

Among the extraordinary imaginary beasts of Tháp Mẫm, certain pieces are marked with originality of position, iconography and their links with Vietnamese art of the end of the Lý (1009-1225 CE) and that of the Trần (1226-1400 CE). Thus the posture of the dragon-*makara* does not seem to have its origin in the traditional repertoire of Champa. It arises rather from figures called Sino-Vietnamese of which fairly nearby examples can be found in pagodas in the north of the country: Chùa Bà Tấm (otherwise known as Chùa Sùng Phúc or Linh Nhân Từ Phúc), in a suburb of Hà Nội, Chùa Thành Đạo (also called Chùa Đậu or Pháp Vũ, Hà Tây province), Chùa Viên Giác (known also as Chùa Hương Lãng, Hải Hưng province), among others.¹ In the present state of knowledge it is difficult to date these with precision. Dates between 11th and 13th centuries are possible. Despite this imprecision, it seems very likely that the Chams adopted a Vietnamese décor – or at least integrated Sino-Vietnamese elements into their own schema – no doubt as a result of numerous contacts, whether warlike or not, that they had with their northern neighbour. In this respect, it should be noted that these animal figures only appear relatively late in Champa, around the 12th century; this seems to indicate that these were not local creations but a borrowing from a neighbouring art. One may object that monstrous animal heads appear already on the Mỹ Sơn E 1 pedestal in the 7th century, but the figures on the small staircase on which they are found correspond to an Indian type which cannot be readily linked to the dragon-*makara* of Tháp Mẫm. Whatever is the case, the question of the relations between Cham and Sino-Vietnamese art remain to be explored.²

Another dragon of this same kind, sadly incomplete, belongs to the collections of the musée Guimet: the animal appears with its lower paws stretched above his head, in a kind of energetic kick, as though he had just sprung, and landed on the ground.³ Discovered to the east of the Tháp Mẫm sanctuary, the fantastic couple which make up the dragons-*makara* of Đà Nẵng and the musée Guimet appear to have embellished the basement of some terrace or even a kind of entrance pavilion, on which Jean-Yves Claeys's report offers few details. Done with the same decorative spirit as the *gajasiṃha*, this dragon is the synthesis of different animals.

The body, whose belly is covered by vertical stripes containing varied motifs (small twisted tufts, Tháp Mẫm commas), is fairly close in proportions to the *gajasiṃha* but is entirely covered with scales. He is a descendant in this from the very strange lying dragons of Trà Kiệu conserved in the Đà Nẵng museum.⁴ This type therefore seems to have had its own evolution in Cham art, apart from the posture, which we suggested came from traditions external to Champa. The head draws from the *makara* in the elongated maw armed with sharp teeth, from the elephant in the tusks and perhaps the rolled up trunk (though curiously atrophied here), and from the lion frontal horns, developed even further. The pricked ears, stretched and jagged, as well as the small goatee beard below the chin, combine to render this fascinating animal as hybrid as it is strange. One notes, among the multiple iconographic sources, the pearl of the Chinese dragon in the mouth.

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- 1 One finds these illustrated in Võ Văn Tường, *Những Ngôi Chùa Nổi Tiếng Việt Nam (Vietnam's Famous Pagodas)*, Hà Nội, Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Hóa and Thông Tin 1994. For Chùa Bà Tấm, p. 77; Chùa Thành Đạo, p. 119; Chùa Viên Giác, pp. 170-173.
- 2 See on this subject Gilberte de Coral-Rémusat 'Animaux fantastiques de l'Indochine, de l'Insulinde et de la Chine' BEFEO 36-2, 1936, pp. 427-435 and Bezacier 1961.
- 3 See Ducrest and Vandermeersch 1997 pp. 162-163, for two other dragons lying on their side, also discovered at Tháp Mẫm, also to the east of the principal temple (inv. 42.49 and 42.48, this latter not being the object of an entry). Mention should also be made of the existence, in a private collection, of an example of the lying type, of which only the head remains (Hubert 1995, p. 48).
- 4 Inv. 42.1 and 42.2, Parmentier 1922 (1), pl. XII.

