

be recognised as dance poses. They are depicted as standing on both feet, which are most often shown in profile, whereas the upper body and the head are portrayed frontally. With their cool yet sensuous beauty, their gracious gestures, extremely complicated hairdos, crowns and jewellery they may be the best-known figures found on the walls of Angkor Wat. In their hands they often hold flowers, fans and bronze mirrors and many of their gestures indicate self-beautifying.

Who are they? They are often labelled as "apsaras" like the dancing female figures discussed above. Sometimes they are also called "devatas" i.e. minor female deities, figures not so common in Indian mythology or art. However, both "apsaras" and "devatas" are simply definitions given to these figures in the 19th and 20th centuries but their original identity is ambiguous. There is, indeed, an extremely enlightening textual source, though a Buddhist one, describing similar heavenly maidens. It is included in a cosmological description in the 5th century Mahavamsa, "The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka". It describes many features of the different levels of the heavens and the actions of the devas or heavenly semi-gods:

...above these devas raising their folded hands, vases filled with flowers likewise, dancing devatas and devatas playing instruments of music, devas with mirrors in their hands and devas also bearing flowers and branches, devas with lotus-blossoms and so forth in their hands and other devas of many kinds... (Bautze-Picroni 2003, 1)

Some scholars seem to think that these standing female figures could be dancers (Marchal 1927; Jacques 1990, 113), either heavenly apsaras or their earthly counterparts, temple dancers, so often mentioned in the inscriptions. As they wear similar costumes and ornaments as Khmer court ladies of the historical narrative reliefs, they can be seen either as mythological characters or as dancers and members of the Khmer court.

Indeed, if one agrees on the rather wide definition of dance proposed in the introductory chapter and also includes ceremonial court rituals within the concept of "dance", these static, ethereal ladies could be interpreted as dance images. If we compare these figures with the Javanese *bedhaya* dancers it is possible to recognise some similarities [4/6]. *Bedhaya*, as already mentioned earlier, is a solemn group dance usually performed in the Central Javanese court context by nine female dancers. They are dressed as royal brides and they represent the brides sent by the mythological Queen of the South Sea to the sultan. The dance starts and ends with a solemn march-like procession while the more or less abstract dance proper includes several movements of self-beautifying, such as putting a flower in the hair, adjusting the crown etc. Interesting similarities can be noticed. The gestures of both the *bedhaya* dancers and the ladies in the reliefs indicate self-beautifying. However, ladies in the reliefs have actual objects such as flowers, mirrors and fans in their hands, whereas the *bedhaya* dancers only indicate the acts by gestures.

The *bedhaya* dancers execute their procession by forming strict lines. While the torso and hands are kept static, the movements of the toes and soles of their feet are highly articulated. Correspondingly, the ladies of the reliefs, especially in the group portrayals, seem to walk in the same direction, an impression created by their feet shown in profile (although the Khmer artists were completely capable of portraying the feet in different positions and from different



FIG 4/6
BEDHAYA DANCERS FROM
YOGYAKARTA, CENTRAL JAVA.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1995.

angles). The comparison of the reliefs and the bedhaya dance makes it clear, one hopes, that the noble ladies of Angkor Wat could be interpreted as dancers, or at least court ladies participating in a stylised, ceremonial court procession, such as the one described above in Zhou Daguan's account on a royal procession.

3) DANCE-RELATED FIGURES IN NARRATIVE PANELS

The third large group of figures which could be interpreted, if not always exactly as dancing figures, but at least clearly as dance-related images are the hundreds of figures in several poses found in the narrative reliefs of the third enclosure of Angkor Wat, known as the Large Panels. The subject matter of these panels is, as mentioned above, from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas as well as from the official Khmer history. It is generally agreed that the Large Panels should be visited anticlockwise. It is then that the narrative action of the panels unfolds



FIG 4/7
OPENING SCENE OF THE
LARGE PANEL SHOWING
HEAVENS AND HELLS.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.



FIG 4/8
SECTION OF THE LARGE PANEL
DEDICATED TO THE MYTH OF
CHURNING THE MILKY OCEAN.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

in proper sequence. Thus the visit should start from the main entrance of the third enclosure facing the west and continue to the right round the whole enclosure.

The first large relief in the western gallery shows the climax of the Mahabharata, the Battle of Kurukshetra. Round the corner, in the southern gallery there is the historical relief showing the Procession of Suryavarman II followed by the Heavens and Hells panel portraying the judgment of souls. It starts with two superimposed registers showing processions of good Khmer aristocrats and citizens on their way to the heavens [4/7]. Soon opens the way down to the hells where, in the third and lowest register, the bad citizens are punished in various detailed ways by athletic demons.

Round the corner, in the eastern gallery there is the famous Churning of the Milky Ocean. It shows the Hindu creation myth in which the gods and *asura* demons rotate the mountain for 1000 years by pulling the great snake around it in order to produce *amrita*, the elixir of immortality⁴. In the same way as the Heavens and Hells this relief is also divided into three superimposed registers [4/8]. Marine animals, both mythical and realistically depicted, inhabit the lowest one. In the central register the actual churning is taking place, whereas in the uppermost register apsaras are flying, who according to the mythology, are born from the churning process. In this case one can be sure that the figures are indeed apsaras as they belong to this narrative context and they are depicted in the Indian-derived pose indicating flying, characteristic of apsara figures in South and Southeast Asia in general.

Further in the eastern gallery and round the corner in the northern gallery various Puranic battles between gods and demons are depicted. The final panel, in the northern gallery shows the climax of the Ramayana, the great battle of Lanka. In addition to the Large Panels the visual programme of the third enclosure also includes reliefs in the corner pavilions, which show scenes from the Ramayana and the Puranas.

Some dancing figures can be recognised in the panels. The *gopis* or cowgirls have a prominent role in the Krishna mythology, especially in the episodes recounting about Krishna's amorous youth, and they can be seen dancing in a rather large composition in which Krishna is depicted sitting at the top (Roveda 2002, fig. 146). The *gopis* wear dresses and ornaments similar to those of the Khmer ladies in the historical reliefs and of the dancing and standing ladies described above. However, it is notable that their dance does not repeat the typical Khmer dance but seems to be merely a very informal, spontaneous outburst of collective joy.

Although Krishna is shown in many of the panels, he himself is never portrayed as a dancer whereas in India Krishna is frequently shown in a dance attitude. In the visual programme of the third enclosure the only Hindu god portrayed as a dancer is Shiva (Ibid., fig. 239). He is also dancing in the southern door panel of the so-called Cruciform Pavilion (Ibid., fig. 199). Shiva, however, does not play a central role in the visual programme of Angkor Wat, since the shrine is dedicated to Vishnu.

Much more numerous than the actual dancing figures on the walls of the third enclosure are the dance-related figures. Most of them are found in the battle scenes and are thus related to the martial arts. As discussed already in Chapter 2.6 several such movements and positions were depicted four centuries earlier in the Ramayana reliefs of candi Loro Jonggaran in Central Java. They are still clearly related to Indian prototypes and, consequently, the movements can easily

be compared with those mentioned in the *Natyashastra*. Also in Angkor Wat the most common dance-related positions show the art of archery and fighting attitudes with strongly flexed legs.

If they are compared with the Javanese *Ramayana* figures, the Khmer counterparts are already clearly localised adaptations of the Indian prototypes. In the Khmer figures the leg position is much lower. In reliefs the human anatomy has clearly gone through a process of localisation and it is unmistakably Khmer in character. The reason for this can be (A) stylistic i.e. the figures are not anymore based on Indian shastras and their iconometrical rules, and/or (B) simply physiognomic, i.e. the proportions of the Khmer people were different from those that the original Indian prototypes were based on.

The martial-art-related figures of the Large Panels can be divided into two main categories: those in a standing position and those in a sitting position. Those standing positions associated with the art of archery are very common. The art of archery is dominating theme in the *Ramayana* reliefs of candi Loro Jonggarana also because the main hero of the epic, Prince Rama, is a master archer. Consequently Rama is often shown as an archer in the Khmer *Ramayana* reliefs. The numerous variants of portrayals of the act of shooting an arrow in Southeast Asia could be explained by the fact that in West India, approximately in the area where the prototypes of many Southeast Asian dance images can be found, as many as ten fixed body positions for using the bow and arrow were listed in an ancient martial arts manual (Zarrilli 1998, 34).

Other standing figures in poses related to the martial arts are most often depicted with a wide-open flexed, low-leg position. The weight can be either on both legs or just on one and this creates an impression of powerful movement of the body from one side to another. Sometimes the warrior can have a weapon, most often a stick, in his hand. This kind of dynamic, aggressive movement is not only limited to the battle scenes. For example in the Heavens and Hells panel the demons in the lowest register are often depicted in similar powerful attitudes [4/9].

These poses are clearly related to the martial arts. The relief showing a martial arts demonstration or competition, discussed already on in Chapter 2.5, shows the same kinds of movements. Moreover, in the reliefs portraying military processions in the 13th century temple complex of Bayon, warriors are often shown in poses derived from these basic positions [4/10]. In these cases it is clear that the movement is related to a kind of warrior's dance, since many men are simultaneously repeating the movement in an exaggerated way.

Similar kinds of poses are, indeed, still very common in most of the martial arts traditions of Asia today⁵. The pose gives maximum support to the body and enables the person to change the position of his torso rapidly, which is of utmost importance in a battle situation. The position is, however, not limited to the martial arts only. For example, many movements of powerful demon characters in the *khon* masked dance theatre of Thailand and in the *lakhon khol* tradition of Cambodia are partly based on this basic technique [6/17]. Both genres concentrate on episodes from the *Ramayana* and are supposed to have their roots in ancient Khmer traditions, as discussed later in Chapter 6. The resemblance of the demonic stage characters to their counterparts in the Khmer reliefs is further reinforced by the fact that in both cases the most common weapon used is a stick.

Further similarities between Thailand's and Cambodia's forms of mask theatre and the Khmer reliefs can be found in some of the sitting poses shown in the Large Panels. As discussed



FIG 4/9
 DEMONIC FIGURES PUNISHING
 SINNERS IN THE HEAVENS
 AND HELLS PANEL.
 PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

FIG 4/10
 PROCESSION AND, BELOW,
 A WAR DANCE IN 13TH
 CENTURY BAYON.
 PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.





FIG 4/11
KING SURYAVARMAN II IN
THE LARGE PANEL SHOWING
A MILITARY PROCESSION.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

in the introductory chapter, the court etiquette has had a decisive influence on the performing conventions of dance and theatre. One example of this is the formal sitting poses used on the stage still today. In the Large Panels several formal sitting poses can be recognised. In traditional Khmer and Thai culture sitting on the floor level has been normal for commoners, whereas sitting on an elevated bench or a platform has been reserved for those representing power, either earthly or spiritual. Thus sitting on a raised level refers to the hierarchical structure of society. It becomes a manifestation of power and thus has an undeniable theatrical quality⁶.

The most famous sitting figure in the Large Panels is, without doubt, the builder of the shrine, Suryavarman II himself. In the panel showing a historical procession he is seated on a throne with his right leg bent under his body and the left leg hanging freely [4/11]. The graceful easiness of his pose gives an impression of undeniable authority, which is further emphasised by the fact that other participants in the audience are seated on lower levels. This same effect is frequently used in the numerous court scenes of khon and lakhon khol. The royal characters are sitting on a bench on the stage, while the courtiers of lower rank sit on the floor. On a modernised stage the hierarchy is often emphasised by using platforms of different heights.

FIG 4/12
VISHNU/KRISHNA RIDING
A GARUDA. PHOTOGRAPH
AUTHOR 2003



The fixed poses in the reliefs are not reserved for court scenes alone. In the Historical Procession panel and in the many battle scenes the generals riding elephants are depicted in three different poses. The “resting attitude” with one leg hanging out from the howdah is similar to the pose of Suryavarman II on his throne. In the “parade attitude” the general is standing with one foot on the back of the elephant and the other in the *howdah* canopy, whereas in the “battle attitude” the general is standing in the howdah in the flexed leg position (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 1979, 97).

In many of the mythical battles a god, incarnated on earth to fight against different personifications of evil, is riding on an animal particularly attributed to him. Gods can either ride in a chariot or ride on an animal. Shiva is shown in a chariot pulled by two bulls, Agni’s chariot is pulled by a rhinoceros, Skanda rides on his peacock, Indra on an elephant etc. Sometimes a god can stand on the shoulders of his mount [4/12], as in the relief showing Rama on the shoulders of Hanuman (Roveda 2002, fig. 67). The poses of the riders varies from the above-mentioned three poses of Khmer generals to different martial-art-related poses such as those related to archery and the various open-leg positions.

In Thai khon as well as Khmer lakhon khol Prince Rama and the demon king Ravana often arrive at the battle field in decorative chariots drawn by actors dressed as horses. The postures of the riders can be seen as variations of the poses mentioned above. When the battle reaches its climax, Rama and Ravana step off their chariots to engage in hand-to-hand combat. Finally, the victor raises himself in a heroic posture on the thigh and shoulders of the loser. These, almost picture-like static *tableaux* [6/16] have their exact counterparts in the Thai and Cambodian mural paintings and reliefs, which, as will be discussed later, have their roots at least partly in the Angkorian reliefs.

The crucial question, which will further discussed below, is this: are the theatrical traditions based on the observation of earlier visual sources or are the visual representations based on the conventions of contemporaneous living theatrical traditions? When one considers these tableau-like formations in which a god or a human being is riding on his mount, it is interesting to note that, for example, in Indonesia there are several living dance forms in which this actually takes place on stage. In the East Javanese *reog ponorogo* tradition, actors ride on the shoulders of mythical animals enacted by human dancers (Indonesian Heritage: Performing Arts 1998, 22) and in a well-known court dance from Yogyakarta female dancers ride on mythical birds performed by masked male dancers.

(4) "TAPESTRY RELIEFS"

The fourth group of dance images on the walls of Angkor Wat consists of small human and animal figures found in the medallions of the so-called tapestry reliefs carved on the walls and around the doorjambs of the complex [4/4]. As the term "Tapestry Relief" makes it clear, the reliefs give an impression of intricate textiles. The impression is created by the low execution of the reliefs and the ornamental quality of the background foliage and the medallions. However, the figures depicted in the medallions cannot be reduced merely to ornamental motifs. As Vittorio Roveda has pointed out they sometimes have, at least in Angkor Wat, a narrative function and they can be read in several ways (2002, 224–237; 2005, 306–319).

Many of the figures depicted in the medallions are either in a dance pose or in a fighting attitude. The dancing figures often include humans in similar kinds of open-leg positions as the "apsaras" (Roveda 2005, fig. 8.127) but sometimes also in very unusual positions (Roveda 2002, fig. 247). Both humans and demons are regularly depicted in fighting attitudes similar to the many poses discussed in connection of the Large Panels. Monkeys, such important characters in the Ramayana epic, are shown in many positions that are characteristic of these animals (Ibid., fig. 249). Even today, the same kinds of "monkey poses" dominate the movement technique of the monkey characters in Thai khon and Cambodian lakhon khol masked dance theatres [6/13, 6/14].

4.4 Dance Images and the Overall Symbolism of the Complex

As Angkor Wat is the largest religious complex in the world and the epitome of Khmer culture it is understandable that much has been speculated about its function and the meaning of its bas-reliefs. Vittorio Roveda has summarised (2002, 17–20) the predominant interpretations. In the 1930s George Coedès interpreted Angkor Wat as a funerary temple. For him its reliefs had

the task of transforming the complex into a heavenly palace. In the same decade F.D.K. Bosch, on the other hand, saw the reliefs as a glorification of the king who was identified with the god Vishnu whom the complex was dedicated to.

In the 1940s Maurice Glaize stressed the possibility that for Khmer royalty and aristocracy the act of building temples was a form of merit-making (as it was in the contemporaneous Buddhist Pagan in present-day Myanmar, discussed in Chapter 5). For him the reliefs were not only to glorify the builder but had a religious-didactic function as well. He assumed that the faithful could walk around the building under the guidance of a spiritual specialist who explained to the laymen the events of the reliefs (as it was the case in Indian Buddhist tradition and probably in Java too, as discussed in Chapter 2.6). However, no textual evidence supports this theory, which will be further discussed below.

At the turn of the 1950s Jean Filliozat focused his attention on an astronomical and numerical interpretation of the complex. He understood the complex as a model on which the Khmer cosmos was constructed. In the 1970s the American scholars R. Stencel, F. Glifford and E. Moron studied the relationship of Angkor Wat's structure and its symbolic meanings. This line of interpretation reached its controversial climax in Eleanor Mannikka's study in 1996. For her Angkor Wat is constructed in accordance with a certain system of measurement that conveys solar and lunar meaning. Thus the "measurements of both the parts and the whole contain calendrically and cosmologically significant totals" (1996, 3).

It is very plausible that each of these interpretations throws some light on the many-faceted symbolism of the complex. However, it is universally agreed that Angkor Wat was built to reflect the Indian-derived cosmological model with Mount Meru as its central axis. Although it is not exactly known which cosmological text the Khmer builders relayed on when constructing the complex, the Meru symbolism seems to be the only reliable symbolic context in which the Angkor Wat's dance images can be set. As already discussed above, the 65-metre-high central tower at the top of the artificial mountain represents the central peak of Mount Meru, whereas the four flanking towers symbolise the four surrounding peaks. The walls and galleries are the mountain ranges enclosing the realm of the gods, which is finally surrounded by seas represented by the moat. In this spatial symbolism sacredness accumulates in the centre, which is also the highest level in the construction, and decreases in the outer and lower skirts of the complex.

It is logical to discuss the overall symbolism of the dance images following the tripartite structure of the Meru symbolism. Thus the focus will first be on the dance images carved on the outer and lower parts of the structure. Then will follow the dance-related images in the reliefs carved in the third enclosure, i.e. the Large Panels and other reliefs found on the middle level of the structure. Finally the reliefs of the uppermost terraces will be discussed, which represent the highest level of the Meru symbolism, the realm of the gods.

As stated above, the first dance images a visitor is able to see when entering the complex are the female dancers in a very low flexed-leg position, with one foot raised to knee height and their hands repeating Indian-influenced mudras. As discussed above, their energetic Indian-derived, yet clearly localised dance pose is very common in Khmer art. These figures are generally called "apsaras" although there is no clear evidence of who these female dancers actually are.

Female dancers were a very common motif in Indian temple reliefs from approximately the 8th to the 12th century, which corresponds to the period of the greatness of Khmer architecture. However, these female dancers in their various poses, based on the *Natyashastra* tradition, are not usually recognised as *apsaras*. There are also *apsara* figures in Indian temple sculpture but they can be identified as *apsaras* by their flying poses or by the narrative context which they belong to. It is generally agreed that the dancing female figures in Indian temple reliefs often depict *devadasis*, hereditary temple dancers, who performed at various rituals in the temple's main hall during the day in front of the *sanctum*. The reason for the existence of these numerous female figures on the walls of Indian temples has been explained by the fact that in Indian thought female figures, in their open sensuality, represent female energy, which in its fertility associations is benevolent for the temple complex as a whole (Roveda 2002, 220).

It is plausible that the vigorous and carnal dancers of Angkor Wat's outer walls, pilasters and friezes, in fact, also depict human temple dancers. This is supported by several facts. First, the Khmer inscriptions mention female dancers working in the Khmer temples many times. Second, the poses and costumes of these dancing figures are similar to those of the dancers shown elsewhere in a historical narrative context i.e. a similar kind of dance was performed in the military processions and as an entertainment by professional dancers. Also the contrast between these dancers with their uplifted, heavily bent legs and the ethereal, so-called "*devatas*" could not be greater. While the *devatas* are depicted in solemn, almost static attitudes, the movements of the dancers of the lower levels seem energetic and earthly.

One reason why these dancers have later been identified as *apsaras* may be the popularity of the *Ramayana* epic in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, which spread from the regions of present-day Thailand to Cambodia after the Tai had conquered Angkor for the second time in 1431. In the *Ramayana* tradition the *apsaras* are the most popular mythological characters, who dance in both heavenly and earthly spheres (Vatsyayan 1977a, 167). Maybe this has led to the deeply rooted habit of calling these dancers *apsaras*. On the symbolic level, however, the difference between whether these figures are humans or heavenly nymphs might not be so drastic. As the king was regarded as god, his palace and temple were also regarded as a god's abodes. Thus the female dancers performing on these premises could be regarded, at least on a symbolic level, to be analogous with their heavenly counterparts, the *apsaras*.

The second group of dance images, which can be found in both the outermost and inner parts of the complex, are the small dancing figures carved inside the medallions of the so-called Tapestry Reliefs. They are sometimes carved on the walls but more often they appear on the inside surfaces of doorframes and on some inner window frames. The conventional way of naming these very low reliefs with foliage and medallion motifs as tapestry reliefs seems apt, since recent studies of Khmer textiles support the fact that they are indeed substitutes for valuable textile hangings. The actual textiles could not survive long in the tropical climate and thus they were duplicated on the stone walls.

Gillian Green has pointed out (2004) that one motif that is common in the tapestry reliefs, that of intersecting circles, can be recognised in a fragment of an Indian export fabric found in Egypt and dated to about the middle of the 13th century. The same motif is also carved on the loin cloth of a 13th century Javanese Ganesha statue proving that the Indian imported textiles

were popular round the then known world. It is thus possible that at least some of the hangings on which the tapestry reliefs were based were imported textiles. On the sea routes connecting India to Southeast Asia and further to China the most common trade goods were indeed textiles (Maxwell 2003). Even Chinese motifs can be distinguished in the tapestry reliefs (Green 2004, fig. 16) and this indicates that some of the reliefs are probably based on Chinese textiles.

On the other hand, as the main themes depicted by the figures inside the medallions are related to Hindu mythology, it seems probable that the textiles which served as models for the tapestry reliefs either were made in India or were of local craftsmanship. It is even possible that they were made in India according to sketches by Khmer artists. This was a common practice, for example, in Thailand during the Ayutthaya and the early Bangkok periods, when textiles based on Thai patterns were produced in India for the Thai market (Guy 1998, 58–59). This could explain why the tapestry reliefs include some dance poses that were uncommon in Khmer dance imagery. These exceptional poses either could be influenced by the tradition of the country of the origin of the textiles or were misinterpretations by craftsmen who were unfamiliar with Khmer iconography and dance poses.

The practice of covering the walls of temples and palaces with imitations of valuable textiles is not limited to Khmer culture alone. It can be regarded as a Pan-Indian practice. For example the sixth century Buddhist Dharmeka stupa in Sarnath, in eastern India, is covered with a bas-relief imitating a sumptuously embroidered cloth that once draped the whole stupa. In Kerala, in West India, the murals in the 16th century Mattancherry palace are lined with painted imitations of valuable *patolu* fabrics. In Indian-influenced Southeast Asia low reliefs imitating textiles can be found in the Buddhist stupa of Borobudur and there are painted textiles also in the murals of the temples of Pagan (Guy 1998, 57).

The nearest equivalent to the dancing figures of the tapestry reliefs can, however, be found in the Burmese wall hangings called *kalaga*. These padded, almost relief-like hangings decorated with sequins and beads are still being produced both in Myanmar and in northern Thailand, albeit mainly for the tourist trade. The term *kalaga* means “a foreign curtain” which has been seen indicating that the origins of the tradition may be in India (Maxwell 2003, 377). The *kalaga* hangings often show scenes from the Buddhist Jataka stories and sometimes even from the Ramayana epic. The principal scenes are regularly surrounded by medallions with dancing figures such as *apsaras*, *devas* and *devatas*. These valuable hangings were used in both palaces and temples similarly to the ways in which the prototypes of the tapestry reliefs were possibly used in Angkor Wat.

As already discussed above, the Large Panels in the third enclosure offer a great variety of dance-related figures. Dancing human figures, warriors and demons in martial arts-related attitudes as well as kings and generals in fixed poses are depicted in this enormous visual narrative, which includes the Puranic stories, the great epics and the official Khmer history. The inevitable question arises: what was the function of these bas-reliefs?

According to Vittorio Roveda (2002, 17–19) George Coedès emphasised the magic role of the reliefs. For him they had an “evocative” function, that of bringing sacredness and life to the building. For F.D.K. Bosch the reliefs showed an analogy between the cycle of the sun and the life of Vishnu, with whom the king was identified. According to Maurice Glaize’s theory

the reliefs had a religious-didactic function so that pilgrims were able to follow them with the guidance of a religious teacher. For Eleanor Mannikka the reliefs form a religious text which is illuminated by the sun throughout the year; the light focuses on its thematically essential scenes and thus reveals the deeper meaning of the reliefs.

In connection with the above assumption that believers were allowed to see the Large Panels Vittorio Roveda has pointed out that no textual evidence actually supports this theory. Furthermore, Roveda states: "It is now believed that public access may have been possible only during festivities or special occasions, and under the guidance of Brahmins, as in modern practice" (2002, 18). However, if Angkor Wat is seen in the context of the tradition of Indian and Southeast Asian temple architecture as a whole, it would be rather exceptional if this had not have the case. In early Indian Buddhist tradition, on the otherhand, this was a common practice (Dehejia 1998) and also the Ramayana reliefs in several Indian temples were on the outer walls of the temple for visitors to see (Dallapiccola 1994; Wechsler 1994). The same was also the case in Java, where the Buddhist teachings and the Ramayana epic were carved in temples and stupas for pilgrims to see during the ritual circumambulation of the building.

As was discussed in Chapter 2.6 in connection with the development of Javanese narrative temple reliefs, it seems possible, according to this author, that the portable storyteller's devices, such as picture panels and scrolls, could have influenced the development of the Javanese temple reliefs. Similarly one could assume that the development of Angkor Wat's Large Panels could have followed the same course. The Indian Brahman priests may have first used panels or scrolls, which were imported from India, to visualise the stories from the Puranas and the epics originating in India to local audiences. Later, these imported visual devices were replaced by panels and scrolls made by Khmer artists. When Angkor Wat was built and the Large Panels were carved (which in fact are the earliest known reliefs in a panel format in Khmer art), the complex narrative methods and the localised style of these storyteller's devices were employed when the stories were canonised in stone on the walls of Angkor Wat.

This is and probably will remain, of course, a pure speculation. However, there are facts which seem to support this view. As discussed in the introductory chapter and in connection with the development of Javanese temple reliefs, the interrelatedness of storyteller's devices and narrative reliefs seem undeniable both in India and Java. For example, in India the punishments in hell were made familiar to audiences by storyteller's panels as early as the fourth century (Brown 1997, 80). This kind of panel, series of panels or scrolls could have served as a model for the Heavens and Hells of the Large Panels.

Between the Large Panels and theatrical traditions there might also be another kind of relationship. Thai scholars sometimes refer (Mattani 1993, 35) to the Large Panels, and especially the Churning of the Milky Ocean, as an important source when studying the roots of Thai khon and the rare Indraphisekha ritual performed at the Thai court⁷, which, in fact, adopted the court culture, the concept of the god-king and rituals from the Khmer. There are, indeed, many similarities between khon and the Large Panels, especially the Churning of the Milky Ocean. All the fledged leg positions depicted in the reliefs are similar to the poses used by the demon characters in khon. Even more striking are the similarities between the khon crowns and masks and the crowns of the carved figures and the way in which the multiple heads

of the gods are depicted in the panel. The conical crown, in which several heads are depicted, is almost identical with the lacquered papier maché mask used by Tosakanth (Ravana) in present-day khon.

This raises several questions. Is the Churning of the Milky Ocean, in fact, based on an actual performing tradition enacting this myth which the Thai later adopted from the Khmer? Eleanor Mannikka (1996, 43) has called attention to commentaries by authors who maintain that the myth was enacted by the Khmer during court ceremonies such as the coronation, as has been the case in Thailand too. Thus it would be plausible that the relief was based on a living performing tradition. This could explain several things: (1) how the iconography of the relief was born, (2) how the convention of showing multiple heads was created, and (3) what the male dancers were performing.

The whole question of the role of the male dancers would thus become clear. As discussed above in connection with Khmer textual sources, the inscriptions mention professional male dancers several times. However, the only male figures in dance poses or dance-related attitudes in Angkor Wat are the Shiva Nataraja reliefs and warriors and demons in various martial-arts-related poses. If, for example, the depiction of the Churning of the Milky Ocean was based on a contemporaneous dance theatre tradition, it would make clear that the male dancers were enacting holy myths as a masked dance drama, not dissimilar to khon, which according to Thai scholars may have its roots in the Indrabhisheka rituals (Mattani 1993, 35). If an anachronistic comparison is made, it is interesting to note that at the Thai court the khon masked dance drama was fully a male domain until the mid-19th century. It was usually performed by male dancers as an outdoor spectacle on special occasions, while the dances and dance dramas (*lakhon nai*) in the innermost parts of the palace were performed by female dancers.

So far the Large Panels have been discussed in the light of their possible connections with different performing arts traditions. At a symbolic level the Large Panels represent a kind of "middle sphere" in the Meru cosmology, where demons, humans and semi-gods can coexist. At this level the higher gods such as Shiva can appear and Vishnu descends in his *avatars* to intermingle with humans and demons. This is the sphere where the great drama can take place when the gods fight with the demons, their arch-enemies. The full range of dance-related poses can be found in these various situations. Within this sphere the builder of the complex, King Suryavarman II, himself an earthly manifestation of Vishnu, is also shown surrounded by his court, analogous to a heavenly court.

Two of the Large Panels, the Churning of the Milky Ocean and the Heavens and Hells, reflect, in their iconography, the tripartite structure of the Meru symbolism and thus the symbolism of Angkor Wat itself. They are divided into three superimposed horizontal registers. In this hierarchical space the heavenly beings generally occupy the upper-most level, the action takes place in the middle register, and the lowest register is reserved for the Indian-derived hell scenes as well for marine animals representing the underworld in the ancient indigenous cosmology.

One can divide the movement techniques of the figures in each register in the following way. In the Churning of the Milky Ocean the underwater scene forms the lowest of the three superimposed registers. The action of the churning is vigorously depicted in the middle register,

while the highest register is reserved for the heavenly nymphs, the *apsaras* with their elegant, courtly movements shown in the traditional pose of flying [4/8]. In the Heavens and Hells the movements of the torturers in the lowest register repeat the strongly Indian-influenced turned-out leg positions, the common attitudes of demons and Khmer warriors, while the eternally happy inhabitants of the heavens of the two upper levels are portrayed in courtly and completely static poses [4/7].

This scheme can be recognised within the complex as a whole. When one reaches the uppermost parts of the temple the only human figures one can find are the so-called "devatas", holding in their hands flowers, mirrors and fans repeating the gestures of self-beautifying while seemingly walking ceremoniously in a row in a similar way to that of the Javanese *bedhaya* dancers today [4/5]. They surround the first enclosure and the holiest sanctum in the central tower, which most probably, according to Indian custom, was reserved for rituals executed only by the Brahman priests. It is not exactly clear which the cult image inside the sanctum was. When Angkor Wat was turned into a Theravada Buddhist temple, the original statue was removed from the sanctum. In an outer gallery of the complex there now stands a large statue of Vishnu, which could have been the main icon of the shrine, but there is no way to verify it.

Whatever the visual representation of Vishnu worshipped in the sanctum was, the symbolism of the "devatas" seems clear. They surround the king in his deified form and move in a courtly procession round him. They represent the heavenly nymphs or concubines of the highest order, since they are allowed to exist at the uppermost levels of the cosmology with Vishnu himself.

4.5 The Hierarchy of Movement

In spite of the fact that very few textual sources exist to throw light on dance during the whole Angkorian period, the mere quantity, nevertheless, of various kinds of dance images found at Angkor Wat and other Khmer temples seems to prove that dance had a prominent role in Khmer culture. This is, no doubt, due to the fact that the religion practised during most of the heyday of Angkorian culture was Brahmanic Hinduism, in which dance, as in India, had an extremely important role, both in its mythology and rituals.

The most common type of dance image in Angkor Wat is a dancing female in an open-leg position with one leg bent up while the hands are in Indian-derived mudras [4/3]. This is clearly a position derived from Indian dance tradition. However, in the reliefs of Angkor Wat, as well as of other Khmer sanctuaries, the position has gone through an apparent localisation process. This is shown by the extreme lowness of the position in which the heel of the uplifted leg often touches the inner thigh of the supporting leg. This specific position, which is very difficult to maintain for any length of time, creates an impression of a dynamic, fast movement.

These kinds of dancing females often appear as separate, single figures or in groups of two or three dancing on lotus flowers. Sometimes they are also portrayed in a row in the friezes of the interiors of temple halls. Because of their popularity and their uniformity it would be easy to conclude that they represent merely an iconographic convention. However, they show a rich variation of hand gestures. Moreover, dancing figures in similar positions also regularly appear in larger dance scenes in which the instruments, processions and architectural settings are

rather realistically portrayed [3/11, 3/12]. These two facts seem strongly to indicate that these figures are, in fact, based on a dance tradition practised during this period.

These lively, dynamic dancers are generally labelled as "apsaras", a definition which was coined only during the post-Angkorian period. Some scholars, among them the present one, have, however, suggested that they could also be interpreted as actual temple dancers, which are often referred to in the Khmer inscriptions. Another group of female figures, so characteristic of Angkor Wat, is the standing or walking female figures, often flanking the doorways and being the sole inhabitants of the uppermost levels of the complex [4/5]. They also are sometimes referred to as "apsaras" although they are most commonly labelled as "devatas". Their restrained gracefulness and their various gestures of self-beautifying certainly correspond perfectly with the description of devatas in the fifth-century chronicle quoted above. Thus, in the case of these heavenly semi-gods the established term devata seems to be apt.

Only a few scholars have interpreted these devatas as dancers. However, an analogy between the slow and solemn Central Javanese bedhaya dance and these devatas was pointed out above. It might be possible that the restrained movements of the devatas, in fact, portray a kind of ceremonial parade of the palace maidens. The only surviving contemporaneous travel account, referred to above, certainly describes such a procession. Thus, in the context of the rather wide definition of dance formulated in the introductory chapter, these devata figures could perhaps be interpreted as dance images or at least dance-related images, too.

The third frequently portrayed pose in the reliefs of Angkor Wat and other Khmer temples is the flexed open-leg position, found for example in military processions or in the Heaven and Hells scenes of the Large Panels [4/9, 4/10]. It is clearly related to martial arts and is thus almost solely reserved for male figures. This position is regarded as the most widespread feature of Indian-influenced dance in Southeast Asia. Most of the figures portrayed in this position are not exactly dance images, but rather dance-related figures, since they are not depicted actually dancing but rather in positions adopted to dance and dance theatre.

A wide range of dance-related poses can be found in the narratives of the Large Panels of Angkor Wat. As many of the myths portrayed in these narrative panels culminate in great battle scenes, the reliefs consequently show figures in several types of positions related to fighting. They include not only the above-mentioned flexed open-leg position but also poses related to the use of weaponry, especially to archery [4/12]. Although these positions are clearly also localised in Khmer reliefs, many of them, however, stem from the Indian tradition where several fixed positions indicating the use of archery were categorised. The narrative reliefs often also depict stylised sitting and riding poses, which can be classified as dance-related positions [4/11, 4/12].

One crucial question is whether some of the scenes shown in the Large Panels, such as the Churning of the Milky Ocean [4/8], could have been based on actual theatrical performances. In the case of the Churning of the Milky Ocean this seems possible, as some scholars have suggested. This is supported by the fact that at least at the court of Pagan, as was already mentioned, and at the Thai courts of Ayutthaya and Bangkok, as will be discussed in the next chapters, the Indraphisekha ritual "pantomime" enacting the myth of the Churning of the Milky Ocean was regularly preformed during the coronation ceremonies.

If this assumption is correct, the fact that large-scale mythological dance dramas were preformed by male actor-dancers would explain the contradiction between the Khmer inscriptions and the imagery which never seems to show any male dancers. The hypothesis favoured by this author is that male dancers participated in large-scale dance dramas, such as the Indraphisekha. This is supported by the fact that at the Thai courts of Ayutthaya and Bangkok, the inheritors of the Khmer legacy, the large-scale dance drama, khon, enacting scenes from the localised Ramayana, was originally performed by male dancer-actors only. Indeed, when one compares the dance-related information provided by the reliefs of Angkor with a still living dance tradition, it is exactly khon and other early forms of Thai dance and dance drama that one should look at. One could summarise this comparison as follows:

The low open-leg position of the popular female dance figures found in abundance in the reliefs of Angkor Wat can still be identified in some positions of Thai classical dance. The flexed open-leg position depicted frequently in the Heavens and Hells scenes of the Large Panels of Angkor Wat are still the basic technique of the demonic characters of khon today. Most of the stylised poses indicating archery as well as the fixed sitting and riding poses found in the narrative reliefs of Angkor Wat can easily be recognised in the khon conventions of today, albeit sometimes in more or less localised variants. Even the mask-like faces of the monkeys and the demons as well as the conical, multi-faced heads of the leading demon characters of the Churning of the Milky Ocean panel could be plausibly identified as the prototypes of today's khon masks [6/17].

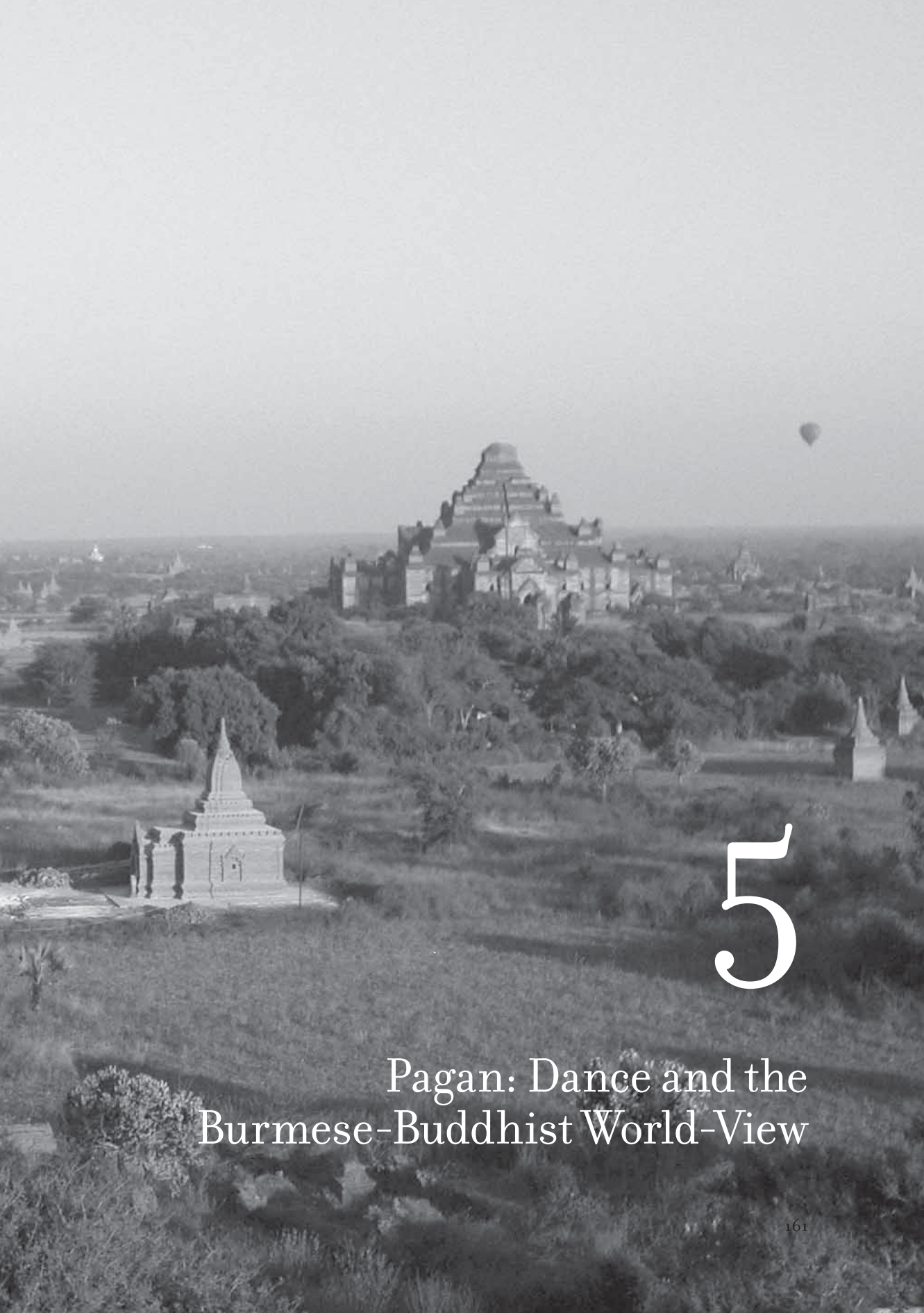
The specific group of dance images, depicted in medallions in the so-called Tapestry Reliefs, includes several kinds of dancing figures. Among them can be recognised the flexed open-leg position and the dynamic movements of the female dancers. However, they also show some dancing figures which do not seem to fit the main categories of Khmer dance imagery. They can be explained by the fact that the Tapestry Reliefs are indeed based on contemporaneous textiles. At least in Ayutthaya, the inheritor of the Khmer legacy, textiles based on Thai models were made in India and then imported from there. It seems that this was the practice in Angkor as well, which could explain why they include some dance poses that were uncommon in Khmer imagery. Either they can be influenced by the tradition of the country of the origin of the textiles or they were misinterpretations by craftsmen who were not familiar with Khmer dance and iconography.

Finally, when turning to the main question of this study, i.e. what the dance images reveal when examined in their architectural context, the key answer lies in the Meru symbolism of the temple complex. As discussed in previous chapters, it is agreed that at the symbolic level Angkor Wat represents the five-peaked Mount Meru with its surrounding seas and mountain ranges. Vertically, this cosmological whole forms a tripartite structure which is completely ethicised i.e. the good beings move upward while the bad ones fall. This also gives the poses and movements of figures depicted within it a kind of moral quality. In Angkor Wat this hierarchy of movement can be summarised as follows:

The movement is aggressive and powerful in the outer and lower parts of the complex as well as in the lowest registers of its tripartite panels. The demons in the Hell scenes repeat the open-flexed martial-arts-related poses of the warriors. Also, the dancing female figures of these

levels, whether humans or heavenly apsaras execute their dance in an energetic way. Thus the qualities of movement on the lower levels could be described as aggressive, energetic, earthly and sensuous. On the other hand in the middle levels of the complex, for example in the Large Panels, most of the dance image types typical of Khmer art are found as the gods intermingle with humans and demons.

On the uppermost levels of the complex, which reflects the tripartite cosmological hierarchy, the movements slow down. Only the feet of their sole inhabitants, the heavenly devatas, and their restrained gestures hint at some perceptible motion. Thus the qualities of movement on the uppermost realms are restricted to the noble, slow and almost static ones only until the movement finally ceases.



5

Pagan: Dance and the Burmese-Buddhist World-View

5

Pagan: Dance and the Burmese-Buddhist World-View

Pagan, at a bend of the Irrawaddy River in the dry zone of Upper Burma, is, with its almost 3000 recorded brick monuments, the world's largest archaeological site related to Buddhism¹. During its heyday, in the 11th to 13th century, it was a big, international metropolis and a centre of political and religious life. The murals of the temples suggest that monasteries and palaces made of teak as well as more modest bamboo houses, such as those that can still be seen in remote villages, were scattered among brick-constructed religious monuments.

The founders of the greatness of Pagan were Burmese who are believed to have emigrated from South China to the Irrawaddy river area at some time in the 9th and the 10th centuries. According to the famous 19th century Burmese chronicle, the "Glass Palace Chronicle of Burmese Kings", the dynastic history of Pagan started in 1044 when King Anawrahta rose to power². The dynastic line of altogether twelve kings continued until 1298 when the political centre was shifted to the north of Pagan, first to Pinya and later to Ava, which was to remain the country's capital from 1365 to 1557. In spite of the loss of its political power Pagan has continued to serve as an important religious centre until our times. Religious buildings were also constructed there during later periods and even the much debated, controversial rebuilding campaign of Pagan, started by the present government in the early 1990s, is to some extent based on the continuity of the local religious tradition³.

Before the arrival of the Burmese, Pagan was most probably a Pyu settlement. The predominantly Buddhist Pyu culture, discussed in Chapter 3.6, had flourished in the early centuries A.D. in large areas of Upper Burma. The Pyu capital of Srikshetra was destroyed by an invasion from Yunnan in the mid 9th century, at approximately the same time as a fortified city following the typical Pyu design was founded in the place where Pagan was later to grow. The Pyu influence on Pagan is undeniable. It is believed that some of Pagan's monuments were built

over earlier Pyu buildings, which is supported by the fact that thousands of Pyu-type bricks have been found there (Stadtner 2005, 21).

Another source of influence was the Mon culture with its centre in the south-eastern part of present-day Myanmar. Like the Pyu the Mon also shared the Buddhist religion originally received from India. The Mon influence on the culture of Pagan was at least in some respects considerable. The early inscriptions were written in Mon language and it is known that Mon priests held important posts in the palace of Pagan⁴.

Pagan was a natural junction of trade routes and thus also of cultural exchange. Besides the Pyu and Mon impact, influence from different parts of India, Sri Lanka, and to a lesser degree from China shaped the culture of Pagan. The Mon delta trading posts, which served the Southern Silk Road connecting China to Southeast Asia and further to India and the Mediterranean world, were not far away. Contacts with South China were also possible via the land route connecting Burma with Yunnan. Of all contacts the most dominant were those with India, since they brought both Buddhism and Brahmanism to Pagan, as well as traditions of literature and artistic prototypes.

The peak of the Pagan period from the 11th to the early 13th century was a time of political expansion. Power was centralised and labour was imported from the surrounding territories. Society was based on a kind of caste system in which the community was hierarchically regimented into occupation-related groups (Strachan 1996, 19). On the lowest level were the temple slaves. The elite consisted of nobles and heads of monasteries, whereas at the top of the hierarchy stood the king, whose absolute power was legitimised by the Indian-derived cosmology and the exalted conception of kingship.

According to the Theravada Buddhist tradition, wealth should be distributed to the *sangha* or religious community by acts of merit to ensure oneself a good karma. The most effective way of merit making was the construction of religious buildings. This explains the enormous number of religious monuments of different sizes and shapes found in Pagan. The richer the donor, the mightier buildings he or she ordered to be constructed. The monuments were finished with sculptures, stucco reliefs and mural paintings which provide all the Pagan period dance images discussed below.

The eclipse of Pagan has traditionally been attributed to the Mongol invasion in the late 1280s. However, it is now admitted that there is no historical evidence to support the theory that the Mongols seized the city of Pagan (Stadtner 2005, 26). The reasons for the shift of power to the north are not exactly known. Michael Aung-Thwin has suggested that it was exactly the merit-making tradition which gradually led to the decline of Pagan. According to him the *sangha* grew richer and richer while the revenues on which the power of the court and government rested were drained and this made Pagan "a tempting object of plunder for enemy as well as tributary states" (1985, 28).

5.1 The Belief System of Pagan

The predominant religion in the belief system of Pagan was Theravada Buddhism, which reached its institutionalised form in Pagan during the reign of King Alaungsithu (1113–1169/70). Other

ingredients were Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism (Aung-Thwin 1985, 24). No traces, however, of the existence of any spirit worship of *nats* or spirits, so popular in Burma later, have been found from the Pagan period (Stadtner 2005, 37).

Theravada Buddhism was probably received first from South India in its Sanskrit form and from the 12th century onward from Sri Lanka in its Pali form, once the contacts between the countries were established. The core of the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism, i.e. everyday rules for the monks, the sayings of the Buddha and the actual philosophy, are included in the *Tripitaka* or the "Pali Canon". An integral part of Theravada Buddhism is the biography of the Gautama Buddha, which has survived in several yet surprisingly similar variants. In Pagan the most popular version of the biography was the 5th or 6th century Nidanakatha received from Sri Lanka (Ibid., 30–32). The Nidanakatha, as well as other biographies, describes the turning points and great events of the Buddha's life, which serve as the subject matter of much of Buddhist art in Pagan as elsewhere in Asia.

The *Jatakas* or stories of previous births of the historical Buddha, included in the Pali canon, were also an important source of subject matter for the artists of Pagan. These highly didactic stories illustrate the moral virtues of the Buddha's previous incarnations, which gradually led to the final enlightenment. The Pagan Jataka tradition is believed to be based on the Sri Lankan series of 547 stories, although in Pagan three more Jatakas were added to the collection (Bautze-Picron 2003, 68–78). In Pagan, as well as in other Buddhist cultures in Southeast Asia, the last ten Jatakas are especially venerated as a collection called the *Mahanipata*.

Besides the historical Gautama Buddha, the Buddhas of previous ages were also venerated. The number of these varies in different traditions. In the Pagan period the number totalled 28, the Gautama Buddha being the last of them. The life stories of these previous Buddhas followed the basic line of Gautama's biography, although in visual representation each of them is seated under a different kind of tree at their moment of enlightenment. The last four of the 28 Buddhas form a specific group often venerated in Pagan temples, each one facing a different direction. They are the Buddhas of our present age. Besides the Buddhas of the past and present Maitreya or the Buddha of the future was also included in the belief system, which resulted in an exceptional grouping of five Buddhas.

Mahayana Buddhist themes such as *bodhisattvas* can also be found among the murals of the temples. However, there is no evidence that actual Mahayana worship was practised. It is now believed that the Mahayana influence was limited to motifs and the style of art, which were adopted from East India, especially from the Pala kingdom with the Nalanda monastery-university as its religious centre. The Pala influence on Pagan art can be recognised in many fields, in sculpture, painting and architecture.

Pagan had close contacts with religious centres of East India, especially Bodhgaya with its famous temple commemorating the Buddha's enlightenment. Burmese craftsmen participated in its repairs and maintenance (Stadtner 2005, 150) and a replica of it was built in Pagan. The Mahayana elements were smoothly adapted to form an organic part of the otherwise Theravada-dominated religion and imagery. Moreover, it has been pointed out that the whole theoretical division between different Buddhist sects, as often emphasised by 20th century scholars, probably did not even exist during the Pagan period.

Indian influence on the Pagan belief system was not limited only to Buddhism. Also Brahmanic and later Hindu elements found their ways to Pagan, at least to a certain degree. From the time of the birth of the Buddhist art tradition in the second and the third century A.D. Brahmanic deities were already depicted in the Buddhist context and some of them were included in the Buddhist cosmology as well. Actually, Brahmanic elements were present in Pagan from the earliest times, probably due to the older Pyu tradition. There was also a settlement of Indian traders in Pagan, although only one Hindu temple has survived.

It is believed (Aung-Thwin 1985, 34–36) that the Brahmanic-Hindu influence was strongest in court circles. Court ceremonies and rituals were Hindu in character and they were often performed by Brahman priests. Coronation ceremonies were celebrated by enacting the story of the Churning of the Milky Ocean as a Indraphisekha play and, for instance, King Kyanzittha (1084–1113) traced his descent from Vishnu. In one inscription he was even identified with the family of Prince Rama (Stadtner 2005, 38). Thus the Brahmanic-Hindu elements seem to have served the political need to legitimise the king's power more than the religious life of ordinary people. However, some Hindu deities found their way to Pagan's religious imagery. Like the Mahayana motifs, they were also adjusted to the local belief system.

While clearly Buddhist in origin, Burmese cosmology combines elements from all the above-mentioned religions. This is recorded and illustrated in numerous post-Pagan manuscripts, but most probably that was already the case, in one form or another, during the Pagan period (Herbert 2002, 77). Like the celebrated Thai cosmology, the *Traiphum*, which was discussed in Chapter 3.3, the Burmese universe was also divided into three basic levels, that of the material world in which the law of karma still applies, the corporeal world and finally the world of formlessness. All these states were further divided into sub-levels, altogether 31 in number.

While the exact sources of Burmese cosmology are not known its general structure is common with the other Buddhist cosmologies. However, local flavour was given in the post-Pagan times, for example, by the Burmese nat spirits as well as by the multi-tiered *pythat* towers of Burmese wooden palaces and monasteries, the former residing above the world of men, the latter representing, in the illustrated manuscripts, celestial abodes. Whatever the form in which the cosmology was known during the Pagan period, it clearly provided an ethicised, hierarchical structure, which is reflected in Pagan's religious monuments and their iconographical programmes.

5.2 Stupas, Temples and their Function

The two main types of Pagan's religious monuments are the solid *stupas* and the temples with interior spaces. As already discussed in Chapter 3.2 the stupa originates from early Indian hemispherical mounds crowned by multiple stone umbrellas. They were constructed to enshrine relics, which was the function of Pagan's stupas as well. In Burmese a stupa is called *zedi*. The earliest stupas found in Burma are often related to the Pyu culture (Aung-Thwin 2005, 210). However, according to more recent studies, only one surviving zedi can safely be dated to the Pyu period (Stadtner 1998, 47). Its tapering cylindrical shape is repeated in some of Pagan's zedi structures, echoing a possible continuation of the Pyu tradition.



FIG 5/1
SHWEZIGON STUPA. STRACHAN 1996.

Influence from East Indian Pala architecture is evident in many of Pagan's zedis. The Sri Lankan stupa type may also have influenced the stupa architecture of Pagan, but to a lesser degree than the Pala prototypes. Zedis in Pagan varied greatly in shape and size from the bulbous, probably Pyu-influenced ones to the domed Pala-influenced ones. However, no linear stylistic development can be traced in the Pagan's stupa architecture (Aung-Thwin 2005, 2006). The largest zedis were often designed in a bell shape, such as the famous Shwezigon [5/1]. The bell-shaped stupa became the landmark of Burmese architecture, culminating later in the 15th century Shwedagon in Rangoon.

The impression created by the hundreds of monuments of Pagan is that of diversity. However, according to their ground plan, the basic temple types can be divided into two groups, that with a solid core encircled by a corridor [5/2] and that with an open vaulted temple chamber, also often surrounded by a corridor⁵ [5/3]. Furthermore, the temples can be grouped according to the number of their entrances. The most common type, the one-faced temple, has only one main entrance, usually facing east and resulting in an asymmetric ground plan. Another type, the four-faced, has four entrances facing the main directions and having a more or less symmetric ground plan. Variation is created by the differing sizes and shapes of the entrance halls and the corridors.

Some of the largest of Pagan's temples, such as Sulamani, Htilominlo and Thatbyinnyu, have two stories [5/4], although their ground plan follows the model of the ordinary, one-storied solid core type. In these temples a square hall is built on top of the solid core of the ground floor. The largest temples are traditionally dated to the 11th and 12th centuries, but due to the lack of temple inscriptions the exact building date of only a very few temples is actually known. A feature unique to Burmese temple architecture is the pentagonal ground plan. Its appearance was due to the worship of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, together with the four Buddhas of our era, which created the need for five cult figures, each facing its own entrance hall.

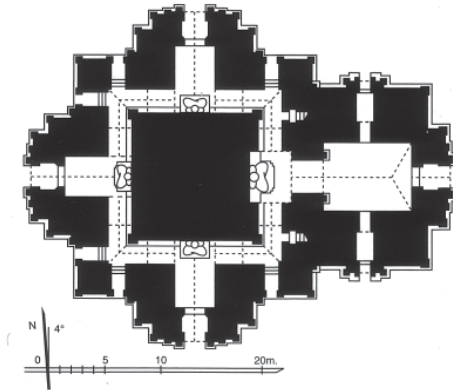


FIG 5/2
SOLID-CORE TEMPLE TYPE: TAYOKPYI TEMPLE.
SRADTNER 2005.

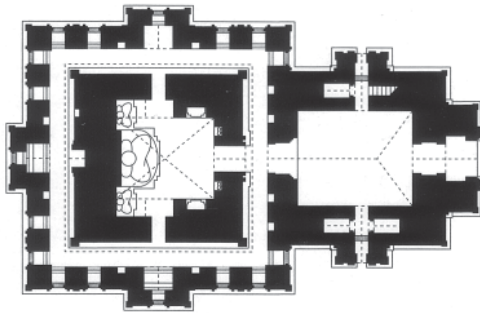


FIG 5/3
HOLLOW-CORE TEMPLE TYPE: PAHTOTHAMYA
TEMPLE. SRADTNER 2005.

The imposing interiors of many temples would not have been technically possible without the masterful knowledge of vaulting technique, unusual in Southeast Asia. The Pagan architects and master builders used several vaulting techniques, the cloistered vault, the barrel vault, the cupola, the $\frac{3}{4}$ barrel, and the $\frac{1}{2}$ barrel and adapted them according to their suitability for various parts of the buildings (Aung-Thwin 2005, 217). The number of bricks needed in the construction was enormous. It is estimated, for example, that the building of the largest temple, Dhammayazika, required some six million bricks (Stadtner 2005, 55).

The outerwalls of the early temples had rows of small windows, creating a shadowy atmosphere in the interior spaces. Later, the windows as well as the doorways grew in size, increasing the light in the interiors. Another development was the growth of the doorway projections, which came to dominate the architecture and provided long halls with their own facades on each side of the building (Ibid., 64). The impression of the diversity of forms in the temples is further emphasised by a rich variation in their superstructures. In fact, they can be divided into two main groups, those derived from the form of a stupa and those based on the shape of a *sikhara*, the curvilinear temple tower developed in North India.

It is not known from where exactly in India the form of the sikhara tower was adopted but the most probable source seems to be Pala India. The Pala influence stretched from c. 750 to 1200 and covered large areas from present-day Bihar to Bengal. However, as extremely little has

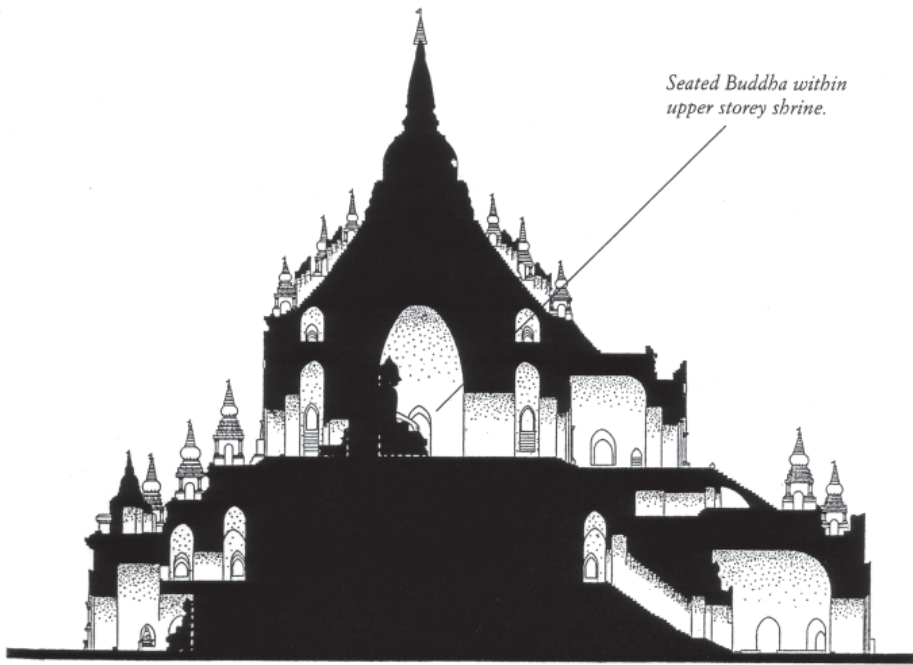


FIG 5/4 TWO-STORIED TEMPLE TYPE: THATBYINNYU TEMPLE. SRADTNER 2005.

survived from Pala architecture, there is no exact evidence that the Pala kingdom was the source of Pagan *sikharas*. The Indian influence is also reflected in the Burmese name for a temple. They are called *gu* or *ku*, which is related to the Pali and Sanskrit word *guha* meaning a cave. The basic symbolism of both the stupa and the *sikhara* is deeply rooted in the idea of Mount Meru, emphasising the cosmological connotation of the temple buildings.

In Burma both the stupa and the temple are called *hpaya*. It is a word used for sacred objects of worship, such as a Buddha statue, a votive tablet, a temple, a stupa or even the king (Strachan 1996, 10). A religious monument was a kind of merit-producing machine in itself. The act of its construction was already an act of merit-making. Temples were built by the kings as well as by members of their families, officials and merchants for the accumulation of good karma. The amount of *hpaya* was increased by the placing of relics and votive objects, such as small Buddha reliefs, inside the stupas, into the solid cores of the temples and inside the Buddha statues of stuccoed brick. It was believed that a religious monument emanated its sacredness, benefiting not only its builder but the whole world.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the actual rituals which took place in the temples. The fact that they are called *gu* or *ku*, denoting a cave, seems to indicate that the earliest prototypes of Pagan's one-faced temples were the Buddhist cave temples of North India. This, together with some of the surviving inscriptions, supports the idea that the early rituals were

related to Indian *bhakti* practices, in which the devotee focuses his or her loving attention on a religious image. The image is adored, dressed and treated as the most honoured guest. Indeed, the surviving inscriptions list not only the ritual food offerings donated to temples, but also the necessary garments for a Buddha statue including, for example, an outer robe, an inner garment, a gold couch, bed covers and pillows, a betel box etc. (Strachan 1996, 17).

Whether the ritual circumambulation of the buildings took place in Pagan is uncertain. It has been a part of rituals in some Buddhist cultures, and the basement terraces of Pagan's stupas and the encircling corridors of many temples would have also made this ritual possible in Pagan. However, access to the upper terraces of the temples was very difficult and no literary evidence exists to support the idea that the circumambulation formed a part of the religious rituals in Pagan.

Paul Strachan speculates that the rather plain temple interiors of today were "cluttered with regal objects and requisites, a clamour of activity as food offerings were shuttled from the kitchens down passageways crowded with chanting devotees, to be offered to the rousing din of xylophones, drums and castanets, amidst the lustrous blaze of brightly coloured wall paintings, gilded furnishings and flapping banners and hangings" (Ibid., 17). Among all these activities dance was also performed, as is indicated by several reliefs and murals discussed on the following pages.

5.3 The Iconographical Programmes of the Temples

To further enhance the sacredness of the temples, cult images were placed on the altars and in the corridors and their walls were covered with reliefs and murals. The materials and techniques included reliefs made of stucco, ceramics, wood and stone as well as full-round sculptures made of stone, brick and wood. The inner temple walls were covered with murals. Dance images were created by all these media. Before one focuses on the actual dance images, it is useful to discuss the overall visual programmes to which they belong. They will be examined, starting from the temple exteriors and continuing to the interiors.

The most common technique used on the exteriors of the temples is stucco. In fact all the brick temples were wholly covered with it. Much of the stuccoed walls were, however, left plain, the ornamental reliefs mostly concentrated in the lower and, especially, upper friezes and around the windows and doorways. The roof terraces were often decorated with architectural elements such as miniature stupas, horizontal and vertical extensions etc. The most common theme in the uppermost registers is the frightening yet auspicious lion-like head of a *kirtimukha*, a common motif in Pala art and also found in other Hindu-Buddhist cultures in Southeast Asia. Certain kinds of loops, composed of strings of pearls or flowers, sprout out from the *kirtimukhas*' mouths, joining the heads together with a continuous ornamental motif. Inside these loops there are floral designs. Sometimes geese or human figures, in one case even dancing ones, are shown beneath this basic pattern [5/5].

The windows and the doors framed by architectural motifs are topped by waved arches with crocodile-like *makara* heads at the ends. *Makara* is another mythical creature common in Buddhist art in India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. The arches are decorated with vertical,



FIG 5/5 STUCCO FRIEZE FROM THE C.12TH–13TH CENTURY MAHABODHI TEMPLE, PROBABLY REFURBISHED IN THE 20TH CENTURY. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

flame-like projections and against their background there are often horizontal terrace-like registers, again a theme common in Pala art. The decoration of the lowest part of the walls is simpler, consisting mainly of upward-pointing triangular patterns with floral designs. Sometimes the stucco decoration also includes motifs like deities, seated Buddhas in various mudras, ogres, vases etc.

In spite of some variation, the motifs of the stucco reliefs in Pagan were rather uniform and also long-lasting; they are also common in later periods. However, according to Donald M. Stadtner (2005, 48–49), two successive styles can be distinguished in the Pagan period ornamentation. The earlier one, characterised by its boldness and its execution in high relief, continued until about the second half of the 12th century. From then on until the 13th century, the prevailing style was executed as low relief and had a kind of “lace-like” character. To a lesser degree the stucco ornamentation also continues in the interiors of the temples concentrating there mainly in the frames of the niches and entrances as well as in the thrones of the Buddha statues.

A narrative-didactic element was added to the exteriors of many stupas and some of the temples, such as the 11th–12th century Ananda temple, by ceramic tiles. They show mythical creatures in relief, such as animal-headed deities, and monstrous members of Mara’s army. However, the most common theme is the Jatakas [5/6]. That is why these ceramic *estampages* are commonly known as “Jataka tiles” and there are thousands of them in Pagan. They are glazed most often with various shades of green⁶. The scene shown on a tile is usually identified by means of a short description written either in Mon or Old Burmese characters on its lower frame.



FIG 5/6
GLAZED JATAKA TILE WITH
A DANCING FIGURE FROM
THE 12TH CENTURY FIVE-SIDED
STUPA OF DHAMMA-YAZIKA.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.



FIG 5/7
DANCING FIGURE FROM THE
CENTRAL SECTION OF THE
PAGAN-PERIOD WOODEN DOOR,
NOW IN THE COMPOUND OF
THE SHWEZIGON STUPA IN
PAGAN.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

The tiles in the Ananda temple are arranged so that the deities march along the east face of temple's base and Mara's army marches along the west face, creating a dramatic tension between the positive and negative elements and recalling the moments just before the Buddha's enlightenment. One of the largest series of Jataka tiles survives on the upper roof terraces. The first 137 Jatakas are each represented by a single tile, whereas almost 400 tiles are dedicated to the last ten Jatakas.

Considering the didactic nature of the Jatakas and the fact that each tile includes a written description, it would be natural to assume that Ananda's tiles also served a didactic purpose. However, because access to the upper terraces is difficult and restricted it is possible that the tiles were not meant to be seen, but had a more iconic-kind of function, that is to enhance the sacredness of the monument. The case was probably the same with many of the murals, which were executed in the very narrow and dark passages of the interiors (Brown 1997).

One original Pagan-period wooden doorway has survived to give information about this intermediary element connecting the exterior to the interior⁷. It was found in 1922 and is now on display within the compound of the Shwezigon stupa. It is four metres high and decorated with carved reliefs showing musicians and dancers [5/7]. Wood was a prominent material in Pagan and it is known that large wooden monasteries also existed among the brick monuments (Fraser-Lu 2001, 27)

The main function of Pagan temples was the worship of a Buddha statue. In a solid-core-type temple the principal image was placed against the wall facing the entrance hall. In the hollow-core temple it was placed in the sanctum hall, likewise facing the entrance. The principal Buddha statue is most often shown seated in the earth-touching gesture (*bhumisparsamudra*) denoting the moment before the Buddha's enlightenment when he defeated the demon Mara. It is still the most common mudra in Burmese Buddha representations today. The whole temple was designed to focus on this central image, which was the object of the bhakti-kind of worship of the devotees visiting the temple.

The principal statues are large in size and thus they are most often made of brick, covered with stucco and painted. As mentioned before, they contained votive objects and have often been pierced by treasure hunters of the later centuries. Smaller statues, either made in the same technique or sculpted in stone, were placed in ritually less important spaces, such as the encircling walls of the sanctum and the corridors. A theme often repeated in the sanctum walls of temples is the twenty-eight Buddhas of the past.

As Pagan Buddhism was predominantly a form of the Theravada school, the main Buddha statue is consequently usually the historical Gautama Buddha. However, because of the Mahayana influence, the main statue can sometimes also represent one of the four Buddhas of our era, or Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. As mentioned before, they were occasionally worshipped together in a group of five Buddhas.

Sometimes sculptures, or rather high reliefs, show scenes from the Buddha's life. They are based on the various biographies of the Buddha already discussed earlier. In the Ananda temple an exceptional series of eighty stone sculptures describing the important moments in the Buddha's life is scattered on the walls of its encircling corridor. Besides the Buddhas or scenes from the Buddha's life, other motifs were also executed as sculptures. They include large

standing male figures, most probably bodhisattvas adopted from the Mahayana iconography of Pala art. Buddha's disciples were sometimes also represented by statues.

The style of sculpture was dominated by Indian Gupta and later, especially, by Pala prototypes. However, these styles were quickly localised. There are different views about the stylistic development of Pagan sculpture. For the purpose of this work it may be sufficient to draw a very rough outline of the development. The stylistic phases can be observed better in stone sculpture, since most of the large brick and stucco statues have been rebuilt in recent times. The early phase was dominated by stylised, sharp and accentuated features. By the mid-12th century, the bodies broadened and became shorter, while the faces grew rounder (Strachan 1996, 25). Many Buddha statues in Pagan, however, originate from later periods or are heavily restored and this sometimes creates a stylistic confusion.

The walls of the temples were covered by murals. Much has been destroyed by time, by later additions and by the climate. Owing to the relatively dry climatic conditions in Pagan, a great number of murals have, however, survived in considerably good shape. Of the over 900 temples built from the 11th to 14th century almost 350 still have parts of murals left (Stadtner 2005, 79). They were painted with the *fresco secco* or the dry-fresco technique by the use of, most probably, cloth paintings as models. Before the actual execution of the dry-fresco painting the walls were divided into grids by horizontal and vertical lines. The small squares either could be used as frames for smaller paintings, such as Jataka scenes, or were employed to ensure the symmetry of bigger compositions. Inscriptions in Mon, Sanskrit, Pali or Burmese were often written beneath the scenes to explain the action shown.

The statues and the murals together form organic visual programmes. The *bodhi* tree, for example, in the background of a three-dimensional cult-statue of the Gautama Buddha, was often painted on the wall as were other types of trees attributed to the twenty-eight Buddhas of the past. Thus the visual programme, which liturgically focused on the cult statue, continued smoothly on the temple walls as murals. The programmes were based on the seemingly endless supply of subject matter provided by the Pali Canon, the Jatakas, cosmology and other doctrines adapted to Pagan Theravada Buddhism. Although the murals follow certain strict iconographic rules, no temple is identical with another one. The distribution of themes, the colour schemes etc. differ drastically.

Stylistically, the murals can be roughly divided into two phases. According to Stadtner (2005, 85–87) the early style from the late 11th or the early 12th to the beginning of the 13th century was clearly connected with the Pala pictorial conventions, still verifiable in surviving Pala palm-leaf manuscripts. The interior walls were only used as a flat surface to display paintings and statues placed in niches. The second phase, from the beginning of the 13th century, aimed to create an illusion of three-dimensional architecture by imitating arches, pillars and pilasters among which the paintings were now placed. Overlapping motifs, growing out from their former frames, appeared and large panels with Buddha figures reflecting the possible influence of Tibetan and Nepalese cloth paintings or *thangkas* were executed in prominent places.

Besides the actual Buddha panels, the Gautama Buddha is often depicted in other iconographic programmes as well. The sermons delivered by him, the flaming Buddha motif

and the Buddha reclining on cosmic waters are often repeated themes. The renderings of the Buddha's life, however, are the most popular themes in the narrative series. These regularly show the main events of his life, such as the four encounters after his departure from the palace, the awakening and beginning of his teaching career, his eight miraculous deeds, and finally his demise. When the lives of the Buddhas of the past are visualised, their biographies follow the same outline as the life of the Gautama Buddha. The Buddha iconography seems to be based predominantly on Sri Lankan textual sources whereas its style is strongly related to the Northeast Indian Pala visual tradition.

The Jatakas also provide subject matter for the narrative-didactic painting series besides the events of the Buddha's life. They can be distributed on the walls of the inner shrine or they can form a kind of pictorial frame for a Buddha figure in a large panel or they can be distributed as a frieze in a lower part of the wall. Very often, however, the Jatakas are painted as series of small rectangular panels in the entrance halls of the temples. The style of these small paintings is almost pictographic in character, somewhat resembling modern comic strips. In many of the iconographical programmes they seem to have a kind of "preparatory" role, creating an impression that the lives of the previous Buddhas were "leading to the historical existence of the Buddha" (Bautze-Picron 2003, 72).

The visual programmes include many subsidiary themes, such as the Mahayana-derived bodhisattvas. Their identities are not always clear. They often serve as guardian figures of the principal statue or flank the entrances. Brahmanic gods and semi-gods frequently appear in the programmes as they have done in Buddhist art since the early centuries A.D. The gods most often portrayed are Indra and Brahma, who both play a central role in the lore concerning the Buddha. Monks can be seen everywhere in paintings. They are depicted in the paintings showing events of the Buddha's life and often they kneel and venerate the central image of the Buddha. A theme which outgrew its original context in Pagan is Mara's attacking army. It usually belongs to the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment, but in Pagan it sometimes forms an independent and highly dramatic motif by itself.

These main iconographical themes are flanked by ornamental motifs among which smaller mythological creatures are often shown. These "ornamental" motifs include several architectural shapes as well as foliage, creepers, lotuses, other flowers and some abstract motifs, such as pointed obovals. The mythological figures include, among others, kirtimukha heads, makaras, flying human figures, small bodhisattvas, dancers, couples making love and kinnaris. The kinnari and kinnara figures in Pagan are mostly shown as composite creatures combining the lower part of a bird's body with a human torso and head. All these motifs have their important roles in creating the impression of the supernatural beauty of a heavenly palace.

The iconographical programmes also include themes hinting at yet another interpretation of the temple. It is not only a metaphor for the heavenly palace, but it can also be seen as the cosmic body of the Buddha. The cosmological motifs include the sun and the moon, above which Buddha is often seated. They include also direct elements from the Buddhist cosmology, such as Mount Meru and its heavenly lakes. The Buddha's footprints with their 108 auspicious signs are frequently shown on the ceilings of the entrance halls and central wings. They recall the presence of the Buddha above the devotee (Bautze-Picron 2003, 26-27).

The ultimate goal of the visual programmes of Pagan's temples could be summarised in the words of Claudine Bautze-Picron:

The overwhelming ornamentation was perceived as a prayer to the Buddha and his teachings; it shows how monuments were thought of as reflections of the cosmos and of the Buddhahood. The richness of the decoration transforms these temples into heavenly palaces, propelling the devotee into another dimension: he stands in the infinite and eternal universe with the world of the gods above his head, and the history of Buddhism from the unknown beginning of the universe to the unbounded future all around him. (Ibid., 208)

5.4 Dance Depicted

Before turning to the dance images and their distribution in the visual programmes of the temples, it is the time to consider what kind of dance or dance poses are depicted in these images. Dance images in Pagan's temples are numerous indeed. They are executed in all the media known in Pagan art, i.e. as stucco reliefs, glazed Jataka tiles, wooden reliefs and, above all, as murals. Considering the categories of dance images discussed in Chapter 2.3, most of them are either still *in situ* in the temple context (III), or at least have belonged to it even if now in museums. Further, some of them belong to the narrative context (II) although most of them belong to the type of various portrayals of dancers (B). It is noteworthy that most Pagan art is still in Myanmar, either in Pagan or at the National Museum in Rangoon as well as in some smaller museums.

No actual dancing gods (D) can be found, but some of the semi-gods belonging to the Buddhist cosmology (C) are depicted in the familiar dance-related flying pose discussed several times before. (Bautze-Picron 2003, plate 174). Many murals and some of the base reliefs of Buddha statues show portrayals of (A) dance scenes. The precision of the portrayal of dance poses varies greatly. For example, on the glazed Jataka tiles the poses and their details [5/6], such as the positions of the hands and the fingers, are rather roughly portrayed, whereas in some of the stone reliefs and paintings the execution is sharp and explicit [5/15].

A common theme among the dance images are dancing musicians. Sometimes they are shown together with dancers who are taking part in a celebration, such as a religious procession [5/8, 5/9] (Luce 1969, plate 241). The male musicians play instruments, such as drums, conch shells and cymbals and they are portrayed in extremely energetic poses in the stretched, wide open-leg position, which enables change in the weight of the body from side to side. The impression is that of a lively, dynamic dance.

There is no doubt that the performances of these dancing musicians belong to the same widespread genre of processional dances which lives to this day, for example, in Manipur, bordering Burma, and in Sri Lanka, with which Pagan had close religious contacts. In Manipur the processions are performed in a Hindu context, whereas in Lanka they belong to the same Theravada Buddhist tradition as in Pagan. The most famous of the many Buddhist processions of Sri Lanka is the annual Kandy Perahera, during which the revered relic, the Buddha's tooth,



FIG 5/8
DANCING MUSICIANS, COPIES OF MURALS.
LUCE, 1969.



FIG 5/9
FEMALE DANCER, COPY OF A MURAL.
LUCE 1969.

is brought out of its temple and carried by an elephant around the city of Kandy. The majestic procession is accompanied by dancers and dancing musicians [5/10]. The instruments played by the musicians are similar to the ones in the Pagan murals.

Many of the dancers of the murals, most often females, shown as either dancing together with the musicians (Luce 1969, plate 166 c) or alone or in group formation, are depicted in the standard position with open-bent legs and one uplifted foot [5/9]. This position is common for example among the apsaras of Angkor Wat. This position, its connection with Indian tradition and its spread throughout Southeast Asia is discussed in depth in Chapter 2, where Kapila Vatsyayan was already quoted pointing out that "...it would appear that in the ninth century

the whole region, ranging from Western India and Burma to Cambodia and Java, had evolved a dance-style which followed identical principles of movement” (1977b, 3).

This open-leg position of female dancers has, however, disappeared from present-day Burmese dance. As Noel F. Singer has noted (1995, 2) the posture in which the legs are held open and bent at the knees, so characteristic of Pagan dance images, is “avoided by modern Burmese female dancers”. This may be due to changes in etiquette and, consequently, in costume. In the post-Pagan period the female dance costume has imitated a court dress marked by a long and narrow lower garment, which simply makes it impossible to execute an open-leg position. The elasticity of the lower body is now, however, ensured by a deep S-like curve of the legs and the back.

Some of the female dancers in the murals of Pagan are shown in more complicated positions, which recall the poses of Indian classical dances, such as *bharatanatyam* of Tamil Nadu or *odissi* of Orissa, East India [5/11] (Bautze-Picron 2003, plates 145 and 188). A remarkable dance image can be found in one of the decorative roundels situated below the window openings in the Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi temple, built in 1113. It shows a scantily dressed female dancer and a male drummer, also in a dance pose [5/12]. The fluidity of their slim bodies gives the painting an erotic atmosphere. The elastic curve of the torso, the downward pointing resting hand and the upper arm bent back connects the painting with the classical Indian solo dance forms, such



FIG 5/10
THE VES DANCE, THE MOST
FAMOUS OF THE KANDYAN
DANCES, SRI LANKA.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.



FIG 5/11
FLORAL BAND WITH
DANCING FIGURES,
HPAYATHONZU TEMPLE.
BAUTZE - PICRON 2003.



FIG 5/12 ROUNDEL PAINTING WITH A FEMALE DANCER AND A MALE DRUMMER FROM THE 12TH CENTURY KUBYAUKGYI (MYINKABA) TEMPLE. STRACHAN 1996.

as *odissi*. The similarity with the contemporary Indian tradition becomes clear if this roundel painting is compared, for example, with the famous dancing figure in one of the surviving murals of the 12TH century Thanjavur Shiva temple in South India.

The Myingkaba Kubyaukgyi temple happens to be the earliest dated temple in Pagan. As discussed above, the early style of Pagan mural painting, to which this roundel thus belongs, is marked by more or less direct loans from Pala art. Whether this dynamic dance scene also belongs to the iconographical repertoire borrowed from Pala art is a crucial question. This is supported by the observation by Stadtner that states that

The painted roundels with dancing figures at the Kubyauk-gyi temple (Myinkaba) bear an uncanny resemblance to roundels found among the 11TH century painting at Alchi in the Ladakh region of Kashmir. Such a similarity is more than coincidental, since both regions were eager recipients of Pala influence. (2005, 74)

This could indicate two things: firstly, that the dance figures depicted in the roundels are simply motifs adopted from Pala iconography. Secondly, it can also be proof that there existed in the whole region of Pala cultural sphere an Indian-influenced dance tradition of its own. As it happened to Pala architecture and to Pala culture as a whole, the dance tradition may also have disappeared from Northeast India at some time by the mid-13TH century. Thus Pagan could have

been the heir of this dance tradition as it was the heir of many other Pala influences as well. This could explain the strong Indian flavour still to be felt in present-day Burmese dance. The footwork, many of the body and arm positions as well as the eye and neck movements repeated in the classical dance training series are clearly related to the Indian tradition. Certainly, the technique and the general style are localised and unmistakably Burmese in character.

One speciality, which gives present-day Burmese dance its specific character, is the angularity of the arm movements. According to the Pyu dance image already discussed this quality seems to have been already present in the Pyu period. As in other fields of the arts, the Pyu influence also was felt in music, as is shown by an inscription written to commemorate the building of King Kyanzittha's (1084–1113) palace. It informs us that during the celebrations people were "singing Myanma songs, Mon songs and Pyu songs"⁸. Thus it seems plausible that the Pyu dance tradition was also adopted by the Burmese during the Pagan period (Zaw Pale & Khin Win New 1998, 55). Consequently, present-day Burmese dance could include elements not only from the extinct Northeast Indian dance tradition but also from the indigenous Pyu tradition. There were further influences later from the Thai capital of Ayutthaya when the Burmese seized it first in 1758 and again in 1767 and brought Ayutthaya's court artists to Ava (Mattani 1993, 21).

In a dance pose frequently shown in Pagan temples one leg of the dancer is strongly bent towards the back [5/13] (Bautze-Picron 2003, plate 185). The torso is curved backwards and the face turned to the backwards bent foot. Acrobatic poses, perhaps related to this, can be found in a series of Indian *karana* reliefs in the Chidambaram temple in South India, discussed in Chapter 2.3. However, there are obvious differences. Compared with the *karanas*, in Pagan art the dancer's torso is often more strongly curved. The face is turned towards the bent foot, whereas in the *karana* reliefs the face is usually shown *en face*. In Pagan paintings dancer's poses are again marked by the angularly bent arms, a feature which, as discussed above, may originate from the Pyu tradition.



FIG 5/13 ROUNDEL PAINTINGS WITH SWORD DANCERS FROM THE 12TH CENTURY KUBYAUKGYI (MYINKABA) TEMPLE. BAUTZE-PICRON 2003.

Similar poses are depicted in reliefs of a wooden door now on display within the compound of Shwezigon stupa [5/7]. A comparison with the decorative roundel paintings in the Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi temple shows a difference in their execution, possibly due to the different media. The female dancer with scarves in her hands, carved on the wooden door, seems more static in character compared with the male sword dancers, who are painted with fluent lines, creating an impression of dynamic speed. It is noteworthy that present-day Burmese dance includes similar kinds of poses. For example, the often performed puppet-style dance of the Magician regularly includes a jump-like movement in which the main characteristics of these Pagan period dance images can still be recognised.

5.5 Dance in the Iconographical Programmes

Compared with Angkor Wat the number of dance images found in the temples of Pagan is less profuse. There are, no doubt, hundreds of dance images on the walls of Pagan's Buddhist temples, but in the Hindu temple of Angkor Wat alone the dance-related images can be counted in their thousands. The primary reason for this difference can be explained by the dissimilar religions and their attitudes towards dance. As already above discussed, one of the main Hindu gods, Shiva, creates and destroys the universe by his powerful dance. Many other Hindu gods and semi-gods also express themselves by dance. This naturally gives dance a central role in the iconographical programmes of Hindu temples.

The dance was also physically present in Angkor Wat as well as in the Hindu temples of South India, which served as its distant prototypes. The Indian temples had hundreds of devadasis or female temple servants who worshipped the main statue of the temple with their dances. According to the Khmer inscriptions, in Angkor Wat there may also have been hundreds of female dancers employed, as discussed in Chapter 4.1. It is true that Pagan's temples also employed both musicians and dancers among their temple slaves (Stadtner 2005, 25), but what their role was in the Buddhist rituals is not exactly known.

However, some of the dance images give us hints of the duties of dancers in the temples of Pagan. As discussed above, several murals show open-legged dancers and dancing musicians participating in religious festivities. In a mural in Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi dancers are worshipping a Buddha image (Bautze-Picron 2003, plate 22) and dancers in similar functions are also depicted in the 20th century mural copies [5/14] (Luce 1969, plates 166 c and d). They seem to depict public celebrations on a grand scale. One relief also shows a more intimate kind of devotional dance performance. In the base of a 12th century statue showing the Great Decease of the Buddha, a couple of dancing musicians are performing among the devotees. It is most likely that these dance images give us fairly reliable information about the role of the temple musicians and dancers in Pagan. At least one of their duties was to perform at various religious functions, the most common of them being a form of religious procession.

Although dance does not seem to have such a prominent role in Buddhism as it has in Hinduism Buddhist literature, however, often refers to it. According to Kapila Vatsyayan, Indian Buddhist literature mentions dance on several occasions (1977a, 182–185). On the whole, Buddhism valued the arts, although in the field of the performing arts music was regarded as a

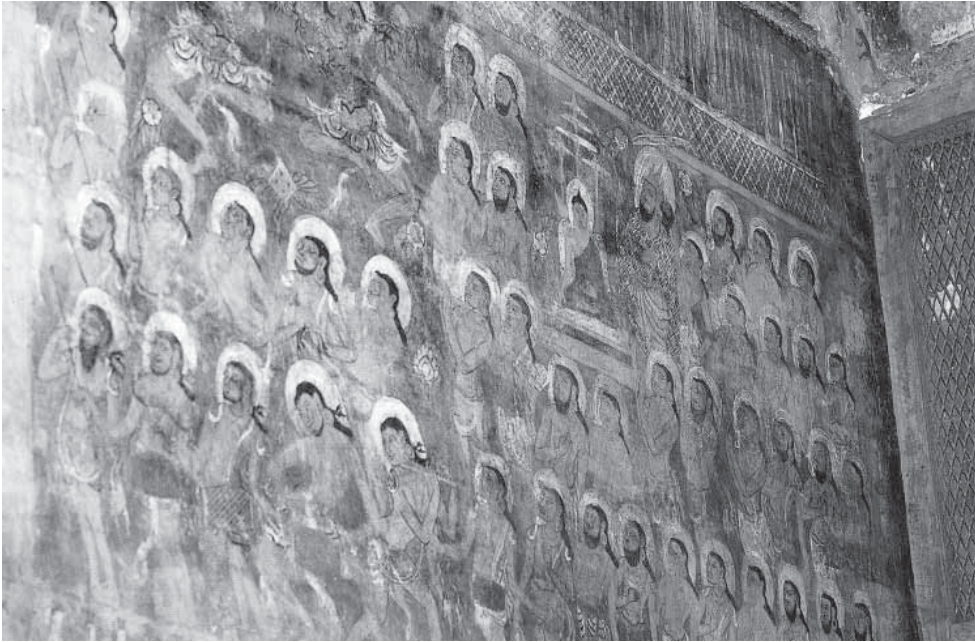


FIG 5/14 DANCERS CELEBRATING A BUDDHA STATUE, KUBYAUKGYI (MYINKABA). BAUTZE-PICRON 2003.

higher art form than the more corporeal dance. Dance, nevertheless, could be performed as a sophisticated court entertainment. It was also rated as a skill, which should form a part of the education of cultured courtesans. Indeed, in the Buddhist literary tradition professional female dancers were often regarded as courtesans.

Thus dance had an aura of eroticism and, consequently, in the Buddhist tradition dance was often seen as a form of physical temptation, not proper for monks to watch. This attitude is clearly reflected in a story recorded in "The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma" (1960, 145). It tells about a monk called Rahula. The moment that he saw he an extremely beautiful dancing girl performing in a festival, he fell in love with her and wanted to leave the religious order. He was forced to leave Pagan.

Similarly, dance often has a negative connotation when it is mentioned in connection with the Buddha's life story and consequently, when visualised in the context of it. Among the reliefs in the Ananda temple discussed above there are scenes showing turning points of the Buddha's life. Included are depictions of pavilions filled with beautiful dancing girls. These were provided by the Buddha's father to protect his adolescent son from seeing suffering. They indeed belong to the luxurious and sensual palace life the Buddha was soon to leave behind. The ultimate dance scene of the Buddha's life shows dance in an even more negative light.

After his enlightenment the Buddha stayed near Bodhgaya for seven weeks. Among his "Seven Stations after the Enlightenment" there is a scene in which the Demon Mara's three daughters try to seduce the Buddha (Bautze-Picroni 2003, 41; Stadtner 2005, 42). Since Mara had failed to defeat the Buddha, his three daughters, named Tanha, Arati and Raga or "Desire, Aversion, and Lust", decided to put their feminine charms to use. The scene is often depicted

showing the daughters dancing in front of the Buddha, who is sitting in the earth touching mudra. In the Ananda temple, in the base of a Buddha statue, they are shown in poses derived from Indian-influenced dance technique [5/15]. According to literary sources each of these dancing temptresses multiplied themselves three-hundred fold to flirt with the Buddha, an act which was naturally doomed to fail.

Dance is occasionally mentioned also in the Jatakas and consequently dance images can be found on some of the Jataka tiles in the exteriors of Pagan temples and also in some murals of their interiors. According to Kapila Vatsyayan (1977a, 183) the Jatakas often refer to dance as a form of court entertainment.

Dance is also mentioned in a cosmological description in the 5TH century *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka, from which scenes are sometimes shown in Pagan's temple murals. A description of decorations in a relic chamber in Sri Lanka gives interesting information about the role of dance in Theravada Buddhist cosmology. The *Mahavamsa*, which has already been quoted, first describes deities surrounding the "shining Buddha image". Present among them are also dancing girls. After an account of scenes from the Buddha's life and the Jatakas, *Mahavamsa* continues to describe the heavens in detail:

At the four quarters of the heaven stood (the figures of) the four Great Kings, and the thirty-three gods and the thirty-two (celestial) maidens and the twenty-eight chiefs of the Yakkhas; but above these devas raising their folded hands, vases filled with flowers likewise, dancing devatas and devatas playing instruments of music, devas with mirrors in their hands and devas also bearing flowers and branches, devas with lotus-blossoms and so forth in their hands and other devas of many kinds..." (Bautze-Picroni, 2003: 1)



FIG 5/15 MARA'S DAUGHTERS DANCING IN FRONT OF THE BUDDHA FROM A PAINTED STONE RELIEF IN THE 11TH–12TH CENTURY ANANDA TEMPLE. STADTNER 2005.

As discussed above, at one level Theravada Buddhism seems to show a negative attitude to dance. However, at the same time it includes dance smoothly in its cosmology, without any negative connotations. In her study of illustrated post-Pagan cosmological manuscripts Patricia Herbert (2002) has noted that dancers are present at some of the 31 levels of Burmese cosmology. For example, in the Tusita Heaven or plane number 23 a deity is entertained by a harpist and a dancer, and, at the next level, in the Yama Heaven, Indra's queens watch a performance of musicians and dancers. On the reverse side of these palm-leaf manuscripts dancers are sometimes depicted outside the outer circular wall of the universe.

Herbert has also compared the distribution of motifs found in the manuscripts with the iconographical programmes of Burmese murals. She concludes: "The aspirational message of the manuscripts parallels that of temple murals where the hells are depicted at the lowest levels, followed by the abode of men, of the *devas*, and the *brahmas*, with the uppermost levels reserved for Jataka stories and the life of the Buddha" (2002, 92). In her study on the mural painting of Pagan, Bautze-Picron has reached a similar conclusion:

... it emerges quite evidently that the distribution of motifs follows a very specific pattern, bearing clear meaning. Human couples constituting a fertility-related element present in the art of India since the very early period are distributed in the lower level, whereas creatures of a more divine nature are painted above them. (2003, 121)

Keeping in mind the two interpretations of the overall symbolism of Pagan's temples, the more esoteric of which relates the temple to the cosmic Buddha, and especially the one which relates the temple to a heavenly palace, it is clear that the dance images should be read in the cosmological context. Both Hindu and Buddhist cosmology share the same origins and the same hierarchical structure. In Angkor Wat it was possible to trace a kind of hierarchy of movement in which specific poses and expressions were seen proper for certain levels in the hierarchical structure. This is not the case in the visual programmes of the temples of Pagan.

In Pagan, dancers in various poses can be seen in all registers of the visual programmes from the lowest to the uppermost levels. There does not seem to be a fixed pattern of distribution of dance styles. The poses vary from the open-leg positions of the musicians to jumping positions with one leg bent backwards and to the clearly Indian-influenced classical dance poses. Indian-derived classical poses can be found in the lowest parts of the interiors as is the case with the decorative roundels situated below the window openings in the Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi temple (Strachan 1996, plate XI). They can also be shown on the highest levels, as is the case with the capitals of painted pillars of monument 1150 [5/16] (Bautze-Picron 2003, plate 145). In these highest spheres the semi-gods also appear in the Indian-derived flying poses (Ibid., plate 174).

If observed from the viewpoint of the the sacredness of the motifs, dancing figures appear in the most important sections of the visual programmes, such as the Buddha's biography or the Jatakas, solely when the narration demands it. As mentioned before, dance is present in the Buddha's life at least twice, first in his youth at the palace and later when Mara's daughters try to seduce him. Consequently, dancing figures appear in the visual programmes when these

particular scenes are depicted. Dance is often portrayed in the Jatakas in connection with court entertainment, although even a dancer with a dragon head-dress can be found on one of the Jataka tiles of the Ananda temple (Singer 1995, 2). Also the many portrayals of the religious processions discussed above are usually placed in the liturgically important registers of the visual programmes, since they belong to the narratives related to religious festivities, such as worshipping the Buddha or his statue.

When one is focusing on the dance images which do not belong to these most sacred narratives, a certain pattern of distribution can be recognised. These images regularly appear in the frames surrounding windows, doors and niches or on the painted dummy pillars as well as among the supporting motifs surrounding the iconographically more powerful themes. Thus it would be easy to conclude that dance images were used as a kind of “decorative” motifs. However, as Bautze-Picron has observed:

Probably no motif can be qualified as being purely ‘decorative’ in the field of religious art. Every ornamentation, and every space filled by these ornamentations, finds an explanation... Without any doubt, these elements have their bearing on our overall understanding of the temple and of the image which this temple is to convey. (2003, 119)

What kind of symbolic message do these dance images that do not belong to the most sacred narratives convey? The overwhelming majority of the dancing figures are female. They are often portrayed in the same vertical spaces together with couples making love, most often above them. This clearly indicates that dance was seen as an expression of the corporal world. The existence of so many female dancers can be seen to reflect the visual programmes of Indian temple architecture in which dancing female figures had a prominent role. Female figures, often with erotic colouring, were regarded in Indian and Indian-influenced cultures as auspicious motifs and lent a building an aura of fertility, growth, and prosperity (Roveda 2002, 220–224).

As a rule, most of the dance images which do not belong to a narrative context appear in subsidiary spaces, such as frames, capitals and painted pillars. Dance figures are also depicted in the only surviving Pagan period wooden doorway, which is a transitory element connecting the exterior and interior of a building. This seems to reflect Buddhism’s general attitude towards dance. It has its definite role in the Buddhist cosmology, although not as central as in Hindu imagery.

Dance images together with other motifs, also enhance the sacredness of the building. They add to the whole elements of festivity and joy. As a temple is an earthly metaphor for the heavenly palace, many of the dancers are shown in the poses of classical Indian-influenced dance that are suitable to be performed in the palace context. On the other hand, a temple is also a reflection of the cosmos. In its hierarchical structure, dance appears at many levels, including several heavenly spheres, as also is the case in the illustrated post-Pagan cosmological manuscripts.

5.6 Dance as Celebration and Temptation

The over two thousand temples in different states of preservation in Pagan provide hundreds of dance images executed in different media, such as stucco, stone and ceramic reliefs, wood carvings and, above all, as murals. They give enlightening information about dance, its functions, forms and styles and about the general attitude towards dance during the Pagan period.

The majority of these dance images are portrayals of lively dance scenes forming parts of religious festivities. They regularly show dancing musicians in the flexed open-leg position, so common in the Indian-influenced dance tradition of Southeast Asia [5/8]. Among them are often female dancers with open-bent legs while one leg is uplifted in a similar way as in the Khmer "apsara" figures [5/9]. These dance and music celebrations clearly stem from the widespread tradition of processional dances, still performed, for example, in the neighbouring regions of Assam and Manipur as well as in Sri Lanka, with which Pagan had close contact because of the form of Buddhism, Theravada, they both shared.

Some of the images, especially those executed as murals, frequently also show female dancers in more complicated positions, clearly related to the "classical" Indian tradition. Their strongly curved bodies and their intricate arm positions seem to connect them to tradition not dissimilar to East Indian orissi dance [5/11, 5/12]. This could indicate that the dance tradition of Pagan also included a more intimate and complex dance tradition stemming from India besides the processional celebrations.

A crucial question arises as to whether these Indian-influenced figures reflect a dance tradition practised in Pagan or whether they are merely iconographical loans from East India's Pala culture with which Pagan had active contact. The former possibility is supported by the fact that similar motifs can be recognised in paintings in places as distant as Ladakh, in Northeast India which belonged to the sphere of Pala influence in the same way as Pagan.

However, the many clearly Indian-influenced elements in today's Burmese dance seem to indicate that the dance tradition of Pagan may have been strongly influenced by Indian tradition. Therefore, the present author's hypothesis is that just as Pagan was the inheritor of Pala's architectural and iconographical legacy, so did the Pala dance tradition that has now disappeared influence the style of dance in Pagan. Thus the dance images were not only exotic iconographical loans but, in fact, reflected the dance tradition practised in Pagan during the period when the images were executed. Indeed, many of the features found in the dance images of Pagan can still today be recognised in the classical dance as canonised in Myanmar today. These features include the Indian-connected footwork, zigzag formations of the arms, hand gestures reflecting the Indian mudras, and the energetic jump with one leg stretched almost to touch the back of the dancer's head.

In the case of the iconographical programmes of Pagan's temples, most of the textual sources on which they are based are rather well known. The most often portrayed of them are the sacred biographies of the Gautama Buddha and the Buddhas of the past as well as the Jataka stories, although the exact cosmological accounts of the period are not known. However, later Burmese cosmologies indicate that, at least in principle, the cosmology of the Pagan period was based



FIG 5/16 UPPER PART OF A PAINTED PILLAR WITH A DANCING FIGURE ON TOP, MONUMENT 1150. BAUTZE-PICRON 2003.

on the contemporary Theravada Buddhist cosmology, the Traiphum being its earliest known version in Southeast Asia.

When the dance images of Pagan's iconographical programmes are observed in this textual context, they reveal a dualistic approach towards dance. Dance is frequently performed in joyous religious festivities. On the other hand, when dance scenes are portrayed in the context of the Buddha's biography they get a negative connotation as corporal temptation luring one from the path of mindfulness toward the carnal world [5/15].

On the other hand, when dance images are observed as a part of the symbolism of a temple as a whole, they reveal a more positive attitude. The most common interpretation of the symbolism of Pagan's Buddhist temples is that they represent the heavenly palace on earth and thus they reflect in their details Buddhist cosmology. In this hierarchical construction, dancing figures are distributed in spaces such as on window and door frames, painted dummy pillars etc. Although these are clearly intermediate spaces reserved for liturgically less important motifs, dancing images sometimes appear in this hierarchical structure even at higher levels than the Buddha himself [5/16].

One could conclude that the dance images in the temples of Pagan reveal that the dance tradition or traditions of Pagan were strongly related to the dance traditions of the East Indian and Sri Lankan Buddhist world. Whether some of the images are just iconographical loans from East India and Sri Lanka or whether Pagan adopted elements from their actual dance tradition should be further studied. However, many dance images, such as the open-legged musicians and the dancers they are accompanying, seem to be firmly related to the tradition of the processional dances still performed today in the region. It is very likely that they give rather

reliable information about the temple ceremonies of Pagan. It is noteworthy that various dance styles and techniques depicted in Pagan's dance images can still be recognised in the Burmese dance tradition of today.

When dance images are read in their architectural context they further reveal the general attitude of Pagan Buddhism towards dance. Like Buddhist literature, the dance images also reflect a contradictory approach towards dance. It was seen as a form of an earthly and corporal world with an erotic connotation and, on the other hand, it was present even in the high spheres of the Buddhist cosmos. Thus dancing figures were seen as proper motifs to enhance a temple's sacredness.



6

Wat Phra Keo: Dance and the Dynastic Cult

PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR

6

Wat Phra Keo: Dance and the Dynastic Cult

On the banks of the Chaophraya River, in the heart of old Bangkok, stands the Grand Palace complex¹, which served as the residence of the Thai royal family from 1785 to the 1920s and still remained as the administrative centre of the country until 1932, when the absolute monarchy was demolished. With its glittering gilded spires, porcelain-covered towers and glass mosaic-decorated halls it is the country's most popular tourist attraction. Moreover, it serves as the ceremonial centre for grandiose rituals with Brahmanic overtones related to the dynastic cult, which is thriving even now and which is one of the characteristics of the many-layered syncretistic culture of predominantly Theravada Buddhist Thailand. Its 1.900 metres of white-washed walls with European-style angular bastions enclose an area of approximately 200.000 square metres. The complex was founded in 1782 by the first king of the still ruling Chakri dynasty, King Rama I (1782–1809).

The complex is divided into four separate walled areas. The outer court was reserved for palace guards and offices of various ministries. The central court was occupied by royal residences and throne halls. It also included meeting halls for conducting state affairs. The inner court is a complex of rather small-scale buildings. It was restricted to the king and the queen, to the royal concubines, the young princes and the princesses and their all-female retinue only. At the north-eastern corner of the Grand Palace complex is the royal chapel, Wat Phra Sriratana Sasadaram, commonly known as Wat Phra Keo (also Wat Phra Kaew), generally regarded as the epitome of Thai art and architecture [6/1]. It houses the venerated statue of the Emerald Buddha, the palladium of the state.

As its predecessors, Wat Mahathat in Sukhothai and Wat Si Sanphet in Ayutthaya, Wat Phra Keo was also reserved for royal use only and thus it is a *wat* or temple-cum-monastery complex without resident monks and, consequently, it lacks the monks' living quarters (Subhadradis 1986). The heart of the Wat Phra Keo complex is its *ubosot* or ordination hall, where the 66 cm high statue of the Emerald Buddha is venerated. Carved from a solid piece of jade the statue depicts the Buddha in the earth touching mudra.

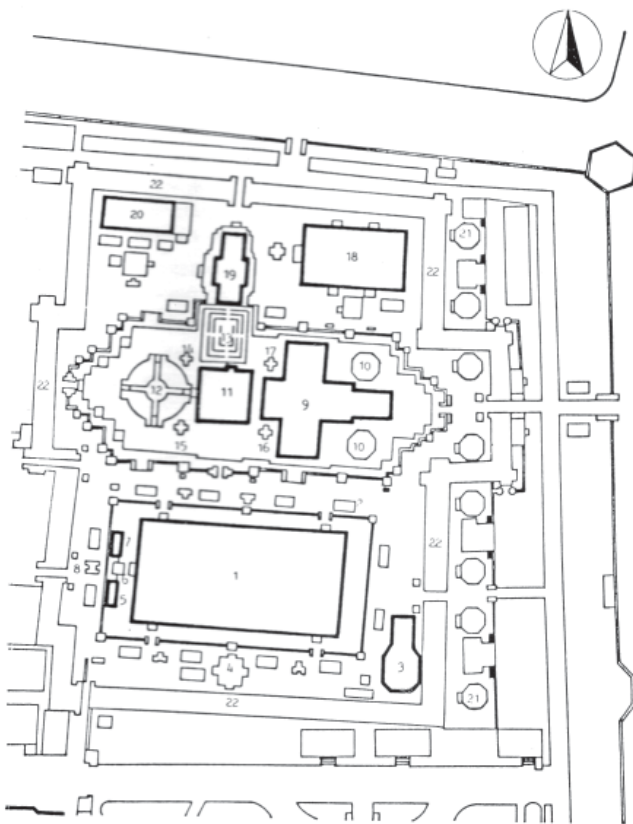


FIG 6/1
 PLAN OF THE WAT PHRA KEO
 COMPLEX IN BANGKOK.

1. THE UBOSOT,
2. TWELVE OPEN PAVILIONS,
3. VIHARN,
4. BELFRY,
5. HO RACHAPONGSANURORN,
6. PHRA POTHITHAT PHIMAN,
7. HO RACHAKARAMANUSORN,
8. STATUE OF A SEATED
 BRAHMAN HERMIT,
9. THE ROYAL PANTHEON,
10. TWO GUILT STUPAS,
11. THE LIBRARY,
12. PHRA SI RATANA CHEDI,
13. MODEL OF ANGKOR WAT,
- 14.—17.
 MONUMENTS OF CHAKRI
 KINGS,
18. THE SUPPLEMENTARY
 LIBRARY,
19. VIHARN YOD,
20. VIHARN PHRA NAK,
21. EIGHT PRANG TOWERS,
22. GALLERIES WITH
 RAMAKIEN MURALS.
 ROYAL HOUSEHOLD OF THAILAND.

The origin of the statue is shrouded in legends. Historically, however, it is known to have been in Lampang and Chiang Rai in present-day North Thailand and Luang Prabang and Vientiane in present-day Laos before it was taken from Vientiane in 1779 by the general who was later crowned King Rama I. The statue was housed in Wat Arun in Thonburi, on the opposite side of the Chaophraya River when Thonburi served as the capital of the country from 1767 to 1782 (Warren 1988, 225). The installation of the Emerald Buddha in the ubosoth of Wat Phra Keo in 1783 marked the beginning of a new era in the country's history, that of the Rattanakosin period (from 1782 to the present).

The ubosot is surrounded by *sema* boundary stones indicating that it is a place for ordination, in this case for ordaining the kings. It is a traditional Thai assembly hall with a rectangular floor plan, a high ceiling and a steep, multi-tiered gable roof. These types of buildings have their roots in traditional residential wooden houses (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 14). The sacred buildings were transformed into brick-cum-laterite constructions with a wooden superstructure during the Sukhothai period, as discussed in Chapter 3.8, and it was further developed during the Ayutthaya period (1350–1767). Like numerous other features of Ayutthaya's culture this type of building was adopted with minor changes in the early Rattanakosin period as an ideal to be cherished, a phenomenon to be further discussed in the next sub-chapter.

The statue of the Emerald Buddha sits on a gilded altar representing the traditional Hindu aerial chariot (Aasen 1998, 124). It is the focus of several rituals including the annual ceremonies during which the king changes the golden attire of the statue according to the three seasons, the rainy season, winter and summer (Warren 1988, 227). On the lower levels of the pyramidal altar structure there are ten crowned standing and several sitting Buddhas. The altar is flanked by two large standing Buddhas in royal attire in the pacifying of the ocean mudra.

The tradition of crowned Buddha statues with royal ornaments was already known in Ayutthaya (Woodward 2005, 54–55) and it was continued in Bangkok. The crowned Buddhas of the ubosot of Wat Phra Keo are, however, closely related to the dynastic cult of the ruling Chakri family. They were ordered by successive kings of the dynasty to commemorate specific members of the royal family. Whether the statue is dedicated to a male or a female person can be seen from the draperies of the statue's robes (Naengnoi 1998, 52–55). These visual representatives of the members of the Chakri dynasty are venerated in various rituals, a unique tradition which seems to combine ancestral worship and Khmer-influenced Brahmanism with Theravada Buddhism.

However, the murals covering the interior walls of the ubosot stem mainly from the Thai Theravada Buddhist iconographical tradition, which had its origins in Sukhothai period murals, examined briefly in Chapter 3.8. The tradition was crystallised during the late Ayutthaya period and adopted by the early Rattanakosin artists, as discussed in the next sub-chapter. The distribution of motifs of the Thai temple murals of the early Rattanakosin period often follows a general pattern (Ringis 1990, 80) in which the mythical geography of the *Traiphum* cosmology is depicted on the western wall, behind the altar. The opposite eastern wall, in front of the Buddha statue, is generally dedicated to the attacking army of the demon Mara, which tried to disturb the Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment. The side walls are generally divided into several superimposed registers. The upper registers are usually reserved for kneeling celestial beings which seem to venerate the altar whereas the lowest registers generally show scenes from the Buddha's life or from the Jataka stories and occasionally scenes from the *Ramakien*, a Thai version of the Indian Ramayana epic.

The original early Rattanakosin period murals of the ubosot have, however, undergone several periods of change. The temple complex has been expanded, repaired and redecorated throughout the nine successive reigns of the Chakri dynasty, and a major restoration has been carried out every fifty years (Warren 1988, 233; Naengnoi 1998, 21). In present conditions the colours of the murals at the ubosot are rather dark since they are painted with western pigments (Boisselier 1976, 95). The Mara's army still occupies the eastern wall and the *Traiphum* the western wall. Originally the upper parts of the side walls were divided into registers with kneeling *devatas*, but during the repainting of the murals under King Rama III (1824–1851) they were painted over with scenes of the Buddha's life, while the middle register now shows scenes from the Jatakas and the lives of previous Buddhas (Naengnoi 1998, 59–60). Royal ceremonies and processions painted under the windows seem to underline the royal nature of the chapel.

The dominant element of traditional Thai temples and palaces, which on a symbolic level means the same thing, as they are both earthly metaphors for heavenly palaces, is their elaborated roof structure. It is constructed of multiple, overlapping tiers. Originally, the system of many layered roofs may have been developed to maximise ventilation, but later this multi-

tiered structure became a symbol of the importance of the building it cover: the more ornate the roof, the more important the building. This roof type is thus generally reserved only for palaces, temples or important government buildings (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 136).

Every roof end and apex has a highly stylised attachment, sculptured, gilded and often covered with glass mosaic. All the various attachments, developed over the centuries, add to the cosmological symbolism of the building. They include stylised motifs, such as *naga* snakes, *garuda* heads and other bird motifs, all mythical creatures inhabiting various spheres of the Hindu-Buddhist cosmos. Their interpretation is not always unambiguous, and regional differences exist. In general, however, they are all benevolent divinities regarded as protectors of Buddhism (Ibid., 142).

The iconographical programme of the exterior of a temple hall culminates in the triangular gable ends or pediments. The decorations of the pediments have their origin in the often lacquered and gilded wooden pediment reliefs of the earlier wooden temples. During the early Rattanakosin period plaster and later cement reliefs with colourful glass mosaic became popular. Located above the main entrance, the eastern pediment is iconographically the most powerful element of the exterior. The themes depicted in it reveal the status of the building, its sponsorship and its possible royal affiliation.

The central figure in the pediment of the ubosot of Wat Phra Keo is that of God Vishnu (Phra Narai) on his mount *garuda*, an old Brahmanic symbol of the king. It is surrounded by small figures of *devatas* in the gesture of *wai*, respectful greeting. They are planted in the rich foliage of *kanok* motifs, which could be regarded as a kind of trademark of the Thai decorative style of the Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods [6/5]. *Kanok* is an asymmetric flame-like motif and when several of them are combined together, they can cover a large area, creating a vibrant impression of superhuman light and energy. According to Jean Boisselier, the Thai ornamental tradition stems from age-old Indian prototypes and the most common *kranok* type in the Thai repertory "suggests fine undulating tongues of flame, but is seen as a skilful stylization of the ears of rice at the moment of flowering" (1976, 68–69).

The iconographical programme with its references to cosmology continues in the doors of the ubosot. They are surrounded by heavy gilded frames in the so called *mondop* style, in which the upper part of the frame has multiple tiers of square registers diminishing in size as they rise to the conical tip. It is one of the many architectural elements directly connected with the Meru symbolism. It can appear as a door or window frame or as the roof structure of royal or religious buildings, such as *mondop* pavilions, from which its name is derived, rising on a square plan and containing relics, images or sacred scriptures.

The door panels are decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays with *kanok* flames and mythical animals of the Himavamsa Forest lying on the lower slopes of Mount Meru. They have a protective function, since in the Thai tradition window and door openings are, particularly in religious structures, regarded as passages between differing realms and thus in need of special motifs to discourage the entry of negative forces into the interior (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 154). Protection of the sacred building is also the function of the 12 Khmer-style guardian lions sitting at the base of the steps leading to the ubosot. Formerly, they were thought to be original Khmer bronzes, but this has later been questioned (Naengnoi 1998, 46).

The ubosot is located in the southern end of the complex. The central part is occupied by a large raised marble platform on which stand three buildings from different periods. They are axially placed reflecting their cosmological symbolism. At the eastern end of the platform stands Prasat Phra Thep Bidorn with a cruciform plan, originally constructed by King Rama IV (1851–1868) to house the Emerald Buddha. The building was, however, too small for the ceremonies connected to the statue and it was converted by the British-educated King Rama VI (1910–1925) into a memorial hall for the first five kings of the Chakri dynasty and called “Royal Pantheon” in English. It houses western-style statues of the kings and is open to the public only on the dynastic anniversaries when ceremonies take place there (Warren 1988, 231). The building is crowned with a Khmer-influenced *prasat* tower or “spire of palace” (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 140) denoting its royal character.

In the centre of the marble platform stands Phra Mondop, a library originally built by King Rama I to hold the new edition of the *Tripitaka* or Buddhist Canon, since the older edition was destroyed in the sack of Auythaya. The building, with its glittering roof structure in the mondop style, got its present form during the reign of King Rama III (1824–1851). At the eastern end of the platform rises Phra Sri Rattana Chedi, a bell-shaped stupa which was originally built by King Rama IV to house a Buddha relic and was later completely covered with gold mosaics by King Rama V (1868–1910). Although basically a traditional Buddhist stupa it is closely connected with the dynastic history, since it is modelled after the stupas of Wat Si Sanphet in Ayutthaya, the predecessor of Wat Phra Keo (Naengnoi 1998, 74).

The complex was further enriched by additions, such as mondops, gold-covered chedis, a bell tower etc. King Rama III followed the wish of King Rama I by commissioning the construction of eight prang towers outside the actual temple compound. In their different pastel shades created by Chinese glazed terracotta mosaics, fashionable during the “China Mania” of the Third Reign (1824–1851), they commemorate specific aspects of Theravada Buddhism (Warren 1988, 229). Chinese elements are strongly present everywhere in the compound. Chinese-style miniature mountains, Chinese-derived bonsai trees, the Chinese stone statues and ceramic tiles can be found in abundance around the complex. Furthermore, Chinese-style door guardians are often painted on the door panels, and Chinese elements, such as cloud and mountain motifs, were smoothly adapted for the Rattanakosin-style murals, lacquer works and mother-of-pearl inlays.

Wat Phra Keo has several layers of symbolic meanings. In its ground plan, its architectural forms and in many of its iconographic details the complex reflects the Buddhist cosmology formulated in the Traiphum. However, the dynastic connotations almost overshadow the Buddhist ones. When a visitor venerates the altar in the ubosot, he or she in fact, venerates the Palladium of the State and commemorative statues of members of the ruling dynasty. The strong presence of Chinese elements in the complex may be explained, not only by the stylistic trend of the Third Reign, but by the fact that Thailand has a vast population originating from China. Thus, for example, a bronze statue of Guanyin, the most popular bodhisattva of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, is placed axially in front of the entrance of the ubosot facing the Emerald Buddha at a lower level.

As has already been mentioned, many of the rituals related to the kingship of Thailand and, consequently, to the Wat Phra Keo are Brahmanic in origin. Brahmanic or later Hindu elements



FIG 6/2 RAMAKIEN MURALS IN THE GALLERIES SURROUNDING THE WAT PHRA KEO COMPLEX. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.



FIG 6/3 SUPPORTING DEMON AND MONKEY FIGURES IN A STUPA AT WAT PHRA KEO. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.



FIG 6/4 GIANT GUARDIANS OF WAT PHRA KEO. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

can also be traced in the complex itself. Thus the first statue a visitor will face when entering the complex is a bronze statue of a *rishi* or a Brahman hermit regarded as the *guru* or master of traditional medicine (Naengnoi 1998, 24). Above all, the Hindu element is strongly present in the approximately 600 meters long mural painting in the cloisters of the wall enclosing the whole complex, which depicts scenes from the Ramakien, the Thai version of the originally Indian Ramayana epic. It is perhaps the largest mural painting in the world [6/2].

Even with a superficial knowledge of present-day Thai dance and dance theatre, it is clear at first sight that the figures of the murals employ similar poses, gestures, garments and ornaments to those of today's classical dancers. Thus the Ramakien murals include hundreds of images clearly related to dance. Ramakien imagery continues in other parts of the complex, in the "Atlas" sculptures [6/3] of the chedis and in the huge guardian sculptures flanking the entrances of the complex [6/4].

With its many references to the past and with its Chinese and Hindu elements, the style of Wat Phra Keo complex is, however, quintessentially Rattanakosin in character. This style could also be called as "Royal Style". How this style came into being is the subject of the next sub-chapter whereas the following sub-chapters are dedicated to the Ramakien and its influence on visual arts and dance. Finally the Ramakien imagery of Wat Phra Keo and, above all, the murals and the intricate question of the interrelationship of the visual arts and dance in this "Royal style" will be discussed.

6.1 From Ayutthaya to Bangkok

Sukhothai, whose temples and dance images were discussed in Chapter 3.8, is traditionally regarded as the cradle of Tai culture. What was to become the Thai culture of the Rattanakosin period was, however, formulated in the kingdom of Ayutthaya during its rule of over four centuries from 1351 to 1767. Ayutthaya annexed Sukhothai, displaced the Khmer dominions in the regions of present-day Thailand and even conquered the Khmer capital of Angkor for the first time in 1352. Warring with its neighbours, Malays, the Khmer and the kingdoms of Lanna and Burma, it further expanded its territories.

Her military power, her exports of rice and her role as an important trade centre with active contacts with China, Japan and the Southern Silk Road made Ayutthaya a wealthy and powerful empire in the 15th century when King Trailok (1448–1488) established his administrative reforms. They gave shape to the Siamese society and its administration, which was to remain more or less unchanged until the mid-19th century (Aasen 1998, 102).

The capital of Ayutthaya, now in ruins, is situated some 80 km north of the present capital, Bangkok. It is located at the confluence of the Chao Phraya and Pasak Rivers. The site was improved by the construction of a canal, which turned the site into a protected island on which the most important buildings, such as the palace and the main temples, were constructed. The island was further crossed by a canal network and thus transport was mainly by water, both to reach the capital and within it (Dumarcay 1995, 68).

Ayutthaya's population was ethnically diverse. The eclectic belief system combined animistic beliefs, different forms of Buddhism dominated by Theravada, Chinese elements as

well as Brahman practices and the concept of the god-king adapted, to a great extent, from the Khmer. Auytthaya's concept of a king, which naturally had political ends to bolster and mystify the kingship in an increasingly complicated political system, amalgamated several ideologies (Aasen 1998, 92). It combined the Hindu-Brahman concept of *devaraja* or god-king, already discussed in Chapter 4, with that of *chakravatin* or a descendant of God Shiva, and a further Buddhist flavour was given by the ideology of *dharmaraja* or righteous ruler, which associated the king with a bodhisattva or a Buddha to be (Hall 1968, 102–103, 105–108).

The cult of kingship in Ayutthaya was concentrated in the Royal Palace, which adjoined the city's north wall. According to the descriptions of foreign diplomats who visited the palace, court etiquette was extremely rigid. During audiences the king appeared in an aperture placed high up in the inner wall and looked down upon the prostrated court and visitors (Garnier 2004, 119). Grand ceremonies took place in the throne hall, Sanpet Prasat, which was destroyed in 1767. Before the Ayutthaya period palaces were mostly constructed of wood, since more durable materials, such as brick, laterite and stone, were generally reserved for religious buildings. Probably reflecting the deified status of Ayutthaya's kingship, the throne hall was, however, built of brick².

Annexed to the Grand Palace complex was the Royal "Chapel", Wat Si Sanphet, also destroyed during the Burmese attack in 1767. It was reserved for royal ceremonies only and thus it had no monks' living quarters. In its plan and symbolism it was based on the Sukhothai's central shrine, Wat Mahathat (Aasen 1998, 98), and later it served as the model for Bangkok's Wat Phra Keo.

In the Ayutthaya period the Sukhothai practice of organising the main buildings of a wat along a single east-west axis was also continued. Chedi types, too, were borrowed from Sukhothai as well as North Thailand, although the trend was to elongate them and to cut multiple vertical, angular corners into their bases and bodies. The symbol of royal authority, however, the lotus bud chedi of the Sukhothai period, was abandoned. During the Sukhothai period many traces of the earlier Khmer dominance were effectively wiped, and the surviving Khmer temple towers were covered with Mon- and Sri Lanka -influenced stucco reliefs (Roveda 2005, 458–459). In Ayutthaya, however, the situation was different.

Ayutthaya had invaded the Khmer capital of Angkor twice, in 1352 and 1431, and subjected Khmers to vassalage. Despite this politically subordinate relationship, the interest in Khmer culture, its Brahmanic rituals, cosmology, art and architecture, was great, and many of its features were willingly adopted as a part of Ayutthaya's own evolving tradition. Thus the prang, or memorial tower, with its bullet-like upper part, based on the Khmer temple tower, became the new symbol of royal authority. The Khmer prototype was, anyhow, elongated, it was given Buddhist connotations and it became the principal monument of a wat complex.

The prang tower refers to Mount Meru and its heavenly spheres with its supporting garuda figures and niches facing the four cardinal points. Its royal character was underlined by the figures of Vishnu and Indra riding their mounts garuda and the many-headed elephant. Many wat complexes were arranged, no longer only axially as was the Sukhothai-derived practice, but also on a more complex, often rectangular plan, derived from the Khmer cosmological tradition. The galleries also stem from Khmer architecture; they are open on the inside in a colonnade

and enclose many of the wat complexes of the subsequent centuries. On a symbolic level the galleries represent the mountain rings encircling Mount Meru (Ringis 1990, 38).

It is possible that not only ideas and art works were brought from Angkor to Ayutthaya during the military invasions. Among the hostages taken to Ayutthaya there could also very well have been court dancers, who may have given new impetus to what was to become the classical dance tradition of Ayutthaya and the later Rattanakosin period, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Mattani 1993, 39; McGill 2005, 20).

The sculpture of the period concentrated on Buddha statues shown in all four poses that were already known in Sukhothai. Stylistically, they reflect influences from Sukhothai, Mon and especially Khmer traditions. Among the surviving manuscripts there are several brightly illustrated versions of the Traiphum. Some temple banners have survived, but not much is left of Ayutthaya's mural paintings (Ginsburg 2005, 95–109). A couple of fragments have survived in the capital itself, but the finest examples are found in areas far from the capital. The most outstanding ones are the murals of the probably 17th century Wat Yai Suwannaram in Petchapuri. They show a register of worshipping divinities separated from the creamy background by dominating zigzag lines. The style is delicate in its linearity the colour scheme being limited to creamy white, red, black, ochre and green. No dance images have survived in the murals, however.

An art form, which was to preserve the Rattanakosin period dance-related images is black and gold lacquer. Its precise origin is not known, but according to Boisselier (1976, 47–48), examples of it were found in Thailand before the 17th or the 18th centuries, although its style in the few existing Ayutthaya period examples already appears profoundly Thai with its subtle gold designs [6/5]. Most of the finest pieces of gilt lacquer are from the early Rattanakosin period, but owing to the fact that lacquers, such as cabinets, chests etc., are easy to transport, it is possible that some of them indeed originate from Ayutthaya. According to Kukrit Pramoj, the only surviving lacquer library pavilion, now at the Suan Pakkad Palace Museum in Bangkok, may actually be an Ayutthaya period work (Kukrit 1960).

Ayutthaya was an international metropolis. Among its approximately one million inhabitants there were expatriates and emigrants, for example, from China, Japan, Persia and Europe, some of them even serving as high officials. This cosmopolitanism left its marks in the arts. Chinese tree and rock motifs appeared in the murals and lacquer works, French engineers built forts and palaces for the kings while the glass mosaic, so lavishly used in later Rattanakosin architecture, may have its origins in India and Persia (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 198; Ringis 1990, 16).

In 1758 Ayutthaya was attacked by its arch-enemies, the Burmese, who finally sacked the city in 1767 and destroyed nearly all its palaces, temples and libraries, taking tens of thousands of war prisoners with them back to Burma³. Among the captives were also dancers and other artists (Singer 1995, 11), who gave new impetus to Burmese culture just like the Khmer dancers and artists had probably done for the culture of Ayutthaya three centuries earlier.

Son of a Chinese father and a Thai mother, the future King Taksin was a military officer at the time of Ayutthaya's fall. Within seven months he managed to rally Thai forces, expel the Burmese, and establish a new capital at Thonburi, further down the Chao Phraya River. In 1782 a revolt broke out against King Taksin. He was replaced by a prominent military commander,



FIG 6/5
SCENE FROM THE RAMAKIEN,
A DETAIL FROM AN EARLY
RATTANAKOSIN PERIOD BLACK
AND GOLD LACQUER CABINET,
MUANG BORAN MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2004.

Chao Phraya Chakri, the founder of the present Chakri dynasty and later called King Rama I. For strategic reasons he moved the seat of government across the river to a small trading port known as Bangkok.

That was the start of the Bangkok period or Rattanakosin era. The most important task for the early Chakri rulers was to re-establish the former glory of Ayutthaya in the new capital. Thus by royal order, canals were dug to create a replica of Ayutthaya's city plan in Bangkok, copies of Ayutthaya's destroyed palaces and temples were built, surviving sculptures were brought from the old capital, and lost literature was recreated. King Rama I ordered the manuscripts of three literary works to be rewritten. They were the Tripitaka or the Buddhist canon, a codification of law and the Ramakien. "The first served to revive the religious order, the second enforced the rule of law and the last served to uphold the monarchic power". So notes the most recent introduction to the Ramakien-related *khon* masked theatre, and it continues:

From the inauguration of Bangkok as the new capital, The Ramakien could be found in the Siamese culture in a fully integrated manner, linking all forms of the arts and artistic expression from books to dramatic presentations and from classical dance to mural paintings. (Khon, Thai Masked dance 2006, 22)

6.2 The Ramakien

The core literary work of the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods and for the early Rattanakosin era was the Traiphum cosmology which has been already mentioned several times. Another text, basic to Thai culture, is the Ramakien ("Rama's Story") also known as the *Ramakirti* ("Rama's Glory"). It is an Indian-derived epic describing Prince Rama (Phra Ram in Thai), Crown Prince of Ayodhya and also an *avatara* of god Vishnu. His consort Princess Sita (Nang Sida) is abducted by the demon King Ravana (Tosakanth, also Tosakan, Tosachat, Thotsakan) to his island kingdom of Lanka (Longka). The lengthy story recounts the ultimately successful efforts of Prince Rama and his half-brother Lakshmana (Phra Lak), assisted by the white monkey Hanuman and the brave monkey army, to rescue Princess Sita from Lanka.

The Rama stories, of which the Ramakien is only one of the numerous versions⁴, are usually connected with Hinduism but sometimes also interpreted in the Jain, Buddhist and even Islamic context. Rama's story was already known in the regions of present-day central Thailand by the end of the first millennium and the beginning of the second millennium AD, when parts of the area was ruled by the Khmers. This is indicated by the Ramayana reliefs of the 11th century Phimai temple. Ramayana was known already during the Sukhothai period, as indicated by an inscription (Natthapatra & Promporn 1998, 106) and some rulers' names, such as King Ramkhamhaeng (Mattani 1993, 29). The importance of the story is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the capital of Ayutthaya was named after Rama's city Ayodhya, located in Northeast India. Little is, however, known about the manifestations of the Rama tradition during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods.

When the new Chakri dynasty was established in Bangkok, one of the first activities of the first two kings was to let the text be rewritten in its now approved classic form. The importance of the epic was further underlined by the fact that the kings were later renamed after the epic hero, as King Rama I and King Rama II⁵. The origins of the Thai version and its sources are not known. Frank E. Reynolds writes:

Although modern Thai versions of the Rama story show definite affinities with South Indian, Javanese, and Khmer (Cambodian) versions, there is simply no basis for determining with any degree of precision when, from where, or in what form the story was introduced into the central Thai context. (1991, 55)

It is easy to recognise several specifically Thai qualities in the Ramakien. Phra Ram is, of course, presented as an *avatara* of Vishnu, but at the same time he is subordinate to Shiva (Ramanuja 1991, 38). The emphasis lies in the second of the three parts of the story⁶, that is, in the section describing the abduction of Sita and the Great War. Hanuman, for example, is not celibate and

purely devout as in the Indian tradition, but more a Casanova-like ladies' man. Thus the story is localised in several ways. For example, the Buddhist connotation can be recognised, although Phra Ram is not regarded as the Buddha or any of his previous incarnations. The epic was, however, compiled by Buddhist kings and the epilogue, written by King Rama II, stresses the connection between the Ramakien and the Buddhist teachings (Reynolds 1991, 57).

By order of King Rama I (1782–1809) Ramakien was compiled to form what is still today the longest composition in Thai verse. In 1815, by order of King Rama II (1809–1824) Ramakien was written in a form suitable for khon and lakhon performances, and later, by order of King Rama IV (1851–1868) several scenes of the epic were rewritten (Natthapatra & Promporn, 1998: 107–108).

An important aspect of the Ramakien is its role in the dynastic cult, which is firmly rooted in the ancient conception of the devaraja or god-king of the Khmer tradition. The King is regarded as the incarnation of Phra Ram, and thus the Ramakien is also the narration of the "Ten Kingly Virtues" of the righteous ruler (Mattani 1993, 46). J.M. Cadet has written with a good reason: "For so successfully indeed has Rama I transmuted the epic...that the majority of Thai know nothing of its Indian origin, looking upon the Ramakien less as a work of art than a history of their royal house" (1970, 32).

The importance of the Ramakien for the dynastic cult is emphasised by the fact that the whole epic was painted by the order of Rama I in the galleries of the Wat Phra Keo. As discussed above, it is the very centre of the dynastic cult enshrining the Emerald Buddha, the palladium of the ruling dynasty. Thus an ancient, probably Khmer-derived, but later Buddhacised god-king cult and the Ramakien tradition were officially amalgamated.

6.3 Ramakien Imagery

The earliest surviving visual depiction of a scene from the Ramayana epic seems to be a 5th century terracotta panel, found in Uttar Pradesh in Central India. It shows Rama and Lakshmana as forest dwellers and it probably formed a part of the iconographical programme of a brick temple. The next surviving examples are stone panels from approximately the 6th century. Stylistically, these early examples belong to the classical Indian Gupta period. With regard to the scanty evidence of early Ramayana imagery, Vidya Dehejia, who has studied the above material, has noted: "It is necessary, however, to remember the incomplete nature of the evidence: ancient temples and now vanished brick palaces were once covered with murals which may well have contained Ramayana depictions" (1994, 10). To this may be also added that most probably the early, less durable wooden reliefs as well as story-tellers' devices, such as panels, scrolls and shadow puppets, could also have shown scenes and figures from the epic.

Large early series of Ramayana reliefs still *in situ* on the outer walls of a large temple complex can be found in the Papanatha temple at Pattadakal, in West India. This early 8th century temple belongs to the early Western Chalukya architecture, which had already earlier utilised smaller scenes from the Ramayana in the iconographical programmes of the temples. In the Panpanatha temple, however, the scenes cover large areas of the walls and the pillars. Helen J. Wechsler, who has studied the subject, has noted:

This unprecedented programme is more than merely a novel way of presenting devotional narrative imagery; it must be understood as an intentional and necessary device conceived by the temple's royal patron and architects. In planning of the Papanatha Temple, the patron was able to construct a statement about his own actions and character by linking them with the strength and infallibility of the epic heroes whose exploits cover the walls. (1994, 27)

As discussed earlier, in Chapters 2.3 and 3.4, the cultural zone in which the Papanatha temple is located, i.e. Western India dominated from the 6th to the 13th centuries by the Chalukya dynasty, seems to have been an important source from which both certain dance poses and iconographical prototypes were received in Java and Champa. Thus it is possible that the practice of employing the Ramayana and its visual renderings to validate the king's divinity and his right to rule, so central to the Ramayana traditions in the regions of present-day Cambodia and Thailand, may have its roots there.

Exactly how and when the Ramayana and, consequently, Ramayana imagery was transmitted to Southeast Asia is not known. However, it must have happened during the long process of the transmission of Indian influence to the region, analysed in Chapters 2.4 and 2.5. The surviving Ramayana cloths discussed in the same chapters, imported from India to present-day Indonesia, although of much later date, may indicate that portable objects, such as storytellers' devices used to illustrate the oral act of conveying the epic, could have served as early prototypes for Ramayana imagery in Southeast Asia.

The earliest traces of Ramayana tradition in Southeast Asia belong to the Champa and Central Javanese cultures. A temple in Champa was dedicated to Valmiki, the author of the best known version of the epic, with inscriptions referring both to the epic poem as well as to the avatars of Vishnu (Dehejia 1994, 13). An early figure, identified as Hanuman, is dated back to the 7th or 8th century. Other known Cham Ramayana reliefs, including Hanuman, Ravana and Rama, belong to the 10th century (Huyh Thi Duoc 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 2.6, running along the inner balustrade of the Shiva and Brahma temples of the 9th century candi Loro Jonggaran complex, in Central Java, the Ramayana is shown as a series of bas-reliefs. It is divided into rectangular panels, not dissimilar to the above-mentioned early Indian Gupta panels. The style of the Central Javanese panels, as discussed in same chapter, is clearly related to the Indian tradition. Although only one actual dancing figure can be recognised in these panels, however, they contain several dance-related figures, clearly reflecting the Indian conventions defined in the *Natyashastra* manual.

Surviving Khmer art includes numerous Ramayana-related reliefs. Scenes from the epic can be found, for example, on the walls of the 10th-century Banteya Srei, the 12th-century Angkor Wat and the 13th-century Ta Phrom. The most extensive of the Khmer Ramayana series is the one belonging to the Large Panels of Angkor Wat's galleries, discussed in Chapter 4. The Indian-derived poses can still be recognised, but compared with the Central Javanese reliefs, they have clearly gone through a localisation process. When amalgamated with the Khmer devaraja cult, the epic acquired an important politico-religious role in enforcing the king's divinity and right to rule, as Vittorio Roveda has summarised:

Although the Ramayana initially did not have a specific theological function, it acquired one because Rama was earthly manifestation of the god Vishnu. Therefore the text becomes a devotional text, a holy story, which could purge one from one's sins. At the time of Jayavarman VII, the Ramayana was seen as an allegory of the king's life. Like Rama, he had been unjustly exiled, and had to fight evil forces (the Chams being equated with the rakshasas), before being able to return to Angkor (Ayodhya in the case of Rama) and regain the throne. Sita was the symbol of Cambodia, and making her free was the objective of the king. (1997, 33)

Thus even in Angkor the Ramayana was interpreted in a syncretistic context dominated by the cult of the devaraja or the god-king, a phenomenon which became still more complex when the Thai adopted this ideology and added to it one more layer, the influence of Theravada Buddhism. The earliest surviving Ramayana-related reliefs in the regions of present-day Thailand can be found in the 11th century Khmer temples of Phnom Rung and Phimai, which were built when Phimai served as an important Khmer outpost (Gosling 2002, 124–134).

As mentioned above, the Ramayana was already known in Sukhothai but no Ramayana imagery has survived from the period⁷. Few Ramayana-related images are known from the Ayutthaya period, although the importance of the epic is clearly evident in the fact that the capital was named after Rama's city Ayodhya and that the names of several kings were derived from the name of Phra Ram. As already pointed out, the exact origins of the present Ramakien epic are not clear. As a whole, however, the Central Thai Ramakien tradition, with its vital role as a part of the dynastic cult, seems to be inherited through the Khmer among so many other features of Khmer culture adopted during the Ayutthaya period.

The numerous Ramakien-related art works in different media from the early Rattanakosin period, such as bas-reliefs, murals, black and gold lacquer works [6/5], and mother-of-pearl inlays, already show such crystallised iconographical and stylistic features that it is obvious that they must stem from an already well matured tradition. The style of Ramakien depictions, especially those executed in two-dimensional media (as most of them are), is dominated by an extremely delicate linear style, which had its roots in the Sukhothai period Buddha statues and the surviving stone engravings, discussed in Chapter 3.8. The style was further developed during the Ayutthaya period.

One feature, which was to become characteristic of this style (which was not restricted to Ramakien imagery alone), was use of the Ayutthaya-period court dress as standard costume for all noble characters and even for high-ranking demonic figures (Mattani 1993, 245). The details of the costume, ornaments, elaborated headdresses and crowns vary according to the rank of the characters. The most exalted male figures wear the cone-like *mongkut* crown with a tapering spire. It is based on the king's actual crown and is also related to architecture, since, as discussed above, *mongkut* appears as a form of roof structure or a highly decorative frame for a window or a door.

The use of ornamental motifs, such as the *kanok* flames, also connects the pictorial arts with architecture and further with the "minor arts", such as textiles and ceramics of the period, which all share the same easily recognisable courtly style. In fact, the study of the details of

costume, crowns and ornaments in visual arts is a kind of sub-discipline of Thai art history, since analysis of their minute details has proven to be one of the best ways in which to determine the date of a work.

All the features discussed above are typical of early Rattanakosin art. The characters of the Buddha's life, the Traiphum or the Jatakas are depicted in the same style. No other literary work, however, makes use of such a wide range of different characters and ways of expression as the Ramakien. The epic itself starts with a description of the origins of three kinds of characters in the story, the humans, the demons and the monkeys. All these three "races" and an additional crowd of gods and semi-gods include hundreds of characters altogether, which should all be easily recognisable. The gods and noble humans are shown in graceful attitudes with restricted and gentle facial expressions while their actions and emotions are made clear by dance-like poses and gestures. The monkeys and demon characters, on the other hand, have expressive, exaggerated mask-like heads, clearly related to the style of the Ramayana and the Churning of the Milky Ocean reliefs in Angkor Wat, discussed in Chapter 4 [4/8].

A rich variety of poses and portrayals of movements are provided by the characterisation of the aggressive quality of the demons as well as the playful and animal qualities of the monkeys. Phra Ram, on the other hand, is often shown in heroic poses or in several dance-like attitudes related to archery. This may be explained by the fact that, as mentioned in Chapter 2.6, Rama is described as a master archer in the Indian epic. The most spectacular scenes are the great battle scenes, which the epic provides in abundance. The main protagonists, Phra Ram and Tosakanth, arrive on the battle-field surrounded by their armies, in golden chariots decorated with kranok motifs. These scenes culminate when Phra Ram and Tosakanth step down from their chariots to engage in hand-to-hand combat. Finally, the victor raises himself in a heroic posture on the thigh and shoulders of the loser in a pyramid-like tableau.

The identification of each of the hundreds of monkey and demon characters is made possible by the shapes of their facial features, such as eyes, noses, eyebrows, mouths etc., as well as by the forms of their tiaras, crowns and their weapons. In the case of polychromic art forms, such as murals, illustrated manuscripts and painted sculptures, the colour scheme of their costume, body and face also help identification. It seems obvious that such a detailed, encyclopaedic collection of characters with their own easily recognisable features, as well as the homogenous style of Ramakien imagery in general, must have been based on established iconographical manuals. Most probably these were lost like other manuals and literary works during the sack of Ayutthaya. The importance of guide books is emphasised by the fact that different kinds of manuals were immediately produced at the very start of the early Rattanaosin period

Jean Boisselier has analysed (1976, 231–325) early Rattanakosin manuals⁸. According to him, they show a mixture of styles, so typical of the Thai art of the period. In the model drawings he distinguishes elements from the Khmer, Chinese and South Indian iconography. He explains the South Indian influence by the fact that the court Brahmins, who took and still take care of many court rituals, had their connections with certain priestly lines in Tamil Nadu. The figures in the manuals served as canonised models for painters, sculptors and craftsmen who prepared the properties for royal rituals. They also served, according to Boisselier, as models for the theatre, especially for *nang yai*, an ancient form of shadow theatre in which dancing



FIG 6/6
NANG YAI PERFORMANCE.
PHOTOGRAPH MARJA-LEENA HEIKKILÄ-HORN 1983.



FIG 6/7
NANG YAI SHADOW PUPPETEER IN A POSE
REFLECTING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
FIGURES (IN THIS CASE, MONKEYS) CUT OUT OF
LEATHER. DHANINIVAT 1973.

puppeteers perform scenes from the Ramakien by presenting cut-out hide figures against a semitransparent cloth screen [6/6].

The origin of shadow theatre is a standard problem in Asian theatre studies, as it has been practiced over a wide area from Turkey in the west to China in the east. Similarly, the origin of nang yai is one of the widely discussed topics in Thai theatre studies (Nicolas 1927; Dhaninivat 1954; Boisselier 1976, 219–225). One could summarise by saying that there seem to be several attempts to explain the origins of this unique form of shadow theatre. According to a popular theory, nang yai originates from South Thailand and was received there through the Srivijaya Empire. It could also have been transmitted by the sea routes directly from India, which is often regarded as the cradle of many of the Southeast Asian shadow theatre traditions⁹.

The problem with this theory, however, is that no Indian or any other Southeast Asian shadow theatre traditions employ similar, static picture-like images as used in nang yai. Moreover, in no other tradition in the whole of Asia do the puppeteers dance while operating the figures as is the case in nang yai [6/7]. The only "sister" form with similar practices can be found today in Cambodia¹⁰.

Early surviving nang yai figures, which were made during King Rama II (Boisselier 1976, 219–226), show a variety of stylistic features, such as the mask-like faces of the demons and monkeys, which clearly relate them to the Ramakien imagery of the Central Plains of Thailand and thus, as discussed above, also to the Khmer reliefs of Angkor. Whatever the origins of nang yai are, it is self-evident that it is organically interwoven into the Thai Ramakien imagery as a whole. In fact nang yai is the earliest Ramakien-related art form mentioned in Thai literary sources.

The Ayutthaya Palatine Law, dated in 1458, mentions nang yai on several occasions (Ibid., 220). This indicates that nang yai must indeed have been a well-established art form already by then. There even exist references indicating that nang yai may have been performed during the Sukhothai period, but since these references belong to the fictional literature of later periods, scholars have been very cautious in accepting this as a fact (Nicolas 1927, Dhaninivat 1954, 6; Boisselier 1976, 221).

Nang yai may even be a kind of a primary source of the whole Ramakien imagery with its uniform iconography. As already discussed several times in this study, there is a possibility that early storytellers' devices may have functioned as early prototypes for later art in more durable materials. Their already familiar iconography and style could have been employed and further developed when scenes from the epics, originally recited by the storytellers, were executed on the stone or brick walls of the still surviving temples. This theory, favoured by this author, is, of course, completely hypothetical when one is studying early periods from which very little if any literary evidence survives.

However, when one is discussing developments in early 20th-century Thailand, such literary evidence is available. In an enlightening document, translated into English and published by Mattani (1993, 63) one gets detailed information about how intricate the interaction between the visual arts and nang yai could actually have been. The document is a letter written by Prince Naris, the most important cultural personage of his time, to Prince Damrong, who has been called "The Father of Thai History"¹¹. The letter explains, among other things, the origins of the famous Ramakien marble reliefs in Wat Chetuphon in Bangkok.

The construction of Wat Chetupon, more commonly known as Wat Po, was ordered by King Rama I, who also started the construction of Wat Phra Keo. Because of their close affiliation with the king, these adjacent complexes are both Wat Luangs or Royal Wats. Their characters, however, differ. Wat Phra Keo, as has already been made clear, is the seat of the Palladium of the State and the centre of the dynastic cult. Wat Chetupon, on the other hand, has served since its rebuilding project, launched in 1839 by King Rama III, as a centre of learning and is commonly called the "Siamese Peoples' University" (Aasen 1998, 126).

By order of King Rama III, the complex was transformed into a kind of encyclopaedia of all the traditional knowledge of the period. Long inscriptions were engraved for those who could read and didactic murals were painted for those who could not. The basement platform of the majestic ubosot was covered with 152 greyish marble panels showing scenes from the Ramakien [6/8]. The marbles were sometimes thought to have been brought to Bangkok from Ayutthaya but are now generally accepted as being made to the order of King Rama III (1824–1851) during the restoration of the temple (Boisselier 1975, 190). They are regarded as masterpieces of Thai stone carving. They are executed as extremely low, delicate bas-reliefs and "they flow in a way seldom duplicated by the statuary of the period" (Van Beek 1999, 183). Even to an untrained eye their stylistic and iconographical affinity with nang yai figures is striking.

Indeed, the above-mentioned letter written by Prince Naris seems to confirm this close relationship. According to the letter the marbles were ordered by King Rama III himself. Prince Naris describes how a very important artist (Master Chai), who had created a famous set of nang yai figures for royal use, also drew the sketches for these Ramakien marble reliefs. This would, certainly, explain both their low bas-relief technique and their style, which is similar to nang yai puppets, which are the main characteristics of these reliefs.

The shadow puppet-like character of the reliefs becomes even more obvious if the reliefs are seen duplicated as stone rubbings [6/9]. Then they appear as dark shadowy silhouettes against a white background. For decades, stone rubbings, made from the original reliefs, were sold to the Thai and tourists alike on the temple premises, but for the protection of the original reliefs this practice is no longer allowed, and imitations of the rubbings are now made mainly as woodblock prints¹².

Nang yai may, indeed, have had an extremely important role as an intermediary between the visual arts and theatrical narration. As pure objects the large leather figures belong to the field of the visual arts, but when they are in proper use they belong to the field of the performing arts. Moreover, as discussed above, the artists who made the model drawings for the puppets could also have been the actual designers of some other important Rattanakosin style art works, which were then executed by other craftsmen. There may have been model cartoons and manuals for nang yai figures, which maintained, developed, and spread the uniform iconography and style of Ramakien imagery.

An analogical and more or less contemporaneous example confirms that this could indeed be possible. The iconography with its minute details and the style of the Central Javanese *wayang kulit* shadow puppets, discussed in Chapter 2.6, were recorded in manuals. While the early Thai manuals were destroyed, the Javanese manuals have survived in the *kraton* (palace) libraries of the Central Javanese courts¹³. They did not serve only as guide books for the

FIG 6/8
MARBLE PANEL AT WAT PO
IN BANGKOK SHOWING A
SCENE FROM THE RAMAKIEN,
PROBABLY CARVED DURING
THE REIGN OF KING RAMA III
(1824–1851).
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.



FIG 6/9
STONE RUBBING FROM THE
SAME PANEL.
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.



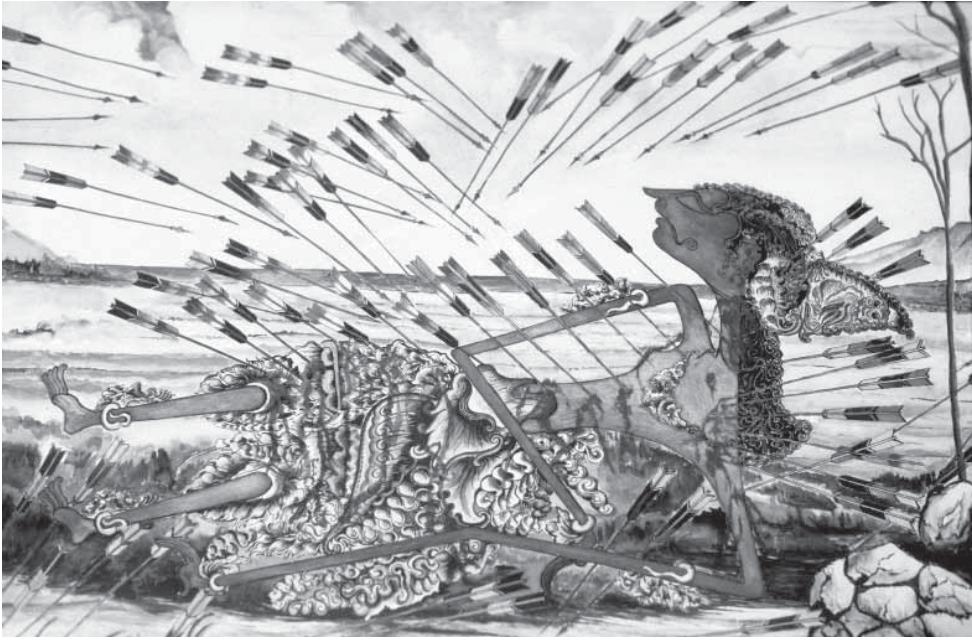


FIG 6/10 SCENE FROM THE MAHABHARATA, A WAYANG-STYLE PAINTING FROM THE KRATON (PALACE) OF YOGYAKARTA, CENTRAL JAVA. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1984.

craftsmen who produced the wayang kulit puppets [2/19], but they also set the standards for painters and carvers who created paintings and reliefs in the so-called *wayang style* [6/10], based on the iconography and extremely stylised, elongated style of the shadow puppets (Guy 1982, 69–71).

So far the focus has been on the symbolism of the Thai temples, on the Ramakien, and on the intermingling of the epic with the dynastic cult, architecture, the visual arts and shadow theatre. However, as hinted at above, whenever the Ramakien is visually rendered, the element of dance seems to be somehow present. Thus, before finally focusing on the dance-related images of Wat Phra Keo, the next subchapter attempts to summarise the interrelationship of the Ramakien tradition with one more an art form essential for this study, that of dance.

6.4 The Ramakien and Dance

The Indian Ramayana epic is already clearly related to dance, as both Rama and Ravana are described as skilful dancers. Dance is mentioned in the epic on several occasions, and scenes from it are known to have been enacted in India as early as from the 4th century onwards (Vatsyayan 1977, 161–174). While the Ramayana spread from India to other parts of Asia, especially to Southeast Asia, it became the most popular subject of the shadow and puppet theatre as well as of the dance theatre in the whole region¹⁴.

In the Thai Ramakien the interrelationship between dance and the epic itself became, if possible, even more close. As mentioned, the Ramakien starts with a description of the origins of three kinds of characters in the story, the humans, the demons and the monkeys.

This is essential for the development of Thai classical dance. Even today the Central Thai classical dance techniques are divided into these categories. Moreover, an episode called “The Destruction of Nonthuk by Phra Narai”, in the version of the Ramakien composed by King Rama I, includes a list of 19 movements, still used today when training dancers as a part of the so-called Mae Bot or “Alphabet of Dancing” (Dhanit 1980, 15–16). This movement series forms the basis of the classical dance technique used by noble male and female characters in different dance theatre forms.

The present *natašin*, or classical Thai dance, developed probably during the Ayutthaya period, although very little is known about this process¹⁵. The roots of *natašin* can be deciphered by using the early dance images of the region, discussed in Chapters 3.7 and 3.8, as archaeological source material. This has been attempted by Mattani Rutnin (1993, 15–219). In her analysis she also summarises the views of earlier Thai scholars. According to it, the possible origins of Thai dance may be found in the Khmer tradition as depicted in the dance images in the Khmer reliefs of Angkor and the Khmer-related reliefs of Phimai temple in eastern Thailand. Also, according to her, one source may be the Mon tradition, depicted in the few surviving Mon reliefs. One possible transmission route of this clearly Indian-influenced dance technique could also have been South Thailand with its connections with Sri Lanka and the Srivijaya Empire. There may also be the possibility that the dance tradition was brought from India direct to the regions of Thailand by Brahman gurus (Tamra Ram 1997, 7–10).

This last possibility is supported by the fact that many dance-related key terms still used in the Thai language, such as *natašin* (classical dance) and *kru* (guru), stem from Sanskrit and are related to India’s *Natyashastra* (*Natasatra* in Thai) tradition. Furthermore, as already mentioned, a Sanskrit manuscript of a *Natyashastra* manual can be found in the National Library of Thailand. The Thai dance technique has indeed many features in common with Indian techniques. They include several poses, the use of three different speeds of movements, and the original series of 108 basic movements (now reduced to 68) corresponding in number with the 108 *karanas* of the *Natyashastra*. However, there are also definitive differences between the Indian and Thai traditions, as Mattani has noted:

Thai dancers, in both the folk and classical styles, hold their bodies straight from the neck to the hips in vertical axis and move their bodies up and down with knees bent, stretching to the rhythm of the music. Indian dancers, on the other hand, move their bodies often in an S-curve. The arms and hands in Thai dancing are kept in curves, or *wong*, at different levels, high medium or low, and the legs are bent with the knees opening outward to make an angle called *liem* (lit., angles) ... The grace and beauty of the dancer depends on how well these curves and angles are maintained in relationship with the proportion of the whole body. (1993, 3)

Furthermore, Mattani adds that the Indian *mudras* are simplified in Thai dance to a few basic hand gestures, which when combined with dance gestures (*phasa ta*), can denote the actions and, especially, moods of the characters. She also notes that the foot movements of Thai dance are generally slower than in India and, furthermore, that in Thai dance the toes are mostly curved upward or kept flat at an angle with the legs, but never pointed, as they sometimes are

in Indian dance. These differences may be interpreted as to signify that the Thai adopted their dance tradition, not directly from India, but from their neighbours, the Khmer and the Mon, in an already localised form.

It is enlightening to compare present Thai dance with the dance images discussed in the preceding pages. The basic open position of the legs (the angular "liem" in Thai tradition) can be already traced in the earliest images found both in India and Southeast Asia. As discussed on several occasions above, it is often related to the martial arts. The "wong", or curved arm with upward-bent elbow joint, on the other hand, seems to appear for the first time in Southeast Asian dance images later, around the 10th century, as shown by the Cham Tra Kieu dancer and Mon relief discussed in Chapters 3.4 and 3.7. In this Mon relief it is possible, for the first time, to clearly recognise the strongly backward bent fingers, one of the main characteristics of Thai dance still today.

According to Mattani (1993, 46, 149), the classical court dance tradition declined towards the end of the Ayutthaya period, but the remains of the tradition were, nevertheless, carried on to the court of Bangkok. The formulation of the present style took place during the reigns of King Rama I and Rama II. Even King Rama I ordered artists to paint a pictorial manual for Thai dance [6/11]. This manual was executed in the style of contemporaneous murals. In the following reign, another manual concentrating on the characters of the Ramakien [6/12], still clinging to the traditional painting style, was ordered and painted (Tamra Ram 1997, 7–10). The standardisation of the dance technique took place exactly simultaneously with the rewriting of the Ramakien and the canonisation of Ramakien-related imagery.



FIG 6/11 MINIATURE PAINTING FROM A DANCE MANUAL FROM THE PERIOD OF KING RAMA I (1782–1809). TAMRA RAM 1997.

It is thus perhaps no wonder that the sub-techniques of classical Thai dance are classified according to the characters portrayed in the Ramakien. The first group, the noble humans, is divided into major heroes (*Phra Ram*), minor heroes (*Phra Lak*), major heroines (*Nang Sida*), and finally to minor heroines (*Montho*). Even the names of these role categories are borrowed from the Ramakien's principal characters. The second group consists of demon characters (*yak*), and the third of monkeys (*ling*), both crucial to the structure of the Ramakien epic.

The close affinity between the Ramakien and dance (and, consequently, dance drama) is partly explained by the fact that the second version of the epic from the reign of King Rama I was meant to be performed as *lakhon* (also *lakon*) or court dance drama (Khon, Thai Masked dance 2006, 22). *Lakhon* is, however, only one of the Thai dance drama forms using the Ramakien as its story material. *Nang yai*, the ancient shadow theatre tradition already discussed above, can also be regarded as a form of dance theatre, since the puppeteers move in a dance-like manner according to the various characters portrayed in the leather figure they are manipulating. Thus the above basic movement techniques, that of the noble humans, demons and monkeys, can be recognised in the movements of the puppeteers of *nang yai* in its present form as well as in its early photographic documentation (Dhaninivat 1954).

No other form of the performing arts is, however, so profoundly interwoven with the dynastic cult and the Ramakien and, consequently, Ramakien imagery, as *khon*, already referred to in Chapter 4. It is a form of dance theatre employing extremely decorative painted and gilded *papier maché* masks covering the whole heads of the dancers enacting the demon and monkey roles¹⁶. The masks and the glittering court and military dresses¹⁷, different types of crowns,



FIG 6/12
MINIATURE PAINTING SHOWING
A BATTLE SCENE FROM THE
RAMAKIEN FROM A DANCE
MANUAL, PERIOD OF KING RAMA
II (1809–1824). TAMRA RAM 1997.



FIG 6/13 HANUMAN IN THE MURAL OF WAT PHRA KEO. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1983.



FIG 6/14 HANUMAN ON A KHON STAGE. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1995.

ornaments and attributes, which still today reflect the Ayutthaya period prototypes, make it possible to reproduce exactly the same scenes, characters and tableaux on the stage as seen in the Ramakien murals and other Ramakien imagery discussed above [6/13, 6/14].

Khon makes use of all the sub-techniques of Central Thai classical dance. In fact, they almost seem to be created for the needs of khon. The noble humans employ the full scale of the *natasin*. The monkey and demonic characters have their appropriate basic movement techniques. Their movements are dominated by an extremely open leg position, the Indian-influenced characteristic of South-East Asian martial dance, which has already been discussed several times. Indeed, the movement technique of the demons is believed to originate from the ancient Thai martial arts (Natthapatra & Promporn 1998, 108). Thus, the dance of the demons with its powerful stamping is aggressive in character, whereas the monkey's dance has its acrobatic and playful elements. Their movements imitate those of real monkeys adding thus to khon's complex movement vocabulary still one more element, that of the ancient animal dances¹⁸.

One of the standard topics of Thai theatre studies is the origing of *nang yai*, as is also the origin the origin of khon. According to an inscription it was performed among other forms of entertainment in the early 18th century and since then it has regularly been mentioned in textual sources, such as royal decrees (Ibid., 9–13). However, this is not the place to dwell on this complicated subject more than what is necessary for understanding the transformation of the dance imagery. *Nang yai* shadow theatre has often been regarded as one possible source of khon. This view is based on the fact that it is known that there existed a specific form of khon

which was performed in front of a screen, similar to the white muslin screen used in nang yai¹⁹. This could, of course, explain the many similarities which khon and nang yai share.

They both employ the same kinds of archaic verse, movement techniques, and characterisation. This could also explain one of the main characteristics of khon dance. The dancers tend to stand still in their decorative poses for longer periods and there is a clear tendency for silhouette-like attitudes and tableaux, corresponding to those depicted in the nang yai figures. A similar kind of interrelationship between shadow theatre and dance can already clearly be recognised in the Javanese wayang style and wayang-related theatre forms²⁰, discussed in Chapter 2.6.

Another approach, discussed among others by Damrong (1975), Kukrit (1998), Mattani (1993), to try to decipher the birth of khon is connected to ancient ritual performances, such as *Chak Nak Dukdamban* (lit., pulling a giant serpent), which was performed in connection with coronation ceremonies. In this grandiose ceremony, known also as Indraphisekha, military officers and civil officials dressed as demon and monkey characters of the Ramakien enact the scene of the Churning of the Milky Ocean. It is known to have already taken place during the Ayutthaya period (Mattani 1993, 6–7). As already mentioned above, a similar ritual was performed at the court of Pagan, and it was also carved on the walls of Angkor Wat.

A third source of khon, or at least for some of its movement techniques, may have been the *krabi krabong* or sword and baton dance, which is mentioned in an inscription as early as in 1458. It employed the open-leg position and was accompanied by music. It was practised by princes and noblemen to learn the skills of martial arts (Natthapatra & Promporn 1998, 108).

As already examined in Chapter 4 there are many similarities in Angkor Wat's reliefs and khon. For example, the conical, mask-like heads of the gods and their tiaras in the reliefs seem to be direct forefathers of the khon masks and headgear. Also, the very open leg position of the demons and the use of a stick as a weapon in these movements, so typical of *krabi krabong* and khon, can be found in the Khmer reliefs. The Khmer connection becomes even more apparent when one considers the term "khon". According to Dhanit Yupho, the Thai might have received the art of khon from the Khmer, since the term is derived from the Khmer term "*khon*" (Mattani 1993, 39).

Which one of these approaches is the correct one does not concern this study. Mattani's opinion, however, is that nang yai and khon are sister forms which developed side by side. She writes:

Performers of both theatre forms adopted the aesthetic qualities from each other to perfect their arts. For example, *khon* dancers imitate fighting poses depicted in the exquisitely carved shadow puppets, while nang puppeteers manipulate their puppets and use the leg and body movements of *khon*. (1993, 7)

This writer agrees with the above view, which does not try to explain the origins of complex art forms as a kind of simple linear evolution from one form to another. It has already become clear that, throughout centuries, different theatrical art forms, such as shadow theatre and dance, have influenced each other deeply and in several ways. To this complex process of cross-fertilisation one must also add the visual arts. As seen on the preceding pages, dance has been

portrayed by sculptors and painters and, on the other hand, conventions of the visual arts have influenced theatrical performances. This complicated process continued in Thailand, as the next sub-chapter will discuss, well until the 20th century.

6.5 The Dance-Related Images of Wat Phra Keo

Among the overwhelming abundance of art works, executed in various media, originating from different periods and covering the whole complex of Wat Phra Keo, many dance-related images can also be recognised. However, only a few of them depict actual dancers. The majority of them can be classified as belonging to the "dance-related images". As they are often incorporated into narrative paintings, many of them also belong to the category of (11) "dance images in the narrative context".

This sub-chapter will first discuss the Ramakien murals covering the inner walls of the galleries enclosing the whole temple compound. A black and gold lacquer screen, now installed at the Wat Phra Keo Museum, will then be examined, after which the focus will turn to the three-dimensional sculptures and sculptured reliefs integrated into the architecture of the complex. Finally, a group of free-standing sculptures, these also now in the collection of the Wat Phra Keo Museum, will be discussed.

The cloisters enclosing the Wat Phra Keo complex form a huge covered gallery [6/2]. King Rama I, the founder of the temple, commissioned the painting of its murals. They were to depict the whole story of the Ramakien, based on his own version of the epic (Naengnoi 1998, 28). The motivation behind the project seems evident. By painting the scenes from the Ramakien in the surrounding galleries of the complex, which serves as the centre of the dynastic cult, Wat Phra Keo would be "marked" as Wat Luang, Royal Wat. Furthermore, as discussed above, the epic is full of analogies to the king himself and the kingship in general.

The project was enormous. The murals include altogether 178 panels, each of them approximately three metres wide and some two metres high. The panels are accompanied by verses of the epic carved on marble slabs during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. In addition to this, avatars of Phra Narai (Vishnu) and several characters of the Ramakien were painted on the pillars as well as on the corridor walls of the gallery.

Earlier Ramakien murals can be found in the wooden library of Wat Rakhang in Thonburi and in the Buddhaisawan "Chapel", which is located on the premises of the National Museum of Bangkok (Santi 2000, 55, 81). Nowhere else, however, has the Ramakien such a prominent role as at Wat Phra Keo. It is believed that the tradition of enclosing a wat with cloistered galleries is derived from the galleries of the Angkor Wat, Phimai and Phnom Rung temples (Ringis 1990, 38; Nithi & Mertens 2005, 90). Thus it would seem plausible that the idea to render the Ramakien in this kind of grandiose scale was also inherited from the Khmer tradition. This is supported by the fact (which, of course, may also be a pure coincidence) that the total length of the murals comes close to 600 metres. It corresponds approximately to the total length of the reliefs, the so-called Large Panels (including other myths besides the Ramayana) covering the walls of the Angkor Wat's galleries.

It is surprising that the original function of the Ramakien murals is mentioned nowhere. None of the many guide or art history books referring to the murals tell us whether they were used for educating members of the court, who had permission to enter the royal temple compound. It would be easy to assume that they had a didactic function because of the explanatory marble slabs added to the murals at a later stage. It has been suggested that the process of reading the murals also served as a ritual circumambulation of the temple (Ringis 1990). This, however, contradicts the fact that the ritual circumambulation is always done in Thailand in a clockwise direction, whereas the Ramakien murals should be seen in a counter-clockwise direction, as the Large Panels of Angkor Wat, so that the story unfolds correctly. Thus, as was the case with the Large Panels of Angkor Wat, and in the case of Wat Phra Keo's Ramakien murals, one can only speculate upon their original function, which will be discussed in more general terms below.

Not much, if anything, is left of the original paintings, since the murals have been restored or practically repainted several times. A particularly drastic repainting is known to have taken place during the reign of King Rama VII (1925–1934) (Subhadradis 1986, 32). The practice of "restoration" or, in this case literally over-painting the murals, a nightmare for a modern art historian, is dictated by several factors. The climate of Central Thailand is extremely harsh in its humidity and, consequently, the life-span of mural technique is limited. Further, the contemporary concepts of "conservation" and "restoration" were introduced to Southeast Asia rather recently (Boisselier 1976, 73).

Probably the most important factor, however, is that Thai murals in general have served both didactic and iconic purposes. They were painted "as visual texts for spiritual instruction" (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 166). Furthermore, their function was to enhance the sacredness of the building in question, and the execution of the painting was regarded as an act of merit (Ringis 1990, 88). More important than to preserve them in their supposed "authentic" condition has been just to keep them in good condition so that they can fulfil the iconographical demands set on them.

In the case of Wat Phra Keo, so laden with layers of symbolic connotations, the custom of regularly over-painting the murals has been pervasive. The Ramakien murals have been repainted several times, usually in connection with important dynastic events: for the fiftieth anniversary of Bangkok in 1832 during the reign of King Rama III, in 1882 for the centenary celebrations during the reign of King Rama V, for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 1932 during the reign of Rama VII, and again for the bicentenary celebration in 1982, during the reign of the present king, Rama IX (Subhadradis 1995, 1). At the time of writing, the "restoration" was again in full swing.

The fact that the Ramakien murals of Wat Phra Keo do not represent any "authentic" style or any particular period seems to be the reason why art historians tend to overlook them. For example Jean Boisselier justifies his decision not to include them in his study in the following words:

We shall not mention the sizeable group at Wat Phra Keo...because all these scenes, both in the cloister and in the ubosoth, were repainted in the reign of Rama III.

They have been many times restored since then and the adoption of Western colours and Western modelling have deprived them of their classic beauty, although the compositional balance has been preserved. (1976, 95)

This attitude is understandable from the point of view of traditional western art history, which has to deal with the question of the authenticity of art works. However, from the point of view of a multi-disciplinary study, such as the present one, in which the question of authenticity is not always relevant, and which involves architecture, the visual arts, dance, theatrical practices and aesthetical ideals in general, the Ramakien murals at Wat Phra Keo offer exceptional and valuable visual source material. From these paintings, created by several workshops of artists during a long time-span, it is possible to trace the aesthetic and iconographical trends and, what is crucial to this study, the close interrelationship between dance and the visual arts during the 19th and 20th centuries in Thailand.

The Ramakien murals have, in fact, even more in common with the theatrical arts. In Southeast Asia dance theatre has often developed from the art of storytelling. Like the art of storytelling and, consequently, the forms of dance theatre which derived from it, these Ramakien murals should not be regarded as authentic works of art of a certain period either, but rather as embodiments of a living and renewing visual narrative tradition with an unchanging core.

In their present state, most of the temple's murals reflect the trends of the period of Thailand's westernisation, which culminated during the rule of King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851–1868) and especially during the rule of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868–1910). Western influence at that time was by no means a complete novelty in Thai painting. Western elements, such as less flattering portrayals of European soldiers and officials with their prominent noses, foreign clothes and strange hats, as well as less lucky attempts to paint buildings with a kind of western perspective, can be already found in some Ayutthaya period black and gold lacquers and in murals of the Thonburi and early Rattankosin periods (Nithi & Mertens 2000, 29).

In the Ramakien murals of Wat Phra Keo, however, the western influence dominates, especially in their landscape backgrounds and in the execution of many of their buildings. Traditionally, Thai paintings utilised a "bird's eye" or aerial perspective, in which limited panoramas with their clear details are viewed from a point above. The panoramas, which serve as kinds of dramaturgical units, each concentrating on a certain section of the narrative, are organically linked to each other, enabling the smooth rendering of the story, scene by scene.

During the period of westernisation of Thai arts, the western "vanishing point" perspective gained popularity, which when combined with the use of the horizon and shading, created an illusion of distance and depth (Ringis 1990, 110). However, in the Wat Phra Keo's Ramakien murals the westernised style and the earlier, flatter style with an aerial perspective, frequently overlap and sometimes create a fantastic, nearly psychedelic, fairytale-like atmosphere.

The stylistic clash between the "old" and the "new" culminates in the contrast between the traditional, flat human, demon and monkey figures set against the westernised backgrounds [6/15]. According to tradition, the more important the character, the more carefully its execution should follow the canons. The noble persons, such as Phra Ram, are mainly depicted in three-quarter-face or semi-profile, and their poses and gestures correspond with the aesthetical standards and rules of Thai classical dance (Santi 2000, 190). Keeping these figures rather flat and showing them mainly as silhouettes or semi-silhouettes enabled the artists to maintain the proportions of classical dance.



FIG 6/15 SCENE FROM THE RAMAKIEN IN THE MURAL OF WAT PHRA KEO. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.

The style of the principal characters of the murals is indeed clearly based on iconographical manuals. Further, they share the basic attitudes and gestures with nang yai as well as with classical dance and its early manuals, mentioned above. This is apparent, especially in the battle scenes, which culminate, as discussed before, when the protagonists step down from their chariots to engage in hand-to-hand combat and end in a pyramid-like tableau [6/16]. According to Mattani (1993, 7) these specific scenes were adapted for the khon stage, where they always arouse unanimous applause from the audience, from the iconographical conventions of nang yai figures [6/17].

However, even this flat style of the principal characters started to give away to a more westernised approach. In 1874, in connection with the restoration of the Ramakien murals, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) ordered the royal printers to print a new collection of iconographical models. Further new manuals with apparent pedagogical aims were produced and, consequently, the style of the principal figures slightly changed. When observing the clash of traditional and western style in these manuals, Jean Boisselier, a pioneer of the study of Thai painting, who has studied them, writes:

The change of direction is most obvious in the representation of the human form. In an attempt to effect a compromise between two such different attitudes, the manuals draw directly, and for the first time, on the theatre.... Needing to identify the various characters and to describe their behaviour, the new iconography adopts



FIG 6/16
BATTLE TABLEAU FROM
THE RAMAKIEN MURAL
OF WAT PHRA KEO.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.



FIG 6/17
BATTLE SCENE ON A
KHON STAGE.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1995.

the theatre's extremely elaborate vocabulary of gestures, as well as its collection of masks. In a perspective which is henceforth that of the Ramakien (the influence of theatre again), gods and heroes of both sexes lose sovereign aloofness which has characterized them hitherto. This is now replaced by a somewhat unexpected geniality, which is, in fact ill-suited to their behaviour. In general, monkeys and demons seem to have retained more character, for the simple reason that the khon masks did not allow of insipid interpretations. (1976, 235)

As one dominant *Leitmotif* of this study has been the close and complex interrelationship between dance and visual arts, this author cannot agree with Boisseliers's above-quoted view in this matter. In the light of the preceding chapters his statement that the later manuals "draw directly, and for the first time, on the theatre" does not seem logical. The close interrelationship of dance and the visual arts is undeniable in the Indian and also clearly apparent in the Southeast Asian traditions. Already the early surviving black and gold lacquer works, which he discusses with great insight (Ibid., 47-49) had adopted the vocabulary of movements, masks and costuming similar to present-day khon [6/5].

It seems that behind Boisselier's attitude is his deep respect for the traditional style of Thai painting and consequently his dislike of its westernisation. It is true that new manuals propagated a new kind of approach for the earlier, completely flat, shadow puppetlike figures. For example in the monkey figure one can recognise an attempt to portray the characters in perspective but still at the same time to maintain its easily recognisable figure and its monkey-like pose [6/18]. Further, Boisselier states that in the manuals "monkeys and demons seem to



FIG 6/18
HANUMAN FROM A MANUAL FOR THAI
DESIGN. BOISSELLIER 1976.

have retained more character, for the simple reason that the khon masks did not allow of insipid interpretations". This may be explained by the fact that similar development towards realism took place on the khon stage as well.

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was the period when western ideas and aesthetics spread in all fields of Thai culture, including not only visual arts but dance and theatre as well (Mattani 1993, 69–150). They influenced deeply also khon. By the second half of the 19th century the noble human characters no longer wore masks, but had their faces whitened with Chinese powder (Ibid., 246–247). According to etiquette, however, they refrained from any facial expression and thus their faces, to a certain degree, retained their mask-like quality. This could explain the corresponding trend in the manuals which Boissellier refers to when stating that "gods and heroes of both sexes lose the sovereign aloofness which has characterized them hitherto. This is now replaced by a somewhat unexpected geniality, which is, in fact, ill-suited to their behaviour".

Realism and naturalism became the trends both in the visual arts and also on the stage in Thailand. When the noble characters abandoned the use of masks and took, in this respect, a step towards a kind of stage realism, correspondingly, the painter's manuals added a touch of naturalism to their characters, which was again reflected in the style of the murals. Similarly, when painters were experimenting with the western-influenced "vanishing point" perspective, shadowing and the use of horizon, the theatre adopted the western kind of pro-scenium stage and painted backdrops (Mattani 1993, 228–234).

Changes also occurred in the khon costume and, consequently, in dresses portrayed in the murals. During the later part of the 19th century King Rama IV ordered that courtiers should cover their upper body. This led to a change of dress code in general, also of course on the stage (Ibid., 244–247). The new khon costuming, now with an upper garment even for noble male characters, was standardised and the code was copied in the murals. Due to their exceptionally large size and the fact that they were repainted again and again, the Ramakien murals record many phases of the change in the style of painting, often corresponding with the developments in dance and theatre as well.

So far the focus has been on the principal characters of the Ramakien murals. As shown, their portrayals usually shares the poses and gestures with classical dance and they are based on the strict rules recorded in manuals. In addition, the murals include plenty of secondary characters, often ordinary people. Their style is freer and not recorded in any manuals. Their portrayals seem to be based on observations of the artists themselves, since they include several details, such as dresses, fabrics, hairdos etc. typical of the period of the execution of the paintings. Secondary scenes with less important figures are traditionally shown in the lowest registers of the murals (Subhadradis 1981).

The secondary scenes often provide realistic and colourful depictions of daily life with various kinds of less noble characters including Brahmins, peasants, slaves, soldiers as well as foreigners from different parts of the world. Among the various actions shown, there are even different kinds of sexual activities, portrayed with great humour and understanding (Santi 2000, 204–215, Wyatt 2004). While the principal characters in the Ramakien murals are dressed in originally Ayutthaya-derived court costume or martial uniforms, the secondary

characters reflect in their outfits the trends and practices of the period when the murals were painted or repainted.

The secondary scenes support the upper registers and often overlap with them. Sometimes they include portrayals of dance and other kinds of theatrical activities. Usually the dance and theatre scenes belong to larger representations of grand festivities, such as cremations of important persons. As was the case with the outfits of secondary persons, these theatrical scenes similarly show types and styles of performances which were prevalent during the time of the creation or repainting of the murals. Such dance and theatre scenes can be found in the murals of several wats around the country.

The one most often referred to is Wat Matchimawat with its Fourth Reign (1851–1868) murals in Songkhla, in South Thailand (Khon: Thai Masked Theatre 2006, 20). These murals include a large scene showing the cremation ceremonies of the Buddha with many kinds of theatrical activities, such as Thai boxing, acrobatics and lakhon [6/19]. Other scenes depict a rod-puppet-theatre show as well as a local *nora* dance performance. Such painted theatrical scenes serve as a valuable source of information about the development of Thai dance and theatre²¹.

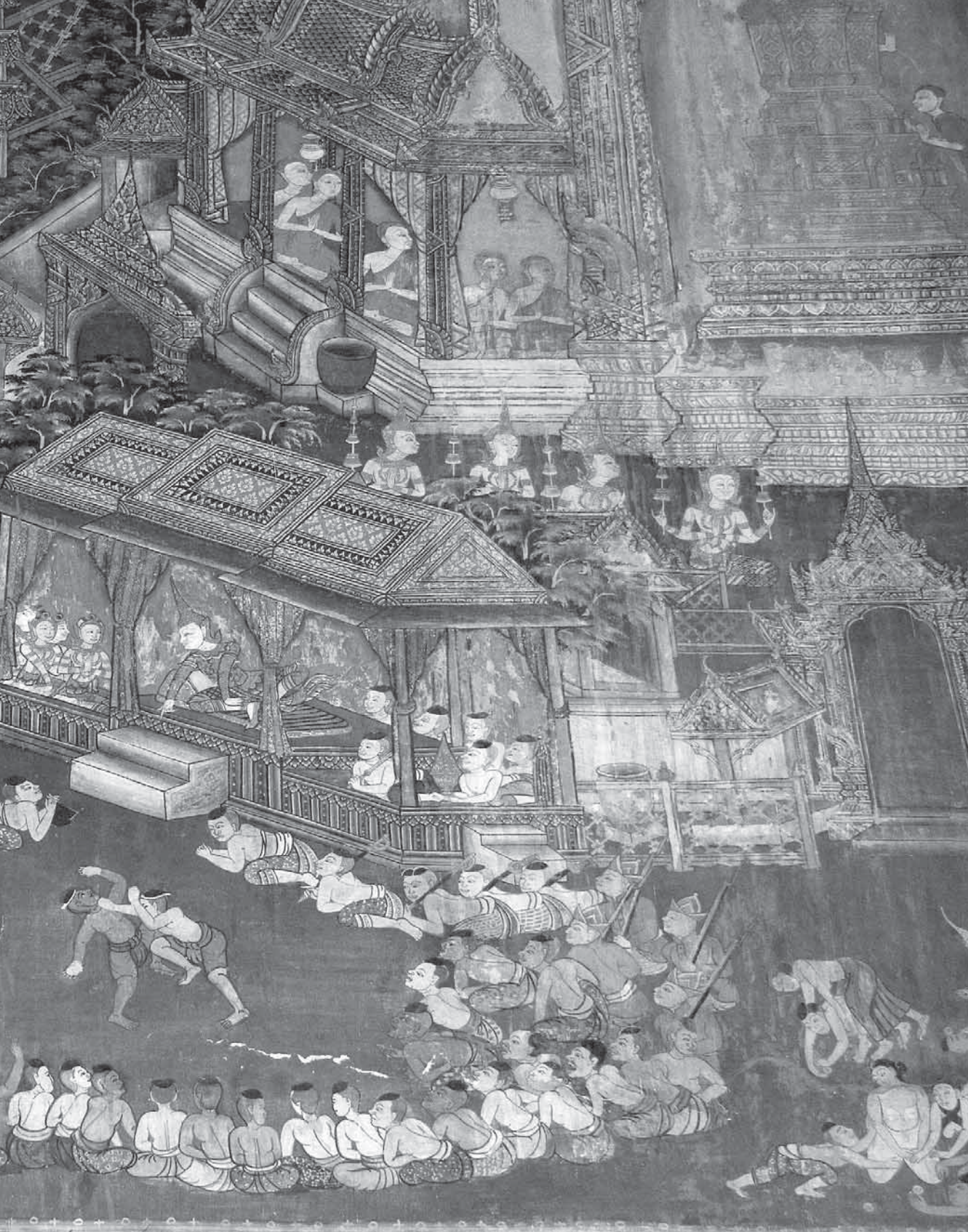
A complete panel (no. 113) of the Ramakien murals at Wat Phra Keo is dedicated to the funeral ceremonies of the demon king Tosakanth [6/20]. Several theatrical performances are also shown. However, as the Ramakien murals adopt the western perspective, the scenes are not placed in the lower register as earlier but in the background of the painting. The performances include (from left to right) nang yai shadow theatre [6/21], khon, puppet theatre, *rabeng*, Chinese marionette theatre, an unidentified form, folk dance, probably *molam*, *hun krabok*, i.e. Central Thai rod puppet theatre, *nang talung* shadow theatre of South Thailand and finally a Chinese opera scene [6/22]. Although the panel is probably restored and even over-painted, the scene gives a rather comprehensive description of the main forms of dance and theatre practised in Thailand in the 19th and early 20th century.

As is the case with these Ramakien murals in general, the exact time of the execution or repainting of this particular panel is not known. However, the practice of providing diverse forms of entertainment during the cremation ceremonies of rulers and other dignitaries has been a common custom in Southeast Asia. These kinds of festivities were, and still are, regarded as a form of merit making for the departed. Documents reporting the cremation ceremonies of the kings of the Rattanakosin period confirm that it indeed was the custom to invite the above-mentioned forms of entertainment to be performed in the lavish festivities offered to the general public (Natthapatra & Promporn 1998, 6–13).

After discussion of the Ramakien murals, which reflect the stylistic clash of indigenous and western aesthetics, it is interesting to focus for a while on the traditional style as preserved in a large lacquer panel, now in the collection of the Wat Phra Keo Museum²². It shows the scene of Pulling of the Giant Serpent from a grand ceremonial performance of Indraphisekha or Coronation of Phra Isuan (Indra)²³ [6/23]. As already discussed on several occasions, it enacts the Churning of the Milky Ocean myth and it has been carved in the Large Panels of Angkor Wat; performances enacting this myth are known to have been performed at the courts of Pagan and Ayutthaya during coronation ceremonies.



FIG 6/19 CELEBRATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CREMATION OF THE BUDDHA, MURAL FROM THE REIGN OF KING RAMA III (1824–1851), WAT MATCHIMAWAT IN SONGKHLA, SOUTH THAILAND. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.



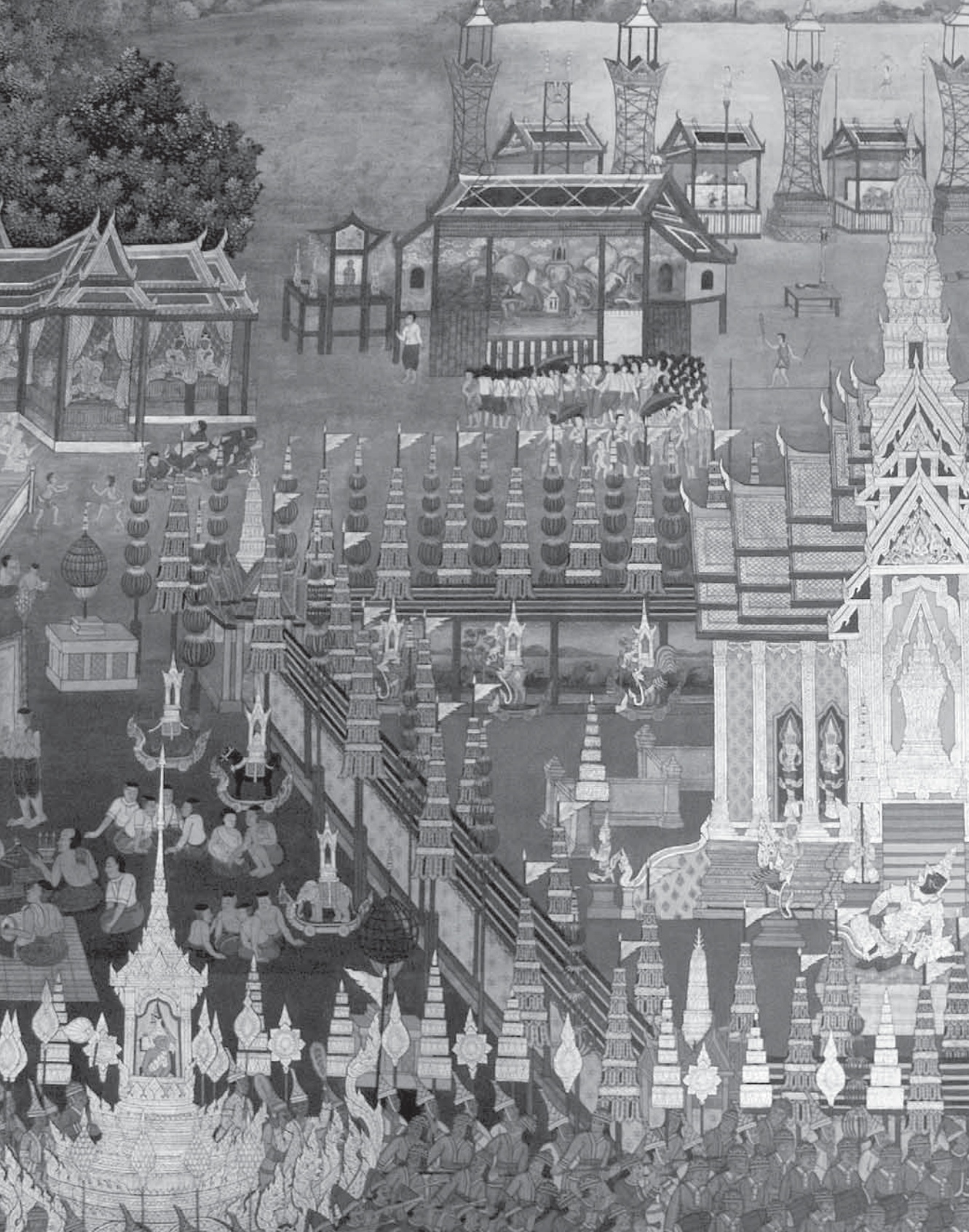


FIG 6/20 CREMATION CEREMONIES OF THE DEMON KING TOSAKANTH IN THE RAMAKIEN MURAL AT WAT PHRA KEO.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.





FIG 6/21 NANG YAI PERFORMANCE IN THE PANEL OF TOSAKANTH'S CREMATION. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.



FIG 6/22 CHINESE "OPERA" PERFORMANCE IN THE PANEL OF TOSAKANTH'S CREMATION. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

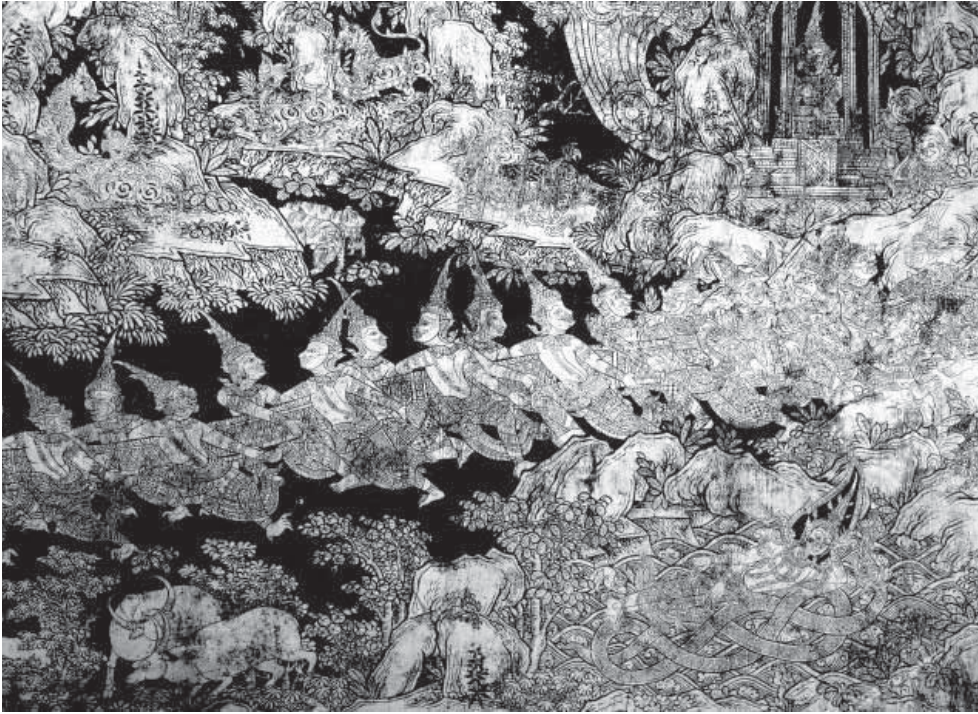


FIG 6/23 SCENE OF PULLING OF THE GIANT SERPENT FROM A GRAND CEREMONIAL PERFORMANCE OF INDRAPHISEKHA, A LACQUER SCREEN PROBABLY FROM THE MID-19TH CENTURY, NOW IN THE WAT PHRA KEO MUSEUM. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

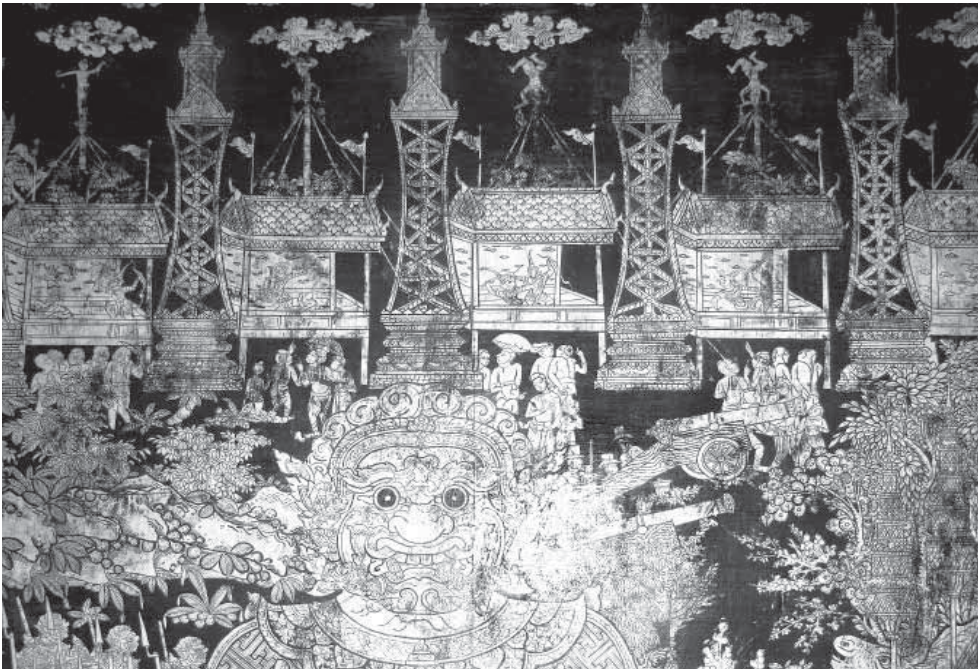


FIG 6/24 DETAIL FROM THE SAME SCREEN SHOWING DIFFERENT FORMS OF ENTERTAINMENT DURING THE INDRAPHISEKHA CEREMONY. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

According to Naengnoi Suksri (1998, 126) it is believed that the screen was formerly located in Phra Thinang Indra Phisek Maha Prasat, which was burned to the ground in 1789. Also Prince Dhanivat writes about an Indraphisekha lacquer screen (1975, 116). He, however, states that the screen was commissioned by King Rama III to commemorate the ceremony held 300 years earlier in Ayutthaya. According to him it flanked the throne in the Dusit Audience Hall in the Grand Palace. On the other hand, the caption at the Wat Phra Keo Museum states that the screen was probably ordered by King Mongkut.

Whichever interpretation is true or whether two screens showing this theme existed does not concern this study. What is interesting is that during the early Rattanakosin period the idea to commemorate this ceremony was considered of such importance. As discussed earlier, this very ceremony is regarded as one of the early traditions from which khon was developed. Indeed, in the screen now at the Wat Phra Keo Museum, the men pulling the giant serpent are dressed in khon costume and the facial features of the demons and the monkeys have a clear resemblance to khon masks. Dhanivat speculates "whether the pageant was meant to be an integral part of the ceremony or just one of the celebrations that accompany a great event" (1975, 116).

The screen, although a commemorative work of a later period, seems itself to implicate that the latter was the case. In the uppermost register of the central panel, which shows the actual Indraphisekha ceremony, approximately fifteen temporary stage structures on which several kinds of performances are taking place are shown [6/24]. Further study of these details could throw light on the early Rattanakosin-period performing arts traditions. Similarly, a closer study of the screen itself could give valuable information about the Indraphisekha, a ceremony that has played such an important role in the court rituals of mainland Southeast Asia.

Many dance-related three-dimensional sculptures and sculptured reliefs integrated into the architecture of Wat Phra Keo can also be traced at the complex. They are mainly demon and garuda figures. Their execution is rather formal and even mechanical, since they are usually distributed as ornamental figures in the basements of temple halls and chedis. They have, however, a symbolic function. Seeming to support the upper structure with their hands and bodies their function as a kind of "Atlases" is firmly based on the Traiphum cosmology [6/3]. The yakshas or demons inhabit the lower levels of Mount Meru, whereas the garudas dwell in the pavilions of its four subsidiary peaks (Ringis 1990, 28). Both of them and, occasionally, monkeys appear as popular guardian figures in Thai art and architecture.

These supporting figures are regularly depicted in the open-leg position related to the martial arts and to the strong, aggressive characters in many dance forms throughout the region, already mentioned on several occasions. The largest and most best-known guardian figures of the whole complex are the twelve huge, over ten-metre-high demon figures flanking the entrances of the complex [6/4]. They are rendered in stucco over a brick core and depict the demon figures from the Ramakien. Although they are dressed in costumes resembling khon costuming, they avoid dance-related postures or gestures. They stand firmly on both feet resting their hands on their batons in front of them. It is assumed that most of them were created during the Third Reign (1824–1851) and one pair during the Fifth Reign (1868–1910) (Subhadradis 1986, 31). Thus they are creations of the period which can be defined as a transitional phase from traditional to westernised aesthetics in Thai art.



FIG 6/25 HANUMAN, STONE SCULPTURE FROM THE PERIOD OF KING RAMA RAMA III (1824–1851), NOW IN THE WAT PHRA KEO MUSEUM. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

FIG 6/26 MANOHRA, STONE SCULPTURE FROM THE PERIOD OF KING RAMA RAMA III (1824–1851), NOW IN THE WAT PHRA KEO MUSEUM. PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

According to Mattani (1993, 63) King Rama III, who originally ordered the giant guardian statues to be made, was a very pious Buddhist and had a strong dislike of physical performances. This led to demolishing many forms of court dance and dance drama. However, at the same time he was very keen on having the scenes and characters, previously shown in dance drama, reproduced by other media. He also commissioned the nang yai inspired series of Ramakien murals at Wat Po, discussed above in Chapter 6.3.

The change in the style, and indeed the change in the whole concept of dance imagery, is clearly evident in four pairs of stone statues commissioned by King Rama III. They depict characters from dance dramas composed by King Rama II: the Ramakien [6/25], the *Kraitong*, the *Sang Thong* and the *Manora* [6/26]. According to Subhadradis, they were probably originally placed in the corners of Wat Phra Keo's ubosoth, and later moved to its museum (1986, 32). These life-size statues are carved from greyish stone and, although they represent well-known characters of popular dance dramas, they clearly avoid any references to classical Thai dance in their poses and gestures.

There are several factors which may explain how these stylistically completely alien sculptures came into being. During the Third Reign, as discussed before, Chinese influence reached its peak in Rattanakosin art (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 214). Several temples were built

and renovated in the Chinese style, and gardens of palaces and temples were decorated with Chinese stone sculptures, imported from China as ballast in ships. These Chinese sculptures mainly represent figures from Chinese mythology and literature and sometimes even European officials and soldiers, which all served as guardian figures of Thai temples and palaces. These Chinese stone sculptures may have served as the source of inspiration for these four pairs of statues.

There may be a further explanation of the new and static style of these sculptures. In the letter already quoted above, written by Prince Naris to Prince Damrong, the former speculates about the creation of these sculptures. First, he explains that he is rather sure that they were commissioned by King Rama III himself, since only the king had the right to order such big stones to be transported from the provinces to Bangkok. Further, he hypothesises that, according to the style of the sculptures, the artist who draw the sketches for these statues was most probably

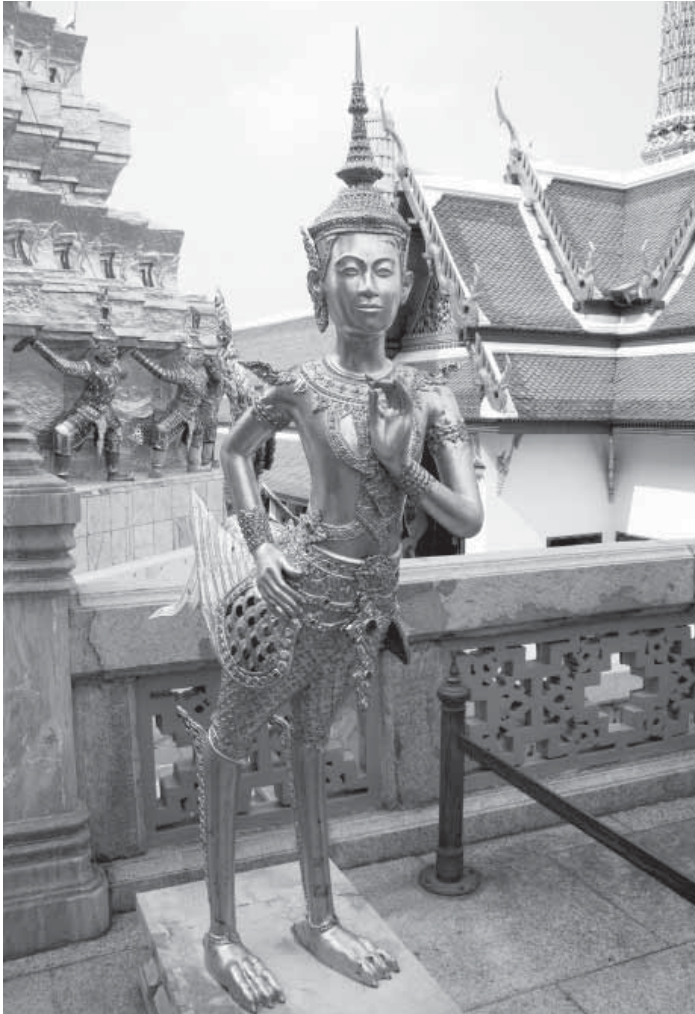


FIG 6/27
BRONZE KINNARA AT
WAT PHRA KEO FROM
THE PERIOD OF RAMA V
(1868–1910).
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

Master Chai, the very designer of nang yai figures who, according to Prince Naris, also drew the models for the Ramakien marble panels at Wat Po (Mattani 1993, 63).

According to Prince Naris' speculations, Master Chai himself could have drawn the sketches and sent them to the king for his approval. After that they were sent to the craftsmen who then executed the actual sculptures. Whatever the origins of these statues are, it is clear that they represent a new kind of experiment in Thai sculpture. However, either the medium, i.e. stone, or the inexperience of the craftsmen working with this medium, resulted in very static portrayals of originally dance-related characters. It is true that to execute the poses and delicate finger movements of Thai dance in three-dimensional stone sculpture is an almost impossible task. However, to refrain from the earlier dance-related iconography and style may also have been a deliberate decision. It could, for example, be the result of the king's dislike of dance or of his admiration of the Chinese arts.

Nevertheless, this trend continued later at Wat Phra Keo during the period of westernisation. King Chulalongkorn ordered mythological characters of the Himalayan forest to be cast in bronze [6/27]. Compared with stone, bronze is a much more suitable medium for portraying the finger movements of Thai dance. However, also these sculptures avoid traditional dance-related gestures (other than wai, the greeting gesture). Their gestures and mannequin-like facial features are clearly western-inspired. In a two-dimensional medium, such as murals, however, the traditional dance-related iconography and style continued to thrive, as shown by the Ramakien murals in Wat Phra Keo's galleries.

6.6 Interrelated Processes

Being the centre of the dynastic cult and the shrine of the Emerald Buddha, the Palladium of the State, Wat Phra Keo also serves as a kind of visual encyclopaedia of Thai art, its roots as well as its forms and trends during the Rattanakosin period. Thus, it is no wonder that it also preserves an exceptional variety of dance-related images. Many sculptures and reliefs integrated into its architecture schematically repeat motifs, such as open-legged giants and garudas, which are based on old iconographical models and have their established roles in the Buddhist cosmology of the Traiphum [6/3].

However, this cosmological symbolism in the dynastic chapel of Wat Phra Keo is framed by another mythical landscape, that of the Ramakien, the localised version of the Ramayana. Most probably even during the Ayutthaya period, but at the latest at the very beginning of the Rattanakosin period, the Ramakien epic became fully integrated into the dynastic cult. Ultimately, it was used as a tool to legitimise the king's right to rule by reminding people of his ascendance of a major Hindu god and of his being the heir to Ayutthaya. This tradition already had its roots in the eighth-century western India. In the Central Plains of present-day Thailand it was probably adopted from the Khmer. The epic was rewritten and entitled as the Ramakien during the beginning of the present Rattanakosin era, i.e. during the very period when Wat Phra Keo was founded and its construction started.

Most of the dance-related images of Wat Phra Keo can be found in the Ramakien murals covering the walls of the galleries surrounding the complex [6/2]. The iconography of its

principal characters, in spite of the many restorations and repainting of the murals, maintains the iconographical details and the flat, two-dimensional style canonised during the Ayutthaya period [6/5]. This easily recognisable style and its rich iconography, which can also be recognised, in addition in murals in black and gold lacquers, were most probably derived from the conventions of the leather figures of the nang yai shadow theatre showing scenes and characters from the Ramakien [6/6, 6/7].

The close interrelation of the visual arts and the storytelling tradition with its devices, such as panels, scrolls and shadow puppets, has been already discussed in connection with the temple reliefs of Java and Angkor. In those cases, however, no textual evidence exists to prove the phenomenon. In the case of Rattanakosin art such evidence is available. A letter written by Prince Naris, a leading cultural personage of the beginning of the 20th century, seems to prove that a master designer of nang yai puppets also drafted models for the Ramakien reliefs of Wat Chetupon and probably also for the four pairs of three-dimensional sculptures, now at the Wat Phra Keo Museum [6/8, 6/9, 6/25, 6/26]. This confirms the complex process of cross-fertilisation of the visual arts and theatrical practices, at least, during the Rattanakosin period.

The fixed iconography employing the positions and gestures of classical dance as well as the court costuming of different periods and fixed types of crowns, headgear and ornaments, was reserved for the principal characters of the Ramakien [6/5, 6/15]. The secondary characters and scenes were executed in a freer style. The secondary scenes provide, not only in Wat Phra Keo but also in other Thai temples, numerous portrayals of dance and other theatrical performances. They often form part of large scenes depicting cremation ceremonies of the Buddha or rulers and dignitaries [6/19, 6/20]. These lively and realistic portrayals give enlightening information about dance and other theatrical practices during the periods when the murals were executed [6/21, 6/22].

Owing to its regular extensions, renovations and repainting, Wat Phra Keo houses many works of art, which reflect the stylistic changes and new aspirations during the period of westernisation of Thailand. Some features of the murals, such as the appearance of the horizon, the use of the western "vanishing point" perspective and shading had their parallels in the changes in the performing arts. At the same time as these novelties were introduced into murals, experiments on the stage were done in a western realistic and even naturalistic spirit, which lead to the abandonment of masks of the noble human characters in khon dance drama and to the use of painted backdrops and later architectural scenography. All these changes were accordingly adapted for the imagery as well.

The attempt to execute more realistic and more three-dimensional figures led to the creation of completely new kinds of dance-related images such as the above-mentioned four pairs of stone sculptures showing the characters of well known dance dramas [6/25, 6/26]. Despite their traditional costuming and facial features they completely avoid the gestures and positions of the earlier dance-related images. The traditional, flat and linear style, with its deep interrelation with Thai classical dance, khon dance theatre and nang yai shadow theatre is, however, being maintained and cherished at Wat Phra Keo by a continuous repainting process of its Ramakien mural still today.

7

Dance Images in 20TH Century Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia

By the end of the 19TH century Southeast Asia was more intensively in contact with the western world than ever before. In the case of modern Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia, focused here, it meant, for instance, that in 1866 Myanmar, or then Burma, became a colony of Britain, Cambodia was declared a French protectorate in 1863, whereas modern Thailand, Siam at that time, which never became a colony, launched a series of reforms, the so-called Chakri Reformation. By this means King Rama V (1868–1910) aimed to bring his kingdom “in line with what were then considered to be the civilized, modern nation-states of the West” (Aasen 1998, 136).

It was inevitable that these regions also embraced western cultural influences, Burma against its will, Thailand voluntarily. This had naturally several political and economic consequences and it was to influence the world-view and culture of these countries deeply, too. The traditional cosmologies, such as the Traiphum, were gradually abandoned in favour of an empirical world-view. In Thailand even the father of the reformist King Rama V, King Rama IV (1851–1868), who was very keen on western astronomy, is believed to have abandoned the Traiphum as early as 1836 (Thongchai 1994, 37). However, it was not only the western sciences, but also the practical need to draw exact geographical maps for the new colonies, which led to the gradual renouncement of the traditional way to comprehend the earth and the cosmos (Ibid., 37–42). Traditional cosmologies, however, continued and still continue to have their role in religious imagery.

After the revolution of 1932 in Thailand, which abolished the absolute monarchy and made the country a constitutional monarchy, and after the declarations of independence by Burma in 1948 and by Cambodia in 1953, the arts were employed to serve new kinds of ends. One of

their new functions was to serve nation-building strategies. In Thailand the close relationship between dance and the court ended when, in connection with the revolution, the Department of Royal Entertainment was closed. In Burma the Mandalay court already had been completely destroyed in the Anglo-Burmese wars in the mid-19th century, annihilating the court dance tradition. In Cambodia, on the other hand, the court dance has been revived since the wars of the 1970s and 1980s.

In all of these countries the arts, including also dance, are now taught in institutions operating on western lines. In Thailand the Krom Silpakon or Fine Arts Department took over old court traditions as early as 1933. After a few changes of name it now functions as the Witthayalai Natasin or College of Dance and Music. As it operates under the Ministry of Education, it is understandable that, instead of former ceremonial qualities of court art now "educational values and purposes have become the essence of all arts engaged in some degree of public entertainment" (Mattani 1993, 189). In Cambodia the School of Arts was founded as early as in 1919. It was the precursor of the Conservatory of Performing Arts and the Royal University of Fine Arts, developed in the 1950s and 1960s (Phim & Thomson 1999, 10). In Burma the first governmental institute in control of dance education was The State School of Music in Mandalay, founded in 1953 (Zaw Pale & Khin Win New 1998).

In the case of dance, this led to the standardisation of classical dance techniques. In Thailand the process had already started at the very beginning of the present Rattanakosin period, during the reign of King Rama I, who had ordered the production of an illustrated dance manual (Mattani 1993, 149). The Cambodian court dance tradition, on the other hand, had already been deeply connected to the Thai tradition for centuries. It was implanted in Cambodia because the young Cambodian princes were often educated at the court of Thailand and also because Thai dancers and dance teachers frequently visited and worked at the Cambodian court (Royal Cambodian Ballet 1963, 10–12; Mattani 1993, 66). In Cambodia the first standardisation of classical dance took place in the mid-19th century (Royal Cambodian Ballet 1963, 10). In Burma, where the court tradition had had an abrupt end, it was felt that the classical dance technique should be recreated and standardised for the use of the curriculum of the newly founded State School. This task fell on renowned the performer Oba Thaung, who created the basic movement series, still used in dance training in modern Myanmar (Zaw Pale & Khin Win New 1998).

In this new, secularised, atmosphere the dance imagery also went through changes. In principle, at least, the god-king cult was demolished (although, as has been seen, it still thrives in Thailand) and the old cosmologies were now regarded merely as mythologies. Dance images, although earlier connected to the most sacred core of the belief systems, became popular imagery that was suitable, for example, to be printed as cigarette cards in mid-20th century Thailand [7/1]. In Burma, where western style oil painting was introduced in the 1920s, dancers became a popular theme for the new generation of artists. Just as what gradually happened in the Ramakien murals in Bangkok, so in Burma these new dance images attempted to portray dancers while employing western perspective and "in a manner of sugary-sweet poster prints in bright colours" (Moilanen & Ozhegow 1999, 79) [7/2].

New technologies have also affected the traditional dance imagery. Once photography, film, video and digital technology became available, the illuminated manuscripts of older times



FIG 7/1 FIGURES FROM THE RAMAKIEN, CIGARETTE CARDS, MID-20TH CENTURY, THAILAND. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

were replaced by documentation and educational materials by other media. In the field of the visual arts, however, pictorial manuals, often including dance images, are still produced. In Cambodia, for example, a pictorial manual of the prominent figures of the Reamker, the local version of the Ramayana, was produced by a renowned painter in 2001 (The Reamker Painted by Chet Chan, 2001). It is intended for the use of students and painters working with traditional temple murals.

In Thailand the long-lived tradition of frequently producing manuals for painters, already discussed in Chapter 6, still continues today (Suwat 2006). However, they are now made mainly for the use of school-children and students [7/3]. In Thailand, at least, the actual ritual and ceremonial use of dance images still continues. The animistic spirit altars receive groups of miniature-size dancers, now cast in plastic, as an offering [7/4]. Garuda's still fly in official emblems and flying devatas appear in royal decorations.



FIG 7/2
DANCERS, AN EARLY 20TH
CENTURY OIL PAINTING,
YANGON NATIONAL MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1984.

The original dance images of earlier centuries still maintain their significance today. The images are studied, as on these pages, by researchers both in Southeast Asia and abroad because of their exceptional informative value as source material from the periods of which very little textual evidence exists. They have also inspired researches, dancers and choreographers in attempts to reconstruct the dances depicted in them. In the 1950s efforts were already being made in all three countries in question to recreate ancient dances based on early dance imagery. In all of these cases nationalistic overtones are easily recognisable. Indeed, it was the period of intensive nation-building when the arts, as already mentioned, were to serve the process of creating a suitable, official history for the new nations.

In Burma Oba Thuang who, as mentioned above, recreated the basic training series of Burmese classical dance, had also already choreographed a historical dance based on her impressions of the so-called *yodayar* dance (Zaw Pale & Khin Win New 1998, 64). It was a



FIG 7/3 CONTEMPORARY MANUAL FOR RAMAKIEN FIGURES. SUWAT 2006.

Thai-influenced style, which developed after the Burmese had attacked the Thai capital of Ayutthaya and taken artists with them back to Burma, among them many dancers, who gave new impetus to local arts (Singer 1995, 11). Yodayar dance is still frequently performed, often as a separate number in a series of dances, called "Dance of the Dynasties", in which ancient dances, claimed to be based on historical murals and other art works, are shown.

In Thailand, it was Dhanit Yupho, dance historian and then director of the country's highest dance institution, who launched an attempt to use archaeological evidence as a source for dance. In the choreographies by Mom Phaeo, poses, gestures and elements of costuming and ornaments from the ancient dance images were employed (Mattani 1993, 247). The dances were entitled as "Sukhothai dance", "Lopburi dance" etc. referring to the "great" periods, from which the official narrative of the nation's history was simultaneously constructed.



FIG 7/4
PLASTIC DANCERS,
OFFERING FOR SPIRIT ALTARS.
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.



FIG 7/5
DANCE OF THE APSARAS
PERFORMED IN THE DANCE
HALL OF PREAH KHAN IN
ANGKOR. OVER THE DOORWAY
IS A FRIEZE WITH DANCING
"APSARAS" FROM THE
ANGKOR PERIOD .
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

In Cambodia, after the declaration of independence, an intensive search for the nation's roots started. Freedom from centuries of foreign dominance, first Thai and then French, inspired a movement that is often called "Khmerisation". The origin of the nation's history was found in the glorious Khmer culture of the Angkorian period. In the field of dance this led in the 1950s to the creation of "Apsara dance" inspired by the dancing apsara figures in the reliefs of the temples of Angkor [7/5]. This female group dance is performed by a leading dancer impersonating Mera, the legendary founder of Cambodia, and four to six supporting dancers, all wearing headdresses and ornaments inspired by the reliefs. The dance has gained great popularity and has an enormous nationalistic symbolic value. It was created by royal order and the first performer of Mera was a princess, the daughter of the ruler of the country (Phim & Thompson 1999, 33–36). Indeed, after the Khmer Rouge period, the international press announced that the first revived performance of Apsara was a sign of the beginning of a new era.

A common feature in all these "historical" dances is that they all employ some gestures, poses, even positions and, especially, elements of costuming and ornaments, gained from historical dance images. The dance technique employed was, however, clearly rooted in the then prevailing dance techniques and general aesthetics of their respective countries. Thus they can hardly be regarded as dance reconstructions in the strictest sense of the term but rather as homage to the past or simply as new creations based on selected details from historical dance images. How these dance images can serve dance research today, a central theme of the present study, will be finally summarised next.

8

Conclusion

One of the basic paradoxes of dance iconography, the method applied to this study, is the fact that the art of dance and that of image-making are fundamentally different in character. Dance is corporal, temporal, and kinetic, whereas images (at least during the periods discussed here) are static. Several disciplines and sub-disciplines are inevitably involved in the analysis of dance images, the most obvious of them being art history and dance research.

The art-historical analysis helps when one is dating an image and in determining its stylistic and iconographical features, while dance research provides tools for analysing its postures, gestures and other dance-related elements. Sometimes, however, there seems to be some tension between these two approaches. For example, Jean Boisselier, pioneer of Thai art history and also frequently quoted in this study, states when discussing clearly dance-related Thai paintings:

The problems that concern painting in Thailand are basically the same as those that relate to the theatre. Their inspiration derives from the same sources, they are simply two ways of expressing the same reality, and painting has not been influenced by the theatre, as has so often been suggested. (1976, 216)

This denial of any direct interaction between dance and image-making may be a result of the customary ranking of historically-oriented arts disciplines: art history is one of the oldest of them while dance research is among the youngest. This perhaps reflects the general hierarchy of art forms themselves in which dance as a corporal and time-bound art is often regarded as peripheral. Nevertheless, from the dance researcher's point of view it seems almost impossible for painters to somehow invent exactly the same complicated poses, articulated gestures and detailed masks employed by dance and theatre without any knowledge of their actual practices.

One of the themes of this study has been the close interrelationship between dance and image-making. Starting from the early periods in India, the present study refers to this phenomenon. In the Indian tradition, partly adopted in Southeast Asia as well, dance and

its codification in manuals profoundly influenced the image-making, resulting not only in a uniform iconography shared by both arts, but also in a solid philosophical-theoretical basis for them both.

In the 1990s the re-examining of early visual narratives of Indian art opened up the possibility that the early storytellers' devices, such as panels, scrolls and shadow figures, might have influenced the development of the visual narratives of the temples. This possible interrelationship between the visual arts and the tradition of storytelling (and, consequently, storytellers' devices) is discussed in this study in connection with the reliefs of the temples of Java and Angkor Wat. In these cases there is no textual evidence to prove it. In the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and in the Australian National Gallery there are, however, 18th or early 19th-century cloth paintings showing scenes from the Ramayana, made in India but found in Indonesia. This might indicate that importing narrative paintings from India, used perhaps as storytellers' devices or backdrops, has indeed been a practice.

In the case of Thai Rattanakosin art, there is even textual evidence to support a similar kind of interaction in the form of a letter written by Prince Naris, an important cultural personage of the early 20th century. It explains, among other things, the origins of the famous Ramakien marble reliefs in Wat Chetupon in Bangkok, contemporaneous with Wat Phra Keo. According to the letter, a well-known artist who created a famous set of *nang yai* shadow figures for royal use also drew the sketches for these reliefs. It would explain both their low bas-relief technique and their style, which is similar to nang yai puppets.

8.1 Adapting Dance Iconography to Southeast Asian Temple Imagery

The introductory chapter presented an adaptation of the dance iconographical method appropriate to the Southeast Asian temple context. A wide definition of the term "dance" was also provided according to which a dance image may depict various kinds of things. It can simply portray a dancer in an easily recognisable dance pose but it can also be a dancing deity, or it can depict a court scene with its strictly hierarchical composition clarifying the social status of each of its participants. It can also portray an actual performance or a military procession with soldiers marching in a stylised manner.

Two different terms for art works portraying dance are defined: a "dance image" refers to sculptures, reliefs, paintings or graphic works which could be interpreted as depicting the act of dancing, while a "dance-related image" refers to those showing, for example, poses connected to martial arts, rituals and ceremonies. They are not generally regarded as acts of dancing but in the Southeast Asian context they are very closely associated with it because poses related to martial arts, various sitting positions and riding poses etc. shown in reliefs and paintings have been frequently employed by dance and the dance theatre of the region.

This author argues that if one applies the traditional "three-step" technique of dance iconography to the temple-related Southeast Asian dance images, it is inevitable that the process of analysis becomes more complex than if it is applied to separate images belonging to western culture. Thus this study aims to cover several contexts within which the images are

interpreted. They include history, dance history, art history, and, of crucial importance, the history and symbolism of temple architecture. Therefore, the “three-step” analysis technique of dance iconography has been expanded to a “four-step” method.

The four successive steps of this analysis technique include (1) recognising a dance image among other kinds of imagery, (2) analysing the subject matter of the image, (3) considering why the figure or figures in the image in question are dancing, and finally (4) observing the dance images specifically in the temple context. How this method is applicable to the dance images of temples in mainland Southeast Asia and what the findings were, is summarised below.

8.2 The Surface Reading of Dance Images

In the process of recognising a dance image among other imagery, and in the general “surface reading” of the dance image, three courses have been followed: (A) that of employing information gained from previous research and comparing the image both with (B) present dance traditions and (C) Indian prototypes. Scholars who have specifically studied Southeast Asian dance imagery and are frequently quoted or referred to in this study include Kapila Vatsyayan, Claire Holt, Edi Sedyawati, Alessandra Iyer and Mattani Mojdrara Rutnin.

The prevalent approach has been to compare the postures and gestures of Southeast Asian dance images with Indian prototypes and to name them according to the classification and the terminology established in the *Natyashastra*. This has proved useful in determining whether certain Southeast Asian dance images are indeed based on Indian prototypes and in examining to what extent the dance depicted in them was influenced by Indian tradition. Clearly Indian-derived characteristics include the flexed open-bent leg position, often related to the martial arts, but also common in many dance traditions. An extreme example of this position can be seen in the unique Srivijaya dance image identified by this author as *Vajrasphota*, the Tantric Goddess of the Chains. Other, clearly Indian features include the open-leg position with one uplifted leg as well as the hand gestures reflecting the Indian *mudras*.

As this approach, however, easily overemphasises the Indian influence upon Southeast Asian culture, the focus in this study is not predominantly on the similarities but rather on the dissimilarities of Indian and Southeast Asian dance and imagery. Thus comparison of the images is limited not only to Indian prototypes but also to the still extant Southeast Asian dance traditions. Those that are most frequently referred to are Thai classical dance and the *khon* masked dance drama. As the Thais of Ayutthaya inherited many features of their arts and culture from Angkor, it is generally agreed that elements of dance and dance theatre were part of this heritage as well. This is indicated by the numerous poses, movement sequences, sitting and standing positions similar to those found in Khmer reliefs. The *khon* masks also reflect the style of the reliefs of Angkor Wat, especially that of the Churning of the Milky Ocean.

In the case of South Thailand, where the above-mentioned statue of the open-legged Tantric divinity was found, the dance tradition with which the statue is compared with is *nora*, an archaic tradition of the region. Again, it is striking that the extremely open leg position shown by the statue is one of the most prominent stylistic features of this still extant dance tradition.

When one compares the Pagan images with dance techniques that are still practised, the tradition in question is the present classical dance tradition of Myanmar, recreated and canonised in the 1950s. Several features already apparent in the Pagan dance images can be recognised in this style. They include the Indian-connected footwork, zigzag lines of the arms, hand gestures reflecting the Indian mudras, and the energetic jump with one leg stretched to almost touch the back of the dancer's head.

When applying this approach, i.e. comparing the dance images not only with the Indian prototypes but also with the living dance traditions of the region, this author made some noteworthy findings. For example, the use of a dance scarf in the dance images of Champa seems to indicate an indigenous feature in the otherwise clearly Indian-influenced tradition. Further, the upward bent elbow joint apparent for the first time in the famous 10th century "Tra Kieu Dancer", which could easily be interpreted as an anatomical anomaly, turns out, when compared with present dance traditions, to represent a common stylistic and technical feature of many of today's dance traditions in mainland Southeast Asia. Similarly, the backward bent fingers, for the first time apparent in an 8th–11th century Mon dancing relief and in several Khmer reliefs, remain one of the most prominent characteristics of the present-day dance traditions in the region. Thus, when one focuses on the differences between the Indian prototypes and the Southeast Asian imagery, the localisation process of Indian influence becomes pronounced.

8.3 The Main Characteristics of Dance Images

The second step of the process analysis involves establishing the basic characteristics of the image in question. The categorisation of dance images in India and in Indian-influenced Southeast Asia, proposed by this author, includes two parallel typologies. The first one, concentrating on the subject matter of the images, is based on Kapila Vatsyayan's categories of Indian dance images. It includes images portraying (A) dance scenes, (B) portrayals of dancers, (C) semi-gods in dance-related poses, (D) dancing gods, and (E) dance images related to the *Natyashastra*. A parallel classification system concentrates on the context of the image. It includes (I) movable or portable dance images (such as free-standing sculptures, manuscripts etc.), (II) dance images in a narrative context (such as portrayals of dancers in a large epic mural or relief), and finally (III) dance images in an architectural context (i.e. images belonging to the iconographical programmes of temples or other buildings).

These specific, though often overlapping, categories generate their own considerations. For example, type (A), a dance scene, frequently provides a lot of information about dance practices since they also include realistic portrayals of musical instruments, architectural settings of the performance etc. Dancing semi-gods, type (C), on the other hand, are often depicted in clear dance-related poses, which makes it easy to recognise them, while type (D), dancing gods, is often rigidly bound to iconographical rules, since these kinds of images regularly served as the most sacred cult images.

8.4 Doctrinal and other Textual Sources

Once an image is recognised as a dance image and its apparent subject matter is analysed, a major question rises: why is the depicted figure (or figures) dancing? The answer is generally related to the iconographical conventions. They are further associated with various kinds of textual sources which, in the case of temple imagery, are religious in character.

In the case of Angkor Wat, the actual texts are not known but their sources have been identified in Indian literature. As the syncretistic belief system of the period of Angkor Wat was dominated by Indian-derived Hindu-Brahmanism, the most commonly depicted texts portrayed in it are the Indian-originating Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas. Besides these, official Khmer history also served as a subject matter for reliefs. Other textual sources relevant to the study of Khmer dance images are stone inscriptions, also examined from the point of view of dance in this study.

In Hindu mythology and imagery dance has an exceptionally prominent role. For example, one of the main Hindu gods, Shiva, creates and destroys the universe by his powerful dance. Many other Hindu gods as well as semi-gods also express themselves by dance. This naturally gives dance a central role in Hindu imagery as well.

The belief system of Pagan was dominated by Theravada Buddhism, which resulted in active contacts with the similarly Theravada Buddhist Sri Lanka. The core of the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism, i.e. everyday rules for the monks, the sayings of the Buddha and the actual philosophy, are included in the *Tripitaka* or the Pali Canon. Crucial to Theravada Buddhism is the biography of the Gautama Buddha, which has survived in several variants. The 5th to 6th century Nidanakatha received from Sri Lanka was popular in Pagan. Other, often visually rendered texts are the biographies of the previous Buddhas as well as the didactic Jataka stories. In these texts, especially in the Buddha's biography, dance is often regarded as a corporal temptation seducing one away from the path of mindfulness towards the carnal world. Thus dance has not such a prominent role in Buddhist lore as it has in Hinduism.

The ideologies behind the late 18th to early 19th century dynastic temple of Thailand, Wat Phra Keo are manifold owing to the syncretistic belief system it reflects. On one level the complex is a Theravada Buddhist shrine. Thus its iconographical programme is partly based on similar textual sources as in the temples of Pagan and, consequently, they reflect Theravada Buddhist cosmology. While the exact cosmologies from the periods of Angkor Wat and Pagan are not known, the cosmological text related to Wat Phra Keo still exists. It is the famous 14th century *Traiphum*, in which dance is frequently mentioned.

Another text which has served as subject matter for the iconographical programmes of Wat Phra Keo is the *Ramakien*, the localised version of the Ramayana. At the beginning of the Ratanakosin period at the very latest, the Ramakien epic became fully integrated into the dynastic cult. It was used as a tool to legitimise the king's right to rule by reminding people of his ascendance from a major Hindu god and his role as the heir to Ayutthaya. This tradition had its roots in India and was probably transferred to the Central Plains of present Thailand from the Khmer. The epic was rewritten at the beginning of the present Ratanakosin era, i.e. during the very period when Wat Phra Keo was founded and its construction started.

When one is studying the dance images of Wat Phra Keo, materials other than only religious texts exist to shed light on the development of dance images and their role in the symbolism of the complex. They include historical accounts, manuals for dancers and painters as well as more recent texts, such as the letter referred to explaining the interrelationship between shadow theatre and the visual arts of the period.

8.5 The Temple Context

After the above three steps of analysis follows the fourth, the most crucial for this study which examines the dance images of Angkor Wat, the temples of Pagan and the Wat Phra Keo complex specifically in their temple context. In the process, present knowledge of the temple architecture and its symbolism is first summarised. These examples of religious architecture of mainland Southeast Asia stem from the syncretistic belief system of the region, each of them combining its ingredients in its own way. Angkor Wat is basically a Hindu temple dedicated to Vishnu, the temples of Pagan are predominantly Theravada shrines, while Wat Phra Keo combines Theravada Buddhism with the concept of the god-king and with the still thriving dynastic cult.

As these structures reflect Indian-derived religions, they are also all related to originally Indian cosmology. As already mentioned, the exact cosmologies of the periods of Angkor Wat and the temples of Pagan are not known, whereas the Thai cosmology of Traiphum is. In this cosmological context their fundamental symbolism, whether Hindu or Buddhist structures, refers to Mount Meru, the abode of gods and the central axis of the universe. Vertically, this entity forms a basically tripartite, "ethicised" structure in which, through the reincarnation process, good beings climb upward while bad ones are doomed to fall.

This symbolism is most clearly apparent in Angkor Wat. The central tower on the top of the huge mound represents the central peak of Mount Meru, whereas the four flanking towers symbolise the four surrounding peaks. The walls and galleries are the mountain ranges, which are surrounded by seas represented by the moat. In this spatial symbolism the sacredness accumulates in the centre, which is also the highest level of the construction, and decreases on the outer and lower outskirts of the complex. When the distribution of Angkor Wat's iconographical programme and, especially, its numerous dance images are examined, a hierarchical schema, reflecting the moral qualities of the various levels of the cosmology, becomes apparent, and thus a kind of "hierarchy of movement" can be recognised.

In the lowest parts of the complex as well as in the lowest registers of its tripartite panels the movements appear as aggressive and powerful. The demons in the hell scenes repeat the open-flexed martial-arts-related poses of warriors. Also, the dancing female figures on these levels, whether humans or heavenly apsaras, move energetically. The qualities of movements in the lower levels could be described as aggressive, energetic, earthly and sensuous.

On the middle levels of the complex, for example, in the Large Panels, most of the dance image types known in Khmer art can be found as the gods intermingle with humans and demons. Thus the movement vocabulary includes all the known movement types of Khmer dance imagery. However, in the uppermost levels of the complex and, consequently, of the whole tripartite cosmological hierarchy, the movement ceases. Only the feet of the *devatas* and the restrained

gestures of these heavenly maidens hint at some perceptible motion. The movements in the upper realms can be described as noble, slow and almost static.

Pagan's temples share two symbolic interpretations: the more esoteric one relates the temple with the cosmic Buddha, whereas the other regards the temples as earthly metaphors for the heavenly palace. The latter interpretation relates the temples to the concept of Mount Meru, which is apparent in their elaborate superstructures. When the dance images of Pagan's iconographical programmes are observed in this cosmological context, they reveal a dualistic approach towards dance.

Dance is frequently shown in connection with joyous religious festivities or as court entertainment. However, in the liturgically most dominant parts of the programmes, for example, in the scenes depicting the Buddha's biography, dance is portrayed only when the narrative demands it. Dance is present in the Buddha's life at least twice, first in his youth in the palace and later when Mara's daughters try to seduce him. In these most sacred narratives dance has thus a negative connotation as part of the carnal world of desires.

However, when dance images are observed as a part of the symbolism of a temple as a whole, i.e. as an element of the heavenly palace reflecting Buddhist cosmology, they reveal a more positive attitude. In this hierarchical construction dancing figures are distributed in spaces such as on the window and door frames, painted dummy pillars etc. Although they are clearly intermediate or subsidiary spaces reserved for liturgically less important motifs, dance images can appear in this hierarchical structure even at higher levels than the Buddha himself, in the uppermost spheres of the cosmology enhancing the temple's sacredness.

The symbolism reflected in the iconographical programme of Wat Phra Keo is twofold. Its rather loosely organised ground plan and many of its details are related to Traiphum cosmology. Consequently, many mythological characters shown in dance-related poses, such as open-legged giants and garudas, can be identified in its main structures. However, as Wat Phra Keo is not only a Buddhist temple but also the focal point of the dynastic cult and the shrine on the Palladium of the State, another powerful mythology is also interwoven in its symbolism, that of the *Ramakien*.

The *Ramakien*'s principal scenes are painted on the walls of the galleries surrounding the whole complex, while its demon characters serve as giant guardian figures flanking the gates of the complex. During the period when the construction of Wat Phra Keo was commenced, the *Ramakien* epic was already fully integrated into the dynastic cult. It was employed to legitimise the king's right to rule and it became an allegory of the dynastic history. Dance has a prominent role in the epic, since both of its main protagonists, Phra Ram and the demon king Tosakanth, are described as skilful dancers. It also includes numerous battle scenes employing, when rendered visually, a great variety of dance-related poses.

Indeed, most of the dance-related images of Wat Phra Keo can be found in these *Ramakien* murals. The iconography of its principal characters, despite the many restorations and repainting of the murals, maintains the iconographical details and the flat, two-dimensional style crystallised during the late Ayutthaya period at the latest. This easily recognisable style and its rich iconography were most probably derived from the conventions of the leather figures of the *nang yai* shadow theatre, which shows similar characters and scenes from the *Ramakien*.

This style, which could be defined as the "Royal Style", and its fixed iconography employing poses and gestures from classical dance as well as the court costume of different periods and the fixed types of crowns, headgear and ornaments, were reserved only for the principal characters of the Ramakien. The secondary characters and scenes are executed in a freer style and provide, not only in Wat Phra Keo but also in other Thai temples, several portrayals of dance and other theatrical performances. They belong to larger scenes depicting cremation ceremonies of the Buddha or other dignitaries. These realistic portrayals give a great deal of information about dance and other theatrical practices from the periods when the murals were first executed or later repainted.

The core symbolism of Wat Phra Keo as a Buddhist temple is related to Traiphum cosmology with its mythical characters regularly portrayed in dance-related poses. Furthermore, this core is encompassed by the story of the Ramakien, the allegorical history of the ruling dynasty. The style of its principal characters reflects the practices and ideals of court dance and dance drama. The regular extensions, renovations and repainted murals (and other art works) of Wat Phra Keo reflect the changing tastes of the ruling elite of the early Rattanakosin period and, ultimately, the reshaping of the world-view in the second part of the 19th century, when a gradual westernisation of Thai culture began in earnest.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

A practical drawback for this study is the fact that, although I was able to visit and document the great majority of temples and other sites discussed in this study, I could not visit and document all of them. That is why, in the case of the Sumatran ruins and the interiors of the temples of Pagan photographic documentation done by others was used. This was because of the difficulty of access to the ruins, or in the case of Pagan's temples, because the Government of Myanmar did not grant this author permission to document them.

The dance-iconographical analysis, as mentioned above, inevitably involves several disciplines, the foremost of them being art history and dance research. Some other disciplines and sub-disciplines have been applied in this study including, for example, the study of textiles, which throws light on the dance motifs found in the so-called Tapestry Reliefs of Angkor Wat.

Similarly the study of textual sources proved useful, for example, in providing a textual description of *devas* or *devatas* corresponding to the reliefs of the uppermost levels of Angkor Wat. Thus it seems obvious that research into inscriptions and other textual sources would throw more light on the dance traditions of the region and, consequently, on its dance imagery.

No scholar can, however, really master several disciplines in addition to a number of languages and scripts (fifteen, in the case of this study), many of them ancient, as would be ideal for this kind of study. By stating this, I must admit my limitations. I was confined studying the textual sources mainly in English and in one way or another I was directed by others. Also, my knowledge of Sanskrit dance terminology is limited. Consequently in connection with the *Natyashastra*-related terms I have mainly referred to previous research by scholars (often with a dancer's background) who have specialised in this intricate and context-specific terminology.

8.7 Further Study

Research into dance images in the architectural context should definitely include first-hand observations from all the sites discussed. Further study of dance images in general, whether in an architectural context or not, would be most effective if several scholars representing different disciplines and approaches were to share their expertise. In addition to art historians and dance researchers, for example, scholars who are familiar with the textual sources, experts in dance costuming, ornaments etc. and, above all, dancers and dance masters who are thoroughly familiar with their own traditions should be involved.

A practical obstacle to this kind of organised research has been the simple fact that photographic documentation of historical dance images of mainland Southeast Asia has never been compiled. The records are scattered in various, mainly art-historical publications and museum catalogues that are not easily accessible to those doing dance research. The present study might be, at the moment, the only attempt to gather together a wide selection of this kind of photographic documentation from Southeast Asia in one publication.

New technologies could provide an opportunity to create a virtual data bank, easily and economically accessible to scholars in Asia and elsewhere. These scholars could add their own substantive contributions to this bank. As the images discussed in this study are the only source of information about the dance of the early periods of mainland Southeast Asia, such a database could gradually accumulate new information and add deeper insight into this fascinating subject.

Notes

1 Introduction

1. Art works depicting dance are sometimes called "dance pictures" (Seebass, 1991) but since the word "picture" tends to refer mainly to paintings, drawings and photographs this author uses the word "dance image" owing to the fact that the majority of the art works referred to in this study are reliefs and sculptures.
2. Fiona Kerlogue has defined Southeast Asia as follows:

The term 'Southeast Asia' is now generally used to refer to the countries belonging to the organization ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Whether it is appropriate to consider this group as a whole in terms of art and culture is another question. Geography and language divide the region into two main parts: the maritime region, which includes the insular and peninsular parts of Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, the Indonesian archipelago and the Philippines, and the mainland, which includes Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Political boundaries do not correspond precisely with cultural patterns however, which derive in part from ancient patterns of migration. (Kerlogue, 2002: 8–9)
3. For the use of the terms "iconography" and "iconology" in the past and present, see "The Evolving Meanings of Iconology and Iconography: Toward some Descriptive Definitions" by Thomas F. Heck, 1999.
4. Several other art forms can also be involved. A dance image can, for example, portray musicians with their instruments and, consequently, it gives information for musicological research. Dance can be depicted in an architectural setting and thus the image can give valuable information about the development of architecture etc.
5. In the Thai language, for example, there are several terms referring to different types of dance: *natasin* refers to classical Thai dance, whereas *rabam phun muang* refers to folk dances. The ancient word *rabam* by itself refers to "choreographed dances for specific functions and occasions", whereas a similarly ancient term *ten* indicates "dancing with emphasis on the hand movements" (Mattani, 1993: 2–3).
6. This vast phenomenon was the subject of the one-week international seminar and workshop in connection with the Asian Festival of Theatre, Dance & Martial Arts in Calcutta in 1987, which this author was able to attend.
7. On the other hand, during recent decades all over the world, and also in Southeast Asia, contemporary dancers have employed martial arts techniques in their movement vocabulary.
8. "Classical" dance traditions in this study refer to the traditions of the central courts of Southeast Asian kingdoms, which during the beginning of the 20th century were added to the curriculum of government art schools and universities. These traditions are now usually classified as "classical" dance in their respective countries.
9. There are also some Asian and western scholars working with Asian dance images, who have applied dance iconographical technique, as will be referred to in the next sub-chapter.
10. In traditional cultures most images and objects, referred to in the western context as art works, had

a magical or a religious function. The "art for art's sake" attitude was rare, as most of the images and artefacts had specific functions.

11. Art schools operating on western lines were founded in Southeast Asia generally after the turn of the 20th century, but in the Philippines as early as in 1849. In these schools the western approach to aesthetics and art was propagated.

2 Transformation of Dance Images in Early Southeast Asia

1. For different editions of the *Natyashastra* see the Database of the *Natyashastra*, which includes altogether 112 manuscripts found in libraries all over the world (Vatsyayan 1996).
2. For a deeper understanding of the *rasa*, see Vatsyayan, 1977a: 6–8.
3. The four basic poses (deviation from the vertical median) are *abhanga*, *atibhanga*, *samabhanga* and *tribhanga*.
4. *Karanas* or small movement sequences are made up of a movement of the hands, a movement of the lower limbs and a stance. They are widely discussed in Indian dance research and an understanding of them is of decisive importance when one analyses Indian dance images and reconstructs dances based on the instructions of the *Natyashastra*.
5. *Mudra* also actually denotes, besides a hand gesture, any particular position in which one stands. Another word for a hand gesture is *hasta*. The number of *mudras* and *hastas* employed by different dance techniques varies greatly.
6. In India there are hundreds of different types of dance, broadly falling into two basic categories, *margi* or classical and *desi* (*desi carī*) or folk styles. During the 20th century it became established (although not all agree with this) that six major schools are defined as "classical" styles. They are *bharatanatyam* (originally from Tamil Nadu), *manipuri* (Manipur), *kathak* (Persian influenced, originally North Indian style), *kathakali* (Kerala), *kuchipudi* (Andhra Pradesh) and *odissi* (Orissa).
7. The so-called *yogi seals* (three of them have been found) belong to the early Indus culture, which flourished in the Indus river valley c. 2600–1900 BC. They show a male figure sitting cross-legged in the traditional meditation pose. In two cases his head is three faced. His headdress is made from horn formations with a vertical central feature. He is sometimes recognised as a prototype of Shiva in his aspect of Lord of Beasts (Wheeler 1968, 105). The seal type is often seen as the first example in Indian art of the ascetic god or holy person sitting in the lotus position, which was to become a common iconographical model for later Buddhist and Jain art.
8. Dances performed by men with feathered headdresses and bison-horn masks can be seen on the walls of the Mesolithic caves in Madhya Pradesh (Khanna 1999, 41).
9. The *Silpashastra* includes two basic treatises, the *Chitralakshana* and a section of the *Vishnudharmottara*, both dated to the 5th century AD.
10. This classification system is based on Kapila Vatsyayan's (1977a, 269) observations on Indian dance images.
11. For regional developments of dancing Shiva see Khanna 1999, 64–74.
12. Only a few portrayals of Krishna subduing naga Kaliya can be found in the arts of mainland Southeast Asia. However, they do not depict Krishna in a dance pose as is the case in India (Roveda 1997, 45).
13. Sculptured "catalogues" of dance movements can be found in the temples at Chidambaram, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Tiruvannamalai and Vriddhacalam.
14. Mural paintings depicting temple dancers can be seen, for example, in the Tirupparuttikunram Jain temple, near Kanchipuram.

15. For summaries of the process, see Vatsyayan 1977a, 98–99 and Iyer 1998, 11–12.
16. For a summary of the process and the development of our knowledge about it prior to the 1980s see Hall 1981, 12–24. For more recent interpretations of the process in mainland Southeast Asia, see Higham 2002, 231–233 and Miksic, 2003.
17. The term *brahman* refers to divine knowledge. The other three castes were *ksatrayas* (warriors, nobles), *vaisyas* (peasants) and *sudras* (serfs).
18. For contacts between India and Southeast Asia in the context of history of India, see Stein, 1998: 91, 97, 103, 113–14, 125, 127–28.
19. The word “*guru*”, which in Sanskrit means among other things teacher, master and spiritual guide, can be found in several Southeast Asian languages. In many Indonesian languages, such as Javanese and Balinese it is simply “*guru*”, whereas in Thai and Lao it is “*kru*” (“*khruu*”) and in the Cambodian language “*kruu*”.
20. The term *candi* refers to religious stone structures of so-called “classical” periods in the arts of Indonesia.
21. A similar “morality approach” has been proposed for the study of European dance, too (Smith 1999, 116)
22. Islam’s ban on creating human figures was not formulated in the Koran itself but it seems to stem from the theological discourses which took place in the 7th and the 8th centuries. The ban has not always been observed in full. For example, miniature paintings have been painted in many parts of the Islamic world. For the traditional way to explain this phenomenon in Java, see Brandon 1967, 44.
23. The original form of wayang beber is believed to have developed in 939 when a king wanted his forefathers to be portrayed on palmyra leaves. Performances using this kind of drawings started in 1030. The figures were operated by a *dalang*, a manipulator-storyteller, and accompanied by an orchestra. In the East Javanese period wayang beber performances were accompanied by a gamelan orchestra (Sarwar 1994, 276).

3 The Localisation of Indian-derived Prototypes in Mainland Southeast Asia

1. For example, D. G. E Hall, in his study “A History of South-East Asia” first published in 1955, tends to see the British colonial period in Southeast Asia in a rather positive light. Nevertheless, his book has been used as a reference in this study, too.
2. The term “*Indianisation*” became popular when Georg Coedès’ works were translated from French into English. He himself, however, did not talk originally of “*Indianisation*”. Rather he used the term “*Hinduisation*”.
3. The casual finding of prehistoric pottery in Ban Chiang village in Northeast Thailand in 1966 and the major excavations there in the mid-1970s led to the discovery of Southeast Asia’s earliest bronze culture independent of any Chinese influence. This discovery changed the understanding of the early phases of the history of mainland Southeast Asia, which was earlier regarded only as a kind of receiving end that adopted elements from the Indian and Chinese civilizations.
4. For the radical reinterpretation of Thai stone inscriptions, see Michael Vickery and Piriya Kraikish in “The Ram Khamhaeng Controversy: Collected Papers”, edited by James R. Chamberlain, published in 1991.
5. An example of this kind of study summarising the present knowledge of the early phases of the history of mainland Southeast Asia is Charles Higham’s “Early Cultures of Mainland Southeast Asia”, published in 2002.

6. An example of studies deconstructing the official narratives of history is, for example, Maurizio Peleggi's "The Politics of Ruins and the Business of Nostalgia", published in 2002. It investigates the strategies employed when the official narrative of Thailand's history was created. On the other hand, Clarence Aasen's study "Architecture of Siam: A Cultural History Interpretation", published in 1998, investigates the identifying role that architecture has played in the construction of Thailand's culture.
7. Southeast Asian vernacular architecture, built of bamboo and wood, has been examined, for example, by Roxana Waterson in her study "The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia" (1991) and Sumet Jumsai in his book "Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific" (1988). An illuminating example of the changing attitudes in Southeast Asian studies is provided by the popular art-historical book series "World of Art" by Thames & Hudson. "The Art of Southeast Asia" belonging to this series, written by Philip Rawson and published in 1967, concentrates mostly on the heavily Indian-influenced "classical" periods including only three wooden buildings. On the other hand, "Arts of Southeast Asia", also in the same series, written by Fiona Kerlogue and published in 2004, focuses not only on the well-known "classical" periods but also on the indigenous arts, such as wooden architecture and sculpture as well as textile traditions.
8. The basic reference to Southeast Asian textiles, their forms, techniques and cultural messages is Robyn Maxwell's "Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation" originally published in 1990 and revised in 2003. John Guy's "Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles in the East" (1998) gives further information about what the textiles reveal about the international trade contacts and routes between India and Southeast Asia.
9. A vastly illustrated book invaluable for the present study is "The Art of Southeast Asia" (1998) which combines articles by scholars, each specialising in a particular culture of the region with 850 illustrations, many of the buildings and art works shown in them published for the first time. Another incomparable, widely illustrated publication is Vittorio Roveda's "Images of God: Khmer mythology in Cambodia Thailand and Laos" (2005), which with its 1500 colour images and an additional 800 on a DVD offers one a possibility to get an overall view of the whole Khmer imagery scattered in the regions of three countries of mainland Southeast Asia.
10. For descriptions of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist cosmologies, see Richard Gombrich 1975, 110–42.
11. For indigenous Southeast Asian cosmologies see H.G. Quaritz Wales' "The University Around Them: Cosmology and Cosmic Renewal in Indianized South-east Asia" (1977), Roxana Waterson's "The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia" (1991) and Sumet Jumsai's book "Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific" (1988).
12. For the whole text, see Reynolds & Reynolds, 1982.
13. *Alarippu* is an invocation dance performed at the beginning of a *bharatanatyam* performance in which the dancer's body is dedicated to a god.
14. Kapila Vatsyayan has analysed this widespread open-leg position with its many variations, and states, while observing the dancing "apsaras" of Angkor Thom and other Southeast Asian dance images in a similar kind of basic position:

...it would appear that in the ninth century the whole region, ranging from Western India and Burma to Cambodia and Java, had evolved a dance-style which followed identical principles of movement. It would also appear that there was also an active dialogue which was not a one-way process of either copying or influence: it was interaction on the level of form and technique. Even from this sampling it would not be too much to conclude that the style of dance which seems to have emerged in eight-ninth century, beginning with the figure of the Tara in the Aurangabad caves, had a fundamental pose of *ardhamandali*, which was common to all regions especially India, Indonesia, Cambodia. Thailand and Burma shared these fundamentals of the *kshipta* bend of the knees, with either both feet in *samapada* or those in which one foot is in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita* or *anchita*.

From this fundamental position many other positions, many movements, whether *swastika* variety, or of uplifted foot of the *urdhvajanu*, *parshvajanu*, *dandapaksha*, or *dolapada* variety emerged. Examples from the Pathomthamya temple, Pagan..., from the Abeyedan temple, Pagan, and several examples from Lopburi period of Thailand... will easily convince one of a common vocabulary of movement, which was built on the principles of *bhanga*-s and *sutra*-s of Indian sculptural technique and on the principle of conceiving the human form more as a structure of joints than of muscles and the relative tension and relaxation of the muscular system. The survivals of the dance styles in these countries, particularly in Indonesia (both Java and Bali), Thailand and Khmer, and aspects of Burma, further reinforce our impression that although there is a consanguinity of fundamental vision and execution in form and technique, there is regional distinctiveness. The stylisation in sculpture and in dance emerges from an adherence to the basic *ardhamandali* (akin to the *demi-plie* of ballet) position in all depictions of dance in sculpture and in contemporary classical styles. By consciously limiting the human body to this position, only certain physical movements were possible. Most common amongst these was the lifting of one leg or calf; the *urdhvajanu*, *parshvajanu* was a natural popular corollary. This is also pervasive in spite of the many variations in time and space. The *vrshchika* back extension was another possibility for the suggestion of dynamism. (1997b: 10–11)

15. In his encyclopaedic work on Khmer reliefs found in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, Vittorio Roveda has listed (2005: 163) the most outstanding Shiva Nataraja reliefs found in Khmer art. According to him, dancing Shivas can be found, among others, in the following temples: Preah Vihear, Phimai, Phnom Rung, Phnom Chisor, Wat Baset, Angkor Wat, Beng Mealea, Preah Pitu, Bayon, Banteya Samre, Preah Khan, Narai Jaeng Waeng, Sikhoraphum and Kamphaeng Yai.
16. 'Tai' refers to Tai-speaking ethnic groups, whereas 'Thai' refers to the entire multiethnic population of present-day Thailand. However, many scholars prefer to use the more ethnically relaxed term "Siamese" when discussing the people of the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin periods.
17. The existence of the Dvaravati kingdom has been questioned (Dhida, 1999). Jean Boisselier comments the question as follows:

The name Dvaravati, traditionally assigned to what was long assumed to be the earliest school of art in Thailand, is but a convenient designation of questionable historical significance.... The very existence of a kingdom of this name, originally deduced from reading of the name as it figures in Chinese chronicles, was definitely established only in 1963, when George Coedès deciphered a reference to a "Lord of Dvaravati" on silver coins found at the site of Nakhon Pathom, an important city which quite possibly may have been the capital of the kingdom. (1975: 73).

However, in this study the name Dvaravati is used, as it is established as an art-historical period.
18. In this connection "Thai culture" refers to the culture of the 14th to the 18th century Ayutthaya kingdom and its continuation during the present-day Rattanakosin or Bangkok period in Thailand.
19. Kinnari dances are popular in mainland Southeast Asia. They belong to the repertoire of *nora* dance in South Thailand; they are also part of Central Thai dance and to the dances of northern Myanmar as well as North Thailand.
20. Discussion with Achan (Master) Thammanit Nikhomrat in Songkhla on 11.3.2007.
21. *Sankalok* refers to Sawankhalok, which is the old name of Sisachanalai. Most of the kilns were located there, although some fifty kilns have been excavated in Sukhotai itself. The production of Sankalok ware continued until the 16th century (Van Beek, 1999: 121).

4 Angkor Wat: Dance and the Hindu-Khmer Cosmology

1. The earliest inscriptions in Cambodia are from the early 7th century. The first dated ones in Khmer are from 611 and in Sanskrit from 613 (Jessup 2004, 12).
2. This information is based on a very interesting source, a booklet called "Royal Cambodian Ballet", published by The Information Department in Phnom Penh in 1963. However, the only writer's name mentioned in it is that of Jean Groslier. This author is at present trying to identify the other writers.
3. This movement series is typical of many Indian solo forms, such as *orissi*, *mohiniattam* etc., but it is probably most prominent in *bahratanatyam* with its inclination to strict symmetry.
4. The myth of the "Churning the Milky Ocean" or the "Churning the Ocean of Milk" is told both in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana. It became a significant theme for the Khmer culture and its renderings can be found in some 15 Khmer temples besides Angkor Wat (Roveda 2005, 58–61).
5. These types of movements dominate, especially, the *silat* martial technique of Malaysia and Indonesia.
6. This is still reflected today in the everyday etiquette in Thailand where, for example, a pupil instinctively makes an obeisance when passing a teacher.
7. For Indrabhisheka ceremony in Pagan, see Chapter 5 and in Thailand, see Chapter 6.

5 Pagan: Dance and Burmese-Buddhist World-View

1. The monuments of Pagan are photographed and described in the "Inventory of Monuments of Pagan" by Pierre Pichard in eight volumes. According to the Inventory there are 2834 structures in Pagan, including the religious buildings of later periods.
2. The names of the kings are written in different ways in the surviving inscriptions and in the chronicles. The traditional forms, appearing in the chronicles, are used here.
3. The rebuilding campaign of Pagan has been internationally criticised because of its inaccurate restoration methods and fanciful reconstructions (Stadtner 2005, 27).
4. "The Glass Palace Chronicle" claims that Theravada Buddhism was adopted by the Burmese through the Mons when Pagan's first king Anawrahta (1044–1077) seized the Mon centre of Thaton. Earlier, it was believed that the early architecture of Pagan was based on the Mon tradition (Luce, 1960). This, however, is now questioned (Aung-Thwin 2005).
5. Earlier, it was thought that the temples of Pagan developed from early, Mon-inspired buildings towards to the "Old Burmese" style through some transitional periods (Luce 1960). This evolutionary scheme is now questioned because of its lack of historical evidence (Aung-Thwin, 2005). Can be that the different temple types may have developed side by side and continued to be built throughout the Pagan period.
6. The earliest dated green glazed ceramic tiles are from the beginning of the 12th century, but it is possible that the Jataka tiles have a longer history. The earliest tiles may have been unglazed. Even Jataka tiles carved from sandstone are known. They were sometimes glazed as well (Stadtner 2005, 51).
7. Besides the wooden doorway, a large wooden throne has survived. It is now in a monastery museum in Sale. Some wooden Buddha sculptures are now in the Pagan Museum but their date is not known. The same is the case with the four majestic standing wooden Buddha statues in the Ananda temple. Traditionally, two of them were said to originate from the Pagan period, but that is now doubted (Stadtner 2005, 107).
8. An English translation of the inscription can be found in the Pagan Archaeological Museum.

6 Wat Phra Keo: Dance and the Dynastic Cult

1. Several guidebooks and leaflets are dedicated to the Grand Palace: Subhadradis Discul, MC Prince: "History of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha". Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, 1986; Piriya Kraikish: "The Grand Palace and the Temple of Emerald Buddha". Bangkok: The Bureau of the Royal Household, 1988; Warren, William: "The Grand Palace". Bangkok: The Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, 1988; Naengnoi Suksri: "The Grand Palace". Bangkok: River Books, 1998; Nidda Hongwiwat: "The Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace". Bangkok: Sangdad Publishing Co., Ltd, 2004.
2. In the 20th century a model of it was constructed at the Muang Boran Museum, near Bangkok. It has a cruciform central hall with a spired roof, a sweeping front and rear halls with multi-tiered telescoping roofs, and a bowed, raised platform.
3. Maurizio Peleggi (2002, 13) has pointed out that during the early Rattanakosin period an almost complete demolition of Ayutthaya was carried out in order to acquire building materials for the new capital.
4. Variations of the Ramayana are known in twenty-two Asian languages and there exist Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina and Muslim interpretations of it (Ramanuja 1991).
5. During the reign of King Rama VI (1910–1925) all the previous Chakri Kings were renamed as Rama. The ruler now is King Bhumibol Adulyadej or King Rama IX.
6. The Ramayana is divided into three "books", the first recounting Rama's youth, the second recounts the exile, Sita's abduction and the war. The third book tells of the events that transpire after Rama's rescue of Sita, including her banishment to the forest. According to philological studies, the first and third books are later additions to Valmiki's, the best known Indian version of the epic (Richman 1991, 8).
7. However, according to Natthapatra and Promporn (1998, 108) one bas relief of the Sukhothai period shows a dance of the demons, which may have been a kind of predecessor of *khon*.
8. They probably do not predate the reign of King Rama III (1824–1851). They include four manuals for Brahman gods (*Tamra Devarupa*) and four manuals containing the mythical animals of Himalaya.
9. In Southeast Asia, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia have their own, albeit sometimes related, shadow-play traditions and most of them illustrate the epics originating in India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This has led to the common assumption that India is the origin of the whole shadow theatre tradition. This is, however, certainly a dangerous generalisation, since China's shadow theatre tradition has its roots in times before our era and some Indonesian scholars believe that Indonesian shadow theatre originates from ancient indigenous animistic rituals.
10. A similar form of shadow theatre can still be found today in Cambodia (Phim & Thompson 1999, 15–32). It is not known whether Cambodia's *sbaek thom* was received from the regions of modern Thailand during its long rule over large areas of present-day Cambodia or whether it was the origin of Thailand's *nang yai*.
11. Prince Naris was probably the most important cultural personage of his time. He left his imprint on many fields of the arts, especially in set design and architecture (Mattani 1993, 230–349). Prince Damrong (1862–1943) has been called the "Father of Thai History". He was among other things the director of Royal Academy, Minister of the Interior, and the director of the Wachirayan Library, "where he initiated the practice of having court chronicles, biographies, historical and literary works published as mementos on the occasion of royal cremations" (Peleggi 2002, 16).
12. J. Gadet has published all the reliefs as stone rubbings in his book "The Ramakien: The Thai Epic" (1970).

13. Different kinds of wayang manuals have been published right up until the present day. For example, "Ensiklopedia Wayang Purva" (1991) by Suwandono & Dhanisworo & Mujiyono gives details of different shadow figures, their characteristics and relationships with each other. "Seni Kriya Wayang Kulit" (1991) by S. Haryanto focuses on the making of the puppets as well as their iconography.
14. For a comprehensive survey of Ramayana-related art forms in the whole of Asia, see Garret Kam's "Ramayana in the Arts of Asia" (2000).
15. The only actual literary sources concerning the performing arts during the Ayutthaya period are the few references in the Palatial Law of the period, mentioned before, and the Rattanakosin-period "Tamman Lakhon Inao" by Prince Damrong, which, according to Mattani, "contains only his speculations and assumptions, most of them lacking historical proof" (1993, 44).
16. For introductions to khon masks, see Dhanit Yupho's "Kohn masks" (first published in 1960) and "Thai Puppets & Khon Masks" by Natthapatra Chandavij & Promporn Pramualratana (1998).
17. Mattani Rutnin has written a chapter about the transformation of theatre costume in Thailand in her book "Dance, Drama and Theatre in Thailand: The Process Development and Modernization" (1993).
18. For a comprehensive survey of animal-related dance traditions, see "Animals and the Origins of Dance" by Steven Lonsdale (1981).
19. For *khon* in front of a screen, see Mattani (1993, 228).
20. In his article "The Shadow Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play" (originally published in 1948 and reprinted by the Siam Society in 1975) Prince Dhaninivat compares the relationship of nangyai and khon to that of wayng shadow theatre and wayang-related dance drama in Java.
21. Many of them have been published in "Thai Puppets & Khon Masks" by Natthapatra Chandavij & Promporn Pramualratana (1998).
22. The Wat Phra Keo Museum was established in the building of the former Royal Mint in 1982. It is located on the outer premises of the Grand Palace.
23. Both sides of the screen are divided into five panels. The central and largest one on the main side shows the Indraphisekha ceremony. The flanking door panels show a showering of golden and silver flowers, while the side panels show assemblies of celestial beings.

Glossary

LANGUAGES

BNG	Bengali	JAV	Javanese	PAL	Pali	THA	Thai
BUR	Burmese	KHM O.KHM	Khmer (Cambodian) Old Khmer	PRS	Persian	TIB	Tibetan
CHI A.CHI	Chinese Ancient Chinese	LAO	Laotian	SKT	Sanskrit	URD	Urdu
HND	Hindi	MON	Mon language	TAM	Tamil	VIE	Vietnamese

TERM	LINGUISTIC NOTATION	EXPLANATION
adbhuta	SKT <i>adbhuta</i>	the sentiment of miraculous or marvellous; one of the eight codified rasas
agama	SKT <i>āgama</i>	science, tradition; sacred, religious texts
Agni	SKT <i>agni</i>	Hindu god of fire. His chariot is pulled by rhinoceros.
Ajanta Caves	SKT <i>ajāṅṭā</i>	site of Buddhist monastic complex with 29 caves cut into the mountain, 5 th century AD; Aurangabad, India
alapadma	SKT <i>alapadma</i>	<i>mudra</i> or hand gesture in which the fingers are opened and separated indicating several things, such as lotus, elephant, breasts, anger or even questions such as "who are you" etc.
alarippu	TAM <i>alarippu</i>	Alarippu, which means "flowerbud", is traditionally the first full, invocatory dance piece of a Bharatanatyam performance. It symbolizes the awakening of the dancer.
Amaravati	SKT <i>amarāvati</i>	One of the ruling and cultural centres of the Sātavāhana dynasty in Andhra Pradesh (India, 2 nd to 3 rd century AD). The Amaravati style of sculpture spread to Southeast Asia.
amrita	SKT <i>amṛta</i>	immortal; the elixir of immortality
ananda	SKT <i>ānanda</i>	joy, felicity, bliss
Angkor	KHM <i>angkor</i>	Angkor was a remarkable imperial and temple-city of the historic Kambuja Empire (Cambodia). The empire reached its zenith of political power and cultural creativity under Jayavarman VII (1181–c.1218).
Angkor Wat	KHM <i>angkor wat</i>	The temple of Angkor Wat is the apogee of Khmer culture, and the largest religious building in the world. It has five central towers, a colossal gateway, moats and galleries decorated with over 600 meters of narrative bas-reliefs.
anjali	SKT <i>anjali</i>	hand gesture or <i>mudra</i> denoting salutation
apsara	SKT <i>apsaras</i>	name for heavenly nymphs, consorts of heavenly musicians called gandharvas
aramam	SKT <i>arālam</i>	a <i>mudra</i> or hand gesture in which the thumb presses against the index finger, indicating among other things, tree, bud, sprout etc.
ardhaparyanka	SKT <i>ardha-paryāṅka</i>	A fierce standing pose
arupadhātu	SKT <i>arūpadhātu</i>	Buddhist term designating the highest sphere of formlessness, vacuity
asana	SKT <i>āsana</i>	bodily posture, position, pose

Ashoka	SKT	<i>aśoka</i>	King Ashoka (c. 272–231 BC), was the famed Buddhist ruler of the Maurya Empire in Central India.
asura	SKT	<i>asura</i>	demonic semi-god
Aurangabad		<i>auranṅābād</i>	district in Maharashtra, India, with Ajanta Caves
Avalokiteshvara	SKT	<i>avalokiteśvara</i>	“Lord who looks down”, the most widely revered bodhisattva embodying compassion. In China and its sphere of cultural influence, the bodhisattva evolved into a female form known as Guan Yin.
avatara	SKT	<i>avatāra</i>	descent of a Hindu deity (especially of Vishnu) into this world.
Ayodhya	SKT	<i>ayodhya</i>	The legendary city of Rama, located in Northeast India
Ayutthaya	THA		Thai kingdom (1351–1767), named after the city of Ayodhya in Ramayana.
Bayon	KHM		12th century temple complex in Angkor, Cambodia
Bedhaya	JAV	<i>beḍhaya</i>	A solemn, meditative Javanese court dance, performed usually by nine female court dancers, dressed as royal brides sent by the mythological Queen of South Sea to the sultan.
Bhagavati	SKT	<i>bhāgavatī</i>	sacred; name of goddess
bhakti	SKT	<i>bhakti</i>	adoration, devotional worship
bhava	SKT	<i>bhāva</i>	codified states of mind
bhumisparsa	SKT	<i>bhūmisparsā</i>	This mudra is the Buddha’s “earth touching” gesture commemorating his victory over temptations.
bhutadamana	SKT	<i>bhūtadamana</i>	“warding off evil”; this mudra shows the Buddha’s hands crossed at the wrist, with the right hand over the left hand and palms turned outwards
Bodhgaya	SKT	<i>bodhgayā</i>	Bodhgaya temple (in Bihar, India) commemorates the Buddha’s enlightenment.
bodhi	SKT PAL	<i>bodhi</i>	the “awakened” or “knowing” consciousness, generally translated as “enlightenment”.
bodhisattva	SKT	<i>bodhisattva</i>	a Buddha to be, an enlightened being who, out of compassion, foregoes nirvana in order to aid all sentient beings
Borobudur	JAV	<i>borobuḍur</i>	Buddhist temple complex in Central Java, built between AD 778 and 824, was the greatest accomplishment of the Sailendra dynasty. Borobudur was the first great Buddhist monument in Southeast Asia and influenced the construction of later monuments, such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia.
bot	THA	<i>bot</i>	see: ubosoth
brahmin	SKT	<i>brahmin,</i> <i>brāhmaṇa</i>	The term brahmin refers to divine knowledge. Brahmins formed the priestly caste or varna in India. The other three castes were ksatriya (warriors, nobles), vaisya (peasants) and sudra (serfs).
candi	JAV	<i>caṅḍi</i>	Javanese designation of a temple
chaitya chedi	SKT THA	<i>caitya</i>	Buddhist prayer hall; a relic tower or stupa in a Buddhist temple
chakravartin	SKT	<i>cakravartin</i>	The king considered as a descendant of god Shiva, following the Hindu-Brahman concept of devaraja or god-king.
Cham, Champa Chăm Pa	SKT VIE	<i>cam, campā</i> <i>chiêm thành</i>	Champa kingdom, or rather a chain of kingdoms, which flourished in the coastal regions of Vietnam from the 6th to the 12th centuries and, on diminished scale, as late as to the 19th century. Champa also had close trade and cultural relations with powerful maritime empire of Srivijaya and later with Majapahit.
Chenla Zhenla	CHI VIE	<i>zhenla</i> 真腊 <i>chân lạp</i>	Ancient kingdom (c. 550–800) in the Mekong Delta area, later united with the Funan kingdom.
chhau	BNG		masked dance traditions of East India
Chola period	SKT	<i>coḷa, caḷukya</i>	Chola Empire approximately in the 10 th –12 th centuries AD

dalang	JAV	<i>ḍalang</i>	puppet manipulator–storyteller in Javanese wayang performances
darshan	SKT	<i>darśana</i>	the ritual of ‘viewing’ between a divinity and his/her worshippers
desi	SKT	<i>deśī</i>	Indian term for popular dance traditions, merry–making
devadasi	SKT	<i>devadāsī</i>	female dancers dedicated to the service of a temple
devaraja	SKT	<i>devarāja</i>	old Indian notion of “god–king”, which became the prevailing conception of royalty in ancient SE–Asia
devata	SKT THA	<i>devatā</i> <i>tep</i>	minor female deity
Devi	SKT	<i>devī</i>	goddess, the female energy of Shivaistic pantheon, personified as Parvati, Uma, Durga, Kali, a.s.o.
dharmacakra	SKT	<i>dharmacakra</i>	the Wheel of Law, symbol of Buddha’s teaching
dharmaraja	SKT	<i>dharmarāja</i>	Ideology of the righteous ruler, which associated the king with a bodhisattva or a Buddha to be.
Dharmashastra	SKT	<i>dharmasāstra</i>	the sacred law of Hinduism
Dong Son	VIE	<i>đông sơn</i>	a prehistoric Bronze age period and culture, centered at the Red River Valley of Vietnam
Durga	SKT	<i>durgā</i>	manifestation of Devi as independent terrifying divinity
Dvaravati	SKT	<i>dvāravatī</i>	Early Thai kingdom (from the 6 th to the 11 th centuries) with a population speaking ancient Mon language.
Funan	CHI A.CHI O.KHM VIE	<i>fu-nán</i> 扶南 <i>b’iu-nam</i> <i>bnam</i> (<i>phnom</i>) <i>phù nam</i>	Pre–Khmer Kingdom of the Lower Mekong Valley. The earliest of all Indian influenced–kingdoms of Southeast Asia, which flourished in the south–eastern part of the mainland in the early centuries (c. 100–630 AD). Annexed in 6 th century by Chen La, the neighbouring kingdom.
gana	SKT	<i>gaṇa</i>	a dancing semi–god, servant of Shiva
Gandhara	SKT	<i>gandhāra</i>	North Indian ancient Buddhist centre and art school
gandharva	SKT	<i>gandharva</i>	name for heavenly musicians
Ganesha	SKT	<i>gaṇeśa</i>	popular Hindu deity, distinguished by his elephant head; Shiva’s mythical son with Parvati
Ganga	SKT	<i>gaṅgā</i>	the personification of Ganges River
garbhagriha	SKT	<i>garbhagrha</i>	the inner sanctum or ‘womb–house’ of a Hindu temple
Garuda	SKT	<i>garuḍa</i>	“Divine Eagle”, the mythic bird god in Sanskrit epics Mahabharata and Ramayana
Gautama	SKT	<i>gautama</i>	Buddha’s name at birth was Siddhārtha Gautama
ghurnita	SKT	<i>ghūrṇita</i>	one of the <i>karana</i> movement sequences in the Nāṭyashastra
gopi	SKT	<i>gopī</i>	The gopis or cowgirls have a prominent role in the Krishna mythology, especially in the episodes telling about Krishna’s amorous youth.
gopura	SKT	<i>gopura</i>	pyramidal gatehouses of South Indian temples
gu or ku	BUR	<i>gu</i>	Burmese name of a temple, related to Pali and Sanskrit word <i>guha</i> meaning a cave.
guha	SKT	<i>guhā</i>	cave; Indian cave temple
Gupta period	SKT	<i>gupta</i>	Gupta dynasty, 4th to 6th centuries AD; India
guru–śishya	SKT	<i>guru–śiṣya</i>	the Indian traditional, close personal master–pupil system for learning
Harappa		<i>harappa</i>	ancient major city in the site of Indus Valley civilization c. 2600–1900 BC; Pakistan
Harivamsa	SKT	<i>harivamśa</i>	race of the apes; text annexed to Mahabharata
Hevajra	SKT	<i>hevajra</i>	a tutelary deity of Tibetan tantric Buddhism

Hinayana	SKT	<i>hīnayāna</i>	"Lesser Vehicle" of Buddhism; disparaging appellation of Theravada
howdah	HND	<i>haudah</i>	an ornate carriage positioned on the back of an elephant or occasionally some other animal
hpaya	BUR	<i>hpaya</i>	a general term used in Burma for sacred objects of worship, such as a Buddha statue, a votive tablet, a temple, a stupa or even the king
hun krabok	THA	<i>hun krabok</i>	classic style rod puppet (Central Thailand) where a figure is mounted to a long handle and the arms are manipulated by rods
Indraphisekha	THA	<i>indrāphisekha</i>	A ceremony, which has played an important role in the court rituals of mainland Southeast Asia.
Indus (valley)			The site of ancient Indus Valley civilization c. 2600–1900 BC, with Harappa and Mohenjo-daro as major cities; in present Pakistan
Jataka	SKT PAL	<i>jātaka</i>	Jatakas are highly didactic stories illustrating the moral virtues of the Buddha's previous incarnations
kalaga	BUR	<i>kalaga</i>	Burmese embroidered hand-woven wall tapestry, a.k.a. shwe chi doe
kalan	SKT	<i>kalan</i>	Hindu shrine in Champa, in the form of a temple tower
Kali	SKT	<i>kālī</i>	manifestation of Devi as independent terrifying divinity
Kaliya	SKT	<i>kaliyā</i>	name of a Naga, serpent divinity
kamadhatu	SKT	<i>kāmadhātu</i>	Buddhist term designating the sphere of desire, with the events of human life, its good and bad deeds as well as the corresponding punishments
Kandy (dances)			majestic processions around the city of Kandy in Sri Lanka, accompanied by dancers and musicians
kanok	THA	<i>kanok</i>	ornamental motifs, such as the kanok flames; Thailand
karana	SKT	<i>karāṇa</i>	a codified movement sequence in the Natyashastra tradition
karihasta	SKT	<i>karihasta</i>	position of the arms: one hand swings across the body in lata and the other is held near the ear
kathak	URD	<i>kathak</i>	North Indian dance form developed during the Mughal period in 16 th century
Kediri period	JAV	<i>kaḍiri</i>	a kingdom reigning in East-Java from 1049 to 1222
Khandagiri	SKT	<i>khaṇḍagiri</i>	caves containing 2 nd century bas-reliefs, situated in Orissa, Eastern India
khene	LAO	<i>khaen</i>	Lao(tian) musical wind instrument, bamboo mouth organ
khon	THA	<i>khon</i>	The classical stylised form of Thai dance, performed by dancers who mime the action while the story is being told/sung by a chorus in the background. Dancers wear elaborate costumes and masks to portray different characters. Khon characters include demons, monkeys, humans and celestial beings.
khru	THA LAO	<i>khruu</i>	teacher in Thai and Laotian, from sanskrit guru
kinnara	SKT	<i>kinnara</i> , (fem.) <i>kinnarī</i>	name for half-human half-bird inhabitants of the mythical Himalayas
kirtimukha	SKT	<i>kīrtimukha</i>	a mythical creature, with frightening yet auspicious lion-like head
krabi krabong	THA	<i>krabi krabong</i>	Thai sword and baton dance
Kraitong	THA		a dance drama composed by Thailand's King Rama II
kraton	JAV	<i>kraton</i>	palace; the term for the palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, important traditional cultural centres of Java
Krishna	SKT	<i>kṛṣṇa</i>	Hindu divinity, an avatar of the god Vishnu
kru	KHM	<i>kruu</i>	teacher in Khmer language, from sanskrit guru

kshipta	SKT	<i>kṣipta</i>	outward flexed leg position in Indian tradition
Kushana	SKT	<i>kuṣāna</i>	ancient Indian empire, c.60–240 AD
lakhon or lakon	THA	<i>lakhon</i>	general term for Thai dance drama
lakhon khol	KHM	<i>lakhon khol</i>	masked dance drama of Cambodia showing scenes from the local version of the Ramayana
lakhon nai	THA	<i>lakhon nai</i>	Thai court dance drama, originally performed by female dancers only
lalita	SKT	<i>lalita</i>	a graceful <i>karana</i> or dance sequence in the Natyashastra tradition
Lanna Tai	THA	<i>laannaa tai</i>	Ancient kingdom in the North of Thailand, founded in 1259 and consisting of several partly independent city-states. The golden age of Lanna was in the 15 th century.
lasya	SKT	<i>lāsya</i>	classical feminine style of dancing; cf. tandava
liem	THA	<i>liem</i>	Thai dance term: the basic open angular position of the legs in Thai tradition
Lin Yi	CHI VIE	<i>lin yi</i> 林邑 <i>lâm âp</i>	Lin Yi kingdom, established towards 192 AD, is the first nucleus of the ethnic Cham nation. Precursor of the kingdom of Champa. Also known as Lâm Ấp.
ling	THA	<i>ling</i>	appellation of a monkey character, appearing in the Thai Ramakien (Ramayana) epic
linga, lingam	SKT	<i>liṅga</i>	phallus symbol, the cosmic linga symbolizes Shiva's creative power; cf. yoni
Loro Jonggran	JAV	<i>lara jonggran</i>	mythical Javanese female divinity; name of Prambanan temple dedicated to her in central Java
Mahabharata	SKT	<i>mahābhārata</i>	major Sanskrit epic of ancient India consisting of some 90.000 verses
Mahanipata	PAL	<i>mahānipata</i>	Collection of the ten last and especially venerated Jatakas or legends of the Buddha's previous incarnations.
Mahayana	SKT	<i>mahāyāna</i>	The "Greater Vehicle", one of the three main forms of Buddhism; cf. Theravada
Maitreya	SKT	<i>maitreya</i>	the Buddha of the future
Majapahit	JAV	<i>majapahit</i>	During the Majapahit period (1292–1500) the East Javanese culture reached its zenith.
makara	SKT	<i>makara</i>	a mythical creature, with crocodile-like head, common in Buddhist art in India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia
mandala	SKT	<i>maṇḍala</i>	a cosmic diagram, with its sacred centre surrounded by four cardinal points
mandapa	SKT	<i>maṇḍapa</i>	pillared halls for Buddhist ceremonies including, for example, music and dance performances
Manohra	THAI	<i>manohra</i>	Manohra dance drama, composed by Thailand's King Rama II, is unique to South Thailand. It presents the love story between Prince Suthon and Kinnari Manohra, a half-bird half-woman being.
Mara	SKT	<i>māra</i>	Demon, whose three daughters, named Tanha, Arati and Raga or "Desire, Aversion, and Lust" tried to seduce the Buddha.
margi	SKT	<i>mārgī</i>	Natyashastra 's classical, codified dance tradition
Mathura	SKT	<i>mathurā</i>	North Indian school of art
Meru	SKT	<i>meru</i>	central cosmic mountain in Indian cosmology; cf. Mount Meru
Mohenjo-daro		<i>mohenjo daro</i>	ancient major city of the Indus Valley civilization, Pakistan
molam	THA		style of folk music (often accompanied by dance) in north-eastern Thailand and in Laos

Mon	MON	<i>mon</i>	Mon culture of Dvaravati dominated regions of Thailand approximately from the 6 th to 9 th century AD. At present the Mon are centred in the south-eastern part of Myanmar, sharing the Buddhist religion.
mondop	THA		cubic building, often housing a Buddha statue
Mount Kailasa	SKT	<i>kailāsa</i>	the residence of Shiva; equivalent to Hindu-Buddhist Mount Meru.
Mount Meru	SKT	<i>meru</i>	the central axis of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology
mudra	SKT	<i>mudrā</i>	a symbolic hand gesture in the Indian tradition
Mughal (period)	PRS URD	<i>moḡul</i> <i>muḡal</i>	Mughal Empire (Islamized Mongol-Persian dynasty) in India 1526–1707
Naga (tribe)		<i>nāga</i>	ethnic minority living in Assam, India
naga, Naga	SKT	<i>nāga</i> (fem.) <i>nāgī</i>	serpent; Nagas are mythic semi-human, semi-serpent beings
Nalanda	SKT	<i>nālandā</i>	important centre of Mahayana Buddhism in Bihar, East India
Nandi	SKT	<i>nandi, nandin</i>	the bull which Shiva rides; the gate keeper of Shiva in Hindu mythology
nang neang	THA KHM	<i>nang</i> <i>neang</i>	Thai respectful title for legendary heroines, e.g. Nang Sida / Neang Seda, the heroine of Ramakien / Reamker (Skt Sita)
nang talung	THA	<i>nang talung</i>	shadow theatre of South Thailand
nang yai	THA	<i>nang yai</i>	Form of Thai shadow theatre, in which dancing puppeteers perform scenes from the Ramakien (Ramayana) by presenting cut-out hide figures against a semitransparent cloth screen.
nat	BUR	<i>nat</i>	Burmese spirit cult involving numerous nats or spirits
Nataraja	SKT	<i>naṭarāja</i>	title of Shiva, lit. "king" raja of "dance" naṭa
Natasatra or Nattayasat	THA	<i>natasatra</i> <i>nattayasat</i>	name in Thai of the Indian Natyashastra (Skt), translated in Thai in 1968
natasin	THA		Thai classical dance
Natyashastra	SKT	<i>nāṭyaśāstra</i>	Indian classical treatise of theatrical arts, acting and dance, written by Bhārata c.200 BC–200 AD
Nawanatya	JAV	<i>nawanatya</i>	this Old Javanese manual, from 13 th –14 th century, is the nearest equivalent to the Indian Natyashastra in ancient Southeast Asia
Ngoc Lu	VIE	<i>ngọc lữ</i>	Ngoc Lu Drum of Dong Son Period, found in 1893–1894 in the Village of Ngoc Lu, Ha Nam Province, North Vietnam
nirvana	SKT	<i>nirvāṇa</i>	Buddhist notion of extinction or the cessation of all suffering
nora	THA	<i>nora</i>	archaic dance tradition of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia with shamanistic features
nrttamurti	SKT	<i>nṛttamūrti</i>	"form" mūrti of "dance" nṛtta, image of a dancing god
nyaya	SKT	<i>nyāya</i>	traditional Indian way of fighting, as for ex. the bharata or the kaisika martial arts
Oc Eo	VIE	<i>óc eo</i>	A large Funan culture site in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, occupied about 250 AD. This site may have been a busy port of Funan kingdom between 1 st to 7 th century
Pagan	BUR	<i>bagan</i>	Capital of Burma from 1044 until 1298. Pagan, which has continued to serve as an important Buddhist centre until our times, has some 3.000 temples and other religious monuments.
Pala-Sena dynasties	SKT	<i>pāla-sena</i>	Pala and Sena dynasties controlled the eastern parts of India from c. 750 to 1200
Pallava dynasty	SKT	<i>pallava</i>	The Pallavas ruled the Tamil country (Southern India) from c. 558 to 728.
Parvati	SKT	<i>pārvatī</i>	manifestation of Devi (goddess) as Shiva's consort

pataka	SKT	<i>patākā</i>	a <i>mudra</i> in which the fingers are joined and stretched while the thumb is bent denoting among other things beginning of dance, clouds, might, ideal king, storm etc.
phasa ta	THA		Thai dance term denoting actions and especially moods of the characters when the dancer combines hand gestures or mudras with dance gestures
Phnom Penh	KHM	<i>phnom penh</i>	The Khmer capital was moved from Angkor to Phnom Penh in the 15th century.
phra preah	THA KHM	<i>phra</i> <i>preah</i>	Thai / Khmer respectful title for gods, temples and noble humans, such as mythical heroes Phra Ram / Preah Ream (Rama) and Phra Lak / Preah Leak (Lakshmana)
Phra Narai	THA	<i>phra narai</i>	Thai name of the god Vishnu, a.k.a. Narayana
pradakshina	SKT	<i>pradakṣina</i>	ritual clockwise circumambulation around a temple or a stupa and its reliefs
Prambanan	JAV	<i>prambanan</i>	temple complex in Central Java dedicated to Shiva
prang	THA	<i>prang</i>	Memorial tower sharing with the stupa its function as Buddhist reliquary in Thailand
prasat	KHM	<i>(Skt) prāsāda</i>	designates a temple tower, both in Indian and Khmer architecture
prasat	THA	<i>prasat</i>	Khmer-influenced tower, which later evolved into prang.
punakawan	JAV	<i>punakawan</i>	the dwarfish servant figures in Javanese wayang theatre
purana	SKT	<i>purāṇa</i>	“old, ancient legends”; the term refers to archaic Puranic literature Indian religious myths (c. 300–700 AD)
purusha	SKT	<i>puruṣa</i>	the primordial cosmic man in Hindu philosophy
pusaka	JAV	<i>pusaka</i>	a royal heirloom surrounded by mystical aura
pythat	BUR	<i>pythat</i>	multi-tiered towers of Burmese wooden palaces and monasteries
Pyu	BUR	<i>pyu</i>	First settlers in Upper Burma, the Pyu arrived in the 1 st century BC and established several city kingdoms. Their Theravada Buddhist culture flourished in the early centuries A.D.
raas (dance)	HND	<i>raas</i>	form of Indian devotional dance which, for example, is performed in Manipur to commemorate Krishna’s full moon dance with the <i>gopis</i>
Ramakien	THA	<i>ramakien</i>	the Thai version of the Indian epic Ramayana
Ramayana	SKT	<i>rāmāyaṇa</i>	ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to the poet Valmiki
rasa	SKT	<i>rasa</i>	flavour, emotion, sentiment; also as codified expression in music and performing arts
raudra	SKT	<i>raudra</i>	the emotion of terror, the rasa evoked by Shiva’s dance
Ravana	SKT	<i>rāvaṇa</i>	ruler of the demon kingdom Lanka in the Indian Ramayana epic
Reamker	KHM	<i>reamker</i>	Cambodian version of the Indian epic Ramayana
Reog Ponorogo	JAV	<i>reog ponorogo</i>	In the East Javanese reog ponorogo tradition actors ride on the shoulders of mythical animals enacted by human dancers.
rishi	SKT	<i>ṛṣi</i>	A Hindu “saint” or “sage”, denoting in its strict canonical sense a Vedic sage to whom the sacred hymns were originally revealed.
rupadhatu	SKT	<i>rūpadhātu</i>	Buddhist term designating the sphere of form, where corresponding reliefs depict the Jatakas or stories of Buddha’s previous incarnations
sadhana	SKT	<i>sādhana</i>	discipline, realisation, incantation
Sailendra	SKT	<i>śailendra</i>	Buddhist dynasty of Central Java in 8 th century AD. The Sailendra maintained close relations with Srivijaya. Cf. Borobudur
salai or ghatika	SKT SKT	<i>śālai</i> <i>ghātika</i>	Brahmanic institutions, where the students learned arts, such as painting, music, staging plays and dancing as well as many forms of martial arts
sampot	KHM	<i>sampot</i>	a man’s waist-cloth in Cambodia

Sanchi	SKT	<i>sāñcī</i>	site of Buddhist studies and pilgrimage since the 3 rd century BC, with a great stupa; Madhya Pradesh, India
Sang Thong	THA	<i>sang thong</i>	a dance drama composed by Thailand's King Rama II
sankalok	THA	<i>sankalok</i>	The main export product of Sukhothai was its ceramics, commonly known as sankalok ware. The name refers to Sawankhalok.
Satavahana– Ikshvaku period	SKT	<i>sātavāhana- ikṣvāku</i>	ancient Indian empire 230 BC–199 AD in Andhra Pradesh
Sawankhalok	THA	<i>sawankhalok</i>	the old name of historic Thai city Si Sachanalai
sbaek thom	KHM	<i>sbaek thom</i>	Cambodia's shadow theatre related to Thailand's nang yai
sema	THA	<i>sema</i>	boundary stones surrounding ubosoth, the ordination hall of a temple
Shilpashastra	SKT	<i>śilpa-śāstra</i>	generic name of manuals of iconography, sculpture and architecture in India
Shiva Nataraja	SKT	<i>śiva naṭarāja</i>	the Cosmic Dancer; one of Shiva's epithets
Si Sachanalai (Satchanalai)	THA	<i>si sachalanai</i>	Historic Thai city. situated about 60 kilometres from Sukhothai. Its main significance lies in the magnificent ruins remaining from the Sukhothai period when Si Sachanalai was virtually a twin capital with Sukhothai.
sikhara	SKT	<i>śikhara</i>	Curvilinear temple tower developed in North India. The two main sikhara types are the northern nagara and the southern dravida types.
Singhasari	JAV	<i>singhasari</i>	Singhasari kingdom and period 1222–1292 in East Java
Srivijaya Sriwijaya	SKT JAV	<i>śrīvijaya</i>	Buddhist kingdom in Sumatra, Indonesia (from AD 3 rd to 5 th centuries until around 1400).
srngara	SKT	<i>śrṅgāra</i>	the sentiment of love; one of the eight codified rasas
stupa	SKT	<i>stūpa</i>	archaic burial mound, later a repository of Buddhist relics
suci chari	SKT	<i>sūcī chari</i>	dancing position of bending, swivelling and turning around
Sukhothai	THA	<i>sukhothai</i>	The first independent Thai Kingdom (1240–1438), and a renowned cultural period in Thailand.
tandava	SKT	<i>tāṇḍava</i>	classical masculine style of dance; Shiva Nataraja's cosmic dance of destruction and creation; cf. lasya
thangka	TIB	<i>thangka</i>	Tibetan and Nepalese religious cloth paintings
Theravada	SKT	<i>theravāda</i>	the "School of the Elders"; one of the three main forms of Buddhism, also known popularly as Hinayana or the "Lesser Vehicle"
Trailokyavijaya	SKT	<i>trailokyavijaya</i>	"Conqueror of the Three Worlds", a Buddhist guardian deity
Traiphum Phra Ruang	THA	<i>traiphum phra ruang</i>	Buddhist notion of "The Three Worlds" or the realms of desire (kama, our world), form (rupa, realms of the lesser deities) and formlessness (arupa, realms of the higher deities)
tribhanga	SKT	<i>tribhanga</i>	Body posture in Indian dance and sculpture meaning, roughly, "equipoised stance bent in three places." In the western aesthetic tradition, the tribhanga is known as the "contrapposto".
trimurti	SKT	<i>trimūrti</i>	Hindu divine trinity of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu
tripataka	SKT	<i>tripataka</i>	Indian <i>mudra</i> or symbolic hand gestures denoting, for example, crown, flames, invocation, marriage, king, fire, battle etc.
ubosoth or bot	THA	<i>ubosoth</i>	separate assembly hall or monks' ordination hall in a Buddhist temple complex in Thailand
Udayagiri (caves)	SKT	<i>udayagiri</i>	caves with 2 nd century bas-reliefs, in Orissa, Eastern India
Uma	SKT	<i>umā</i>	One of the names of Shiva's consort, a.k.a. Parvati or Durga
wai	THA	<i>wai</i>	gesture of respectful greeting with the bowing of head and with both palms joined in front of the chest; usual in Thailand and more widely in Southeast Asian countries

wai kru	THA	<i>wai-khruu</i>	Thai ceremony of "Paying Homage to the Teacher"
Vajrapani	SKT	<i>vajrapāṇi</i>	Literally "thunderbolt or diamond in the hand", one of the earliest bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism.
Vajrasattva	SKT	<i>vajrasattva</i>	"Diamond Mind", the esoteric Buddhist name of a bodhisattva (Samantabhadra).
Vajrasphota	SKT	<i>vajrasphoṭa</i>	the Goddess of the Chains in Tibetan Buddhism
Vajrayana	SKT	<i>vajrayāna</i>	a school and doctrine of Tantric Buddhism
valita	SKT	<i>valita</i>	turned, decorated
wat	THA KHM	<i>wat</i>	generic term for Buddhist temples in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia
wayang	JAV	<i>wayang</i>	a generic term referring to a puppet or a shadow, or a theatrical performance itself
wayang beber	JAV	<i>wayang beber</i>	Javanese storyteller's scroll performance
wayang golek	JAV	<i>wayang golek</i>	Javanese theatre using 3-dimensional wooden puppets
wayang kulit	JAV	<i>wayang kulit</i>	Javanese traditional shadow play using leather puppets
wayang wong	JAV	<i>wayang wong</i>	Javanese classical dance theatre performed by dancers
Vedic (period)	SKT	<i>veda</i>	Vedic period and civilization in India c.1600 – 500 BC
vidusaka	SKT	<i>vidūṣaka</i>	the jester or the clown character of classical Indian Sanskrit drama
vihara viharn	SKT THA	<i>vihāra</i>	Buddhist monks' living quarters with a central courtyard and surrounding cells.
Vishnu	SKT	<i>viṣṇu</i>	Hindu god, preserver of the universe
vismaya	SKT	<i>vismaya</i>	the sentiment of wonder, awe or surprise; one of the codified rasas
wong	THA	<i>wong</i>	Thai dance term denoting the curved arm with upward-bent elbow joint
vrshchika	SKT	<i>vr̥ścika</i>	a <i>karana</i> or a movement sequence in Indian tradition dominated by a back bent and up lifted leg, often indicating flying
vyantara devata	SKT	<i>vyantara devatā</i>	semi-gods or intermediate gods of the Hindu and the Buddhist pantheon
yajna	SKT	<i>yajña</i>	religious sacrifice
yak	THA KHM	<i>yak</i> <i>yeak</i>	appellation of demon characters (Skt yaksha) appearing in the Ramakien and Reamker (Ramayana) epics
yaksha	SKT	<i>yakṣa</i> , (<i>fem.</i>) <i>yakṣī</i> , <i>yakṣiṇī</i>	appellation of demon characters, supernatural beings, mother-goddesses, pre-Buddhist fertility gods
Yangon	BUR	<i>yangon</i>	new appellation of Rangoon, the capital of Myanmar
yogi	SKT	<i>yogī</i> (<i>fem.</i>) <i>yoginī</i>	practitioner or master of yoga meditation
yoni	SKT	<i>yoni</i>	vulva symbol, female counterpart of the cosmic lingam
Yunnan	CHI	<i>yún nán</i> 雲南	Chinese province, located in the far southwestern corner of the country. Home to almost half of China's total ethnic groups, e.g. Dai, Naxi, Mosuo, Miao, Lisu, Yi, Yao and Bai ethnic minorities
zedi, zeidi	BUR	<i>zedi</i>	Burmese name for a stupa

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(2008)

The reliefs and murals of temples in mainland Southeast Asia, such as the famous Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia, the temples of the city of Pagan in Myanmar, and the royal temple, Wat Phra Keo, in Bangkok, include thousands of figures related to dance in their iconographical programmes. Many of them give valuable information about dance from periods of which very little, if any, textual evidence exists to throw light on this subject.

This study seeks to analyse these dance images by applying and expanding the dance iconographical method formulated in the 1990s. The undeniable Indian influence on the traditions of dance and image-making in Southeast Asia will be discussed, while the focus will be on the localisation process of the Indian influenced prototypes in Southeast Asia.

This study argues that the dance images in the temples of mainland Southeast Asia reveal more information about dance if they are examined as an integral part of the iconographical programmes of sacred buildings than they would do if observed only as separate images isolated from their architectural context in which they were originally created. The reason for this is the fact that both Hindu and Buddhist temples were built to reflect the structure of originally Indian cosmology. Thus the building became an image of the cosmos with its inhabitants and with even ethical connotations. When observed in this context, the dance imagery of these temples reveals several things about dance, its history, its forms and its role in the cultures of mainland Southeast Asia.

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