

The lintel with yama riding on a buffalo

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The Lintel with Yama riding on a buffalo which originated from Cambodia during the Angkorian period dating from the 9th to 13th centuries that currently is exhibited in the Asian Civilisation Museum displays several elements such as features that composite a lintel comprises of ornamentations, symmetry and social space.

In Khmer architecture, a lintel is made up of a horizontal structure joining two vertical colonettes known as wall columns and supported by a pediments known as a (roughly triangular structure above a lintel) between which runs a door or the entrance way of a temple. This marks the transition from the common space and the inner space.

This lintel is a classic artefact dated to the Banteay Srei style. Banteay Srei is the leading Angkorian temple constructed not by the autocrats, but by person who attends royal court as an adviser to the royalty. Such Banteay Srei lintel is known for its minuscule refinement of its decorative carvings which includes several famous narrative bas-reliefs dealing with scenes from the myths of Hinduculture.

This architecture in Cambodia found in Khmer temples done by the Khmer artists who wanted to free themselves from limitation to express their personality via the architecture. Besides, it is crucial to study some important terms used in Khmer architecture including in this Lintel the God of Death . Banteay Srei means 'Citadel of the Women', and it is said that it must have been built by a woman as the elaborated carvings were very intricate for a man to do.

The lintels were predominantly built in with the use of sandstone . This sandstone was used by the Angkorian builders that were obtained from the Kulen Mountains. To obtain the sandstone was more expensive than that of brick hence only gradually came into use. The whole composition of the lintel is well-balanced that signifies the Banteay Srei carving, which has been intact to show the survival appearance of a good quality of the sandstone being the medium.

The ornamentation was also the rise of Khmer art. It is generally significant with the intense engraving and lines were considered to give the structures both light and share. The great harmony of building materials and decoration was emphasized at the time. The elegance and refinement of ornamentation highlight sculptors' techniques of Khmer art. This style was employed by Angkorian artists in the decoration of lintels evolved over time.

During this Angkorian period, the intellectuals undertakes the different age period of lintel styles with detailed and complex precisions. There could possibly be two different functions of this lintel. Firstly, it could act as a form to educate the worshippers entering the temple through visual means, and secondly, to scare away unwanted visitors with fierce pictorial images who might not be familiar with the religion.

This lintel (Fig 4) produces symmetrical properties reflected on each side. The designs are meticulously carved out with detailed precision across the lintel. In the centre of the entire piece, there is a figure with a crown that appears to be riding on a buffalo. This suggests that the figure is the main subject of the entire piece and that it is an important character. The Khmer

artists' were not able to build an arch that allows them to construct the passageways hence lintels were then constructed.

Motifs in the decoration of this lintel include the Kala (Mythical) creature with grinding mouth and bulging eyes, the Simha (a lion), and other forms of vegetation. Normally, this lintel depicts the Hindu gods that were associated on the south direction. Hence, the figure is Yama in the centre, the guardian of the south and the god of death is sitting on a water buffalo.

Yamaraja, the god of death, with red eyes, club, and a noose in his hands riding on his mount buffalo starts walking towards the personage to take their life to his residence. Yamaraja is given a vehicle, buffalo. Buffalo is a reminder of the crudeness. The club and the noose are the reminders of the punishment of the crudeness. This could suggest that it was probably placed facing the (Fig 5) south entrance of a Banteay Srei temple.

Since, south is considered the direction of the departed soul or death no auspicious rites are performed in that direction. In Hinduism, the departed person is placed with his face towards south before and during cremation. This lintel were engraved with circled rings and decorated with carved leaves.

Below Yama is the head of a Kala which spits out a two emerging heads of Simha which symbolized by a lion and is characterized as masculine, fiery and fixed. This acts as the Hindu and Buddhist symbol of bravery. The Simha in turn expels two floral garlands. The closed knitted, stylised foliage in deep relief is typical of earlier design of Banteay Srei temple. In Banteay Srie

temple, Yama is seen both on pediment and lintel on the south face of southern shrine but if observed closely, one is the front view and the other side view.