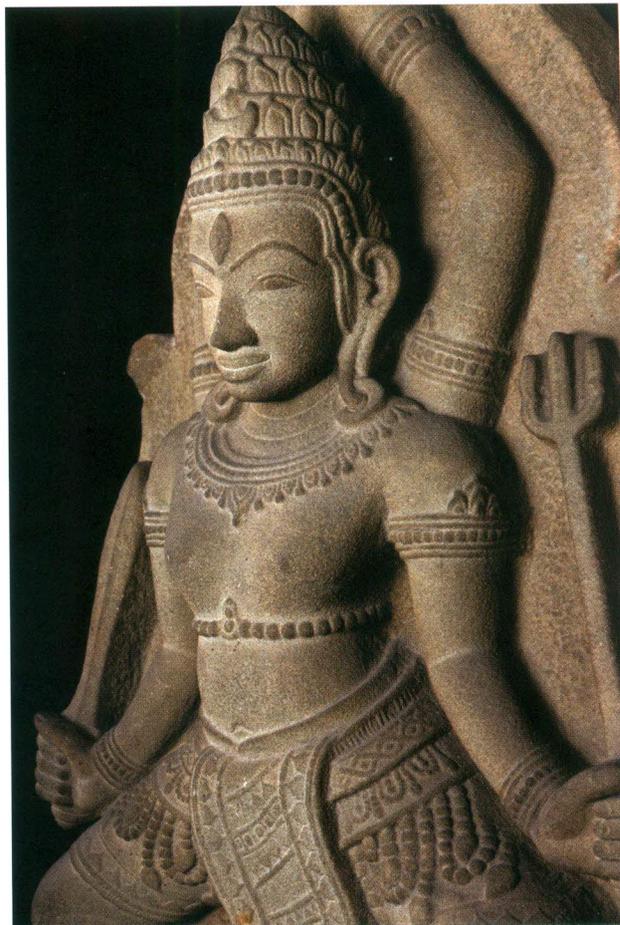


This celebrated work probably did not play a secondary role in Tháp Mâm. It was one of a series of three pieces found in 1934.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that the divinity represented here in a dance position is a minor form of Śiva identifiable by his third eye in the forehead, the crescent moon in the hair and the trident (*triśūla*) in the left hand – but minor in that it is not as far as we know a cult image. The attribute in the right hand... is a sword (*khadga*), a possible attribute of Śiva even though not among the most frequently represented. The back arms are held in a position frequently found in Cham art starting from the style of Chánh Lộ in the 11<sup>th</sup> century; they are raised above the head with the hands joined in a gesture that is hard to interpret. The 'seal' *mudrā* ('symbolic gesture') effected here by both joined hands – little finger and ring finger interlocked, middle fingers together, index fingers bent and thumbs hidden by the others – is recurrent in important gods and goddesses (Śiva dancing, Durgā slaying the buffalo), who are nevertheless secondary in the temple hierarchies. It is never found in a main cult statue in the relatively small number of such main images yet known. This *mudrā*, reserved for deities in the entourage of the principal god recalls the homage (*añjali*), hands joined above the head with palms together; but the crossed fingers corresponds also to the *naivedyamudrā*, a gesture for offering nourishment (concrete or spiritual), in which the hands represent an offering vessel.<sup>2</sup> We therefore think the divinities portrayed in the *naivedyamudrā* – should be understood as making an offering of what they symbolize (creation, destruction of evil in the form of demons etc) to the principal deity. The position of the legs could correspond with the *maṇḍalasthāna*,<sup>3</sup> one of the six dance postures reserved specifically for males, while the left heel makes the *udghattita*,<sup>4</sup> a foot movement in which the heel rises and falls...

The soft modelling and the oval face with passive and serene expression belongs to the idealisation of forms that is typical of the Tháp Mâm style. The sobriety of the jewelry, which is fine and limited, belongs to the same spirit. The smooth rings passed through the lobe is representative of the discretion achieved, which also aims at being readable in an antefix situated at a height, say in a corniche of a principal *kalan*. The costume is a short drape wrapped tightly around the thighs and embellished probably with embroidered



motifs. It is held at the waist with a rich belt supporting trimmings of varying thickness and complemented by precious metal and pearl pendants. One of the ends falls freely in front between the legs and turns to a point; at one with the swaying pendants, this detail participates in Śiva's dance movement in a work whose restraint and nobility may be compared with the admirable tympanum on the facade of the principal sanctuary of Po Klaung Garai, built in Ninh Thuận province between the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

TZ

- 1 M. Emmanuel Guillon refers to four identical pieces without giving their whereabouts (Ducrest and Vandermeersch 1997, p.152). Neither Jean Boisselier, in his various studies, nor Henri Parmentier in a work on Tháp Mâm written in 1939 but unpublished to our knowledge, mention four pieces. The photographic archives of the musée Guimet conserve an interesting series of photographs that record the three well-known sculptures.
- 2 See Jitendra Nath Banerjee, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta University, 1956, p. 263 and pl. V fig. 6.
- 3 See Alexandra Iyer, *Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance of Ancient Java – A study in Dance Iconography*, Bangkok, White Lotus Press 1998, p. 46, paragraph 3.3.2 and illustrations P 15 (p. 120), P 41 (p. 146) and P 57 (p. 161).
- 4 Ibidem, p. 43, paragraph 3.3.1.4.