Door Frame:
The Iconography and Architectural Style in Indian and Southeast Asian Art

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Doorframe in Gupta art, an example of the doorframe, about which the style and iconography in Indian and Southeast Asian art would be elaborated in detail.

Abstract

This research focuses on the doorframe, an architectural component of the door that is regarded as one of the most sacred elements in Hindu and Buddhist architecture, both in Indian and Southeast Asian art. Previous studies have discussed the iconography and styles of the doorframe, such as Stella Kramrisch (1946) and Parul Pandya Dhar (2009). However, their iconography and stylistic connections to India and Southeast Asia have not been widely explored. The aim of this study is to explore the iconography and stylistic connections between Indian and Southeast Asian doorframes prior to the 13th century CE. The findings can be summarized into four main topics: **1) Definition of the Enclosure, Wall, Gateway, Door, and Doorframe:** the study classifies the "enclosure", accompanied by a gateway, and the "wall" of a sanctum, which features a doorframe or "Dvāraśākhā." **2) Iconographic Meaning of the Doorframe:** as devotees peer into the sanctum to glimpse the deity, the doorframe assumes various iconographic meanings. It symbolizes the multiplication of the supreme god, the blessings of abundance, and the deity's power to eradicate evil and provide protection. **3) Development of Doorframes in Indian Art:** the Gupta period introduces the Dvāraśākhā system, characterized by concentric frames. The Vakāṭaka period brings forth the Makara Toraṇa, an arch flanked by two Makaras. The Dvāraśākhā system has evolved through several schools of Indian art, particularly in North India, while the Makara Toraṇa has remained prevalent in South India. And **4) Evolution of Doorframes in Southeast Asian Art with Indian Comparisons:** doorframes in Southeast Asia exhibit localized characteristics. Khmer lintels evolved from the Makara Toraṇa to arches adorned with foliate motifs and Kāla masks. Central Javanese doorframes are primarily decorated with Kāla and Makaras, whereas Bagan doorframes uniquely follow the Dvāraśākhā system.

Keywords: door, doorframe, Indian art, Southeast Asian art

Concise Background and the Importance of the Study

As is generally known, religious Indian architecture is an imitation of the macrocosm to microcosm, or the replication of the abode of the gods from heaven to earth. Temples are designed with a concentric layout that symbolizes the structure of the universe, while the complex design of the Prāsāda—a sacred building characterized by its multi-tiered superstructure—highlights its significance and status, setting it apart from ordinary structures. Several scholars have explored these concepts.

However, the doorframe, or "Dvāraśākhā" in Sanskrit, has always been neglected in former studies. In sacred architecture, the doorframe is of great significance as it is the "transitional zone" between the inner sanctum and the outer realm. It is the only place where devotees can see the main image enshrined within the closed sanctum. Due to its significance, architects and artists have attributed complex iconographic symbolism to the doorframe, representing the supreme statue of the gods and the blessings they bestow upon all beings.

Besides iconography, the stylistic development of the doorframe is also an interesting topic that has been neglected in previous studies. This research, therefore, emphasizes the evolution of ancient doorframes across styles and aspects, both in Indian and Southeast Asian art.

Objective of the Study

1) This research aims to understand the iconography of the doorframe in Indian and Southeast Asian art.
2) This research aims to understand the stylistic connections between Indian and Southeast Asian art before the 13th century CE. The research also aims to explain differences in the indigenousness of doorframes across the artistic schools.

Scopes of the Study

This research focuses only on the doorframes, in terms of iconography and stylistic development, both Indian and Southeast Asian art. This research focuses on the period before the 13th century CE, with some references to the later period.

Concise Literature Reviews

Previous studies have examined the iconography and styles of doorframes. Stella Kramrisch (1946) explores this topic in her article "The Symbol of Entry and Exit: The Door and Its Images," which is part of her comprehensive book *The Hindu Temple*. Parul Pandya Dhar (2010) addresses the iconography and stylistic evolution of the Toraṇa in her book, *The Toraṇa in India and Southeast Asian Architecture*, focusing on its significance in both Indian and Southeast Asian art. However, the connections between their iconography and styles in India and Southeast Asia remain underexplored.

Result of the Study

1. Definition of the Enclosure, Wall, Gateway, Door, and Doorframe

The temple complex is surrounded by enclosures, known as "Prākāra" in Sanskrit. Within this complex, the innermost sacred room, called the sanctum or "Garbahgṛha," is enclosed by walls known as "Maṇḍovara" or "Kūḍya" in Sanskrit. The Prākāra of the temple is attached to the gateways, known in Sanskrit as "Gopura." Typically, the walls of the Garbahgṛha feature a door called "Dvāra," and the doorframe of the Dvāra is referred to as "Dvāraśākhā" in Sanskrit.

The enclosures of the complex and the walls of the sanctum serve to separate the sacred area inside from the profane space outside. Both the enclosures and the walls symbolize the division between human beings and the divine, with the gods' dwelling situated at the center of the universe (the *axis mundi*). In religious ideology, the realm of the gods is surrounded by concentric oceans or mountain ranges. While the gods are considered pure, humans are seen as connected to impurities. Therefore, both the enclosures and walls signify the separation between the pure and impure worlds.

Despite separation, human beings can connect to the supramundane world through the gateway (of the temple complex) and the door (of the sanctum). Consequently, the door and gateway hold significant importance in architectural iconography.

The gateway of the temple complex in Indian architecture can be either the gateway with a "Toraṇa" (the timbered-imitated-beam-and-post structure) (Fig. 1) or "Gopura" (the multi-tiered gateway) (Fig. 2). Toraṇa or Gopura can exist in multiple numbers, positioned at the cardinal directions, inviting people to enter the temple complex from all sides.

Fig 1
"Toraṇa" or the gateway with timbered-imitated-beam-and-post structure, Sanchi Stupa, Madhya Pradesh, Śuṅga period
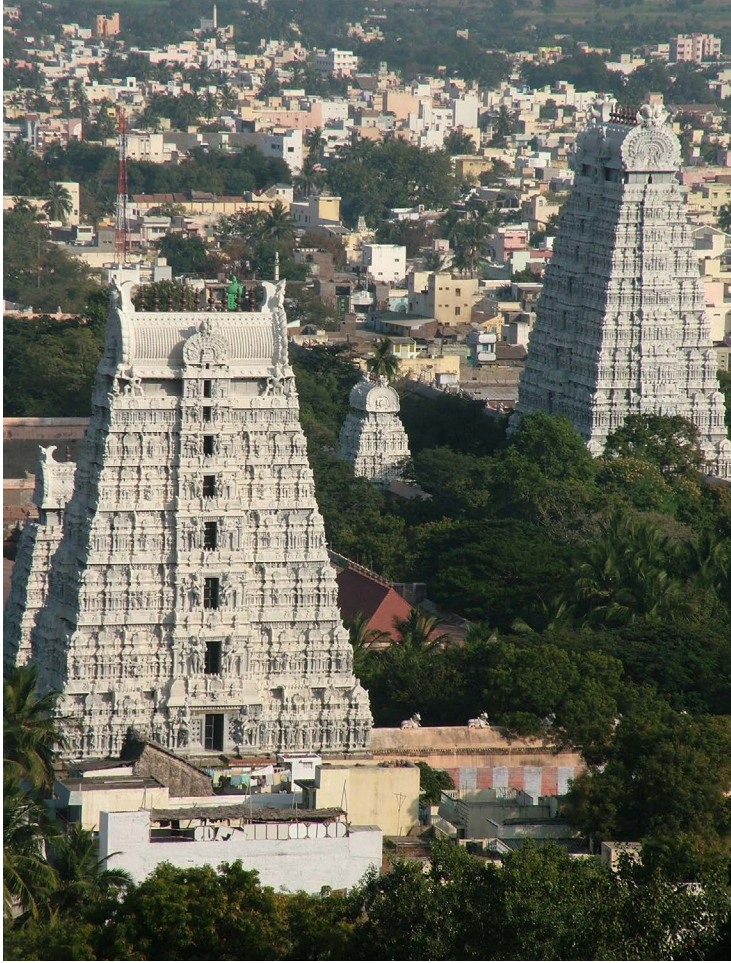
Fig 1

Fig 2

However, the sanctum or Garbahgṛha, the most sacred spot in the temple, which is considered the residence of the god and enshrines the main image of the temple, provides only one door, "Dvāra" (Fig. 3). This research, therefore, discovers the importance of the door of the sanctum, which is far more important than "Toraṇa" or "Gopura". The Dvāra is the only spot where the devotees who gather in front of the sanctum can witness the image of the supreme god. While the walls are associated with "separation" or "illusion" (*Māyā*) created by the god himself-or-herself, the only door of the sanctum is connected with the grace of the god (*Anugraha*). The only way to absorb the power of the god is by peeping at the supreme image through the door, which is called "Darśana" in Sanskrit. Therefore, Dvāra of the sanctum, which is witnessed by the devotees simultaneously with the main image, is as important as the manifestation of the supreme god himself.
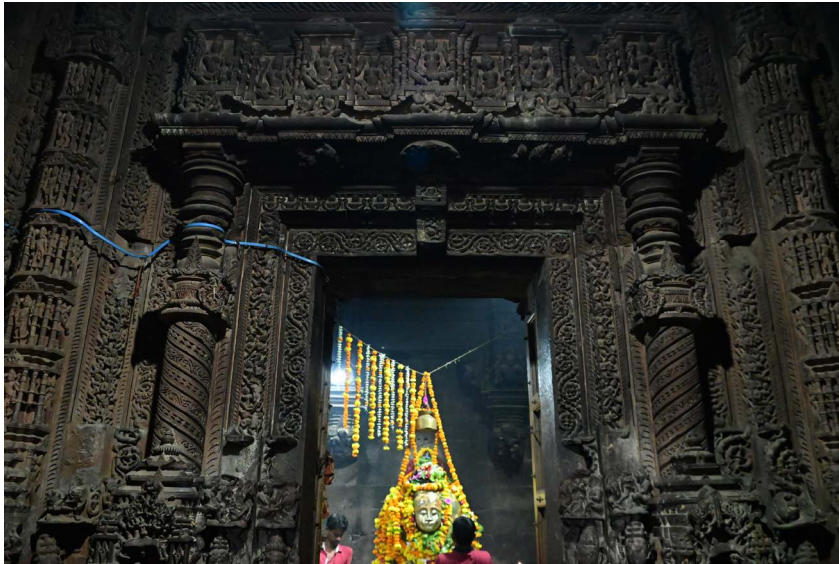
Fig 3

Fig 3
The main image of the god inside the sanctum or Garbahgṛha is revealed through the door (Dvāra) and the doorframe (Dvāraśākhā), Nilakantheshwar Temple, Madhya Pradesh, Paramāra period.

Fig 4

Fig 4
Timbered doorframe with concentric frames, as an example in Tibetan art. This prototype is believed to anticipate the Dvāraśākhā system in Indian art.

Doorframe or "Dvāraśākhā" is the series of concentric frames of the door, indicating the timbered imitation of the wooden structure (Fig. 4). In Indian art, "Dvāraśākhā" is always presented with the door of the sanctum, inside which the main image is enshrined. Therefore, "Dvāraśākhā" is considered the nimbus or the aura of the god.[1] Given its significant symbolic meaning, this research focuses on the doorframe, also known as the Dvāraśākhā.

2. Iconographic Meanings of the Doorframe

The doorframe is similar to the halo surrounding the main image that devotees observe as they try to absorb the god's divine power. Both Indian and Southeast Asian art have assigned various iconographic meanings to the doorframe. The divine power of the god, as represented on the doorframe, can be described as follows.

2.1 The Multiplication of God(s):

In Hinduism, the supreme god is believed to have various manifestations. Therefore, doorways are often designed to reflect these multiple forms. For instance, in a Shiva temple, Nāṭarāja, representing the supreme dynamic power of Śiva and the force that activates the cosmos, is typically depicted at the lintel (Fig. 5). In contrast, a Vaishnava temple frequently features Anantaśāyin, the reclining form of Viṣṇu, at the lintel, symbolizing his eternal existence. An example from Eastern India during the Pāla period, found in the Indian Museum in Kolkata, showcases several Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the doorframe. The research identifies the figures on the upper beam as the five Dhyāni Buddhas, while the historical Buddha is located on the lower beam (Fig. 6). These representations signify Buddhas who eternally inhabit the universe beyond the confines of time and space.

Fig 5

Nāṭarāja, as the supreme dynamic power of Śiva, who activates the cosmos, is portrayed at the lintel, accompanied by other Trīmūrti, Prātihara period, Baroli, Rajasthan.

Fig 5

Fig 6

Buddhas and Bodhisattva on the lintel of the Buddhist doorframe, Pāla period, Indian Museum at Kolkata

Fig 6

Fig 7

Navagraha or the nine planets are represented at the lintel of the doorway, Rajarani Temple, Bhubaneshwar, Orissa art.

Fig 7

In some cases, the Navagrahas (the nine planets, considered the gods of time) or the Dikpālas (the gods of the eight directions) can be depicted partially or entirely on the doorframe, forming a sacred diagram known as a Maṇḍala. The presence of the Navagrahas at the lintel in Indian art signifies an auspicious moment for devotees as they pass through the doorframe. The Navagrahas are the nine planets, starting with the Sun and the Moon at the beginning and ending with Rāhu and Ketu (Fig. 7).

2.2 The Boons of Abundance blessed the Devotees:

Numerous symbols of abundance adorn the doorframe, drawn from both Indian and Southeast Asian art. Ancient architects aimed to emphasize the deities as the sources of abundance—riches, fortune, and fertility. The doorframe is embellished with symbols such as the Makara, foliate motifs, jewels, garlands, pots, conchs, serpents, elephants, and representations of gods or goddesses of abundance. These elements are included to bestow auspiciousness, symbolizing the divine power granted to devotees who surrender to the supreme deity.

2.2.1 Makara: It is a mythical creature that combines features of a crocodile, elephant, and fish. Each of these animals symbolizes water and abundance. The Makara motif is used in various architectural elements, particularly in doorframes. One notable design is the arch with two inward-facing Makaras, known as Makara-Toraṇa. This motif has gained popularity in South India and in Pre-Angkorian Khmer art (Fig. 8).

2.2.2 Foliate Motifs and the Potpourri: Foliate motifs, such as creepers and garlands, symbolize the sweetness of life (or *Rasa* in Sanskrit), which is desirable for all living beings. The creepers and the vase of plenty represent food, the essential sustenance of life in the universe. This imagery is associated with Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, who sustain the universe and bestow abundance upon all creatures.

Creepers are typically designed as horizontal or vertical bands for doorframes, known as Patravalīśākhā in Sanskrit, which were popular during the Gupta period (Fig. 9). Additionally, the framing garlands around doors from this period, referred to as Vanamālāśākhā in Sanskrit, became widely popular in India (Fig. 10).

A pot or potpourri, known as Pūrṇaghaṭa—symbolizing soil and water, both essential for life and abundance—has been compared to a woman's womb, where a baby is nurtured. As a result, pots or potpourris are often used to decorate doorframes, particularly in Indian art. For instance, one example from Osian, Rajasthan, displays a potpourri beneath the doorframe (Fig. 11). Another example from Aihole, Karnataka, features pairs of potpourris flanking both sides of the door, accompanied by dwarves (Fig. 12).

2.2.3 Animals of Abundance: A conch, a serpent, and an elephant symbolize the elements of soil, water, sky, clouds, or rain, which are sources of abundance. Specifically, the conch represents water and serves as a bestower of abundance, similar to the Makara, which perpetually opens its mouth to release the creeper of abundance.

The gray elephant symbolizes a cloudy sky[2] and is associated with the deity of rainstorms, Indra. Both the elephant and the serpent hold equal importance in terms of iconography, as they are considered bestowers of water and sustainers of life.

The Nāga, or serpent, which moves horizontally, is connected to the elements of soil and water. Its elongated body can be seen as a bridge to heaven, symbolized by the rainbow. Consequently, elephants and serpents are often used as decorative elements in doorframes within Indian and Southeast Asian art. A serpent can appear in either its traditional snake form or as a human figure adorned with snake hoods (Figs.11 and 12).

Fig 8

Fig 8
Makara-Toraṇa or an arch
with double inward-facing
Makaras, lintel in Thala
Borivat style, Khmer art,
Phnom Penh National
Museum

Fig 9

Fig 10

Fig 9
Patravalīśākhā or
the doorframe with
the creeper in Gupta art.
This example is Deogarh
Temple in Madhya
Pradesh. A dwarf, which
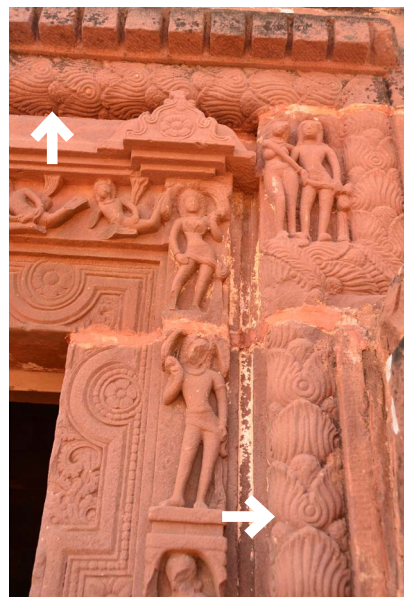symbolizes the earth or
soil, generates the creeper.

Fig 10
Vanamālāśākhā (the frame
with garland) in Gupta art,
as depicted on the top of
the picture, Bhumara
Temple, Madhya Pradesh

Fig 11

Fig 11

Pūrṇaghata placed beneath the doorframe, flanked by human-formed Nāga, Sūrya Temple No.2, Osian, Rajasthan, Pratihāra period

Fig 12

Dwarves, potpourris, and elephants, as well as Makara and river goddesses flanking the doorframe at Aihole, Karnataka, Western Chalukya period

Fig 12

Fig 13

2.2.4 Gods and Goddesses for the Door: Dwarves and Kubera, who has an obese physique, are often associated with earthly treasures and wealth.[3] In Indian art, dwarves can be linked to creepers. Numerous doorframes feature auspicious objects or animals, such as a notable example from Aihole (Fig. 12), which enhances the lower section of the doorjamb with a pair of pots, dwarves, and elephants.

Among the female deities representing water, fertility, and abundance are Yakṣiṇī (female tree spirit, usually depicted holding a branch), and the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, who are shown with their respective vehicles, the Makara and the tortoise. The river goddesses flanking doorways symbolize purification and serve as a gateway to paradise, allowing devotees to achieve liberation from worldly attachments.[4] A prime example of this is the doorframe at the Nachna Kuthara Temple, which dates back to the Gupta period in Madhya Pradesh. It features both Gaṅgā and Yamunā, as well as Yakṣiṇī, as prominent figures surrounding it (Fig. 13).

Fig 13

Gaṅgā-Yamunā and Yakṣiṇī decorate the doorframe in Gupta art, Nachna Kuthara Temple in Madhya Pradesh.

2.3 The Power of God for Terminating the Evilness and Protection:

The door of the sanctum is the sole point where evil or inauspiciousness from the profane realm can enter the sacred space. Consequently, in Indian and Southeast Asian art, the doorframe is often adorned with sculptures of fierce doorkeepers (Dvārapālas) or powerful animal figures to safeguard the purity of the transcendent world. This article will explore both types of doorkeepers: those depicted in human form and those represented as formidable animal masks.

2.3.1 Doorkeeper(s) in the Form of a Human: The first type of doorkeeper is depicted in human form. The characters of Dvārapālas can be either graceful or ferocious. The graceful doorkeepers, characteristic of the Gupta period, are portrayed with sweet, smiling faces. In contrast, the ferocious doorkeepers are depicted with various elements, such as protruding eyes, fangs, muscular bodies, and bearded faces. They often display threatening gestures, with or without weapons (Fig. 14).

Mayamatam, a *Śilpasāstra* text in South India, mentions that the double doorkeepers at the front door facing the east are called "Nandi" and "Kāla". "Tale tale vimānamāṃ dikṣu devān nyaset kramāt/ Pūrvāyāṃ dvārapālau tu Nandikālau ca vinyaset" is the quotation from the text,[5] translatable as "at the base of the Vimāna, in every direction, deities should be designated. In the eastern direction, there are two doorkeepers, "Nandi" and "Kāla". Even though the text does not differentiate between Nandi's and Kāla's characters, it is acceptable that Nandi is portrayed in a benign form while Kāla is in ferocious form. The obvious differences in characters are shown in both the Pratihāra art of India and Angkorian art of the Khmer period.

Interestingly, during the Early Angkorian Khmer period, such as the Preah Ko period, Dvārapālikas, or the female doorkeepers, became popular at temples dedicated to the goddess.

Fig 14-1

Fig 14-2

Fig 14

The comparison between the Dvārapāla with sweet gracefulness (Fig 14-1 – Nachna Kuthara Temple, Madhya Pradesh) and the Dvārapāla with ferocious characters. (Fig 14-2 – Baroli Temple, Rajasthan)

Fig 15-1

Fig 15-2

Fig 15

Dvārapālikas, or the female doorkeepers in Khmer art. The left one is the powerful female doorkeeper at Lolei temple holding a weapon, while the right one is the more benign lotus-holding nymph called Apsarās at Banteay Srei Temple in the later period.

The temples of Preah Ko and Lolei in the village of Rolous, Cambodia, are good examples of the female Dvārapālika. These are the precursors of the later-period benign lotus-holding nymph called Apsarās, flanking the doors in the Late Angkorian art, such as at the temples of Banteay Srei and Baphuon (Fig. 15).

2.3.2 The Doorkeeper in the Form of a Powerful Animal Mask:

The ferocious Kāla or Kīrtimukha,[6] with a lion-faced or a Garuḍa-faced mask, is another symbol of the forceful power for threatening evil. The protruding eyes and the opening mouth expel the inauspiciousness and the evilness from penetrating the sacred realm.

In Hinduism, Kāla symbolizes both the brightness and the breath of the universe and the eternality, as well as the darkness and the time that devours all creatures in the universe (i.e., death).[7] These opposite meanings are actually the qualities of the supreme god who symbolizes time (Mahākāla, which is an epithet of Śiva). Therefore, the mask of Kāla is the manifestation of the supreme god himself, blessing devotees with breath while simultaneously warning them to submit to his power.[8]

Interestingly, whereas Dvārapālas, or the human doorkeepers, are usually in pairs, flanking the double jambs of the doors, the ferocious animal mask is only one, decorating the lintel of the door with protruding eyes and an open jaw. In Central Javanese art, this mask is used both for a doorway and for a niche (Fig. 16).

In Central Javanese and Angkorian Khmer art, the Kāla is depicted as a ferocious lion with an open mouth and protruding eyes. Omission of the lower jaw symbolizes the devouring of time. In Angkorian Khmer art, Kāla becomes the vehicle of an unknown god holding a club. This is thought to be either Śiva (the god of time) or the guardian of the direction (Dikpāla) or the guardian of the door itself. The exact meaning of this character is unknown because of the lack of evidence (Fig. 16).

Fig 16-1

Fig 16-2

Fig 16

The ferocious bodyless mask of Kāla in Central Javanese art (Fig 16-1) with protruding eyes. Kāla becomes the vehicle of an unknown club-holding god in Angkorian Khmer art (Fig 16-2).

Some variations for Kāla in Indian and Southeast Asian art are particularly interesting. In Indian art, Kāla can be portrayed as either a bodyless lion head with an open jaw or a bodyless human head with a shut mouth (Fig. 17). In Eastern Javanese, the lower jaw, scary fangs and teeth, a pair of horns, a scary skull, and the hands with a threatening gesture are added to the mask (Fig. 18). In some variations in Khmer art, the lion-headed mask is substituted with the head of a bodyless Garuḍa, with a beak (Fig. 19). Both lion and Garuḍa are the animals of light and power, symbolizing the Laws of the Lord (Dharma).

Fig 17

The human head Kāla in Indian art is portrayed with a shut mouth and protruding eyes.

Fig 17

Fig 18

Fig 18
Ferocious Kāla in Eastern Javanese Period, Candi Jago, Malang

Fig 19
Bodyless Garuḍa substituted for the lion-headed mask, Lolei temple, Early Angkorian art

Fig 19

3. Evolution of Doorframe in Indian Art

3.1 The System of "Dvāraśākhā" with Kapota in Gupta Art:

Prior to the Gupta period, several fragments of the doorframes provide some decorations, as the precursors to the system of Dvāraśākhā. During the 5th century CE, the Dvāraśākhā system was first introduced in Madhya Pradesh, Central India, during the Gupta period. The temples of Nachna Kuthara (Fig. 13) and Deogarh (Fig. 20) are prime examples. The doorframe in this period is designed with concentric rectangular frames. The main frame comprises the column (Stambhaśākhā) supporting the sloping cornice (Kapota). The door's outer frame is bordered by the garland frame (Vanamālāśākhā), which is designed in a T-shaped outline. The human-figured frame, or the frame of the amorous couple (Rūpaśākhā or Mithunaśākhā), is another important element of the Gupta doorframe. Another important frame is the foliate frame or the creeper frame (Patravalīśākhā). Furthermore, the flying deities, or celestial musicians (Vidhyādhara or Gandharva), are typically depicted on the lintel of Gupta-period architecture.

The system of Dvāraśākhā, accompanied by a pair of columns supporting Kapota, has been continued from the Gupta to the Pratihāra period in North India and the Early Western Chālukya in South India.

3.2 The System of "Makara Toraṇa" in the Post-Gupta period of South Indian Art:

As already explained, the double inward-facing Makaras disgorging the central arch above the doorframe are entitled as Makara Toraṇa in Sanskrit. Normally, Makaras are supported by the columns that flank the doorway (Stambhaśākhā). The research identifies

Fig 20

Gupta-perioded doorframe with the system of Dvāraśākhā and Kapota at Deogarh, Madhya Pradesh

Labels on image:
Kapota
Vanamālāśākhā
Vidhyādhara
Stambhaśākhā
Mithunaśākhā
Patravalī śākhā

Fig 20

Fig 21
Makara Toraṇa of
the Post-Gupta period
in South India: the top one
is the example at Ajanta
cave No.6 (Vakāṭaka
period: 5th century CE),
and the bottom one is
the example at
Virupaksha Temple
in Pattadakal (Early Western
Chālukya-period: 6th-7th
centuries CE).

Fig 21

this term in *Kāmikāgama*, a *Śilpasāstra* text or Indian treatise for artists. *Kāmikāgama* states that "Dvayor makarayor vakraiḥ śaktaṁ madhyama-pūritam I Nānā-vidha-latā-yuktam etan Makara-Toraṇam II"[9] (The double Makaras with the twisted arch, combined with several kinds of creepers, is called Makara Toraṇa- translated by the author)

During the Post-Gupta period, Makara Toraṇa was introduced and became extremely popular in South Indian art. This system was introduced at Ajanta Cave No. 6 (Vakāṭaka period) and later adopted by several Early Western Chālukya-period temples in Karnataka (Fig. 21). During the latter period, a medallion was added to the center of the arch, dividing it into two parts. This type of Makara Toraṇa has, thereafter, been continued in Later Sri Lankan art, with the addition of the Kāla mask at the top of the arch. Hence, it becomes "Kāla-Makara-Toraṇa" (Fig. 22).

Fig 22

Fig 22

The stucco arch of "Kāla-Makara-Toraṇa" in Later Sri Lankan art, Lankatilaka Temple, outskirts of Kandy

Fig 23

Fig 24

3.3 Doorframes in the Post-Gupta North Indian Schools of Art:

In Rajasthan-Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, from the 7th-9th centuries, during the Pratihāra dynasty, the doorframes follow the system of Dvāraśākhā with a pair of columns supporting Kapota. Some minor changes are noticeable, including the figures of deities at the lintel and the frame full of twisted serpents (Nāgaśākhā). The figures of the river goddesses have been enlarged and allocated at the bottom of the jambs (Fig. 23). During the 10th-12th centuries, specifically in the Chandela period, the entire doorframes were adorned with numerous small figures of deities (Trīmūrti and Navagrahas), human and amorous couples (Mithunas). The other types of frames were forgotten (Fig. 24).

In Bihar and Bengal, the doorframe of a Buddhist temple is adorned with numerous small figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, such as the example in the Indian Museum mentioned above (Fig. 6).

Fig 23
Doorframe at Teli ka Mandir Temple at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, Pratihāra period

Fig 24
The doorframe of the Chandela period, full of human figures, Laxman Temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

4. Evolution of Doorframe in Southeast Asian Art with Indian Comparison

Interestingly, the research reveals that Southeast Asian doorframes were less influenced by Indian art. Each school of Southeast Asian doorframes has its own "indigenous" system, and it is proven that Southeast Asian architects during the 5th-12th centuries did not fully understand the complex system of the Indian Dvāraśākhā.

4.1 Doorframes in Khmer Art:

The earliest stage of the Pre-Angkorian art, the so-called Thala Borivat lintel (Fig. 8), follows the South Indian convention of Makara Toraṇa.[10] In a later stage of Pre-Angkorian art, the horseshoed arch emerges, replacing Makara Toraṇa in the Prei Khmeng style. Additionally, the foliate arch adorned with garlands and scrollwork becomes prominent in the Kampong Preah style. Indian scholar Parul P. Dhar notes that this latter style demonstrates the influence of Patra Toraṇa, an arch characterized by foliate motifs, which is derived from Indian art.[11]

The couples of lean columns supporting the lintels seem to be influenced by the Indian Stambhaśākhā, but the inner timber-imitated doorframe and the timber-imitated false door are indigenous inventions. The Khmer columns, despite originating from Indian art, are designed with an indigenous style, full of decorative horizontal bands and triangular leaves.

Later, the Angkorian-period lintel underwent dramatic changes, with the addition of Kāla at its center and small figures scattered around it. In some cases, the lintel is occupied by mythological narratives.

Preah Ko-styled lintel is one of the prime examples of this indigenousness. French scholars assign Kāla insertion as the hallmark for the Javanese influence in Khmer art during the 9th century CE (Fig. 25).

Fig 25-1

Fig 25-2

Fig 25
Kampong Preah-style lintel (Fig 25-1) and Preah Ko-style lintel (Fig 25-2), indicating the evolution of Khmer lintels as a part of the doorframe

Fig 26

Fig 27

4.2 Doorframes in Central Javanese Art:

As is generally known, the most popular scheme for doorframes in Central Javanese art is the arch with Kāla on the top and a pair of outwards-facing Makaras at both ends of the arch. The Kāla-Makara arch has been used for both door and niche frames (Fig. 26). The arch can be supported by a pair of columns or without columns. From the research, the origin of the Kāla-Makara arch started from the circular horseshoe arch in Indian art, which is usually capped by the Kāla mask at the top of the arch (Fig. 27).

In the later periods of Eastern Javanese and Balinese art, Makaras are omitted. Only the Kāla mask at the top of the arch remains. The fangs and the protruding eyes, with horns, have been emphasized to express the forceful power of the Kāla against evil (Fig. 18).

Fig 26

Kāla-Makara arch as the doorframe in Central Javanese Art, Candi in Diang Plateau

Fig 27

Horseshoed arches with the Kāla on the top, Ellora Cave No.10. The research opines that this kind of decoration anticipated the Kāla-Makara arch in central Java.

4.3 The system of "Dvāraśākhā" in Bagan Art:

The art of Early Bagan in Burma is the only school in Southeast Asia that followed the system of "Dvāraśākhā" with full convention. This is also the only school where the wooden frames have survived to this day. Similar to Indian art, the Kyauk Ku Umin stone doorframe and the Nagayon Temple's wooden doorframes[12] (Fig. 28) reveal that Bagan's Dvāraśākhā comprises the triple frames: Vanamālāśākhā, Rūpaśākhā, and Pratravaīlśākhā, while the Stambhaśākhā is unknown. The river goddesses flanking the doorframe are available at Kyauk Ku Umin's doorframe, which is the only example in Southeast Asia. However, the late-Bagan-period doorframes no longer follow the Indian convention and instead become undecorated frames adorned with indigenous motifs.

4.4 The Doorframe in Cham Art:

Several temples of Champa in Southern Vietnam yield examples of the doorframes, with the stone doorjambs supporting the pointed gable. However, as a result of the study, the sophisticated symbols of the doorframe, as in Indian art, are totally omitted in Cham art. The door of the brick temple is quite narrow, capped with a plain structural stone lintel. The doorjambs flanking the door are either plain, providing the area for inscription, or decorated with horizontal bands. Above the lintel, the sculpture of the god worshipped in the temple is depicted, such as a dancing Śiva or Devī (Fig. 29).
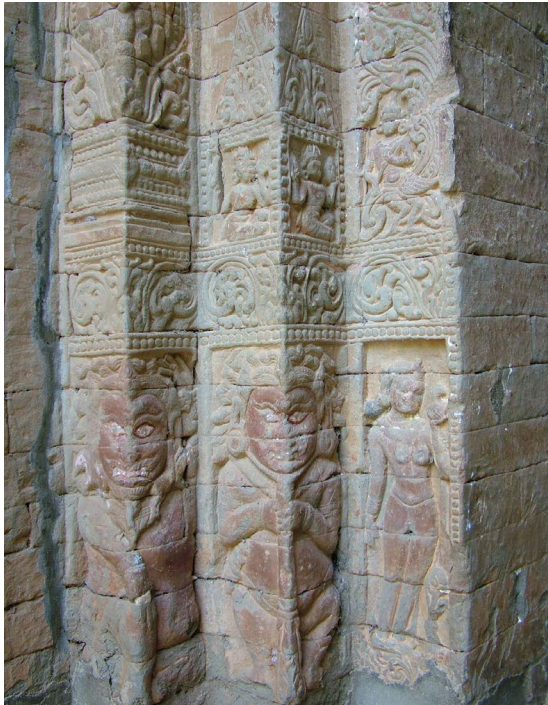
Fig 28-1

Fig 28-2

Fig 28

The doorframe with
Dvāraśākhā system in
Early Bagan art:
Kyauk Ku Umin (Fig 28-1)
and Nagayon (Fig 28-2)

Fig 29

The doorframe of Po Nagar
Temple, Nha Trang, with
the plain doorjambs
supporting the pointed
gable

Fig 29

Conclusion

The research "Door Frame: The Iconography and Architectural Style in Indian and Southeast Asian Art" examines the categorization, iconography, and stylistic development of the doorframe in Indian and Southeast Asian art. The research results can be summarized as follows.

1) The doorframe is important because it reveals the power of the god who resides inside the sanctum. The supreme god possesses the power of multiplication, granting the boons of abundance, terminating the evilness, and providing protection to the devotees.

2) The system of "Dvāraśākhā" was initiated in the Gupta art with full complexity. The system has been followed by several schools in India with some alterations. In South India, Makara Toraṇa was introduced and widespread.

3) Southeast Asian doorframes were less influenced by Indian art. Each school of Southeast Asian doorframes has its own "indigenous" system.

Notes

1 Stella Kramrisch, "Symbols of Entry and Exit: The Doors and Its Images," **in The Hindu Temple, Volume 2** (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 313.

2 Heinrich Zimmer, "The Elephant," in **Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization**, ed. Joseph Campbell (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 102-109.

3 F.D.K. Bosch, **The Golden Germ: An Introduction to Indian Symbolism** (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1960), 113-114.

4 Steven G. Darian, "Ganga Shiva and Hindu Temple," in **The Ganges in Myth and History** (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 97-113.

5 **Mayamatam, Volume 1**, trans. Bruno Dagens (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2007), 320-321.

6 Indian texts call this mask as Kīrtimukha, as in this quotation "Dvārordhve Kīrtimukhaṃ navagrahān samācaret". Nirañjana Mahāpātra, **Śilparatnakośa: A Glossary of Orissan Temple Architecture**, trans. Bettina Baumer and Rajendra Prasad Das (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1994), 174-175.

7 F.D.K. Bosch, **The Golden Germ: An Introduction to Indian Symbolism**, 141-150.

8   A. J. Bernet Kempers, **Ancient Indonesian Art** (Amsterdam: C.P.J. Van Der Peet, 1959), 90. He explains "…*The head of the monster above the entrance seems to devour the visitor who died and is reborn in a symbolic manner not unlike the moon which is swallowed and given back by a monster of the same type…*"

9 Prasanna Kumar Acharya, **A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture: Manasara Series, Volume 1** (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1997), 460.

10 Mireille Bénisti, **Stylistics of Early Khmer Art, Volume 1** (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2003), 104-115.

11 Parul Pandya Dhar, **The Toraṇa in Indian and Southeast Asian Architecture** (New Delhi: D.K. Print World, 2010), 220-221.

12 For further details about Kyauk Ku Umin and Nagayon see Donald M. Stadtner, **Ancient Pagan: Buddhist Plain of Merit** (Bangkok: River Books, 2005), 180-185, 228-231.

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Illustration Sources

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