

## 81. Dragon-makara

Tháp Mãm, Bình Định

12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries

Sandstone: H. 111 cm; W. 147 cm; D. 90 cm

BTC 224-42.49



This sculpture was discovered in 1934 at the ruins of Tháp Mãm, Bình Định province, and transferred to the Đà Nẵng Museum in 1935. Archaeologist J. Y. Claeys classified it as a 'makara' (mythical sea monster). Philippe Stern (1942) referred it as a 'dragon-makara' and J. Boisselier (1963) spoke of a 'dragon'. Hence we see a convergence of the *makara* of Indic culture and of the dragon of Chinese culture.

*Makara* are plentiful in Cham and Southeast Asian sculpture, especially at the ends of lintels, on *torana* gateways or beside stairways. Often the spit out of crocodile-like mouths foliage, pearls, animals or humans. In cat. 64 a *makara* disgorges a goddess; in cat. 80 another Tháp Mãm 'dragon-makara' with horns, raises two hind legs playfully into the air. In-the-round

statues of *makara* like these from Tháp Mãm are rarely seen in Indian art, and at first glance many viewers see the raised clawed feet and bulging eyes and call it a dragon. The Cham sculptors' mythical hybrid appears to issue from a confluence of cultural strains in Cham folk psychology and intensifying between Champa and the Đại Việt from the tenth century on, when Đại Việt art had absorbed much Chinese dragon iconography over several centuries.

The raised front paws of the *makara* give the impression of an attack posture, but the hind quarters are relaxed on the ground and the string of bells on his neck convey a friendly air. The body of the *makara* is not elaborately carved with scales, except on the tail, but the comma-shape motif on his thigh is the signature of the Tháp Mãm style.

