrines (Skt. *vahnyagāra*, *agnīśaraṇa*, *agnīśālā*, Khm. *vrah keralā homa*) for the good of the kingdom, and they employed royal fire-priests (*rājapotṛ*) and other specialised celebrants for this purpose. The direct participation of royalty in the practice of the fire-cult is succinctly illustrated in a contemporary praśasti of Jayavarman VII from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century Pràsàt Tor stele ( K. 692, verse 37, lines C.1–2), where it says in Sanskrit that *saptārcair vahnyagāre vidbisatatabuto yena mantrūḥ prayuktair . . . prahṛṣyaty atīva*, “the seven-flamed [Agni] rejoices greatly in the fire-shrine, perpetually receiving oblations

<sup>26</sup> “This Agni,” *ima[m] agniṃ*, – without the qualification *divaś . . . patantaṃ* – traditionally means “this fire, here on earth” when distinguished from *amum agnim*, “that Agni yonder, in the sky (= lightning).” This is precisely the distinction implied here (line 2) between the overlapping phrases *ima[m] agniṃ* and *divaś . . . agniṃ patantaṃ* (which in Khmer is *vrah vlen svargga*, the name of the god in line 1 being thus explained). What Madhurendra actually writes, literally translated, is “I have seen this Agni here, falling from the sky.” What he means by this, in clumsy paraphrase, is “This terrestrial fire (which you see here, in the fire-shrine) is the divine fire that I saw with my own eyes descending from heaven.” His emphasis on having witnessed this descent personally (line 3), as a real event, denies that he refers to a mystical connection between the divine and terrestrial fires. He is asserting their physical identity.

according to precept accompanied by the mantras chanted by him (*yena*, i.e. by Jayavarman himself).” It was a royal cult. But when this verse was being written in Cambodia in 1195 CE, the personal involvement of Indic rulers in the post-Vedic fire-cult was already a long-established tradition stretching back some 1200–1500 years to the time of the *Mahābhārata*, as indicated by a passage of similar content in the *Droṇaparvan*: “The king on rising goes to his bath-room, dresses, prays to the Sun, and then enters the Fire-chamber (*agnīśaraṇa*), where he honours Agni with kindlings and oblations accompanied with Mantras” (Hopkins 1915: 99). Knowledge of the *Mahābhārata* in preangkorian Cambodia was already comprehensive and exact when the earliest inscriptions were produced, which clearly indicates a continuity of the oral Sanskrit tradition between India and the Indochina peninsula in the preceding centuries<sup>27</sup>.

In view of the sacerdotal language on which the fire-cult relied for its efficacy, the language in which all knowledge of this post-Vedic tradition of fire-sacrifice had been preserved and transmitted for so long, and the perceived necessity of maintaining it unbroken in Indic polities, it was inevitable that Madhurendra, in explaining the origin of the fire-cult that he established in the royal temple of Bantāy Čhmār, should write his inscription in Sanskrit. What is historically interesting here is that this inherited use of the classical language was combined with the new convention, under Jayavarman, of identifying deities throughout his temples in Khmer. The result is the ‘hybrid’ Short Inscription N1, in which the name of the sacred fire is indeed stated first in its Khmer form, but has to be explained in Sanskrit, for as the inscription makes clear through Madhurendra’s internal discourse, the rationale behind the naming of Bantāy Čhmār’s sacred fire was entirely based on Indic reasoning, not Khmer<sup>28</sup>. The collision of these two separate conventions in a single Short Inscription occurs only in N1 at Bantāy Čhmār and this is one of the features that make this text unique.

Another, more specific aspect of its uniqueness is the inclusion of the date. One of the constant characteristics of Short Inscriptions – and this explains why some historians consider them uninteresting – is that they are never dated. The reason for this is that they were not foundation inscriptions recording

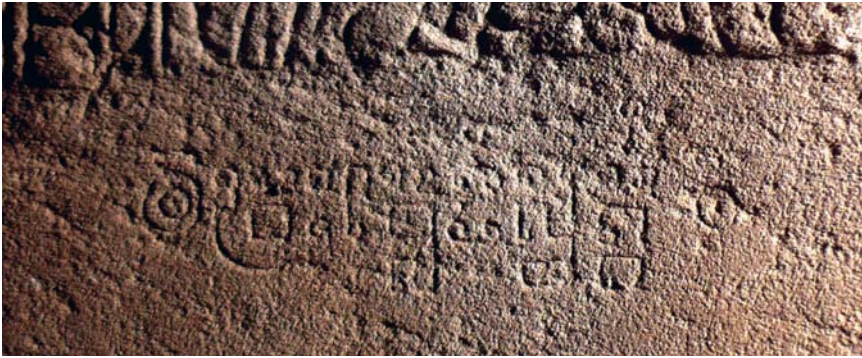
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<sup>27</sup> On exact knowledge of the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Bhagavadgītā*, as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, at the Kurukṣetra *tīrtha* on the Mekong near Vāt P’hu, where at the founding ceremony Devānīka performed a fire-sacrifice (*agnihotra*, *agnimakha*), see K. 365 (Vāt Luong Kāu: Coedès 1956: 215–219). On inscriptions of the 6<sup>th</sup> century Śaka recording the deposition in preangkorian temples of manuscripts of the entire *Mahābhārata*, and of individual chapters from it, and their continuous daily recitation (*aśeṣaṃ bhārata[m] . . . akṛtāmabam acchedyāṃ . . . ca tadvacanāsthitam; saṃbhavaṃpustaka*), see Vāl Kantél K. 359 and Prāsāt Prāh Thāt K. 109, the latter probably to be dated 577 Śaka / 655 CE (Barth and Bergaigne 1885 / 1893: 28–31, Coedès 1911: 393–394, Coedès 1953: 41–42).

<sup>28</sup> The situation is different in K. 227. There, the six-line Short Inscription at the top, written in Khmer and naming the posthumous forms of the slain officers, is explained in the long narrative commentary not in Sanskrit but in Khmer, because the text refers to a Khmer immortalisation cult which, like the fire-cult in N1, requires its rationale to be expressed in its own language.

the establishment of sacred statues<sup>29</sup>, but signs or markers, physically locating the deities in the temple structure and at the same time ranking them in a conceptual hierarchy by their Khmer titles. The date on which the named statues were consecrated was not required information in a Short Inscription, because it would eventually be subsumed in the date of Jayavarman's consecration of the whole temple with all its deities, and that information was reserved for the Sanskrit foundation texts on the corner stelae. The king did not claim, however, to have established the sacred fire, which was the province of the ascetics (Skt. *tapasvin*, Khm. *tapasvī*) and their chief priest. As we have seen, fire-shrines differed from temples in their ritual function, in their architecture, in their orientation, and in being regarded as independent foundations. As such, their establishment and that of the fire which they housed was recorded and dated in their own separate foundation texts written by the fire-priest himself. The presence of the date in Madhurendra's text is therefore another indicator of its hybrid character as a Short Inscription which is simultaneously a Foundation Inscription.

The inscription Maxwell N2 at Bantāy Čhmār (Figure 11) appears on the left-hand (north) door pillar of the outer western entrance to the fire-shrine in the southeast corner of the central complex (structure 15). Unlike the building on which inscription N1 was engraved, this shrine has a “face-tower”, a *śikḥara*



**Figure 11.** BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 1 (Central complex): Southeast quadrant: Face-tower 15: Outer west door: North door-pillar: Inscription N2. The text reads © vrah vlea svargga ©. Compare Figures 5 and 6. [Photograph by AIS P1110878, 05-03-2010]

<sup>29</sup> In this respect K. 227 at Bantāy Čhmār might appear to be the sole exception. But it is not an exception. Its references, undated, to the conferral of titles and the establishment of images of the four Sañjaks (*pre / prasāda . . . oy nāma aṅṅteñ sthāpanā riṅpa*, lines 14 and 29) form part of the historical narratives in the commentary, not of the Short Inscription itself in lines 1–6. As in Prāḥ Khān at Angkor, it would have been the Sanskrit foundation texts engraved on stelae that officially recorded and dated the king's establishment of these statues in the east complex (*pratiṣṭhītās tena pūrvasyān diśī*), while the Khmer Short Inscription carved on the structure concerned indicated their exact location inside that complex (compare the Prāḥ Khān stele inscription K. 908, verses 34–36, and the corresponding Short Inscription, Coedès E1; see Maxwell 2007 [2]: 32–34). K. 227 is exceptional only in that it records the reason for deifying the persons represented by the statues, namely death in defence of royalty. It seems to me that lines 14 and 29 in the commentary of K. 227 are records of the royal decisions or orders to erect the Sañjaks' statues, not confirmations that this had been done. N1, on the other hand, is a truly exceptional Jayavarman VII inscription because it confirms the foundation of a sacred fire by its priest, the only Short Inscription to do so.



**Figure 12.** BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 1 (Central complex): Southeast quadrant: Structure 15: The face-tower, seen from the southwest. Inscription N2 (☉ vrah vleiṅ svargga ☉) is engraved in the doorway beneath the western face on the left. The inscription indicates that, in addition to the ventilated fire-shrine in the east (structure 45), face-towers were used for housing the same sacred fire in the central and western complexes (structures 15 and 64). See Figure 11. [Photograph by AIS P1090245, 03-07-2009]

with a colossal face in each of the cardinal directions below the summit (Figure 12), of the same general type as those for which the Bāyon towers and the gates of Ankor Thom are famous. Its one-line inscription names the same Khmer deity as that in N1: *vrah vleiṅ svargga*, in this case without explanation. Although structure 15 with inscription N2 was the fire-shrine for the central sanctuary (structures 1-2-3), there are good reasons for thinking that it was not the principal fire-shrine of Bantāy Čhmār. It seems to me that structure 45 in the east complex was specially built to play this role, serving the central and western complexes as well as the eastern. This is because it alone was provided with a dated explanatory inscription in Sanskrit, because of its location in the southeast corner of the triple complex as a whole (see Figure 13), and because of its typical fire-shrine architecture (it is the only building of this type in the entire temple, see Figure 15 [C]).<sup>30</sup> The portability of fire was an important ritual factor even in the sacrificial enclosure of Vedic times (second millennium BCE), the fire being maintained permanently at one hearth, the *gārbapatya*, from which burning brands were carried to ignite the other two, the *ābavanīya* and *dakṣiṇa* (Macdonell 1897: 95). In the post-Vedic age portable fires remained an essential adjunct to Khmer Hindu and Buddhist ritual,

<sup>30</sup> The southeast face-tower 15, with its *maṅḍapa* on the eastern side, was the counterpart of structure 20 in the northeast quadrant of the central complex. That is, it was planned as an integral component in the symmetry of that complex, not distinguished as a stand-alone building like structure 45 in the east. Its use as a fire-shrine (inscription N2) therefore appears to have been a functional adaptation. Face-tower 64, with its *maṅḍapa* projection on the west, was clearly designed to fit exactly into the southeast angle of the western complex and has no counterpart in the northeast corner. In other words, this face-tower appears to have been planned

being carried in special containers on palanquins across the country from one temple to another. The inscriptions, architecture and layout of the ritual centre at Bantāy Čhmār indicate that, in an adaptation of the Vedic model (which provided a ritually unifying factor for the triple complex at the heart of Bantāy Čhmār, cf. footnote 32), the home of the sacred fire in that temple was structure 45, whence it was carried to face-towers 15 and 64 to ignite the fires required in the centre and west complexes. The name and definition that Madhurendra gave to the sacred fire in his eastern inscription (N1) therefore applied also to those kindled in the central complex (inscription N2) and in the west, where logically it must have been kept in face-tower 64.

Finally in connection with the fire-cult at Bantāy Čhmār, we know from the famous 10<sup>th</sup>-century Vāt Sithor inscription (K. 111, Coedès 1954) of the learned *ācārya*, Kīrtipaṇḍita, that in Buddhist establishments under the administration of Jayavarman V the priest worth his fee was one who – adept at the *hṛnmudrās* and *mantras* and understanding the esoteric significance of the *ghaṇṭā* and *vajra*<sup>31</sup> – was also skilled in the practice of the ancient fire-cult (*homakarmmaṇi kovidaḥ . . . dakṣiṇīyaḥ purohitaḥ*, verse 69). *Homa* rituals were and are widely performed as part of esoteric Buddhist practice, having an apotropaic function to ward off or destroy negative influences and assist in achieving particular aims. Contemporary inscriptions do not

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as the western fire-shrine following the adaptation of face-tower 15 to serve this function at the centre. Structure 45 in the east has no face-tower because it was destined from the start to be the principal fire-shrine and is therefore of traditional design with a vaulted barrel-roof, no ceiling, and ventilation slits (*vātāyana*) at the top of the walls. In this developmental process along the east–west axis of the site (starting from structure 45, the original fire-shrine, proceeding to 15, which was a face-tower adapted for use as a fire-shrine, and ending with 64, which was a fire-shrine designed as a face-tower), one can see how functionality led to functional adaptation and this in turn to the creation of new architectural types (see Figure 15, [C]–[B]–[A]). Thus the concept of a four-faced tower serving as a fire-shrine was evidently invented at Bantāy Čhmār – cf. *dīpita-dīnmukho 'gnir*, “Agni facing in all directions, blazing” in inscription N1, line 4; compare *R̥gveda* 1.97.5,6, *pra yad agneḥ sahasvato viśvato yanti bhānavāḥ . . . tvam hi viśvatomukha viśvataḥ paribhūr asi*, “As rays of light go forth in all directions from mighty Agni . . . For you [Agni], who face in all directions, protect in all directions”). This invention took place during the construction process, a development consistent with the rapid architectural transformations that Jayavarman’s temples represent, and with his drive to incorporate all cults under a universally valid exterior.

<sup>31</sup> The word in the text is *bajra-ghaṇṭā-rahasya-jño*, in which that which is secret or esoteric (*rahasya*) is the Yogācāra (Vijñānavādin) understanding of the symbolism of *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* (thunderbolt and thunderbolt-bell, manipulated simultaneously by the priest in Buddhist ritual). For examples of these bronze ritual objects from the Buddhist context of Jayavarman VII’s time, from Čikrèṅ and Moṅkolbórcéi, see Lobo 2006: 222–223. The *hṛnmudrās* and *mantras* mentioned were the “heart” (*hṛt-*, in sandhi with *mudrā* becoming *hṛm-*) gestures and syllables invoking Mahāyāna deities for purposes of visualisation, self-identification, and dismissal. The supreme mantra in the Yogācāra system of the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* was *oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*, mentioned for the first time in that sūtra, which Boisselier (1965: 81) considered to have been known in Cambodia at least since 970 CE on the basis of the Lokeśvara-in-Avīci invocation of K. 417 (Čikrèṅ). The Sanskrit texts that Kīrtipaṇḍita himself brought into Cambodia and taught in his establishments in the tenth century were Yogācāra scriptures with their commentaries (*śāstraṃ madhyavibhāgādyam, tattvasatīgrahatīkāditantra[m]*), and their doctrines of the void (*nairātmya*) and subjectivity or mind-only (*cittamātra*) are said to have

state any specifically Buddhist purposes for the enactment of the fire ritual in the temples of Jayavarman VII. It is perhaps difficult to imagine that in the fire-shrines of Bantāy Čhmār the *homa* rite was uninfluenced by the Buddhist esotericism that Kīrtipaṇḍita had indicated in his K. 111 inscription as far back as the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Madhurendra, writing in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, does indeed connect the arrival of the Buddha Vīraśakti with the appearance of Fire from the sky. However this simultaneity is not made to imply an intrinsic connection between the Sugata and Agni, but to show that both deities entered the temple at the same time.<sup>32</sup> The Buddha and the Fire are clearly presented as distinct and separate deities, coexisting in one temple but not identified or syncretised with each other except, I presume, at the highest metanarrative level of the face-towers. This perception of Buddha-cult and Fire-cult as parallel (not intersecting) powers explains why

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shone in him like the sun ( K. 111, verses 27–29). The *Karaṇḍavyūha* (for recent overviews see Mette 1997, Studholme 2002), “the fundamental source for the evolution of the legend of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the *Maṇipadme* formula” (Wright 1998), has been demonstrated to have mythological and iconographical connections with the originally eight large Lokeśvara reliefs on the west wall (direction of the Tathāgata Amitābha) of the third enclosure at Bantāy Čhmār (Boisselier 1965). It was in an expanding and assimilating Mahāyāna context of this kind, in which the Avalokiteśvara / Lokeśvara cult played a leading role, but alongside Khmer and Hindu rituals and belief systems, that Madhurendra established the fire-cult at Bantāy Čhmār in 1216 CE. Like the ideal purohita of K. 111, he was no doubt fully conversant with the philosophy and ritual practices of esoteric Buddhism (illustrated by the Lokeśvara reliefs), but his immediate sphere of competence concerned the more ancient rites of the sacred fire in which he was specialised.

<sup>32</sup> I understand this to signify that both Buddhism and the Fire-cult were made operational in Prāsāt Bantāy Čhmār in 1216 CE, although neither the Short Inscriptions nor the royal Foundation Inscriptions were complete. If, as one might justifiably suspect, there was a significant connection between the arrival in Bantāy Čhmār of Vīraśakti-Sugata, “The Buddha Imbued with the Power of Heroes”, and the hero-cult of the four Sañjaks in the shrines of the east complex ( K. 227 describes in effect a *caturvyūha* of four idealised *vīras* centred on a single royal figure, a concept analogous to the deployment of the four heroic forms of Vāsudeva in Pāñcarātra theology), then that Khmer memorial cult must also have been operational at the same date – cf. below, Note V. Since the surviving Short Inscriptions of the central complex chiefly concern Kamrateñ Jagat and Vraḥ Kanloñ Kamrateñ Añ deities similarly representing deceased / historical individuals, we can assume that those immortalisation cults were active at that time as well. It seems to me that the concern at Bantāy Čhmār to demonstrate the buddhification of deified individuals and of non-Buddhist deities would also have led to the early activation of the cults in the west complex.

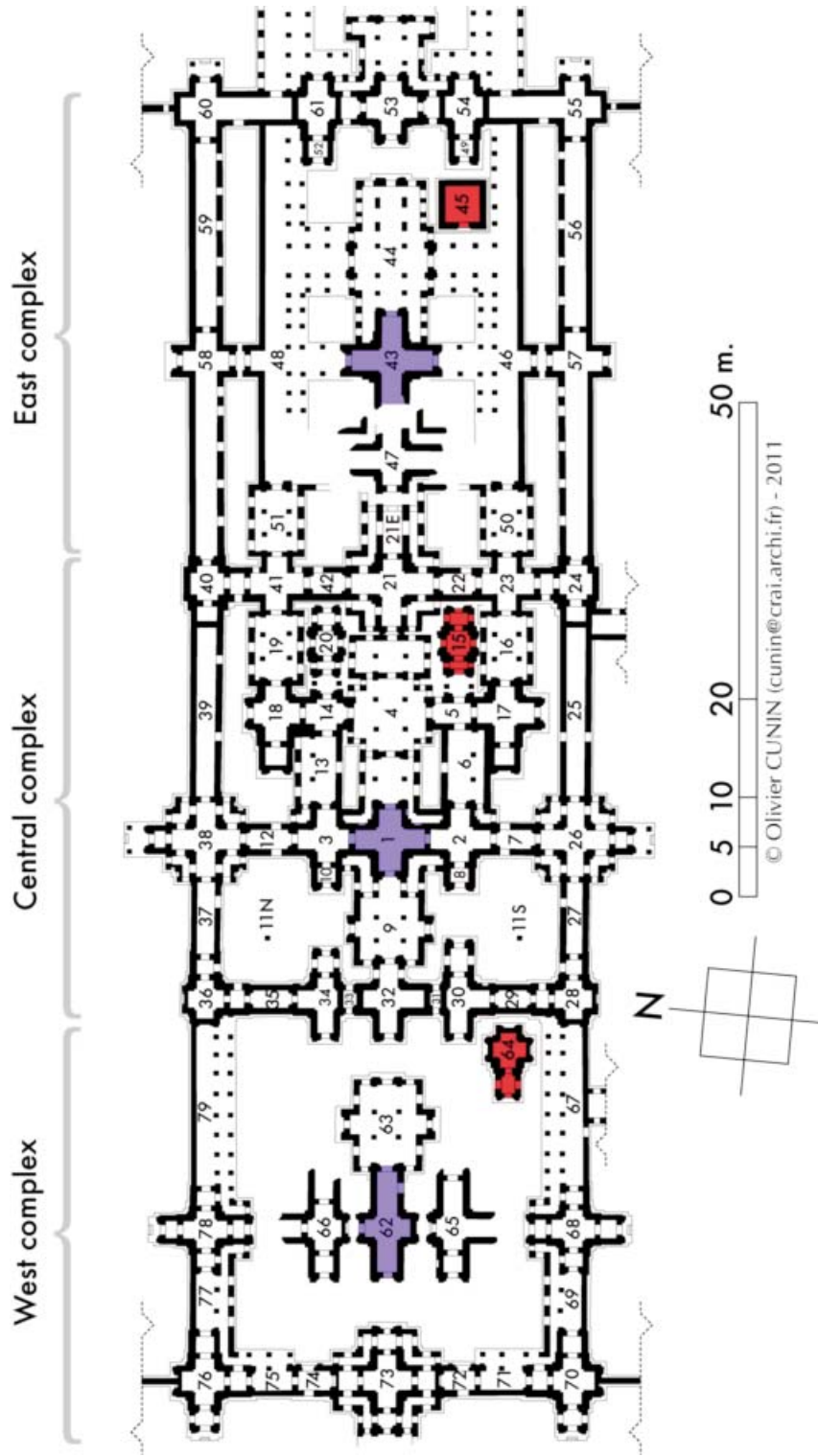
The epigraphic evidence for the existence of these cults along with the Sacred Fire in 1216, and for the presentation of royal gifts to their deities in 1217 (see below, Note VI), coupled with the unfinished state of the foundation stelae, suggest that the three inner enclosures of Bantāy Čhmār were just beginning to function as a unified temple at the time of Madhurendra’s inscription. One of the chief unifying factors in this religious complex was the constant presence of the sacred fire along its east–west axis, another was the erection of face-towers in the central, east, west, north and south complexes. These two factors were combined in the central and western fire-shrines (structures 15 and 64).



there is no sign of Buddhist influence in Madhurendra's N1 text.<sup>33</sup> In this inscription Vedic conceptions, including Agni as the benevolent friend of man and giver of material rewards, are related not to Buddhism but to a direct revelation of the fire-god to his own priest. The fire-cult, always conscious of its Vedic origin, preserves its independence. The presence of the sacred fire in a Buddhist temple of Jayavarman VII, some 250 years after Kīrtipaṇḍita, was nothing new, nor was it in religious terms anachronistic or unorthodox, and certainly it was not redundant, for as Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga it was raised to especial prominence at Bantāy Čhmār, the cult being performed in its own separate shrines throughout the inner enclosure (Figures 13–15 [A], [B], [C]). Moreover its range and relevance were extended far beyond the temple itself, the *upakāryā* fire-house (structure 178, Figure 15 [D]), located on the same east–west axis but positioned in the east of the outer enclosure, providing the interface between these inner fire-shrines and the external fire-houses strung out along the highways (*adbvasu*) traversing the Northwest. The road network and the mobility of the sacred fire made the symbolism of the multifaced Agni, both *viśvatomukha* and *viśvataḥ paribhū* (facing all sides, encompassing from all sides), stemming from the *Rgveda* and still reflected in the face-towers of Jayavarman VII and Madhurendra's inscription, into an easily disseminated proclamation of the political will to defend and protect the territory.

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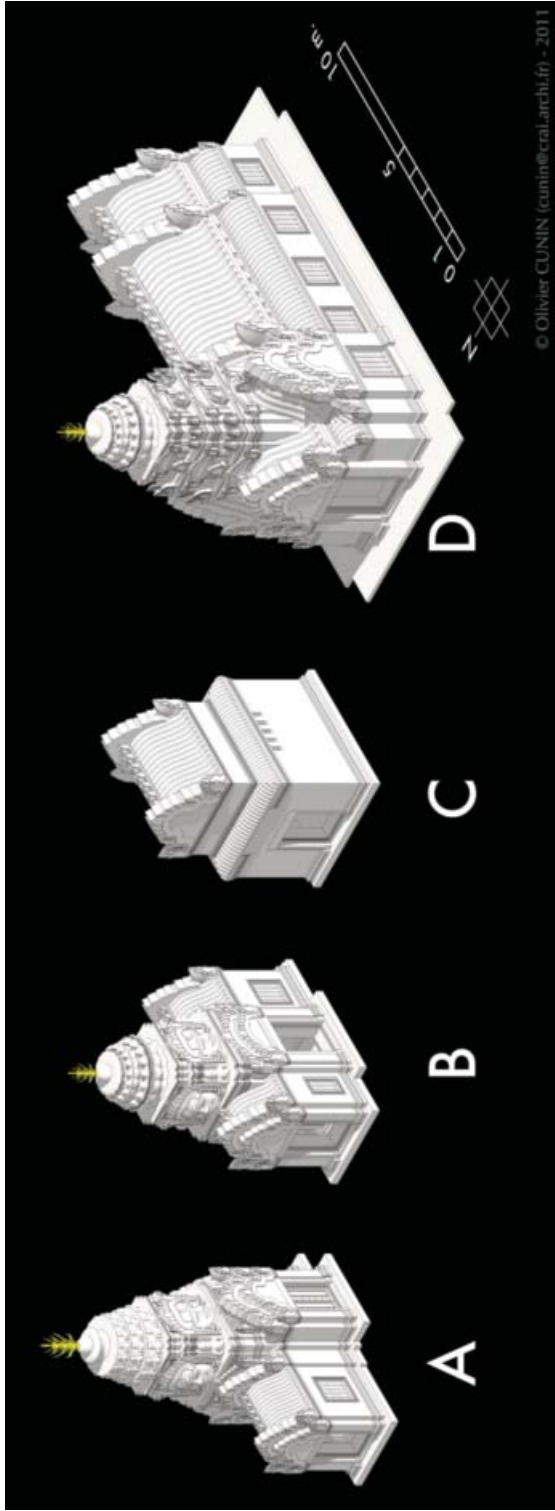
<sup>33</sup> Nor in the surviving iconography of the fire-shrine on which this text is engraved. The small seated figure depicted at the centre of the lintel of structure 45 is not a Buddha surrounded by flames, but an unidentified sage-like figure surrounded by foliage. The possibility that the large relief panel on the west fronton above the lintel may represent, not Rāvaṇa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (as proposed by Roveda 2005: 443), but multiheaded Agni (the *dīpatadīṁmukho [a]gnir* of inscription N1, line 4), was discussed in my Annual AIS Report to the UNESCO-ICC in 2010, pages 10–11 and 26–28, with photographs 2.1–2.2 and 6.1–6.6, of which photograph 6.3 is a digital restoration of the proposed Agni figure. Whatever its identity, this prominent image is surrounded by bearded *tapasvins* seated with their hands in *namaskāramudrā* and contains no Buddhist symbolism whatever. Note that Roveda misinterprets the overdoor relief, located below this multiheaded image and directly above the lintel on the west front, as “Buddha in meditation between Brahma and Vishnu,” and incorrectly assigns it to the east pediment. The accompanying illustration (Roveda 2005: 10.804) shows only a small part of the relief. The full scene, severely eroded, represents a seated bearded figure on the left, flanked by six standards, with two figures kneeling in attitudes of respect in front of him, above a row of bearded ascetics seated with their hands in *namaskāramudrā*. Contrary to Roveda's interpretation, this is not a scene centred on the Buddha.



**Figure 13.** BANTEAY CHHMAR: Enclosure 2: Plan of the three main complexes. The central temple in each complex is shown in blue, the related shrine for the sacred fire in red. The identification of the fire-shrines in the east and centre is certain because they are inscribed. The southeast face-tower in the west complex was almost certainly the third fire-shrine, but this remains a hypothesis because, although a cartouche was prepared, the inscription was not engraved in it. [Graphic by courtesy of Olivier Cunin]



**Figure 14.** BANTEAY CHMAR: Axonometric restitution of the three main complexes (partial view from the southeast). The shrines of the sacred fire in the eastern and central complexes, identified by inscriptions, are shown in red. Face-tower 64, hypothetically the fire-shrine of the western complex, contains a cartouche without inscription. Note the close proximity of structures 44 and 45 containing the exceptional inscriptions K. 227 and N1. [3D reconstruction (2<sup>nd</sup> version, January 2011) by courtesy of Olivier Cunin]



**Figure 15.** B-ANTEAY CHHMAR: The four fire-shrines. These structures are illustrated in west-to-east sequence, all to the same scale, and viewed uniformly from the southwest.

[A] = Face-tower 64 in the west complex, [B] = Face-tower 15 in the central complex, [C] = Structure 45 in the east complex, [D] = Structure 178 in the 4<sup>th</sup> enclosure, east front, north side of the approach road. Building [C], dated 1216 CE (inscription N1), was the principal shrine for the sacred fire. [B] was a conventional east-facing shrine with four doors and a face-tower, converted to use as a fire-shrine (inscription N2). [A] was a west-facing shrine with a face-tower expressly designed to serve as a fire-shrine. Building [D], in the outer enclosure, was the fire-house (vahnigṛha) of the final staging post (upakāryā) for portable fires arriving at Banteay Chhmar from other temples, and conversely also the assembly point for departing fires. Cf. above, footnote 6, and Maxwell 2007 [2]: 40-45, 84-85. [3D reconstructions (3<sup>rd</sup> version, April 2011) by courtesy of Olivier Cunin.]

(IV) ŚRĪ-MADHURENDRASŪRI

The author’s Sanskrit name, Madhurendra (*madhura\_indra*), variant forms of which are found in Indian texts (Mathureśa, Mathurānātha), means “Lord of Mathurā”, which is an epithet of Kṛṣṇa, famed as the only full incarnation (*pūrṇāvatāra*) of Viṣṇu. Mathurā (Madhura, Madhurā, Madhupurī, *Methora*, *Madoura*<sup>34</sup>) on the Yamunā, eighty kilometres southeast of Delhi, remains famous to this day as Kṛṣṇa’s birthplace and many of his legendary youthful exploits took place there, in the Yamunā itself, or across the river in Vṛndāvana. In Cambodia Kṛṣṇa was depicted in the reliefs of Angkor Wat and, as Adrivāha (= Govardhanadhara, Upholder of Mount Govardhana), was celebrated in preangkorian statuary as early as the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century (Phnom Dà, National Museum no. Ka 1641) and was still being worshipped in shrines, and depicted in vigorous reliefs, six hundred years later in the Buddhist temples of Jayavarman VII (Maxwell 2007 [1]: 126, 134, inscription O10; Roveda 2005: 87, 4.2.56–57). The inscriptions of the temple in front of Wat Prāḥ Ēinkosē in Siem Reap speak of a man of the tenth century named Divākara**bhāṭṭa**, married to the princess Indralakṣmī (younger sister of Jayavarman V), who installed images of Viṣṇu and Bhagavatī there. Concerning him the Sanskrit of the Ēinkosē stele ( K. 263, lines 53–60) speaks of Mathurā as a place “where the words of the *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Sāmaveda* are recited by thirty-six thousand brahmins, where Kṛṣṇa, who destroyed the black serpent and slew the families of the sons of Aditi, played in his youth – there indeed, on the delightful Kāṁdī (Yamunā), was this eminent man of fine renown named Divākara the Bhaṭṭa (learned brahmin) born.” It is very evident that the Madhurendra of Bantāy Čhmār was likewise a learned brahmin (the suffix to his name, *sūri*, meaning “learned man” or “sage”), and it is not impossible that he or his ancestors also originated in Mathurā, as his name itself suggests. As Dagens remarks (2003: 93), the highest dignitaries in the religious establishment were selected from brahmins of rank who might be connected to the Khmer royal family and who were often related to a lineage of Indian origin.

The name was not unusual in ancient Cambodia. It occurs, for example, in an 11<sup>th</sup>-century inscription on the south doorframe of the temple of Jayakṣetra at Wat Bāsēt ( K. 205, verses 12–17), where a paṇḍita Madhurendra is mentioned as brother-in-law of a Chief Artisan (*śilpīndra*) having the royally-conferred title of Viśvakarman in a family belonging, by written order of the king, to the “celebrated ‘caste’ (*varṇa*) of the golden skull-cups” (*prathite varṇe hemakaraṅke*). Less than two centuries later, in the Bāyon of Jayavarman VII, a temple contemporary with Bantāy Čhmār, one of the Short Inscriptions ( K. 293, Bāyon inscription 7 in *vraḥ kuṭi*”M” in the northeast quadrant of the first level) even lists a Kamrateñ Jagat deity named Śrī-Madhurendreśvara (*madhurendra\_śvara*) from Stuk Thkū in the elevated company of such deities as Jayamañgalārthacūḍāmani of Kṣac (a toponym that Jacques 2007: 104 relates hypothetically to Bantāy Čhmār), Tribhuvanadeva, Śākyaśiṃha of Tralyañ, and one of the Bhaiṣajyagurus or ‘Medicine Buddhas’. Later still, toward the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, an inscription at Bantāy Srēi ( K. 569), in Khmer,

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<sup>34</sup> Law 1954: 106–110.

mentions a Royal Paṇḍit (*rājapaṇḍita*) named Madhurendra, of the family of the *vraḥ guru* Yajñavarāha, holding office in the reign of Parameśvarapada, which is the posthumous title of Jayavarman VIII (1243 or 1270–1295 CE – on new dates proposed for Jayavarman VIII, see Jacques 2007: 41). This Madhurendrasūri is more famously known from another Bantāy Srēi inscription (K. 568), in Sanskrit, in which it is said that he continued to become a minister (*mantrin*) and favourite of the successor to Jayavarman VIII, namely Śrī-Śrīndravarman (1295–1307 CE) at Angkor. In Majumdar’s devanāgarī transcription (1953: 540), verses 24 and 25 of this Bantāy Srēi inscription state:

*śrīdhṛtjayavanīpater ativalabhaś śrīśrīndrādhipasya dbaraṇīndraśirodhṛtāṅghreḥ /*  
*mantri narendraguruyajñavarāhadhīmadvaśyo mahājanamato madhurendrasūriḥ // 24*  
*yasyānujāyā nṛpabboginīnam agryā sutā pūrṇṇasudhāmśūsuddhā /*  
*śrīsūryalakṣmīr hṛdayābhirāmā śrīśrīndravarmmāvanīpālabbarttuḥ // 25*

This we can translate as: “Madhurendrasūri, esteemed as an eminent man, obedient to the wisdom of the royal guru Yajñavarāha, is a minister and very dear to His Majesty, King Śrī-Śrīndra[varman], whose foot is placed on the heads of kings. The eldest daughter of his (Madhurendrasūri’s) sister, Sūryalakṣmī, pure as the full moon, beautiful at heart, is the favourite wife of King Śrī-Śrīndravarman.” The Madhurendrasūri of Bantāy Čhmār inscription N1 cannot be identified with the man of exactly the same name in these Bantāy Srēi texts – that is, as a man of the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century – because Madhurendra lived under a previous king in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, as he states clearly in lines 3 and 4 of N1. But in view of the several highly-placed individuals bearing the name (or title) of Madhurendra[sūri] between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, as outlined above, it is highly probable that he held a royal appointment (as *rājapotr*, a position which entailed administrative and political as well as religious duties) under Jayavarman VII, which would explain the innovative form and authoritative tone of his personal inscription at Bantāy Čhmār.

## (V) ŚRĪ-VĪRĀŚAKTI

The subject around which Madhurendra’s text revolves in both verses is, as in the Khmer invocation, “The Sacred Fire from Heaven” (*vraḥ vleṇ svargga*), of which the Sanskrit formulation is clearly a translation (in verse 1 *divaś . . . agniṃ patantaṃ*, accusative, and in verse 2 [*a*]gnir divaḥ patan, nominative), meaning literally “The Fire Descending from Heaven”. His text states emphatically that he personally saw (*so ’ham adrakṣam*) the Sacred Fire descending, and that he saw it “here” (*atra*), that is, in Prāsāt Bantāy Čhmār, on the occasion of the arrival of Śrī-Vīraśakti. This must refer to a Sugata (Buddha) of that name, who is also mentioned in the Jayavarman VII stele inscriptions of Tà Prohm and Prāḥ Khàn in Angkor (dated 1186 and 1191 CE respectively). Every year during the spring festival, Vīraśakti – as an image, or possibly in the form of a portable fire – along with other gods was carried in a triple *pradakṣiṇa* around Tà

Prohm, and the foundation inscription of Prāḥ Khān mentions Śrī-Vīraśakti-Sugata along with the Jayabuddhamahānāthas of twenty-five provinces and the Buddha of Vīmāya (Phimai) in its sections on the provincial temples of Jayavarman VII and the gods he consecrated outside of Angkor ( K. 273: verse 85, line C26; K. 908: verses 112, 159, lines C64, D39). During the reign of Jayavarman VII, the Śrī-Vīraśakti whose arrival at Bantāy Čhmār is mentioned by Madhurendra was therefore a Buddhist deity of major importance, whose representative image was regularly carried to other temples, including Bantāy Čhmār and the two great temples in Angkor. The arrival of this Buddha at Bantāy Čhmār was probably the signal for the commencement of the festival, for in K. 273, the stele inscription of Tà Prohm, we read in verses 83–84 concerning the festival there:

*caitraṣṭamyās samārabhya yāvat tatpūrṇamitībhīḥ  
suvasantotsavavidhir vaṃśārāmajināgame  
varṣe varṣe kṛtas . . .*

“At the coming of the Buddha of Vaṃśārāma, the ceremony of the spring festival is held every year, starting from the eighth day of Caitra up until the full-moon day of that [same month] . . .” The expression *śrīvīraśaktyāgamana* (*śrī-vīraśakty-āgamana*, instrumental with *samakālam*, “at the same time as”) in line 3 of Madhurendra’s little inscription at Bantāy Čhmār emulates the expression *vaṃśārāmajināgame* (*vaṃśārāma-jina-āgama*, locative of time) in line 165 of the grand praśasti composed by Jayavarman VII’s son Sūryakumāra for the stele of Tà Prohm. Madhurendra uses *āgamana* instead of *āgama*, both words in this context meaning “coming, approach, arrival”<sup>35</sup> and signifying the ceremonial reception of a famous Buddha from a distant shrine.

Vaṃśārāma (in Khmer Chpā Ransi,<sup>36</sup> also Chpār Ransi, in Pāli Veļuvana), “Bamboo Grove”, although used as a local toponym (*vaṃśārāme*, locative), is presumably a reference to King Bimbisāra’s famous gift to the historical Buddha of such a parkland near the capital of Magadha, Girivraja-Rājagṛha (modern Rajgir, Bihar), in which the Pāli texts locate many activities of the Buddha, with its adjacent mountains Ratnagiri and Gṛdhra-kūṭa, which in subsequent Mahāyāna Sanskrit tradition became the site of the teaching of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* or Lotus Sūtra. The location of the Cambodian Vaṃśārāma, home temple of the Jina (Buddha) named in the Tà Prohm inscription, is not known. The home of the Buddha Śrī-Vīraśakti mentioned by Madhurendra – from which this deity was carried to Angkor and Bantāy Čhmār – has however been identified. It was the Buddhist establishment at Vāt Nokor / Vatt Nagar (Kompong Cham). The temple of Jayavarman VII erected there was originally named Jayavīraśaktinagara in Sanskrit, to judge by the bilingual stele ( K. 82) from that site, dated 1488 Śaka (1566 CE). In this inscription, the Theravāda conversion of Jayavarman’s Mahāyāna temple built some 350 years earlier (*jayabīraśaktinagaram*

<sup>35</sup> Not “tradition”, as Coedès (1906: 77) at first translated *āgama* in this passage; his translation of Vaṃśārāma (“joie des familles”) was also a misunderstanding.

<sup>36</sup> In K. 254 (Irapāñ Dón Ón, 1129 CE), which seems to be the only inscription to give both the Khmer name and its Sanskrit equivalent as *vaṃśārāma* (verse 30, line c.7), the Khmer form is written *chpā ransi* (lines d.28–29).

*nāme purāṇarāje ramme*, “the delightful ancient kingdom named Jaya-Birasakti-Nagara” in line 9 of the Pāli text) is named Jaiyabirasākti in Khmer (see Filliozat 1969: 99–106 and the estampages illustrated below, Figure 16). These 16<sup>th</sup>-century Pāli and Khmer versions of the name clearly derive from an earlier Sanskrit form which can only have been Jaya-Vīraśakti-Nagara, in which the word *nagara* refers to the town originally incorporated within the greater confines (walled fourth enclosure, 422 x 375 metres) of the old Mahāyāna temple.

Further evidence of the Vīraśakti cult is provided by the only inscription on the north door-pillar of the south temple at Prāsāt Tà An ( K. 240) about 6.5 km. northeast of Kralāñ / Kralanh (Lajonquière no. 668, vol. 3, 321–322). It names a deity in Khmer *kamrateñ jagat śrījayavīraśakti-mahādeva*. This looks very like a Short Inscription text of Jayavarman VII (Jaya-Vīraśakti), and Coedès (1951:76–77), referring to the Tà Prohm and Prāḥ Khñ stela and indicating that the Prāsāt Tà An inscriptions are all Buddhist, dates it to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, as does Filliozat (1969: 102) on the basis of the script. The addition here of the title Mahādeva (= Śiva) to the name of Vīraśakti is to be accounted for (Filliozat 1969: 102–103) by the clothing of Śaiva concepts and terminology in terms of Mahāyāna Buddhism, in this case by regarding the *vīraśakti* and the Sugata Vīraśakti as “the buddhicised forms of the energy of Śiva as hero, and of the Buddha who possessed it”.<sup>37</sup> This Buddhist takeover of Śiva cults (and the Śaiva takeover of Buddhist cults) did not originate with Jayavarman VII, however, but was a long-standing tradition in Cambodia, going back to the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Maxwell 2007 [1]: 86–91). In view of the date and the local conjunction of Śaivism and Buddhism<sup>38</sup>, there is good reason to think that in Jayavarman’s time Prāsāt Tà An housed a cult of the same Vīraśakti who was enshrined at Vāt Nokor and who was carried from there to the temples of Angkor and thence – quite possibly by way of the Tà An temple at Kralāñ which is located halfway on the route to Sisophon – to Bantāy Čhmār.

<sup>37</sup> “[ . . . ] Jayavarman VII vénérât la Vīraśakti et le Vīraśaktisugata, formes bouddhisées de l’énergie de Śiva-Héros et du Buddha qui la possédait.”

<sup>38</sup> This practice of amalgamating Śiva with the Buddha not only began long before Jayavarman VII, it also outlasted him into the Theravāda of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Another inscription at Prasat Tà An ( K. 241), on the south door-pillar of the north temple, is dated (1189 Śaka = 1267 CE) and must be later than the undated Short Inscription K. 240 on the south temple. It names the Buddha installed on that date as Kamrateñ Jagat Śrī-Sugata-Māravjita, which suggests a Thai-style Theravāda image depicted in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Woodward 1997: 115, 122; but see Phuthorn Bhumadon 2006). Only some forty years after this, now in a clearly defined Theravāda monastic context, the same Śaiva epithet that had been attached to the name of Jayavīraśakti in K. 240, Mahādeva, was again added to the royal name of a Buddha image (Śrī-Śrīndra-Mahādeva in Khmer) erected by an *upāsikā* in 1308 CE by order of the king, Śrī-Śrīndravarman (Pāli Siri-Sirindavamma), as recorded in the bilingual stele inscription of Kôk Svây Ček in Angkor south of the West Baray: *1230 śaka ṣṭhāpaka vraḥ vuddha kamrateñ añ śrīśrīndramahādeva* ( K. 754, Khmer text, B.7–8). The priests of this Buddha-Śiva cult in the *nihāra* built at Śrī-Śrīndraratnagrāma (Pāli Siri-Sirindaratanaḡama), as it was then known, are termed in Pāli *yājaka* (verse 10) and its population of monks is spoken of collectively as *kamrateñ añ bhikṣusaṅgha* in Khmer (lines 9–10).





**Figure 16.** *Vāt Nokor*: Inscription K. 82: Extracts from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Pāli and Khmer texts naming the site. [Photographs: Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, 113.1, modified.]

Madhurendra's record of the arrival of this major Buddha at Bantāy Čhmār, which is of considerable historical interest for us (see below), for him was clearly an important official event but without significance as a portent susceptible to his personal interpretation. His apparent reason for mentioning it is to supplement the Śaka year 1138 which is given on the same line. The annual ceremony in which this Buddha and other important deities were carried around Jayavarman's temples was the spring festival (*vasantotsava*). At Angkor, this was celebrated in Phālguna (February–March) at Prāḥ Khān, while the Tà Prohm stele specifies the eighth day of Caitra (March–April) for the beginning of the festival there (on this subject see K. 273, verses 83-87; K. 908, verse 158; Maxwell 2007 [2]: 94-98). We do not have such explicit calendrical information from the Bantāy Čhmār stelae because their texts were never completed. At Bantāy Čhmār in Madhurendra's time, however, the mention of the arrival of Vīraśakti in 1138 Śaka would have enabled readers of his inscription to date precisely the event that he describes.

Such a lengthy method of recording the date in a brief inscription by reference to the arrival of this Buddha (*samakālam atra śrīvīraśaktiyāgamanena*, occupying one third of the syllables that the metre allowed him in the first verse) must have been chosen by Madhurendra for a specific purpose. It was not for religious or metrical reasons, since he was a fire-priest concerned with explaining his own fire-cult, not Buddhism, and a far more concise naming of the day and the month could easily have been fitted into the

metre. Evidently it served an important purpose in authenticating his text. The reference was a reminder that the spring festival was an officially coordinated event under Jayavarman VII, organised on prescribed days at specific temples throughout the kingdom, and that this synchronised parading of deities from all parts of the country affirmed the political as well as cultural cohesiveness of the national identity. When Vīraśakti – a Buddha whose image had been personally consecrated by Jayavarman VII ( K. 908, verse 112; Maxwell 2007 [2]: 79-80) – arrived at Bantāy Čhmàr, it was known to all that this Buddha had been brought from Vīraśaktinagara in the Southeast, on the Mekong south of the Great Lake, and had visited temples in the capital, principally Tà Prohm and Práḥ Khàn, dedicated to the parents of the king, before proceeding to the temple in the Northwest. By thus linking Bantāy Čhmàr into the nationwide festival of 1216, the new temple was given *de facto* functional status as of that year, which must have been Jayavarman’s urgent concern, even though it was not yet a fully operational temple *de jure*, since his new Sanskrit texts for the royal foundation stelae remained uninscribed. Meanwhile Madhurendra, by dating his vision in conjunction with (*samakālam*) the festival and explicitly mentioning king and kingdom in line 4, set a quasi-official seal on his explanation of Agni as the Khmer deity Vraḥ Vleñ Svarga revealed to him personally, and simultaneously dated his establishment of the temple’s sacred fire under that name.

The naming of Vīraśakti also serves as a marginal acknowledgement that the fire-cult at Bantāy Čhmàr, like the hero-cult of K. 227 (both non-Buddhist), was practised as part of the ritual functioning of a Mahāyāna temple. This is the only reference to Buddhism in inscription N1, just as the incidental mention of Maitreya Sarvajña in the Champā narrative is the only one in K. 227 (in the formulaic expression *tel [tal] mān vraḥ sarvajña*, “until the Omniscient deity appears”, line 24). Both of these references are used in their different contexts to express time (a particular day or an unknowably long duration respectively), not to introduce Buddhism as a topic, which lay beyond the competence both of the author of K. 227 and of the fire-priest.

Nevertheless, we are justified in suspecting that the arrival of Vīraśakti must have held a special significance for the author of N1. The facts discussed above do not satisfactorily explain why it should have been this Buddha in particular that was brought to Bantāy Čhmàr in 1216, nor why Madhurendra, in his distinctly non-Buddhist inscription, should link the manifestation of the celestial Agni with the arrival of this Buddhist deity. I cannot rule out the possibility that a new image of the Sugata Vīraśakti may have been permanently installed at Bantāy Čhmàr at the same time as the sacred fire (cf. above, footnote 32). The Tà Prohm stele ( K. 273) speaks only of visiting deities, led by Vīraśakti, circumambulating that temple on the full-moon day of Caitra. But the image of Vīraśakti mentioned by Madhurendrasūri later may have been brought to Bantāy Čhmàr for a more specific purpose, namely to buddhicise the hero-cult of the east complex, in the same way that the Buddha Jayamahānātha was installed in gopura 73 to buddhicise the Viṣṇu-cult of the west complex (Coedès 12 / Pottier 14, see above, section 2.B). The east complex, where Madhurendra inscribed his fire-shrine, was clearly his special domain, and the buddhicisation hypothesis provides a more definite religious-political reason for his naming of Vīraśakti in connection with it. It would also explain an architectural peculiarity of the east complex, namely the hypostyle hall

(structure 44) that was built directly on to the east front of the central face-tower (structure 43). We know from the placement and content of inscription K. 227 that the five cult-statues of the deified prince Śrīndrakumara and the four heroic Sañjaks were erected in that hall (the *vraḥ gr̥haratna* of the inscription). The contiguity of this hero-shrine (44) to the central tower (43) strongly suggests that that tower was the sanctuary in which a statue of Vīraśakti, embodiment of heroism as a Buddhist Pāramitā, was installed. If this theory is correct, the sacred fire named Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga in inscription N1 of structure 45 was established to ritually complement a Khmer cult and a Buddhist cult, focused respectively on the physical and spiritual manifestations of heroism (*vīra-śakti* as the *vīrya* of a Sañjak and as the *vīrya-pāramitā* of a Buddha) housed in the two separate but connected sanctuaries in the east. This would explain why the arrival of the Buddha Vīraśakti was relevant to Madhurendrasūri when he composed his Foundation Inscription (N1) for the sacred-fire shrine. Buddhism as the religion of state would thus have been used, yet again, to subsume and dominate a local cult, the cult of the transfigured dead, in this case offered exclusively to slain heroes. The essential individuality of these three cults was maintained by erecting a separate structure for the performance of each, while their combined operation was expressed architecturally through the interconnectedness of their shrines.<sup>39</sup> The Sañjak or Vīra cult of Bantāy Čhmār, with its legendary narratives of death in defence of the state ( K. 227), is of course the religious equivalent of the oath of allegiance texts of Sūryavarman I inscribed in the east gopura of the royal palace at Angkor ( K. 292; cf. above, footnote 14).

#### (VI) ŚRĪ-JAYAVARMAN

The use of the name Śrī-Jayavarman for Jayavarman VII, without any royal titles, as in line 4 of Madhurendra's inscription, is in no way unconventional. It occurs (sometimes with the suffix *-deva*, *-avanibhuj* etc.) in a number of dated Sanskrit inscriptions of the reign, for example in K. 273 Tà Prohm (1186 CE), K. 692 Pràsàt Tor (1189 or 1195), K. 908 Prāḥ Khàn (1191/92), K. 485 Phīmānākàs (after 1192), to which we can now add inscription N1 at Bantāy Čhmār (1216). While this short form was used in Sanskrit inscriptions, contemporary inscriptions in Khmer, not subject to the constraints of versification, used

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<sup>39</sup> See Figures 13 and 14, right: plan and reconstruction of the east complex. The central tower (structure 43) and the hypostyle hall (44) were directly interconnected on their shared east–west axis. The west (front) doorway of the fire-shrine 45, on which the text of N1 is inscribed, gave immediate access to both of these buildings through the south entrance to the pillared hall 44 and, more circuitously, by way of the southern roofed gallery. Since this article was written, Dr. Cunin informs me that his new researches reveal that the internal layout of structure 44, directly in front of the main tower in the east complex of the second enclosure, consisted of a square, pillared central area surrounded by four corner-aedicules with separate doorways. Such a layout would conform precisely to the "jewel-house" (*gr̥haratna*) with subsidiary shrines in the intermediate directions for the four Sañjaks as described in lines 1–6 of K. 227, which was inscribed on the south door pillar in the east entrance to structure 44. This finding confirms the localisation of the hero-cult in the east complex of Bantāy Čhmār, its very close spatial relationship to the central temple of that complex (tower 43), and the placement of the sacred-fire shrine (structure 45 with Madhurendrasūri's inscription N1) adjacent to the shrine of the hero pentad.

lengthier traditional titles such as *[vraḥ rāja] vraḥ pāda kamrateṅ aṅ śrījayavarmmadeva* (examples are K. 973 Prasat Hin K'ok Prasat [Buriram] in 1192 CE, K. 128 Saṃbór in 1204, K. 453 Pràsàt Lič in 1206)<sup>40</sup>. There is thus no reason to doubt that when Madhurendra refers to Śrī-Jayavarman in his Sanskrit text he means King Jayavarman. In employing this short title he is not departing from convention but adhering to it and so we cannot attach any special significance to his use of this form. As for the spelling of the king's name, *jayavarmma-*, as compounded here with *-rājye*, this is the result merely of an orthographic peculiarity of inscriptions, namely the doubling of consonants after *r-* (*-varmma* for *-varma*), and a Sanskrit rule by which nominal stems in *-an*, such as *varman*, drop the final *-n* when used before other words in compounds (*varma-* / *varmma-* for *varman-* / *varmman-*). The spelling of the king's name as Jayavarmma in the present context follows epigraphic convention and is correct Sanskrit, and is therefore also without any particular significance. These no doubt trivial points, included here in answer to particular queries, only go to confirm what was said above concerning Madhurendrasūri, that he was a conventional man of status and learning who was familiar with the major temple inscriptions of his time. The two points concerned do not suggest familiarity with the king nor do they indicate the use of Khmer nomenclature in a Sanskrit text. The Śaka date, in addition to the script and other external features of the inscription, proves of course that the Jayavarman to whom Madhurendra refers is Jayavarman VII.

At present, the latest date we have in association with this king – named as Śrī-Jayavarmma-deva – comes from an inscribed metal vase published by Jacques (2003: 416–424). Engraved on the eight facets of this object is the following Khmer text: *o 1139 / śaka vraḥ jaṃṃva[n] / vraḥ pāda kamra / teṅ aṅ / śrījayavarmmade / va kamrateṅ jaga / t śrītribhuva / navarmmeśvara*, “Sacred gift of His Majesty Śrī-Jayavarman [to] the god Śrī-Tribhuvanavarmeśvara in 1139 Śaka.” This date, equivalent to 1217 CE, is one year later than Madhurendra's inscription at Bantāy Čhmār (see below, Note VII). The deity to whom the king presented this vase has the same name, Tribhuvanavarmeśvara, as the personal god who was installed, along with two goddesses (Tribhuvanacūḍāmaṅī and Yaśorājacūḍāmaṅī, both styled *Vraḥ Kanloṅ Kamrateṅ Aṅ*), in the southeast tower of the central complex at Bantāy Čhmār, adjacent to its inscribed fire-shrine, as the recently discovered inscriptions N2 and N3 show (see above, Figures 3, 5, 11, 12). Another deity of exactly the same name, but accompanied by at least one different goddess, had been installed in *Prāḥ Khān* at Angkor twenty-five years earlier, as both the foundation stele and one of the Short Inscriptions of that

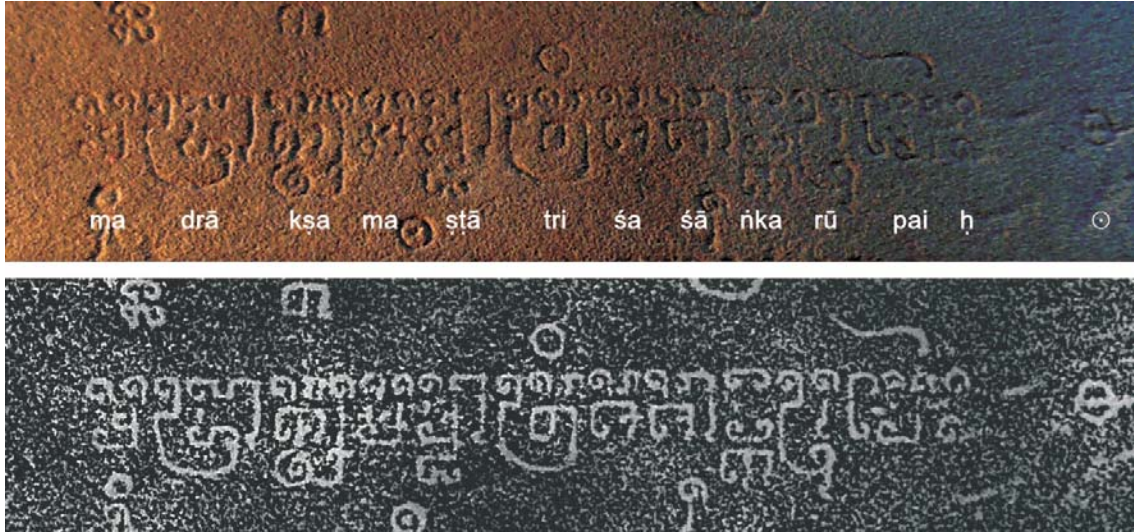
<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that Khmer inscriptions never used abbreviations. Two small gilt bronze triads (Lokeśvara–Buddha–Prajñāpāramitā), of Thai provenance and in *Bāyon* style, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (exhibits 44 and 45, nos. 031647 000085 and 031648 000086) are both inscribed on the pedestal of the central Buddha figure (stylistically similar to Woodward's cat. no. 25: 1997: 97–98), in Jayavarman VII script, with the text *o vraḥ śrījaya pratiṣṭhā* ◉, which I take to be the abbreviated form of *vraḥ [pāda kamrateṅ aṅ] śrī-jaya[varmmadeva] pratiṣṭhā*, “His Majesty Śrī-Jayavarman has established [it]”. The reason for shortening the text in this case was obviously the very limited space available on the narrow bases (the bronzes are only 22 and 23 cm high including pedestals). See Taipei 2003: 71–72. Cf. K. 945 (Coedès 1964: 123), also inscribed on a bronze from the Northwest (*Bāttamḃaṅ*).

temple prove ( K. 908: verse 36; Maxwell 2007 [1]: 126, 133 and 2007 [2]: 34–35). This led Jacques in his 2003 article (419 ff) and again in 2007 (40) to assume that the vase was for presentation to that Tribhuvanavarmeśvara in Prāḥ Khñ. However, since the dates on the vase and on Madhurendra’s fire-shrine are so close, it appears more likely that in 1217 CE the vase was intended for Bantāy Čhmār as a newly inaugurated temple where, only a year previously, the fire-shrines had been consecrated, and where the Buddha Vīraśakti had been received, as inscription N1 shows. The eastern ritual centre of Bantāy Čhmār thus having been set in operation in 1216, it is not surprising to find Jayavarman, in the following year, in the process of presenting the customary royal gifts, such as the inscribed vase, to the multitude of peripheral deities set up in the temple, among them the Tribhuvanavarmeśvara of inscription N3 in the central complex.

This situation obtained despite the fact that the foundation inscriptions on the corner stelae had scarcely been begun. The sudden abandonment of those foundation stelae at such a critical stage in the inauguration of Jayavarman’s second largest temple was presumably due to a combination of events: first the lightning striking the site as recorded by Madhurendra in 1216, closely followed by the death of the king in or shortly after 1217. His death or incapacity to rule at around that time is suggested by the facts that apart from N1 the only other dated stone inscriptions of the 13<sup>th</sup> century mentioning his name, K. 128 from Saṃbhór and K. 453 from Pràsàt Lič, cited above, are some ten years earlier than this (1204 and 1206 CE), and that after 1217, the next dated Cambodian inscription, from Pràsàt Tà An ( K. 241), does not appear until fifty years later in 1267 (certainly long after the death of Jayavarman) and consists of only two short lines in Khmer which make no mention of any king. After that there are no more dated inscriptions at all until the 14<sup>th</sup> century under Śrīndravarman, Śrīndrajayavarman and Jayavarmaparameśvara. In the absence of fresh epigraphic evidence linking the king to some later 13<sup>th</sup>-century date, Coedès’ surmise, half a century ago, of *circa* 1218 CE as the year of Jayavarman VII’s demise (Coedès 1964: 315), continues to stand the test of time, and it appears that the royal foundation texts of the corner stelae at both Añkor Thoṃ and Bantāy Čhmār remained unfinished because of this event.

## (VII) THE ŚAKA DATE

Madhurendra states that at Bantāy Čhmār (*atra* in line 2) he saw the fire-god descending from heaven into the kingdom of Jayavarman (*śrījayavarmmarāḡe*, line 4). This can only be a reference to Jayavarman VII in view of the Śaka date given in the fourth pāda of verse 1 (line 3, right-hand column). The text at that point reads [*m adrākeṣam*]aṣṭātriśaśāñkarīpañḥ (Figures 8, 9, 17). The compound is in the instrumental plural (standard abbreviation of expressions such as *śāke* [XXXX-]gañite, “in the Śaka [year] enumerated by [the figures XXXX]”) and clearly a typical word-code for numerals representing a year in the Śaka era, as is conventional in dated Sanskrit inscriptions. The word *aṣṭā* means eight, *tri* means the number 3, and both *śaśāñka* (“moon”) and *rīpa* (“form”) stand for 1. The date given, after applying the *vāmagatī* (reverse reading) rule, is therefore 1138 Śaka, that is, 1216 CE. This, the only date so far discovered at



**Figure 17.** BANTEAY CHMAR: Inscription N1: Detail: Line 3: 1<sup>st</sup> verse, 4<sup>th</sup> pada. Photograph and rubbing. The date reads *aṣṭātriśaśāṅkarūpaiḥ* = 1138 Śaka / 1216 CE. [Photograph and transcription by AIS P1110901, 05-03-2010. Rubbing by APSARA.]

Bantāy Čhmàr, places the N1 inscription very late in the reign of Jayavarman VII, some twenty-five years after the founding of Práḥ Khān (*vedenducandrariṭpair* = 1113 Śaka) and thirty years after that of Tà Prohm (*samūrttidynśaśāṅkarūpaiḥ* = 1108 Śaka).

This provides us with an approximate date for the completion of construction work on the east complex of Bantāy Čhmàr, for the programme of engraving the Short Inscriptions – which was terminated before it reached the free-standing structures in the west complex – and probably also for the commencement and abrupt abandonment of the royal Foundation Inscriptions on the stelae. On the basis of the legible epigraphic evidence, I suggest that the fire-cult was inaugurated in the east and central complexes in that year, at the same time as the Sañjak cult and that of the Buddha Vīraśakti in the the dual central sanctuary of the east complex, and that the peripheral shrines for other Buddhist deities (Prajñāpāramitā K. 696 and Mahānātha K. 226, in the west gopuras of the central and western complexes respectively), as well as those commemorating deceased persons (*rūpa, vraḥ rūpa*) and historical figures, were operating by the following year. At the same time the external iconography of the third enclosure shows the importance of the ritual worship of the cosmically active, all-subsuming Lokeśvara – depicted among the royal narrative reliefs – as he was conceived in Yogācāra mythological terms. Tantric deities must certainly have been known in this region between Angkor and Phimai, but the surviving epigraphy and iconography do not suggest that the establishment of a tantric tradition was of central concern at Bantāy Čhmàr. The prominence of the sacred fire would clearly have linked the temple and the meanings of the triple cult practised in its inner enclosure (supremacy of royalty – defence of royalty – submission of independent cults) like a hub to other centres

in the region by way of the roadside fire-houses. We may assume that the royal consecration of the whole temple was planned for 1216 or 1217, but there is no textual confirmation that this ever took place, nor are the principal deities in the main temples of the central and west complexes anywhere identified. The unfinished state of the stelae leaves many questions concerning Pràsàt Bantãy Čhmàr unanswered. Nevertheless our understanding of this temple would be appreciably less than it is, had the inscriptions discussed here not survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

APPENDIX 1: DEITIES HOUSED IN BANTĀY ČHMĀR ACCORDING TO THE INSCRIPTIONS

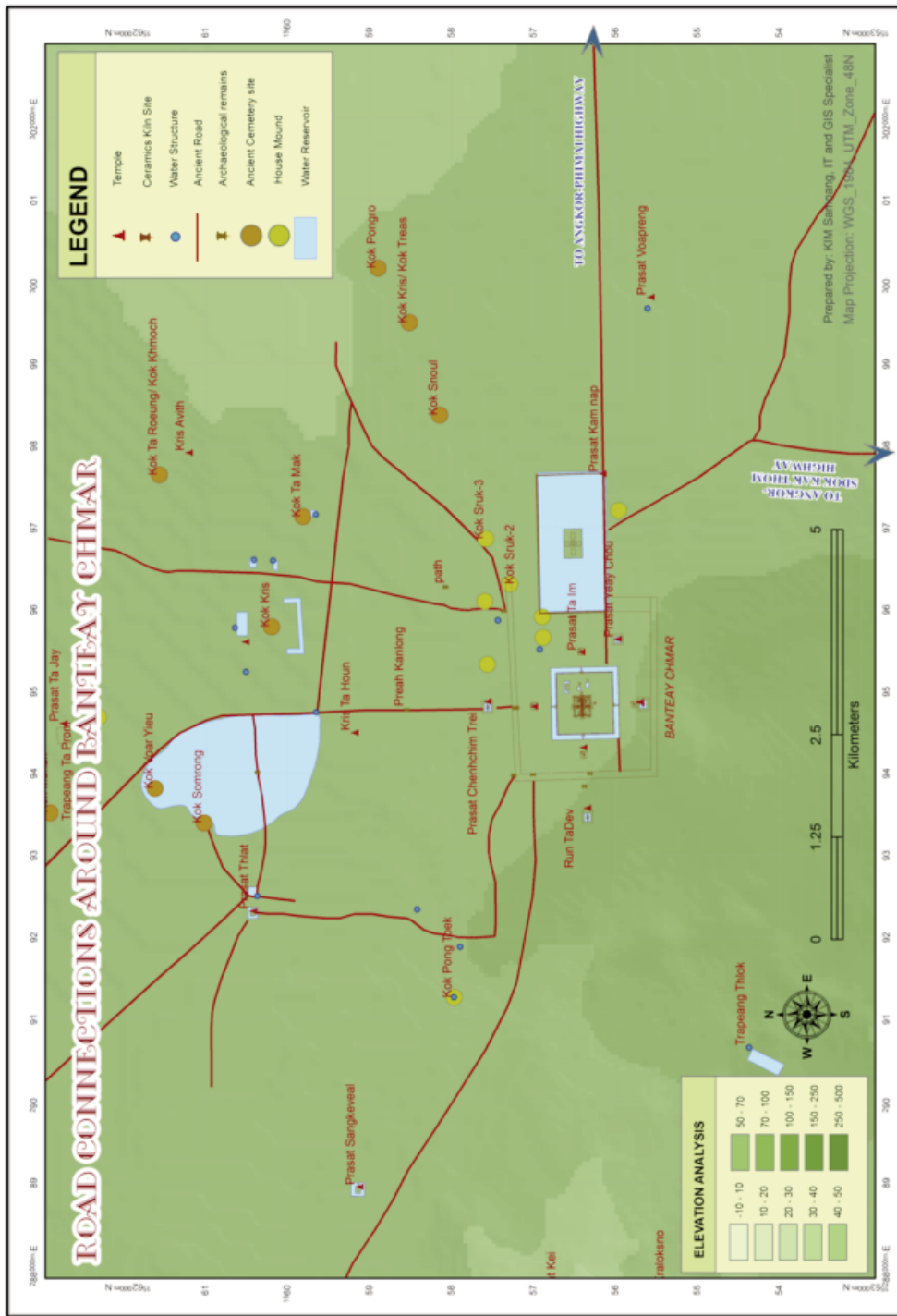
No.	Deity	Cult	Associated Person	Inscr.	Bdg.	Cplx.
01.	KJ Śrī-Tribhuvanadeva	<i>a</i>	KA Vrah Jyeṣṭha - - - - -	K. 827	80	East
02.	KJ Śrī-Tribhuvanadeveśvarī	<i>a</i>	KA Śrī-Tribhuvanadevī	K. 827	80	East
03.	KJ - - - - -	<i>a</i>	KA Śrī-Yaśodharendradevī	K. 827	80	East
04.	KJ Śrī-Śrīndradeva	<i>a</i>	KA Śrī Śrīndrakumāra Rājaputra	K. 227	44	East
05.	KJ Arjunadeva	<i>a</i>	Sañjak Arjuna (line 9)	K. 227	44	East
06.	KJ Śrīdharadevapura	<i>a</i>	Sañjak Śrīdharadevapura (line 10)	K. 227	44	East
07.	KJ Śrīdevadeva	<i>a</i>	Sañjak Śrīdeva (lines 22–23)	K. 227	44	East
08.	KJ Śrīvardhanadeva	<i>a</i>	Sañjak Śrīvardhana (line 23)	K. 227	44	East
09.	Vrah Vleñ Svarga ( <i>agnir divaḥ patañ</i> )	<i>β</i>		N1	45	East
10.	KJ Śrī-Vijayadeva	<i>a</i>	KA Śrī-Vijayavardhana Rājaputra	K. 226	41	East
11.	KJ Śrī-Sūryadeva	<i>a</i>	KA Prabhākara	K. 696-3	24	East
12.	Vrah Vleñ Svarga	<i>β</i>		N2	15	Centre
13.	KJ Śrī-Tribhuvanavarmeśvara	<i>γ</i>		N3	17	Centre
14.	Vrah Kanloñ KA Śrī-Tribhuvanacūḍāmañī	<i>γ</i>		N3	17	Centre
15.	Vrah Kanloñ KA Śrī-Yaśorājacūḍāmañī	<i>γ</i>		N3	17	Centre
16.	KJ Śrī-Jayakīrtideva	<i>a</i>	Dhūli Jen Vrah KA Śrī-Jayakīrtipaṇḍita Vrah Guru	K. 226	3	Centre
17.	KJ Śrī-Bhūpendradeva	<i>γ</i>		K. 226	37	Centre
18.	KJ Śrī-Bhūpendreśvarī	<i>γ</i>		K. 226	37	Centre
19.	KJ Śrī-Trailokyarājacūḍāmañī	<i>a</i>	Kanloñ Vrah Pāda KA Śrī-Dharañīndra - - - - -	K. 226	33	West
20.	KJ Śrī-Vṛddheśvarī	<i>δH</i>		K. 226	33	West
21.	KJ Śrī-Jayeśvarī	<i>δH</i>		K. 226	33	West
22.	Vrah Prajñāpāramitā	<i>δMB</i>		K. 226	32	West
23.	KJ Śrī-Mahīdharadeva	<i>a</i>	KA <sup>Aso</sup>	K. 226	30	West
24.	Vrah Kānti KA Śrī-Jayamahānātha	<i>δKB</i>		G.C.12	73	West
25.	Vrah Bhagavatī Śrī	<i>δH</i>		G.C.12	73	West
26.	Vrah Bhagavatī Nārāyañī	<i>δH</i>		G.C.12	73	West
27.	Vrah KA Nārāyana	<i>δH</i>		G.C.12	73	West



*Notes:* The deities in this table were all installed in the three complexes (east, centre, west) of the second enclosure. Note that many more deities, whose names are now illegible, were named in some of these inscriptions and others at Bantāy Čhmār. This is therefore unavoidably a partial listing. It should be compared with the inscriptions distribution table in Section 3. For invocations of Buddha–Dharma–Saṅgha (= the Triratna, images of which Jayavarman VII claimed to have installed in certain of his temples, see Maxwell 2007[2]: 80), and of Lokeśvara and Prajñāpāramitā (*jñānāñ janani*), on the NE stele of the third enclosure, see Section 2.A. The temple can be seen as an attempt to unify the religious complexities of the nation into an instrument of state policy through an all-inclusive Mahāyāna Buddhism. To be effective politically, this institution had to function ritually, despite the diversity of cults represented in it. This table suggests how that was achieved through organisation.

*Abbreviations:* Inscr. = Inscription; Bdg. = Building; Cplx. = Complex; G.C. = George Coedès; KJ = Kamraten Jagat; KA = Kamraten Añ;  $\alpha$  = *rūpa* or *vrah rūpa*;  $\beta$  = Sacred fire;  $\gamma$  = Deified historical figure;  $\delta$  = Independent deity incorporated under Buddhism; MB = Mahāyāna Buddhist; KB = Khmer Buddhist; H = Hindu. Broken line = illegible text. Left marginal numbers refer to individual deities, not inscriptions. The title Sañjak (nos. 5–8) represents the term *anaksañjak* in K. 227.

APPENDIX 2: ROAD CONNECTIONS AROUND BANTAY CHMAR



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Map showing secondary roads leading from Banteay Chmar (centre, adjacent to the rectangular baray) to ancient burial grounds (marked by brown circles) and to structural archaeological sites (prasat) in the vicinity, and others connecting with the Angkor-Phimai and Angkor-Sdok Kak Thom highways.

[Courtesy of APSARA. Copyright © Banteay Chmar Research Project 2008, modified 2011.]

APPENDIX 3: THE FIRE-PRIEST AND THE SACRED FIRE OF BANTĀY ČHMĀR



BANTEAY CHMAR: Enclosure 3, East wall, North section, front: Detail of a bas-relief immediately adjacent to the North wing of the East gatehouse (Gopura 3E). The bearded fire-priest, a brahmin ascetic with piled hair, the OM-symbol attached to the front of his chignon, is seen performing the *homa* or ritual fire-sacrifice. He kneels directly in front of the sacred fire (Vraḥ Vleṅ Svarga in Khmer, Agnir Divaḥ Patan in Sanskrit) blazing on its raised lotus pedestal and holds an aspergillum for sprinkling holy water. This scene was presumably intended to depict the chief fire-priest of Banteay Chmar, Śrī-Madburendrasūri, the author of inscription N1, leading the ritual on behalf of the king. The full scene (not illustrated) is shown taking place inside a building, presumably the principal fire shrine of the temple (structure 45). It depicts Jayavarman VII, represented on a larger scale, seated behind the priest and holding offerings for the fire-god. The priest kneels on a mat laid on the floor, the king is shown seated on a low dais. The priest, who is in the act of purifying the fire-place and performing *mudrās* while intoning mantras, is accompanied by two brahmin attendants. It is not known whether the aged Jayavarman in fact visited Banteay Chmar. His presence in this scene may be merely symbolic of the close connection between royalty and the fire-cult. The depiction of this scene on the façade of the main enclosure – at the very end of the circumambulatory gallery, and hence the last relief to be viewed before entering the cult centre – emphasises the ritual importance of the sacred fire to the temple of Banteay Chmar as a whole. Compare Section 4 and Note III in Section 5.

[Photograph by AIS DSC02029, 22-07-2011. Enhanced to show detail. Colour variegation is true to the original.]

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**Note:**

Sanskrit vowel-sandhi has occasionally been resolved with the symbol  $\_$  (e.g. *tathā\_āparam* to explain *tathāparam*), the elements of compounds have in some cases been separated with a hyphen (e.g. *bhūtārtha-darśana*), and consonantal sandhi is once or twice explained by the use of square brackets (e.g. *ida[m] divas' . . . agni[m]* for *idan divas' . . . agnim*). But I have done this only where it seemed useful to clarify the terminology; in general these distractions have been avoided. Epigraphic conventions such as the doubling of consonants after the letter *r* (e.g. *svargga*, *tribhuvanavarmmesvara*) have been retained in italicised quotations, in order to reproduce accurately the original inscription texts, but dropped in translations and discussions (Svarga, Tribhuvanavarmesvara). Note that the Sanskrit retroflex *ḍa* is written as a doubled dental *dda* in these inscriptions (*cūddāmaṇi* for *cūḍāmaṇi*). The Vedic accent is omitted from *R̥gveda* citations for lack of suitable fonts. Since the spellings of post-angkorian Khmer names for ancient temple sites inevitably vary in European-language publications, in this paper I have resorted to the standardised transliterations of these place-names as used by Coedès in his *Inscriptions du Cambodge*. The only exception is the popular spelling of Angkor, which has acquired an authenticity of its own.

សង្ខេប

*A New Khmer and Sanskrit Inscription at Banteay Chmar*

T. S. Maxwell

សិលាចារឹកដែលយកមកសិក្សានេះមានអក្សរ៥បន្ទាត់ ហើយទើបនឹងប្រទះឃើញថ្មីៗនៅអាគារលេខ៤៩នៃក្រុមសំណង់ខាងកើត ក្នុងឆ្នាំទី២នៃប្រាសាទបន្ទាយច្បារ។ នេះជាសិលាចារឹកដែលនៅក្នុងចំណោមប្រភេទអក្សរថ្មខ្លីៗ ដែលតែងឃើញនៅតាមប្រាសាទរបស់ព្រះបាទជ័យវរ្ម័នទី៧ ថ្វីត្បិតតែមានលក្ខណៈពិសេសរបស់ខ្លួនដែរ។ បន្ទាត់ទី១ជាកាសាខ្មែរ ឯ៤បន្ទាត់ទៀតជាការសម្រួលពីរឃ្លា តែទាំងអស់នោះរលូនចូលគ្នាជាសេចក្តីតែមួយ គឺនិយាយអំពីអាណាចក្រនៃព្រះបាទ ឆ្រីឈរមីន , អំពីទេព សុគត ឆ្រីវរ គុត្តិ , អំពីព្រះ អង្គ, ហើយអ្នកនិពន្ធនោះឱ្យឈ្មោះខ្លួន ព្រមទាំងច្នាំដែលចារនោះទៀត ធ្វើឱ្យយើងកាន់តែច្បាស់ពីសម័យកាលនៃបន្ទាយច្បារផង។ សិលាចារឹកនេះឱ្យយើងដឹងថា អាគារលេខ៤៩សាងឡើងជាពិសេសសម្រាប់បូជាព្រះភ្លើង។ ឈ្មោះដែលហៅនោះ (ព្រះវ្រៃមីស្វត្តិ, អង្គនរេហ៍ បតន) ខុសពីឈ្មោះដែលធ្លាប់ប្រទះរៀងមក (ព្រះវ្រៃមី, នេវាត្តិ) ហើយល្អះសម្រួលធ្វើឱ្យយើងយល់ហេតុផលដែលប្រើពាក្យខ្មែរនោះ។ ក្រៅអំពីការបកប្រែ អត្ថបទនេះព្យាយាមធ្វើវិភាគនិងបកស្រាយសេចក្តី ហើយដាក់សិលាចារឹកនោះទៅក្នុងបរិបទប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រនិងសំណង់បន្ទាយច្បារទាំងមូលនិងប្រាសាទជុំវិញផង។

**Abstract**

*A New Khmer and Sanskrit Inscription at Banteay Chmar*

T. S. Maxwell

This article concerns a five-line inscription recently discovered on structure 45 in the east complex of the second enclosure at Prāsāt Bantāy Čhmār. Although having several unique qualities, it belongs to the Short Inscription category, a form used throughout the temples of Jayavarman VII, and the script is typical of the epigraphy of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century period under his rule. The first line is in Khmer, and the remaining four lines contain two Sanskrit verses, but the inscription as a whole forms a unity. The text refers to the kingdom of Śrī-Jayavarman, the Sugata Śrī-Vīraśakti, the sacred fire and the fire-god Agni, and gives the name of the author, who writes in the first person, as well as the Śaka year, which is the first confirmed date we have for Bantāy Čhmār. The inscription is the dedication of structure 45 as the principal fire-shrine of the temple. The name given to the sacred fire in this text (*vrah vleñ svargga, agnir divah patan*) differs from the terms usually employed in Cambodian epigraphy (*vrah vleñ, devāgni*), and the Sanskrit stanzas provide a context for the Khmer in which the reason for this is explained. In addition to giving a transcription and translation, the article seeks to analyse and interpret the content of this inscription, and to situate it historically and architecturally in relation to others at Bantāy Čhmār and elsewhere.

**Résumé**

*A New Khmer and Sanskrit Inscription at Banteay Chmar*

T. S. Maxwell

Cet article se rapporte à une inscription de cinq lignes découverte récemment dans la structure 45, dans le complexe est de la deuxième enceinte du Prasat Banteay Chhmar. Bien que comportant plusieurs qualités propres, elle appartient à la catégorie des inscriptions courtes bien connues des monuments de Jayavarman VII, et l'écriture est typique de l'épigraphie de la tranche des 12<sup>ème</sup>- 13<sup>ème</sup> siècles que couvre son règne. La première ligne est en khmer, alors que les quatre lignes restantes contiennent deux vers sanskrits, mais l'ensemble constitue bien une unité. Le texte se réfère au royaume de Śrī-Jayavarman, au Śrī-Vīraśakti, le feu sacré et au dieu-feu Agni, et donne le nom de l'auteur qui le rédige à la première personne, ainsi que l'année en ère Saka qui, pour la première fois, confirme la date de Banteay Chhmar. L'inscription montre que, de tout le temple, la structure 45 est la principale tour dédiée au feu. Ici, le nom donné au feu sacré (*vleñ svargga, agnir divah patan*) diffère des termes habituellement utilisés dans l'épigraphie du Cambodge (*vrah vleñ, devāgni*), et les stances sanskrites en fournissent au khmer le contexte. En sus de la transcription et de la traduction, l'article cherche à analyser et à interpréter le contenu de cette inscription, et à la situer dans le temps et dans l'ensemble architectural, en relation avec les autres inscriptions de Banteay Chhmar comme des autres monuments.