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Representativie Khmer masterpieces, comparable to the finest statues produced by ancient Egypt and Greece. Roberts identifies each of these statues with a particular Khmer king for the first time. Two statues on left 6-7th century Pre-Angorean, two right 12th century Angkorean.

STRI research associate Tyson R. Roberts will talk on "Portrait Statues of the ancient Khmer *devaraja*" at the Tupper Tuesday seminar on February 3rd.

He has been studying the statues since 1994 and has published several articles on ancient Khmer kingship, symbolism, and mythology.

Portrait Statues of the Ancient Cambodian (Khmer) *Devaraja* or Divine Kings

With information provided by Tyson R. Roberts, STRI

George Coedès (1886-1969), doyen of Khmerology, recognized that the Khmer kings were divine kings or *devaraja* (although the Sanskrit term *devaraja* does not occur in Khmer inscriptions). With one notable exception Coedès hesitated to recognize the statues of these kings representing them as Hinduist or Buddhist divinities as portrait statues. The exception was a small number of statues of the Buddharaja Jayavarman VII (reigned 1179-ca 1220) in which the king was portrayed without divine attributes (unique in the annals of Khmer royal statuary). Coedès translated the Ta Phrom inscription (1206) which mentions that 22 statues of Jayavarman VII were sent to various named localities in the Khmer realm; to the extent that these names could be identified with a particular place, they tallied with where the statues were found (Coedès, 1960).

Coedès felt that nearly all other Khmer *devaraja* statues were disqualified as veritable portrait statues because they showed supernatural features: four arms in Vishnu statues, the median

eye in Shiva statues, an Ushnisha or cranial bump on the back of the head in statues of the Buddha, and so on. He admitted that there should be a suitable term for such statues but was unable to suggest one.

As can be seen from the series of photos of the heads of ancient Khmer statues (at right), the statues resemble actual persons. Coedès thought they were posthumous representations, but Roberts's research indicates they were done during the lifetimes of the reigning monarchs. In several instances series of statues can be assembled representing a particular monarch from youth to adulthood through middle to older age. Roberts proposes a functional or functionalist definition for the Khmer *devaraja* portrait statues: anyone living at the time who had seen the monarch in person, would recognize that monarch's image in such a statue (regardless of what supernatural attributes it might also bear that identified the god also represented, or even if the king was represented as a goddess with female breasts and clothing). Accepting the statues as portraits, he uses techniques from biological systematics and classification s well as historical clues to identify the rulers they represent.

Faces of ancient Khmer royal statues representing nearly 700 years of ancient Khmer history (6th-14th centuries AD): A glance is enough to convince most people that these are portraits of actual persons. The Khmer tradition of realistically depicting rulers in statues and in bas-reliefs on temple walls represents an important difference with Indian tradition, and is one reason the ancient Cambodian art often surpasses that of the Indian subcontinent.

The *devaraja* was not only head of state, but also the living god currently in favor, such as Harihara during the later part of the Pre-Angkorean and early Angkorean periods, or of all of the gods if all of them were in favor at the same time, as was often the case. Thus the same monarch could be portrayed in a statue intended for a Shivaite temple as Shiva, in a statue for a Vishnuite temple as Vishnu, and in one for a Buddhist temple as Buddha, Boddhisatva, or even Prajnaparamita (mother of Buddha). In addition to displaying the reigning monarch as a divinity the statues played functional roles in the temples, bringing them to life as the abode of a living god represented by a statue, and as territorial markers spread throughout the kingdom. By establishing the identity of the one and only legitimate reigning *devaraja*, they played an important role in ending political and religious factionalism.

For brief periods in the seven centuries of Khmer history (sixth through early fourteenth centuries AD) there was serious contention for the monarchy. Such struggles always ended decisively with the kingdom unified under one *devaraja*. Statues of the contending or defeated *devaraja* were probably destroyed.

Roberts has identified many of the finest ancient Khmer statues not merely with the gods they represent but also with monarchs from the beginning to near the end of seven hundred years of Khmer history, something that has not been done before. His Tupper seminar will be illustrated by photographs of some Khmer statues that are well known and of others that have not been published on before.

These results shed new light on ancient Khmer kingship, on the usually syncretic relationship (with the *devaraja* as focal point) between Hinduism and its branches and Buddhism, on the relationship of the kings to temples such as Angkor Wat, Banteay Srei, Beng Mealea, and Koh Ker or Chok Gokyar, on the dating of numerous important statues and therefore their stylistic evolution, on the occupation of part of the Malay Peninsula by the Khmer empire ca 600-700 AD, and on the apparently great ethnic diversity of Khmer monarchs.

The study further shows that 1) Khmer art, like Khmer statecraft and agriculture, while part of the Indian tradition, was in important ways innovative (e.g.: India never produced royal portrait statues of *devaraja*, only idealized anthropomorphic sculptures of the gods); and 2) that the Angkor Wat period of Khmer art, corresponding to the reign of Suryavarman II (1113-ca 1150) —not to be confused with the Angkorean era (801-1325)— instead of being the least productive period was actually the most innovative and productive, equaled perhaps in productivity but not in originality only by the Bayon era corresponding to the reign of Jayavarman VII (1179-ca 1220).