

The different problems this small sculpture poses are difficult to resolve. Neither the findspot nor the identification are assured. Henri Parmentier, in *L'inventaire descriptif des monuments çams de l'Annam*¹, said it came from Gò Thi, in the village of Xuân Phương in Bình Định. In his *Catalogue du musée cam de Tourane*,² Parmentier then indicated that 'a serious tradition gives its real origin as the ruins of Xuân Mỹ,' from where the object had been reported before being buried at Gò Thi, where it was discovered by accident by P. Panis. Subsequently, in *Statuaire du Champa*, Jean Boisselier also pointed to Xuân Mỹ' as its likely provenance.³ More recently, however, M. Emmanuel Guillon, dans *Le musée de Sculpture Cam de Đà Nẵng*, has gone back to the first place of origin of the piece.⁴

The identification of the deity has also not been settled. The early identification as Śiva, because of the rosary in his left hand, has been abandoned today. Two hypotheses are now proffered: one sees a representation of Balarāma, the brother of Kṛṣṇa and, like him, an avatar of Viṣṇu; the other hypothetically identifies the figure as Viśvakarman, the architect of the gods and patron of artisans. The problem here is with his attributes. If the plough (*hala, lāṅgala*) is indeed an attribute of Balarāma, the rosary (*akṣamālā*) is not; on the contrary, the rosary could correspond better with Viśvakarman, for whom the plough is not prescribed. Jean Boisselier got around the problem by proposing to see the plough as an adze or carpenter's chisel (*tanka*), which inspection of the object however seems not to allow, although this remains a personal appreciation. In the present state of research, the god, seated on the left leg with the right knee raised -- in the posture called 'Javanese' -- remains anonymous.

A stylistic study however makes more headway. Recollections of Tháp Mãm are present in the work, notably in the backslab, whose external border reproduces the comma motif -- in fact series of stock, stylised leaves -- so important in the 12th and 13th centuries. Certain other details permit us to place this sculpture in the line from Tháp Mãm: the necklace, for example, derives from diverse earlier images. Its central section, however, is enlarged like a lozenge jewel leading to the Yang Mum style. The same applies to the diadem, placed low on the brow, and to the facial features: horizontal lower eyelid, carved iris, eyebrows well marked

and braced, wide mouth. Certain parts of the jewelry -- the higher register of the diadem, earrings and armbands -- are made of leaves or flowers in an original evolution that slightly later works will confirm. Jean Boisselier pointed to certain Khmer influences in this sculpture that help to date it. The forward fold, in three pieces, of the costume notably relates to the little known period called 'post-Bayon', from the middle of the 13th century to the middle of the 15th century.

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- 1 Parmentier 1918 (2), p.758-9.
- 2 Parmentier 1919 (1), p.19.
- 3 Boisselier 1963 (1), p. 364.
- 4 Ducrest et Vandermeersch 1997, nos 177,178, pp. 168-9.