



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR ASIAN ART
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Semester 1, 2010

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Tantric Buddhism in Phimai and its links to the history of Khmer Buddhism

The late 11th -early 12th century Khmer temple in Phimai is an outstanding example of Khmer temple architecture. It is unique, being the only temple adorned with Tantric Buddhist imagery and dedicated to a Tantric Buddhist deity eighty years before Tantric Buddhism became the state religion under Jayavarman VII in the late 12th century. Phimai was built by Jayavarman VI, the founder of the Mahidharapura dynasty in an era when state Śaivism was prevalent. Khmer Buddhism has long been interpreted as being mainstream Mahayanist. Recent discoveries and interpretations, however, suggest that Khmer Buddhism had already taken a Tantric turn in the 10th century. My paper will look at Phimai in the light of these new developments.

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Semester 2, 2010

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The “Radiant Substance”: Lacquer Painting in Colonial Hanoi

While lacquer painting is now widely regarded as a national artform in Vietnam, its original appearance in the 1930s marked a radical departure from previous uses of the material. The idea of using lacquer as a painting medium was an innovation developed at the lacquer studio of the École des Beaux-Arts de l’Indochine, an art school founded in 1925 by the French colonial administration. This paper will discuss the development of lacquer painting, examining the mixture of local, regional and French sources which contributed to its aesthetic.

Early experiments in lacquer painting show a variety of influences and approaches, revealing that the development of this artform was much more than the “Westernisation” of an existing indigenous practice. The reception of lacquer painting in the period, by both French colonial and Vietnamese viewers, shows that the medium could have varied meanings, related to the particular needs and ideals of different groups within the colonial society of Hanoi. Lacquer painting thus provides an interesting case study of issues of identity, agency and the dynamics of cultural exchange in a colonial context.

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Researching Balinese painting through an on-line database