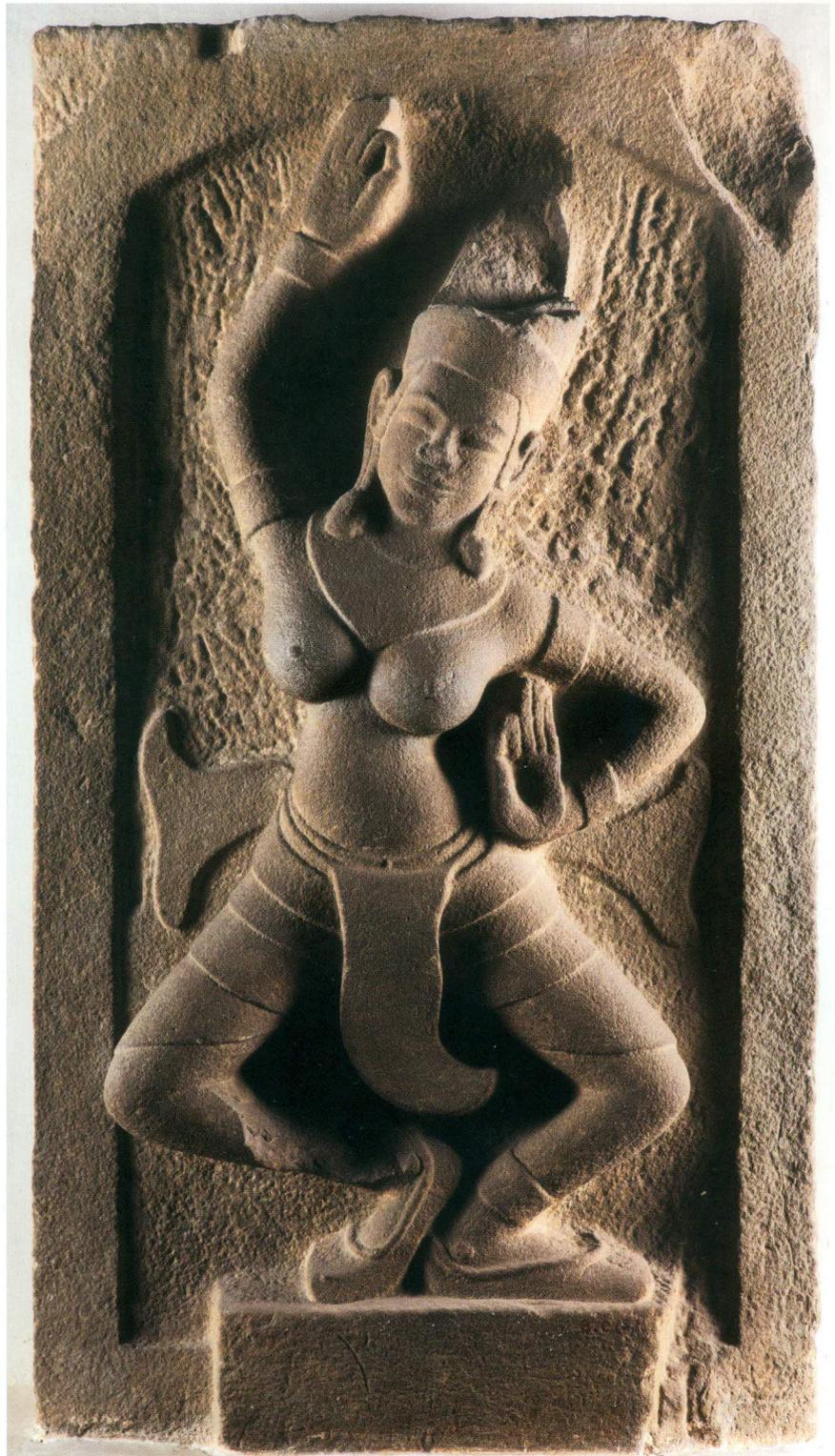


The excavations of Tháp Mâm produced two series of dancers in symmetrical positions with legs flexed, an arm pulled back at the level of the breast, the other up above the head, sometimes holding a lotus bud, sometimes not, in one hand or the other. The lack of finish in the sculpting is not surprising. In fact, Jean-Yves Claeys' analysis was that the laterite blocks of the foundation buckled during the construction, or shortly afterwards, provoking the collapse of the sanctuary tower, while unfinished parts were uninstalled.¹ These unfinished sculptures support his case. The conclusion of Jean-Yves Claeys on dating was to invite us to assign all the pieces found at the site to the same period, even if the exact date remains difficult to determine. The stylistic homogeneity of the sculptures does lead us to think that the work was not spread over an extended period.

The difficulty of locating the place of these works in the monument is more difficult to resolve than that for the dancing Śiva antefix (?) (cat. 77). They were probably not built into the principal foundation, but would have been at a different level. As they are in pairs, they may have been associated directly with the dancing Śivas in some elevated place within the building.

Despite being unfinished, these feminine images adhere fully to the Tháp Mâm style, notably in their clothing – a short drape which both folds forward from the belt at the front and at the back – and also in the jewelry: high conical tiara (*kirita*), ear pendants (*kundala*), necklace (*hāra*), armbands (*keyūra*), bracelets (*kañkana*) and anklets (*nūpura*). A sinuous body posture and a generous plasticity confers on these dancers an undeniably sensual charm and grace.

TZ



¹ Claeys 1934 (2), p. 758-9.