Dance Images in Temples of Mainland Southeast Asia

Jukka O. Miettinen

ACTA SCENICA 20

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To Raimo

Acknowledgements

The research taking shape in this thesis stretches back three decades. Even on my first visits to South and Southeast Asia in the late 1970s I was struck by the obvious interrelatedness of traditional dance and visual arts of the region. In the early 1980s I worked as a junior expert on Asian culture at UNESCO in Bangkok. During that time I participated in a SPAFA (Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization's Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts) project on documenting dance and dance theatre. In this connection I published a series of articles on the close contacts between dance and the visual arts in the SPAFA Journal.

Later my continuous festival work in Finland and research abroad has enabled me to study living Asian dance traditions further. I have touched upon the subject of the interrelation of dance and visual arts in my books on Asian theatre, such as "Classical Dance and Theatre in South-East Asia" (Oxford University Press, 1992). At the end of the 1990s I was invited to give a series of lectures on Southeast Asian art and theatre history at Mahidol University in Bangkok. The process of simultaneously teaching both dance and art history again evoked the deep interrelatedness of these art forms, which led to the idea of a doctoral dissertation on this subject.

Further research and the actual writing period were made possible by grants from the Finnish Cultural Fund and the Finnish Theatre Academy, for which I am very grateful. The process proved to be a long journey that took me back to many sites and museums I was already familiar with from the 1970s and the 1980s as well as to places I had never explored before.

I visited Angkor in Cambodia and the temples of Pagan in Myanmar as well the historic city of Ayutthaya in Thailand in 2003, the Khmer ruins of Northeast Thailand in 2004, South India and Sri Lanka in 2005, Central Javanese temples in 2006, Sukhothai and the surrounding ruined cities and temples and the National Museum of Songkhla in Thailand as well as the Danang Museum of Champa sculpture in Vietnam in 2007 when the final steps of this project took me again to Angkor.

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JM

Tiivistelmä

Väitöskirja analysoi Kaakkois-Aasian mannerosien tanssikuvia siinä kontekstissa, johon useimmat niistä alun perin tehtiin, eli orgaanisena osana temppeleitä ja niiden ikonografisia ohjelmia. Väitöskirja selvittää tanssikuvausten muodonmuutoksia ja niiden symbolisia merkityksiä temppeliarkkitehtuurin osana. Samalla se analysoi mitä informaatiota ne näin antavat tanssista, sen historiasta, muodoista ja roolista Kaakkois-Aasian mannerosien kulttuureissa.

Tutkielma esittelee aluksi lyhyesti Kaakkois-Aasian tanssikuvaston muodonmuutoksia. Sen jälkeen se keskittyy Kambodzhassa sijaitsevan 1100-luvun Angkor Watin, nykyisessä Myanmarissa (Burma) sijaitsevan Paganin 900–1200-lukujen rauniokaupungin temppeleiden sekä Bangkokissa sijaitsevan 1700-luvulla perustetun kuninkaallisen temppelin, Wat Pra Keon tanssikuvastoihin.

Johdantoluku esittelee kaakkoisaasialaiseen temppelikontekstiin soveltuvan tanssi-ikonografisen metodin sovellutuksen. Samalla käsite ”tanssi” määritellään tämän tutkielman tarpeisiin laajasti, siten että käsiteltävät tanssikuvaukset kattavat paitsi varsinaiset ”tanssikuvat” (tanssia kuvaavat veistokset, reliefit, maalaukset jne.) myös ”tanssia sivuavat kuvat”, jotka kuvaavat tanssiin vaikuttaneita kamppailulajeja, rituaaleja, hoviseremonioita jne.

Tutkielma väittää, että kun perinteistä tanssi-ikonografian ns. ”kolmivaiheista” metodia sovelletaan Kaakkois-Aasian temppeleiden tanssikuvastoon, on väistämätöntä että analyysiprosessi muuttuu mutkikkaammaksi kuin sovellettaessa sitä länsimaisen kulttuuripiirin kuvastoon. Siksi tutkielma pyrkii kattamaan useampia konteksteja, joiden puitteissa tutkimuksen kohteena olevat tanssikuvaukset tulkitaan. Ne ovat tanssihistoria, taidehistoria, ja erittäin keskeisenä myös temppeliarkkitehtuurin historia ja symbolismi. Siksi tanssi-ikonografian perinteinen kolmivaiheinen metodi muuttuu ja laajennetaan tässä tutkielmassa ”nelivaiheiseksi”.

Nämä neljä analyysiprosessin vaihetta ovat (1) tanssikuvauksen tunnistaminen muun kuvaston joukosta, (2) tanssikuvan sisällön analysointi, (3) vastauksen löytäminen kysymykseen ”miksi hahmo tai hahmot kuvassa tanssivat” ja (4) kuvan tarkastelu nimenomaisesti temppelikontekstissa. Tutkielma väittää että näin tarkasteltuina tanssikuvaukset paljastavat monia asioita, kuten niiden mahdolliset intialaiset esikuvat ja missä suhteessa nämä esikuvat ovat paikallistuneet, kuvien mahdolliset kirjalliset lähteet sekä viimein, kun kuvia tarkastellaan temppelikontekstissa, yleisen asenteen tanssiin niissä uskoinnossa ja kulttuureissa, joihin kuvat liittyvät.

AVAINSANAT: TANSSI-IKONOGRAFIA, TANSSIN TUTKIMUS, KAAKKOIS-AASIAN TUTKIMUS, KAAKKOIS-AASIAN TANSSIHISTORIA, KAAKKOIS-AASIAN TAIDE JA ARKKITEHTUURI

Abstract

This dissertation analyses dance images in the region of mainland Southeast Asia in the context in which most of them have originally been created, i.e. as an integral part of temples and their iconographical programmes. It investigates the transformation of the dance images, their symbolic meaning as a part of temple architecture, and further analyses what kind of information they thus convey about dance, its history, forms and its role in the cultures of mainland Southeast Asia. After an overview of the formulation of dance images in India and in early Southeast Asia the focus is on the temple imagery of 12TH Angkor Wat in present-day Cambodia, of the ruined 10TH–13TH century city of Pagan in the Myanmar of today, and finally of Wat Phra Keo, the royal temple annexed to the Grand Palace in Bangkok, founded at the very end of the 18TH century.

The introductory chapter presents an adaptation of the dance iconographical method appropriate to the Southeast Asian temple context. A wide definition of the term "dance" is also provided.

Two different terms for art works portraying dance are defined: a "dance image" refers to sculptures, reliefs, paintings or graphic works which could be interpreted as depicting the act of dancing, while a "dance-related image" refers to those showing, for example, poses connected to the martial arts, rituals and ceremonies etc.

This author argues that when one applies the traditional "three step" technique of dance iconography to the temple-related Southeast Asian dance images, it is inevitable that the process of analysis becomes more complex than if it is applied to separate images belonging to the western culture. Thus this study covers several contexts within which the images are interpreted. They include history, dance history, art history, and of crucial importance, the history and symbolism of temple architecture and so the "three-step" analysis technique of dance iconography is expanded to a "four-step" method.

The four successive steps of this analysis technique include (1) recognising a dance image among other kinds of imagery, (2) analysing the subject matter of the image, (3) considering why the figure or figures in the image in question are dancing, and, finally, (4) observing the dance images specifically in the temple context. This dissertation argues that if one applies this method the dance images reveal several things: their possible Indian prototypes, the extent to which the Indian-influenced dance images are localised, their relationship with the textual sources and, finally, when observed within their architectural context, the general attitudes toward dance in their respective religions and cultures.

KEY WORDS: DANCE ICONOGRAPHY, DANCE RESEARCH, SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, DANCE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

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1

Introduction

This study seeks to analyse dance images[1] in the region of mainland Southeast Asia[2] in the context in which most of them have originally been created, i.e. as an integral part of temples and their iconographical programmes. It investigates the transformation of the dance images, their symbolic meaning as a part of temple architecture, and further analyses what kind of information they thus convey about dance, its history, its forms and its role in the cultures of mainland Southeast Asia.

In the context of the present study, mainland Southeast Asia covers the regions of present-day Myanmar (formerly Burma), Thailand (formerly Siam), Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In these regions there flourished several early kingdoms which had close contacts with the Indian civilization. Their spheres rarely corresponded to the borders of the above-listed present-day countries and nations [3/1]. The early kingdoms and/or periods discussed in this study include

Champa, c. 7th–15th centuries AD, with centres in the coastal region of present-day Vietnam

Pyu, c. 7th–9th centuries, in present-day Myanmar

Srivijaya, c. 8th–13th centuries the centre of this vast maritime empire was in Sumatra

Mon, c. 6th–11th centuries, covering regions from North to South Thailand and southern Myanmar

Khmer, c. 8th–15th centuries, centred near Thonle Sap Lake in present-day Cambodia

Sukhothai, c. 13th–15th centuries, centre in the central plain of present-day Thailand

Ayutthaya, c. 1350–1767, capital in the lower central parts of present-day Thailand

The tradition of Ayutthaya has been carried on in Thonburi in 1767–1782 and in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, from 1782 to the present. The Bangkok period is referred to as the Rattanakosin period.

After a survey in broad outline of the transformation of Southeast Asian dance images in general, the main focus will be on mainland Southeast Asia and especially on two large temple complexes and one ruined city, each of them belonging art-historically to the most important religious structures of the region. As will be seen, they all also reflect, in a unique way, the syncretistic belief systems which grew from the long process of the amalgamation of early indigenous traditions with Indian culture, a process which started at the very beginning of the first millennium AD at the latest.

This amalgamation is presented first by Angkor Wat, in present-day Cambodia. It was built during the 12TH century heyday of Khmer civilization with its syncretistic belief system combining earlier indigenous traditions with Hinduism. The temple complex is famous, among other things, for its vast amount of bas-reliefs which include thousands of dance images.

The ruined city of Pagan in today's Myanmar, with its over 2000 temples existing even now in different states of preservation, was a powerful metropolis from the 10TH to the 13TH centuries. Its temples can be seen as testimonies to the intermingling of Hindu-Brahmanic as well as various Buddhist ideologies. Their iconographical programmes include hundreds of dance images executed in different media, such as murals, stucco reliefs and ceramic tiles.

The visual programmes of the Angkor Wat complex and the temples of Pagan are significant not only because of their art-historical value, but also as general source material for many fields of the history of the region. Due to the tropical climate and frequent wars textual evidence prior to the 14TH century is rare in mainland Southeast Asia and thus the existing reliefs and paintings provide an incomparable store of information about different aspects of the culture of the period when the buildings were created.

The third example of the amalgamation of religions and ideologies discussed in this study, Wat Phra Keo, the royal temple annexed to the Grand Palace in Bangkok, was founded at the very end of the 18TH century. While Angkor Wat and the temples of Pagan are now more or less museum-like, preserved monuments, Wat Phra Keo is still a thriving ritual centre. Thus it is understandable that much textual information is available concerning its history and the myths depicted in its iconographical programme. The complex as a whole is an embodiment of the intricate dynastic cult, which was the result of the emerging of the conception of the god-king with Brahmanic elements and Theravada Buddhism. It houses probably the largest mural in the world with hundreds of dance images.

Dance images distributed in these temples and temple complexes are the object of this study. Dance is a temporal and corporeal form of art and prior to the era of film and video it, in fact, existed only at the moment it was performed. Material artefacts and art works, however, continue their existence far beyond the moment of their creation. Therefore it is logical that dance images have been used as source material for dance research. This is especially true in the case of Southeast Asia and India, where dance images are found in considerable abundance. This is explained by the above-mentioned belief systems, since in all of them, both in their mythology and their rituals, dance has a much more prominent role compared, for example, with the tradition of predominantly Christian Europe.

Dance images have been discussed, as will be seen, in many art-historical studies in which their subject matter, dance, has been often overlooked and no deeper analysis about it has been provided. On the other hand, in most of the dance historical studies, referred to in the next chapter, dance images have been analysed in various ways, but rather seldom has any attention been paid to their original architectural context.

This study argues that the dance images in the temples of mainland Southeast Asia reveal more information about dance, its history, its forms, and its role in culture, if they are examined as an integral part of the iconographical programmes of sacred buildings than they would do if observed only as separate images isolated from the architectural and consequently ideological context in which they were originally created. A crucial reason for this is the fact that Hindu Buddhist temples and other sacred structures were built to reflect the structure of Indian-originating cosmology discussed in detail below. Thus the building became an image of the cosmos with its inhabitants and with even ethical connotations.

1.1 Dance Iconography: Systematic Study of Dance Images

The approach applied by the present study is *dance iconography*, which indicates "systematic study of one or more visual sources associated with dance" (Smith 1999, 113). It was formulated in the 1990s. One of its pioneers is the ethnomusicologist Tilman Seebass, who was already familiar with the use of music-related visual art works as source material for musicological research. In his article "Iconography and Dance Research" (1991) he expressed his surprise when he realised that he could not find much, if any, research that reflected a serious and systematic approach to the visual resources of dance.

In his article "Dance Iconography: Traditions, Techniques, and Trends", however, A. William Smith gives an interesting account of earlier western, image-based dance compilations and studies (1999, 113–117). It includes a vast amount of material starting from a 16TH century dance manual to a later archaeological publication on Greek vases with dance themes. By the turn of the 19TH and the 20TH centuries, when the printing of photographs was already possible, dance-related catalogues, such as collections of female dancers and various versions of Salome's dance were also published. Round about from the 1970s onward several dance studies were aiming to analyse visual sources in various ways, some by then indicating the dance iconographical approach, although it was only in the early 1990s that the very term and method of dance iconography were established.

"Iconography"[3] as an analysis method of visual sources was first formulated by the art historian Erwin Panofsky in his essay "Iconography and Iconology: an Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art" (1939). According to him the iconographical approach involves three successive steps of research. The first one (i) describes the main elements and subject matter of a picture. By the second step (ii) the focus is on the narrative story that is depicted and on its meaning. By the third step, called by Panofsky "iconology", (iii) the picture is interpreted as symptomatic of a given culture through the knowledge of comparative material and art-historical analyses. That is why sometimes the term "dance iconology" has also been used for the systematic study of dance images. It has been, however, established (Seebass 1991; Heck 1999) that a suitable term for it is "dance iconography", since the terms "iconography" and "iconology" are practically interchangeable.

A dance image is a pictorial or sculptural representation of a dancer, dancers or, simply, an act of dancing. It is a combination of two, by their very nature, completely different kinds of art forms[4]. Dance is a corporal, temporal and kinetic form of art, whereas traditional craftsmen or artists, such as sculptors, carvers and painters, however vivid and dynamic their creations may be, have traditionally produced static images. In spite of this crucial difference, even a static image can convey various kinds of information about dance. According to Seebass (1991, 34) this information can be classified as follows:

- it represents a dance position;
- it represents a synchronic summary of a succession of movements;
- it represents physical expressions of emotion;
- it concretely represents a concept of dance, such as the Dance of Death;
- it represents, symbolically or abstractly, the idea of dance;
- it portrays a dancer, in action or as a sitter;
- it includes elements related to dance, such as the costume, headdress, or objects held:
- it depicts the physical location (dance floor, stage, ball house etc.), where dance takes place.

As already mentioned above, dance and image-making are very different art forms in character. Dance is kinetic and temporal, whereas visual images are static and this very difference is frequently the topic of the theoretical discourse of dance iconography. This paradox is defined by Seebass as follows:

> Containing a visual component, dance shares a representative quality with the visual arts; but there are elements in dance which *a priori* elude depiction. Dance as form-in-the-making, is realized in space – as are the visual arts – and in time – as are music, oral literature and drama.The form and corporality of dance is visual and depictable, while its temporality (including its rhythm) is – at least in principle not. (Ibid., 35)

However, the relationship between these two elements, the temporal and the static, is not the same in all dance traditions. Seebass further points out that, for example, in European court dance and ballet "a large repertoire of positions and frozen moments is frequent, and dance teaching often consists in having the student master a sequence of such positions". The analysis of these kinds of fixed positions by "naming" them according to the existing dance manuals or oral tradition is a rather natural and simple method of analysing images related to these kinds of "position-oriented" dance traditions. As will be seen later, it has also regularly been done in connection with Asian traditions.

It is more difficult to analyse images depicting dance traditions in which the emphasis is not so much on dance sequences, culminating in clear positions, but rather on the kinetic aspect, for example, in the more or less flowing movement without clear, position-like accentuations. In some artistic traditions, such as "primitive" art and modern western art, these kinds of pictures or plastic figures have been created, but their value for dance-iconographical study can be rather problematic. This is because they frequently seek to capture the *impression* created by dance rather than to accurately portray, for example, its positions and gestures.

Smith has pointed out (1999, 119–126) that there are in principle three different approaches when one considers the nature of a dance image. He calls the first one (A) "the slice", the second (B) "the composite", and the third (C) "the fantasy".

(A) "The slice" approach assumes, according to Smith, that a dance image is a kind of a slice of reality that is an actual portrayal of a particular dance, just like a snapshot photograph at least in principle could be. This approach is actually possible only when dealing with rather recent photographic material from the periods of flashlights and high-speed films or digital technology.

(B) "The composite" approach, on the other hand, understands that a dance image is a kind of synthesis of the moments and various elements from which the artist first selects and then constructs his or her vision of dance. The elements of this kind of dance image may thus have been collected from several sources and rearranged to create an impression of dance or a particular performance. This approach is inevitable, for example, when the artist or craftsman is working with time-consuming media such as stone, murals etc. and the creator is not able, for example, to make quick sketches (or, in our times, to take a snapshot) of a live performance.

(C) "The fantasy" approach finally admits that a certain dance image is not based on observation of a particular dance performance and is thus more or less completely a result of its creator's imagination. It may, however, include elements of dance or dances with which the artist is, in one way or another, already familiar.

Once one has decided which one of these approaches is appropriate in connection with a certain dance image, further questions arise, according to Smith. If the image belongs to the (A) "slice" type, these questions may be for example, "Why has the artist a particular scene to render at a certain time from a certain point-of-view?" In the case of the (B) "composite" type the questions could be "Why has the artist chosen particular elements from various locations, moments, or points-of-views, and is there any ways to discern what those locations, moments, or points-of-views were or are?" Whereas the questions in connection with a dance image belonging to the (C) "fantasy" type may be thus: "Why has the artist chosen to put together pictorial elements in such a fashion, and are they based in any way on actual observation?"

Finally, in the above-mentioned study Smith formulates an adaptation of Panofsky's iconographical interpretation technique suitable for the use of dance research. According to him, Panofsky's three successive steps of the analysis could, in the context of dance images, be formulated as follows:

1. To become familiar with all the images of dance from the period in question.
2. To discover all the sources of information related to dance of the period.
3. To be aware of representative pictures of the artist, school, or genre to which the example being studied belongs.

Although one of the early formulators of the above technique of dance iconography, Tilman Seebass, is an ethnomusicologist and has drawn examples from non-European cultures, the majority of its exponents are working in the field of western arts. How is this method, which has its roots in Panofsky's studies of European Renaissance art, applicable to a very different cultural context and what extra considerations are required while adapting it into the research of temple-related dance images of Southeast Asia? These particular questions will be examined in the next sub-chapter.

1.2 Dance Iconography Adapted to the Southeast Asian Temple Context

The first question, when one is dealing with the dance iconographical method in a culture different from the western one, in which this method was originally formulated, and from where the present author originates, is what is actually meant by "dance". As this rather general term stems from the western tradition it is important to consider what is meant by it in this study, especially since in many of the Southeast Asian cultures such a generalising term does not exist. Instead, they often use different terms for different types of dances and other physical performances[5]. Thus "dance" is a very vague term and its interpretations vary greatly in different cultures and periods.

For the purposes of this study probably the most useful definition of dance is by Judith Lynne Hanna. As she is a dance anthropologist, her definition is not as culture-bound as many other definitions tend to be. According to her (1979, 19) "dance can be most usefully defined as human behaviour composed, from dancers' perspective, of (1) purposeful, (2) intentionally rhythmical, and (3) culturally patterned sequences of (4 a) nonverbal body movements, (4 b) other than ordinary motor activities, (4 c) the motion having inherent and aesthetic value."

Although Hanna's definition allows various interpretations it still does not seem to cover all the different movement types and techniques which form the major dance traditions in Southeast Asia. For example, she defines dance as employing "nonverbal body movements". In Asia, however, there are numerous dance traditions in which the dancer either recites, sings or moves according to a text sung by nearby musicians. Therefore in the Asian context the definition should naturally be expanded to also include dances connected with verbal expression.

In Asia it is simply not possible to classify the stage arts as either nonverbal "dance" or spoken "theatre", since most of the traditional theatre forms employ either dance or dance-like, stylised movements, while dance is frequently interwoven with text. Naturally, once drama and dance are connected "drama becomes more pantomimic in character, dance becomes more literary" (Vatsyayan 1977a, 147). All these movement systems will, however, be included in this study. To simplify the terminology, their physical language, such as symbolic gestures, fixed sculpture-like poses, "pantomime" accompanied by recitation etc. will all be basically referred to as "dance".

The same also applies to portrayals of martial arts techniques. Most of the Southeast Asian martial arts techniques such as Thai boxing and *silat* of the Malay world have clear ritualistic features and they share movements and poses, such as the open-leg position, with the dance traditions of respective regions. It is, indeed, a well-known fact how deeply martial arts techniques have influenced Asian dance and theatre traditions[6]. In fact, when martial arts are isolated from their original function, fighting and/or self defence, and are shown either as a part of theatre or dance performance or as independent martial arts demonstrations or performances, they fit well in with Hanna's definition of dance, although martial arts as such are rarely regarded in Asia as form of art[7].

The question concerning the gestures and movements connected with religious rituals, court ceremonies and the stylised behaviour dictated by strict etiquette is also complex. One example is the *mudras* or symbolic hand gestures, so crucial in Indian dance and theatre traditions, developed from the age-old sacred gestures of the Brahman priests used in religious rituals (Vatsyayan 1977a, 153). An abundance of ceremonial elements can still be found in South and Southeast Asian dance traditions simply because many of them stem originally from earlier rituals and actually a dance performance itself can in many cases still be regarded as a ritual. This deep intermingling of dance and religion makes it difficult to draw a sharp borderline between dance, ceremonies and rituals, as will be apparent in the following pages.

One important feature of mainland Southeast Asian culture has been the conception of the god-king. In many of the cultures and periods covered by this study it was taught that the inner nature of the king was related to that of a god. This led to the building of huge temples and temple complexes, some of them being the focus of this study. The god-king cult created an extremely intricate court etiquette, which was also reflected in dance and dance theatre. As the performances often featured the gods to which the living king was related, it was natural that the physical surroundings and the modes of behaviour of the artistic presentations followed the models set by the king's actual court. Thus many court dance theatre forms, especially those on a grand scale, in mainland Southeast Asia still today reflect the behavioural practices and etiquette of courts from centuries ago.

A dance image can thus, in the context of this study, depict various kinds of things. It can simply portray a dancer in an easily recognisable dance pose. It can be a dancing deity, or it can depict a court scene with its strictly hierarchical composition, clarifying the social status of each of its participants. It can also be a portrayal of an actual performance or, for example, of a military procession with soldiers marching in a stylised manner derived from martial arts.

However, two different words will be used on the following pages for art works depicting "dance" as defined above. A "dance image" refers to sculptures, reliefs, paintings or graphic works which could be interpreted as depicting the act of dancing. Whereas a "dance-related image" will refer to art works showing, for example, poses connected with martial arts, rituals and ceremonies that are not generally regarded as an act of dancing but that are in the Southeast Asian context, as stated above, closely related to it.

Once the wide use of the term "dance" as well as the two different categories of images associated with dance, i.e. "dance images" and "dance-related images" are established, it is time to turn to the main subject of this sub-chapter, which is the adaptation of the method of dance iconography to the context of this particular study.

In the previous sub-chapter the two basic dance types were discussed, the one with a tendency toward movement sequences with frozen, position-like culminations, such as western ballet for example, and the second in which the emphasis is, for instance, on the flow of movement without clear, position-like accentuations. As is mentioned, Seebas has noted that the former type is generally easier to analyse with dance iconographical technique than the latter one.

In Southeast Asia most of the existing dance images belong to the former type. For example, the present classical[8] dance traditions of Southeast Asia all have their own terminology for technical details and most of them are constructed from dance sequences, culminating in clear positions. Furthermore, they are all to some extent related to the Indian, predominantly position-oriented, classical dance tradition, which was gradually transmitted to the region together with other elements of Indian civilisation, a phenomenon which will be discussed in detail on the following pages. Most of the existing Southeast Asian dance manuals, recording the terms and details of dance techniques, seem not to predate the early 19th century, whereas in India such manuals exist, starting as early as from the second or third centuries AD onwards. Therefore the established tradition has understandably been trying to analyse and "name" the positions and gestures of Southeast Asian dance images according to the codified categories and terms of the Indian manuals. To a certain extent this has, as will be seen, proved to be a fruitful method and the results gained by it are employed in the present study, too.

The term *Indianisation* has been applied by earlier historians, especially those of the French school, to this undeniable impact of Indian culture upon Southeast Asia. These early studies by western scholars emphasised heavily the importance of Indian prototypes. Presently, however, the process has been interpreted more as a kind of "long and subtle interplay in which the flow was not entirely in one direction" (Kerlogue 2004, 12–13). Southeast Asia is no longer seen only as a passive recipient of foreign influences but rather as a region which actively selected and cultivated foreign elements for its own needs and purposes. Consequently, historians no longer talk so much of Indianisation but of the *localisation* of Indian influence.

The *Ramakien*, the Thai version of the originally Indian epic *Ramayana*, is a good example of the localisation process. The Ramayana was known in the regions of mainland Southeast Asia at the latest from the 8th century AD onward. It crisscrossed the region in several versions and it was reinterpretated in several ways. In the final fall of Ayutthaya, Thailand's former capital, the written version of the Ayutthaya period Ramayana was lost or destroyed. When the new capital of Bangkok was built at the end of the 18th century, one of the first projects launched by the king was the rewriting of the Ramayana.

Thus, by royal order, the epic, now called the Ramakien, was reshaped. It became the allegorical history of the ruling dynasty and the national epic of present-day Thailand. Most agree that the Ramakien has its roots in India, but the story, its characters and athmosphere are completely "Thai" in character. Similarly, many other cultural features, such as religions or prototypes for temples, sculptures or even dance techniques, which had their origins in India long time ago, went through a long and extensive localisation process. Through this process they became essentially Southeast Asian in character.

The whole question of "cultural influence" is a complex one and it has been analysed by Göran Hermerén in his study "Influence in Art and Literature". In his detailed work he points out a simple, yet very useful, approach to this complicated question (1975, 6). He suggests that while analysing in what respect a particular artist, or in this case a tradition, was influenced by another, one should concentrate not only on the similarities but rather on the dissimilarities of the artistic traditions in question. While applying this method, this dance iconographical study aims to concentrate specifically on the localisation process of Indian-influenced dance and its depictions in the temple imagery of mainland Southeast Asia.

When considering the three different basic types of dance images, i e. (A) "the slice" type, (B) "the composite" type, and (C) "the fantasy" type, proposed by Smith and discussed in the previous sub-chapter, it is obvious that the vast majority of dance images examined in this study belong to the (B) composite type. While iconography as a technique of analysis was originally formulated for the study of European Renaissance art and has been applied since then mainly in the western context[9], this study deals with South and Southeast Asian traditional cultures in periods when concepts such as "art" and "artist" were actually not known and consequently these dance images in question were not "created by artists".

In general terms, one could say that the dance images as well as the whole religious imagery in Southeast Asia have been executed by craftsmen or groups of craftmen directed by one or several "masters". The iconography, iconometry and style of the imagery have been mostly dictated by strict rules, sometimes recorded in model drawings or even manuals. The problem, however, is that no such manuals prior to the early 19TH century have survived because of the tropical climate and disastrous wars in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, in India, from where most of the prototypes were received, such manuals exist.

In "traditional" cultures such as those discussed here religious art[10] was not a field for self-expression in the sense it tends to be now in the West and westernised cultures around the world[11]. On the contrary, the main purpose of religious images was to serve the demands set by religious rituals and practices. Thus the craftsmen were bound to follow strict rules which, however, could vary according to place and period. The iconography and style were deeply linked to the doctrine of the prevailing religion or its particular sect. Moreover, when the craftsmen executed images for the temples, it was the overall symbolism of the building which dictated their subject matter, their iconographical details and their distribution in the sacred building.

When applying dance iconographical analysis to these kinds of Southeast Asian dance images, it is inevitable that the analysis process becomes more complicated than when one is dealing with images belonging to western culture. Thus this study aims to cover several contexts within which the images should be interpreted. They include history, dance history, art history, and what is very crucial, the history and symbolism of temple architecture.

So it is necessary that the already described "three-step" analysis technique of dance iconography becomes more complex when it is applied to the Southeast Asian dance images created for temples. In this study a "four-step" technique is therefore applied. This is dictated by the fact that their temple and consequently the belief system contexts must be observed, too. The outlines of this method and the major questions to be asked are as follows:

1. Recognising a dance image among other kinds of temple imagery

When studying Southeast Asian cultures and their bygone periods it is not always simple to recognise which images are actually dance images. There are three major ways to do so:

- To use information gained by previous research
- To compare the poses, gestures etc. with present-day traditions of respective cultures and regions
- To compare the image with the Indian prototypes which are already relatively well studied

2. Analysis of the subject matter of the image

It is important to recognise what the dance image is exactly portraying: for example an isolated dancer, a scene from a dance performance, a scene from a larger narrative applying a dance pose or gestures etc. This specific question will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3.

3. The crucial question: why is the figure (or figures) in the image dancing?

Once an image is recognised as a dance image and its superficial subject matter is analysed, there opens up a major question: Why is the depicted figure dancing? The answer is most often related to the knowledge of iconographical conventions which are frequently related to various kinds of textual sources. Consequently one should get familiar, for example, with the following:

- textual sources revealing which religion and sect the image is serving, and to consequently interpret the image in its basic doctrinal context. If the image belongs to a larger narrative, for example, to a series of reliefs or murals depicting an epic text, it is important to get familiar with the text in order to understand why the characters belonging to it are depicted dancing.
- other textual sources, which could reveal something about the role of dance, its forms and practices during the period when the image was created.

4. To observe the dance images specifically in the temple context

When studying dance images in the temple context one should acquire a basic knowledge of the temple architecture and its symbolism during the period when the image was created. The following special aspects are to be considered:

- what exactly was the belief system which is reflected by the sacred building
- the overall cosmological symbolism of the building
- the distribution of the dance image in this symbolic whole

In order to comprehend the symbolism of a religious structure and the distribution of the dance images within it, it is recommendable that the researcher visits the building or the complex in question. However useful the good-quality photographic reproductions in many books today may be, the final understanding of the building as a three-dimensional whole is of utmost importance for this kind of study. It is only then that the overall symbolism of the building and the distribution of the iconographical programme in this whole actually reveal themselves.

The basic symbolism of Hindu and Buddhist temples and other sacred structures in Southeast Asia is, as stated above, closely related to the Indian-derived cosmology. The cosmologies of both of these religions share, albeit their many variations, the concept of Mount Meru with its central peak as the central axis of the universe. It is surrounded by chains of mountains and oceans and it inhabited by several kinds of gods, semigods, humans and supernatural beings. They are located in different spheres of this complex whole according to their moral qualities. This dictates the distribution of their portrayals in the temple complex, which in its whole is a material metaphor for the cosmic Meru concept.

The present author has been able to visit most of the temples discussed in this study, both in India and in Southeast Asia. This enabled him not only to get acquainted with the intricate interrelationship of architecture and its iconographic schema, but also to make photographic documentation, which now constitues the majority of the illustrations of this study. Reproductions, however, are used in the case of the Sumatran ruins and the interiors of the temples of Pagan. This is because of the difficult access to the ruins, or in the case of Pagan's temples, because the Government of Myanmar did not grant this author permission to document them.

The "four-step" method described above will be applied in this study, but not always rigidly, since the questions to be asked vary to a certain extent in each case that is discussed. In some cases, for example, the prototypes of dance images as well as temple architecture are known, in some cases not. Similarly, the existence or absence of textual sources affects the analysis case by case and sometimes the steps of the analysis process may even overlap. However, what is inevitable in a multidisciplinary study like this is that several contexts must be provided for the images analysed. Thus, for each group of dance images discussed in this study a short description of the history of the respective period will be made available. Similarly, a description of the period's belief system, architectural tradition, art history and, whenever possible, dance history will be provided.

1.3 Structure of the Study

Chapter 2 will first give a survey of previous research on Indian and Southeast Asian dance images, after which the early dance images of Southeast Asia, not yet influenced by Indian prototypes, will be examined. Sub-chapter 2.3 focuses on the Indian prototypes which were received in Southeast Asia. Further it discusses their development process and establishes their basic typology. Sub-chapter 2.4 discusses the sea and land routes of the transmission of the Indian influence to Southeast Asia while the next sub-chapter investigates what is presently known about the mechanism of this transmission process. Finally, in Sub-chapter 2.6 the temple-related dance images of Java will be examined in order to provide an example of the localisation process of the Indian-derived dance images in insular Southeast Asia.

In Chapter 3 the focus will turn to the regions of mainland Southeast Asia. First, recent approaches in the region's art history will be discussed. Then, in Chapters 3.2 and 3.3 the basic types of temple architecture and their cosmological symbolism in Southeast Asia will be examined briefly. The rest of the sub-chapters are dedicated to the dance images of the early kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia starting from Champa, which flourished in the coastal areas of present-day Vietnam. Then the focus will be on Khmer dance imagery of the regions of present-day Cambodia and Thailand, after which the dance images of the early Pyu culture in the regions of present-day Myanmar will be analysed. Finally, the two last sub-chapters will discuss the Mon, Srivijaya and Sukhothai dance images found in present Thailand.

The main chapters 4, 5 and 6 are respectively dedicated to the Angkor Wat complex in present-day Cambodia, to the temples of Pagan in Myanmar and to the Wat Phra Keo complex annexed to the Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand. First, the general outlines of the history and the belief system of the culture to which the temples belong are provided, after which textual sources, when available, are examined. Then attention will turn to the iconographical programmes of these temples, after which their dance images are examined. Finally, the dance images are analysed as a part of the iconographical programmes and, consequently, as a part of the overall symbolism of these sacred structures. The conclusions of each of these three main chapters will first focus on the general information the dance images give about dance, its forms, practices etc. and secondly what specific information the images convey when observed in their architectural context.

Chapter 7 will outline the relationship of dance and visual arts in present-day Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia during the late 19TH and the 20TH centuries, when the old belief systems gave way to new ideologies, such as the empirical world-view and nationalism. The concluding chapter will summarise one of the basic problems of dance iconography, already discussed above, i.e. the question of what kind of information a static image can convey about the temporal and corporal art of dance. Consequently the two prevalent ways of looking at dance images, that of art historians and that of dance researchers, will also be discussed. Finally, the conclusion chapter will summarise the main findings of this study and propose in which ways the study of Southeast Asian dance images could be carried out in the future.

2

Transformation of Dance Images in Early Southeast Asia

The geographical focus of this study will be on the western and central parts of mainland Southeast Asia, i.e. the regions of present-day Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia. However, since the cultural contacts between different parts of Southeast Asia have been vital to the development of the arts, references will also be made to the dance images in the regions of present-day Vietnam as well as in peninsular and insular Southeast Asia.

This vast area had its own well-developed prehistoric cultures and even today the arts and crafts of some of the remote peoples and regions carry on their traditions. The early, indigenous dance images created within these archaic traditions will be referred to in the first sub-chapter below. Then the focus will turn to India, from where the prototypes of dance images were received in Southeast Asia over a span of more than thousand years starting from the early centuries AD. Finally, the last sub-chapter will discuss the transformations of dance images in the island of Java.

As a natural junction of overland and sea routes between southern and eastern Asia, Southeast Asia naturally had contacts with many parts of Asia already in prehistoric times. Archaeological evidence suggests contacts between India and Southeast Asia already in the 4TH century BC. (Gosling 2004, 34–35; Kerlogue 2004, 40). Clear Indian influence on sculpture and its iconography is evident from circa 200 AD onward. Over the following centuries a number of kingdoms flourished and incorporated the Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, into earlier, indigenous belief systems.

As ties with India became established, the local ruling classes became familiar with Indian civilization. Over the centuries, various cultural traits were adopted including the Sanskrit and Pali languages, literature, and the new, glorified conception of royalty. The Indian conceptions of cosmology affected the way of comprehending space and the cosmos and had a great influence on the development of Southeast Asian architecture.

As mentioned already in the Introductory Chapter, the term *Indianisation* has been applied by earlier historians to the impact of Indian culture upon Southeast Asia. These early studies heavily emphasised the importance of Indian prototypes. Presently the process has been interpreted more as a kind of interplay of influences in which the flow was not only in one direction. Thus, Southeast Asia is no longer seen only as a passive recipient of foreign influences but rather as a region which actively selected and cultivated foreign elements for its own needs and purposes. Consequently historians do no longer talk so much of Indianisation but of the *localisation* of Indian influence. This will also be the case in the following pages. Any account of Southeast Asian dance images should, however, include a description of the development of dance imagery in India, since Indian influence on repertoire of the arts, iconography and dance has nevertheless been both extensive and long-lasting.

A decisive difference between India and Southeast Asia is that in Southeast Asia early literary and textual material, except inscriptions, is extinct, whereas in India a vast body of early written material is available. It includes, among other things, religious hymns and texts, the grand epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, cosmological and mythological accounts, dramas, poetry as well as various *shastras*, sacred treatises which provide guidelines relating to architecture, sculpture, literature, dance, theatre and music.

When one is studying the dance images in Southeast Asia and India it is useful to have a basic knowledge of these literary and textual sources. They do not only form often in localised variations in Southeast Asia the subject matter for both the traditional visual arts and dance genres of the region, but they also contain early references to dance. In the case of mainland Southeast Asia the most important of them are the Ramayana, the ancient mythological story collections called the *Puranas*, and the sacred bibliography of the Buddha and the Buddhist *Jataka* stories.

Since the prototypes of many of the early Southeast Asian dance images stem from Indian tradition, the shastra manuals are also of the utmost importance. For dance research the most significant of them is the *Natyashastra*, the earliest Indian treatise for theatre and dance[1]. It is a kind of a theatre director's or producer's manual, a work attributed to the legendary sage Bharata, and probably compiled in approximately AD 100–200. It gives information and advice on a variety of aspects of both theatre and dance.

In the Natyashastra the theory of *bhava* and *rasa*, so crucial to Indian arts, is established. The theory provides the underlying unity for the different art forms in India. It is a complicated system and has probably been developed during several hundred years. In this context it is not feasible to treat it more than superficially[2]. Bhava could be interpreted as a mental state or mood, and rasa could be translated as sentiment. The task of the artist, irrespective of the art form, is to present the bhava. Rasa is the sentiment created by the bhava as experienced by the spectator. Thus the bhavas produce corresponding rasas.

According to the well-established post-Natyashastra tradition there are nine rasas:

1. The Erotic (*srngara*), 2. The Comic (*hasya*), 3. The Pathetic (*karuna*), 4. The Furious (*raudra*), 5. The Heroic (*vira*), 6. The Terrible (*bhayanaka*), 7. The Odious (*bibhatsa*), 8. The Marvellous (*abhuta*), and 9. The Tranquil (*santa*).

For the purposes of this study the most interesting aspects of the Natyashastra, besides the bhava-rasa theory, are the instructions concerning the dance, its poses, movements and symbolic hand gestures. Basic body poses called *bhangas* are four in number[3]. A large number of movements are described and the movement sequences are classified into 108 categories, commonly called *karanas*[4]. Altogether 67 symbolic hand gestures, *mudras* are also described[5].

It is crucial to the development of Indian arts that this complicated vocabulary of poses, movements and gestures forms the basis not only for the classical Indian dance styles[6], but for the image-making as well. The Natyashastra's dance instructions are reflected in the manuals compiled for the use of sculptors when they portrayed a human body, its poses and gestures. These, together with iconographic and iconometric rules, were recorded in the fourth century AD in the instruction manual called the *Shilpashastra*.

Although the Natyashastra is primarily for the theatre, its strong influence on the visual arts explains the close interrelation of dance and visual arts in India. Whether the Indian shastra manuals were directly known in Southeast Asia is, according to present knowledge, uncertain (Kerlogue 2004, 72). Their influence, however, is easy to recognise in many of the dance images produced in those parts of Southeast Asia which had long-established ties with India.

2.1 Previous Research

This sub-chapter aims to give a general account of the previous research of Indian and Southeast Asian dance images. The exponents of this discipline in India will first be briefly discussed, after which the work of rather a few scholars working in this field in Southeast Asia will be reviewed.

Considering the plenitude of dance images and various textual sources related to them in India, it is no wonder that considerable academic research has been done there to analyse the dance images in the light of the textual sources. So the research of the dance images is already a well-established discipline in India. Starting from the art historians of the early 20TH century, such as Ananda C. Coomaraswamy, dance and the visual arts have been studied side by side. The analysis technique of dance images has been mainly based on the comparison of dance images with existing manuals, such as the famous 2ND or 3RD century guide book for dance and theatre, the Natyashastra, which will be discussed several times in the following pages.

Kapila Vatsyayan has studied the classical Indian textual sources and literary works, such as the great epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the Puranas, the Jatakas, and shastra manuals, in search for dance-historical evidence. She has analysed Indian and even some Southeast Asian sculptures, reliefs and paintings in the light of the evidence found in these textual sources. Her book "Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts" was first published in 1968 and the revised edition was published in 1977. In her works Vatsyayan never refers to dance iconography. However, her analysis technique actually follows the guidelines set by dance iconography and thus Vatsyayan, in fact, can be regarded as one of the pioneers of the dance iconographical approach. Although some details have been questioned by later research (Iyer 1988, 11), her book is a basic reference for every student of the interrelationship between dance and the visual arts in South and Southeast Asia.

Vatsyayan's legacy has been followed up by several scholars. Choodamani Nandagopal, for example, has studied the dance images in the temple architecture of the Karnataka region. Her book "Dance and Music in Temple Architecture" (1990) analyses the gestures and movements of over seventy sculptures according to the terminology of the Natyashastra. Sucharita Khanna's book "Dancing Divinities in Indian Art" (1999) is a systematic study of the development and the types of *nrttamurtis* or dancing divinities. An attempt to reconstruct the dance poses found in the temple reliefs of Java has been carried out by the scholar and dancer Padma Subrahmanyam in her two-volume work "Karanas: Common dance Codes of India and Indonesia" (2003).

An exhibition of music and dance in Indian art was organised at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Australia in 1979. In connection with it an extensive publication and catalogue, entitled "Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art" (1979) was published. Its essays by Kapila Vatsyayan, Pratapaditya Pal and John Guy summarise many of the crucial questions concerning the Indian dance images.

An interesting path has been opened up by Indian scholars Vidya Dehejia and Jyotindra Ray, who have studied the narrative techniques of the Indian visual arts and storytelling traditions. Dehejia has analysed the narrative reliefs of early Indian Buddhist stupas in Bharhut (1998) and other early Buddhist schools of art (1990), and Jain has edited a book "Picture Showmen" (1998), to which several authors have contributed articles on India's various storytelling traditions. These studies give an insight into the early developments of both visual and theatrical arts. They prove how close and complex the relationship between these art forms has been from early times. The same approach can be applied to the study of the Indian-influenced art of Southeast Asia as well.

A pioneer of the study of the dance images in Southeast Asian context is Claire Holt, who in a exceptional way combined in her work the skills of an art, dance and theatre historian. Her *opus magnum*, "Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change" which was published in 1967, certainly combines all these disciplines.

Her method is to resort to analogies between small ethnic performing traditions and those of the so-called "Hinduised" people (in this case the Balinese) as well as to analogies between these and dances practised in predominantly Islamic regions (in this case Java and Sumatra). Holt also stresses the importance of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the available historical documentation, by which she means both textual and visual sources (Holt 1967, 104). What is remarkable and very useful for further studies is that in her book Holt has collected translations of ancient stone and copper-plate inscriptions and other early Javanese texts with reference to ancient performing arts.

When observing the visual sources, mainly the reliefs of the Central Javanese Buddhist *stupa* Borobudur and the Hindu candi Loro Jonggaran, Holt shows that several kinds of information valid to dance historical studies can be obtained from them. Her main interest is in the dance-historical approach, i.e. what the pictorial sources tell us about the history and development of dances and their performance techniques.

She also pays attention to the complicated question of how Indian influence was transmitted to the Indonesian archipelago through literary and iconographical traditions. She also discusses the important role which the Indian Brahman priests probably had as dance teachers during the

Central Javanese period (Ibid., 114–115). Her observations also cover more specific fields of dance research, such as the role of the costume in the development of dance techniques (Ibid., 98), whereas some of her observations are more of a sociological or dance-anthropological nature.

In Indonesia, dance research based on visual and textual sources has been carried out by Edi Sedyawati. Her works include, among others, analyses of Indian influence on ancient Javanese dance and iconography, as well as on dance historical data available in Old Javanese art-poetry. She also discusses the different qualities of the portrayals of Indianised court dance scenes and the depictions of popular performances in the Javanese temple reliefs. She points out that the court style as "high" and the popular style referred to as "low" could also be interpreted as having moral connotations, the low style representing "improper" and the high style "proper" codes of behaviour (Iyer 1998, 67). She has also studied the dramatic principles of Javanese narrative temple reliefs and discusses the possibility that the drastic change from the clearly Indian-influenced Central Javanese style to that of the East Javanese, so-called *wayang* style, happened owing to the influence of local conventions of performing arts (Sedyawati 1998, 1–2)

Alessandra Iyer, who has applied the technique of dance iconography in her work, has studied the 62 dance reliefs in the upper balustrade of the Shiva temple at the ninth-century candi Loro Jonggaran complex in Central Java (also known as Pramabanan). In her book "Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance in Ancient Java. A study in Dance Iconography" her main aim is to show that the dance poses depicted in these reliefs correspond with the *karana* system defined in the Indian treatise for dance and theatre, the Natyashastra. She discusses the whole topic of Southeast Asia's "Indianisation" in the light of recent research and stresses the probability that the communication between Southeast Asia and India was not only a "one-way process" (Iyer 1998, 100).

As can be seen from the above, the study of the dance images related to Javanese dance history is already a well-established discipline. It is natural that in their research of dance and theatre history in mainland Southeast Asia many scholars have also made references to early visual evidence. This is understandable, since the early textual sources, other than inscriptions, are very rare in mainland Southeast Asia. Thus the pictorial evidence is practically the only available information we have when we discuss the early phase of performing arts in mainland Southeast Asia.

The dance-historical information given by the bas-reliefs of the Khmer sanctuaries, Khmer-influenced sculptures, and Mon-influenced sculptures and reliefs in Thailand have been analysed, to a certain extent, by Thai theatre historian Mattani Mojdara Rutnin in her book "Dance, Drama, and Theatre in Thailand" (1993) and in her other writings, in which she also refers to the interpretations of earlier Thai scholars. To facilitate further study of the dance images and history of classical Thai dance in general, in 1997 the Thai Fine Arts Department published a book called "Tamra Ram" containing old, illustrated dance manuals and early series of dance photographs.

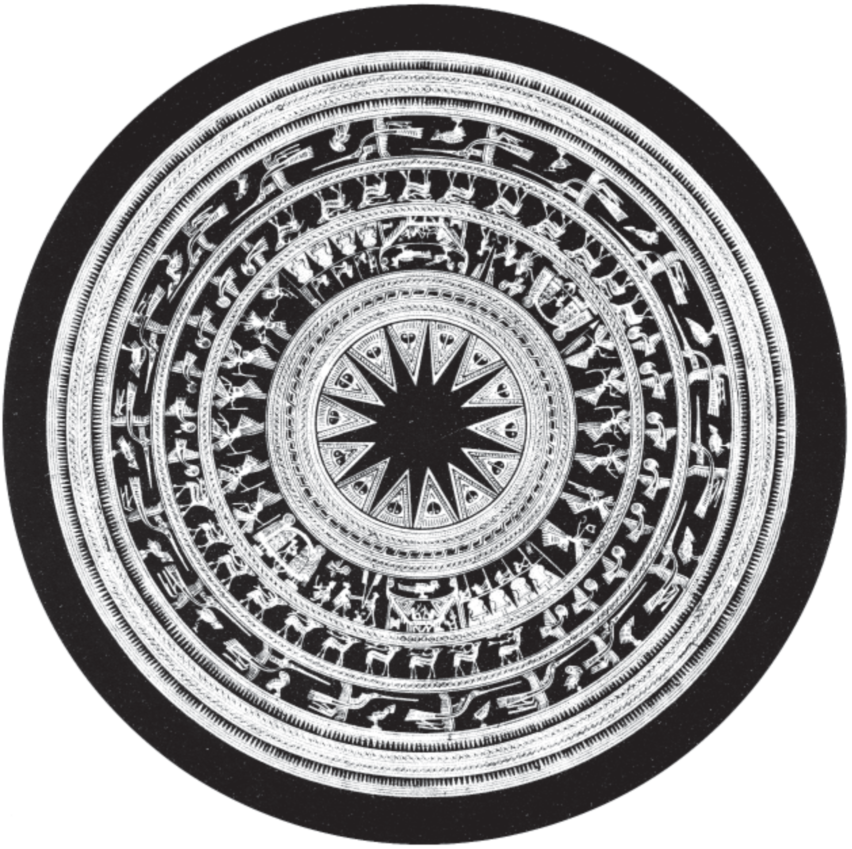


FIG 2/1 TYMPANUM OF A DONG SON BRONZE DRUM, C. 500 BC—100 AD. *DONG SON DRUMS IN VIETNAM 1990.*

2.2 Early Indigenous Dance Images

The earliest known dance images in Southeast Asia can be found in the tympanum decorations of the Bronze Age Dong Son gongs and in some of the ancient rock paintings. The Dong Son culture and gongs derive their name from the village Dong Son in northern Vietnam, which was first excavated in the 1920s. It now is generally thought that it was not the actual political centre of the culture, but merely one of the Dong Son principalities loosely linked to each other. The centre of the Dong Son culture was the central region of the Red River basin. Since Vietnamese archaeologists took over the research into Dong Son gongs in the 1960s and the 1970s their value as a source material for studies of cultural history has been recognised (Pham 1990, 262).

Bronze working was practised in Vietnam probably from the second millennium BC onward and it reached its technical and artistic peak around 500 BC–100 AD (Higham 2002, 175). Among the Dong Son bronze objects, such as tools, vessels, ornaments, weapons, arrowheads etc. the most impressive group is that of the large, decorated gongs, or "drums" or "kettle drums" as they are often called. The earliest examples are cast in one piece. Later, when gong manufacturing spread to other parts of Southeast Asia, as far as to Bali, the gongs were also cast in two pieces utilising the so-called lost wax method. The basic design of Dong Son gongs consists of a flat tympanum and sides that narrow in the middle.

Much has been speculated about the function of these gongs. It is now thought that they have been "connected with both ritual and rank, with many found buried in the graves of high-ranking individuals. The materials with which they were made and the skills needed to manufacture them were such that only the wealthy would have been able to own them" (Kerlogue 2004, 35).

Vietnamese scholars have identified them as rain drums, and their function as summoning rain (Pham 1990, 267). Interestingly, the drums themselves give information about their function.

The tympana of the gongs are decorated with a rich variety of motifs, some impressed into the wax through the use of moulds before the bronze was cast and some carved on the wax by hand [2/1]. The motifs include the central star or sun, which has been identified by Vietnamese scholars as the Solar Star, the central axis of Dong Son cosmology (Ibid., 268). It is surrounded by comb-teeth motifs, concentric circles and birds. Human figures are also depicted, as well as extremely informative portrayals of everyday life, agricultural scenes, rituals and handsome warships with feathered warriors. On the decks of the warships there are fighting stands and the gongs can be recognised hanging inside their lower structures.

Dancers are often portrayed within the middle section of the tympanum decorations. They are shown in line formations in identical, energetic poses. In their hands they hold different kinds of weapons such as spears, sticks and axes. The dancers wear extremely large feathered headdresses and their lower bodies are covered with long, skirt-like costumes.

Probably the most famous of all Dong Son gongs or drums is the so-called Ngoc Lu drum, which measures 63 centimetres in height and 79 centimetres across and now belongs to Vietnam's National Historical Museum in Hanoi. Maud Girard-Geslan describes the dance scene on the tympanum of the Ngoc Lu drum as follows:

> A procession of dancers and musicians in feathered costumes, one of whom is clearly playing a mouth organ (the *khene* of present-day Laos) and another percussion instrument, unfolds anticlockwise… The compartments of the body of the drum are decorated with warriors bearing arms, notably foot-shaped axes, as they execute a collective dance… The exact nature of the events portrayed (enthronement, obsequies, agrarian festival) has been the subject of a great deal of speculation. (1998, 25–26)

Besides the graphic portrayals of dancers of the Dong Son gongs, the other early group of dance images in Southeast Asia is found in rock paintings all over the area. The dates of their execution are, however, mostly uncertain. Dancing figures can be sometimes identified amongst the many animal and human figures, which give information about life in prehistoric times. Fiona Kerlogue has pointed out (2004, 38) that some of the human figures with their cloths, ornaments and feathered headdresses bear similarities to the dancing figures of the Dong Son gongs. Although the rock paintings are sketchy and the Dong Son figures are very graphic in character, they, nevertheless, give some idea of the dances performed. They seem, in most cases, to be social in character, kinds of ritualistic group dances, mostly performed by males.

In many fields of art and culture the direct inheritors of the early traditions were some small-scale societies which live in remote regions. Thus the nearest equivalents to the dances shown on the Dong Son drums could probably be found in the dance traditions practised by peoples who, in mainland Southeast Asia, live outside the central plains and, in maritime Southeast Asia, live on other islands than Java and Bali with their age-old contacts with India. For example, Philip Rawson has pointed out (1967, 15–16) that the dancers among the Naga people in Assam, which is the westernmost extension of the Yunnan massif, still wear ceremonial headdresses made of toucan feathers, and that dancers of another Naga tribe have used ceremonial axes in their dances echoing the ancient dances of the Dong Son gongs and rock paintings.

2.3 Indian Prototypes: Formulation and Typology

The early principalities of Southeast Asia with their already complex societies and sophisticated cultures, as the Dong Son figures and rock paintings suggest, came into contact with Indian civilization by the end of the first millennium BC. One of the early groups of art works, which show a clear Indian influence both in style and iconography, are the Buddha statues found around the Southeast Asia's coastal regions, which served as trading posts for the early sea routes connecting India and China to Southeast Asia.

These early Buddha statues show a clear connection with the South Indian Amaravati school, which flourished in the coastal regions of South India from c. 150 to 250 AD. A Buddha statue can obviously not be defined as a dance image but it strongly reflects, nevertheless, the aesthetics and iconographical conventions stemming from a tradition which was to culminate in the early theatre and dance manual, the Natyashastra.

Until the beginning of the first millennium AD the teachings of the Buddha had been venerated only in symbolic form, such as the Buddha's footprints, a wheel symbolising his teachings, a begging bowl etc. The development of an anthropomorphic Buddha image started in northern India in the first century AD. In the Mathura school, located near present-day Delhi, Buddha images still derived much of their energetic spirit from the early, pre-Buddhist *yakshas* or fertility gods. In Gandhara, in the regions of present Afghanistan and Pakistan, another centre of Buddhism created images, which combined the Greco-Roman style with the Indian content. Both of these earliest schools adopted methods typical of the tradition which was simultaneously being crystallised in the instructions of the Natyashastra.

In the second century AD Buddha images were also produced in southern India, in Amaravati, from where originate the earliest examples of Buddha images found in Southeast Asia. The image-makers already knew the fundamental principles of and rules for depicting movements, gestures, sentiments etc. defined in the Natyashastra. When creating Buddha images they made full use of various *asanas* or body positions, *mudras* or hand gestures as well as *rasas*, sentiments expressed by the image. Through these sophisticated means the image communicates with its spectator. Standing, but more often sitting cross-legged in the age-old meditation pose of the Indian *yogi*[7] the Buddha gesticulates with his hands and fingers. These gestures designate which specific moment of his life is being depicted: meditation, overcoming temptations before his enlightenment, his first sermon etc. His face always expresses the ninth rasa, that of tranquillity.

It is obvious that the iconography of Buddha images is closely linked to the great tradition of the inter-relatedness of dance and the visual arts, which culminated in the Natyashastra and the Silpashastras. Furthermore, it could be plausible, that these images and their development could also have had a more direct connection with the theatrical arts. In relation with Buddhist textual sources of the early centuries AD Kapila Vatsyayan has noted that

> Very early in the history of Buddhism, the Buddhist monastic order had given up its highly antagonist attitude towards the theatre and even went so far as to make use of the stage as a means of propaganda for the teachings of Buddhism: nor had the Buddhists any hesitation in allowing the Buddha to appear on the stage impersonated by the ordinary actor. The allegorical plays also became very common. (1977a, 185)

It is interesting to speculate the possibility that the development of the iconography of Buddha images could have followed the same pattern that was to be the case with images of the dancing gods and semi-gods of Hinduism and Buddhism. Their poses, gestures etc. were derived from the actual dances and rituals practised by their worshippers (Khanna 1999, Xii, XV). Likewise, it

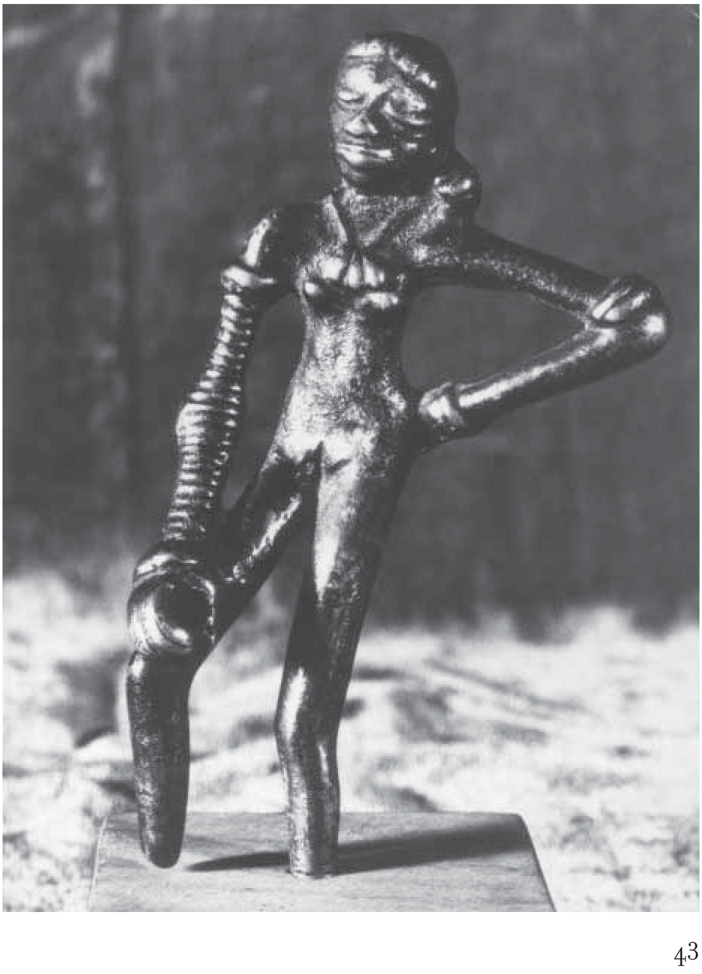


FIG 2/2
DANCER, MOHENJODARO C. 2600—1900 BC. *DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES, PAKISTAN.*

would not be unthinkable that the process of formulating the iconography of the Buddha image could have been inspired by early Buddhist stage presentations.

The actual dance images have indeed a long history in India. Besides the few surviving rock-paintings[8] the earliest dance images belong to the Indus civilization which flourished around 2600–1900 BC. The remains of its centres, Harappa and Mohenjodaro are located in the Indus valley, in present-day Pakistan. Two small Indus statuettes have been traditionally classified as dancing images. A damaged male figurine, excavated in Harappa, was identified by Sir John Marshall, a pioneer of Indus studies, as a dancer (Marshall 1931). This stone figurine has an uplifted leg and his torso is slightly twisted, which indicates that the dance movement bears strong similarities with Shiva Nataraja's dance of much later periods [2/7] (Rowland 1974, 37; Vatsyayan 1977, 271; Wheeler 1968, 90).

The second dance image, found in Mohenjodaro, is a copper figurine portraying a female dancer [2/2]. She has been identified as either a dancing girl, a kind of a predecessor of the later dancing temple slaves, *devadasis*, or the Mother Goddess (Khanna 1999, 42; Vatsyayan 1977a, 271). The curve of her spine, the front inclination of her torso and her bent knee has

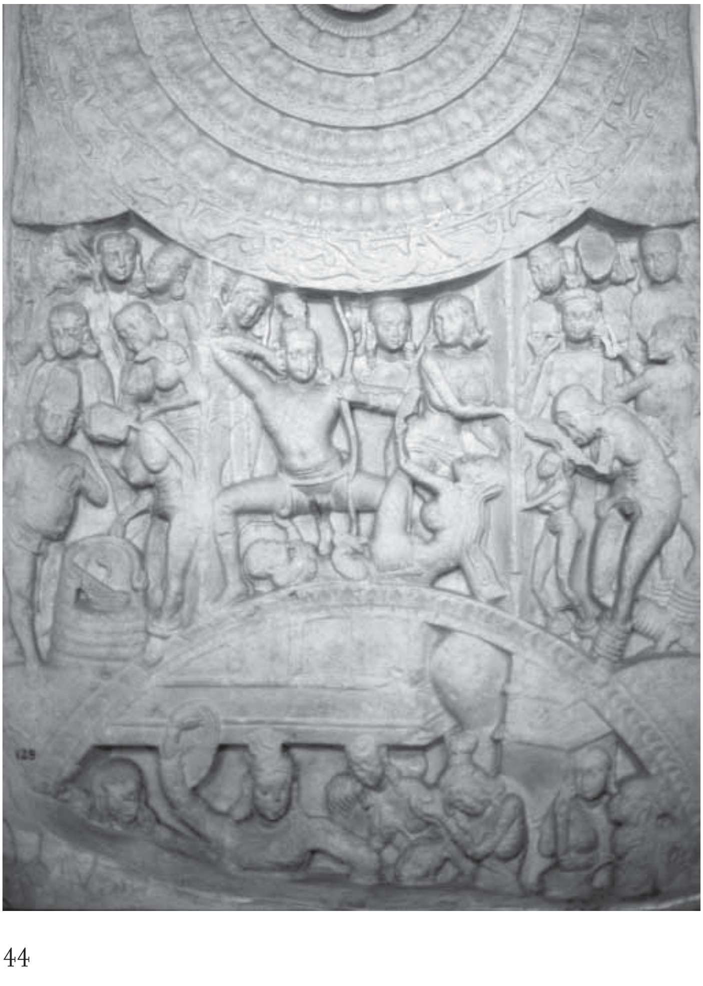


FIG 2/3
JATAKA SCENE SHOWING THE OPEN LEG POSITION, WHICH IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, AMARAVATI, SOUTH INDIA, C. 100–200 AD, CHENNAI MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.

been interpreted to indicate that the figure is actually a dancer and, moreover, that the dance seems to be related to later Indian classical dance styles (Vatsyayan 1977a, 271). Khanna (1999, 42) has even seen similarities between this ancient figurine and a performer of *kathak*, a dance form developed during the Mughal period in the 16TH century.

The movements and standing poses of these early statuettes are, no doubt, suggestive of later developments of Indian dance and visual arts. There is, however, a considerable gap from c. 1500 BC to c. 400 BC, during which the only references to dance can be traced in the Vedic and later Buddhist and Jain literature, but no actual dance images are known (Vatsyayan 1977a).

The earliest actual dance scenes, i.e. portrayals of dance performances accompanied by musicians, can be found in the second century BC bas-reliefs in the Udyagiri and Khandagiri caves in Orissa, in eastern India. Approximately during the same time and somewhat later, in the early Kushana period Buddhist stupas at Bharhut and Sanchi, as well as in a Satavahana-Ikshvaku period stupa at Amaravati, the sculptor's vocabulary expanded to include more and more poses and gestures, which bear clear resemblances to those described in the Natyashastra. They include the very common outward-flexed position of the knees (*kshipta*) [2/3], variations of poses indicating flying, and a pose depicting intertwining the tree, typical of the tree-nymphs of early Indian sculpture. The open-leg position and flying poses found their way to Southeast Asia [2/20, 5/8, 5/9].

In India the whole phenomenon of the interrelation of dance and the visual arts, and indeed of other art forms as well, is a most crucial one. The question is not merely of borrowing and exchanging materials and ideas from one art form to another. In Indian thought dance, and all art, is basically a religious sacrifice (*yajna*). Art is also regarded as a form of yoga and a discipline (*sadhana*). Through the creation of a work of art the artist/craftsman strives to evoke a state of pure joy or bliss (*ananda*).

The human body was seen as a vehicle of worship and thus dance becomes an act of invoking the divine. During the period c. BC 200–AD 200, as stated before, the complicated techniques of dance, as well as the rasa system, were codified in the Natyasashtra. It is significant that in the Indian tradition it is dance, a temporal and corporal form of art, which is regarded as the ascendant art form. It set the measure for other forms of art, since they adopted the theory of bhava and rasa from the tradition of the Natyashastra.

Dance has been so predominant in its position that some textual sources stress that sculptors and painters cannot succeed in their work without a basic knowledge of it (Guy 1997, 34). The Natyashastra sets the physical and dramatic tools for evoking the rasa or the emotional state appropriate to worship. On the other hand, the Shilpashastra, manual of iconography and sculpture was intended to help in producing corresponding figurative representations[9]. Consequently the principles of movement, however complicated they may be, are the same for both a dancer and a sculptor. The final goal of this intricate science of movements, measurements, poses, gestures etc. is to create the rasa, the actual object of presentation, and finally, to reach even further in evoking the state in which transcendental bliss can be experienced.

All the three Indian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism share the same theoretical basis for dance and the visual arts. And so the dance techniques, in spite of their local stylistic variations, bear strong similarities in all of these three traditions. Consequently, their imagery shares common aesthetic norms, iconographic features and iconometric theories. These had a great effect on their development in Southeast Asia, since two of these Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, found their way to Southeast Asia.

As early as from the Vedic period 1600–550 BC onwards Indian literature and mythological narrative created figures which were depicted in the visual arts as dancing or in easily recognisable dance-derived poses, reflecting the prevalent dance techniques. During the classical Gupta age from the fourth to the sixth century AD the repertoire of the dance images expanded further. The Puranas and the *agama* literature provided more dance-related imagery. Along with dancing human beings and semi-gods of older periods also appeared *nrttamurtis* or dancing gods, the first of them being the dancing Shiva. The Natyashastra already existed in written form and the Silpashastra had just been formulated, which enabled painters and sculptors to capture the dance movements with great precision. The earliest surviving painted dance images, other than the above mentioned ancient rock paintings, are also heirs of the Gupta tradition. These were executed on the walls of the rock-cut temples in Ajanta and Aurangabad (Khanna 1999, 47).

Many of the early Buddhist reliefs with their dance-related images and the early dance images of Hindu cave temples are still in situ in their original architectural contexts. The earliest surviving free-standing stone temples were built in the Gupta period. Gradually their plain outer walls were decorated with narrative panels as well as dancing divinities. This was the beginning of a development which was to lead to the flourishing of dance images in Hindu temple architecture during the so-called "medieval" period from the 6TH to the 16TH century. The most abundant representations of dance images can be seen in the Hindu temples of South India, in the Bhubaneshwar temple in East India and in the temples of Khajuraho in Central India. The West Indian Jain temples of Mt. Abu are also famous for their dance imagery [2/4]. The styles of sculpture differ and local schools can easily be recognised, but the fundamental portrayal of the movement is mostly rooted in the tradition of the Natyashastra.

During the early second millennium AD the contacts between Hindu India and Southeast Asia gradually ceased and, consequently, the direct Indian influence on Southeast Asian arts diminished. The localisation process of Indian prototypes had, however, already been going on for centuries. There is, nevertheless, proof that at least in Thailand the tradition of relying on Indian prototypes was kept alive until the 20TH century. In Thailand the models influenced by South Indian prototypes were collected in manuscripts as late as in the early 19TH century and they have been circulated in printed form until our times (Boisselier 1976, 231–233).

Whether they are free-standing sculptures or miniature paintings or executed on the walls of the temples, the dance images in India and in Indian-influenced Southeast Asia seem to fall, according to their subject matter, into five, albeit sometimes overlapping, categories[10]:

(A) Dance scenes,

(B) Various kinds of portrayals of dancers,

(C) Semi-gods, either dancing or depicted in dance-related poses,

(D) Nrttamurtis or dancing gods,

(E) Dance images related to the Natyashastra,

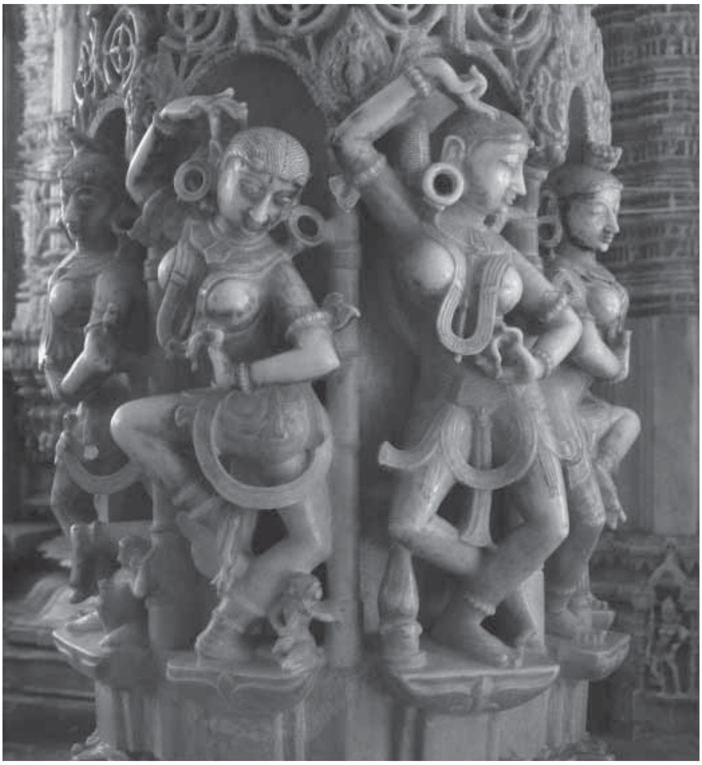


FIG 2/4
DANCERS ON A PILLAR OF A JAIN TEMPLE IN MOUNT ABU, WEST INDIA, 12TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1988.

(A) DANCE SCENES portray an actual dance performance, often in a narrative context. Sometimes they depict dance performances at court or they are related to literary sources such as the life of the Buddha, the Jatakas or Hindu myths. They can also depict rituals, an act of worship etc. For example, the dance scenes found in the remains of the second-century Buddhist stupa in Amaravati supply a number of examples of devotional scenes, in which dancers adore the symbols of the Buddha's teachings such as the *dharmacakra* or the Wheel of Law and even wash the Buddha's footprints with their hair. They represent an early form of Indian *bhakti* or devotional worship, which also spread to mainland Southeast Asia.

From the point of view of dance research this kind of dance images are usually very informative, since the details, such as the social setting, ritual context, performance space, costume, the accompanying musicians with their instruments etc. all add to the accuracy of the documentation. Although the dance scenes are often set in a mythical past they, in fact, give vivid information about the life and dance techniques of the time when the image itself was executed.

(B) PORTRAYALS OF DANCERS, which do not belong to a narrative context, can often be found in both Indian and Southeast Asian art. Dancing figures can appear as "ornamental" motifs in friezes, around door and window openings and in pillars [2/4]. However, the visual programmes of the temples of Southeast Asia are usually dictated by strict cosmological and iconographical rules, and thus all their details, among them dancing figures, have a deeper symbolic meaning as a part of the iconographical programmes of the temples.

(c) SEMI-GODS or intermediate gods *(vyantara devata)* of the Hindu and the Buddhist pantheons are often portrayed dancing or in such characteristic dance-derived poses that they are easy to recognise. Sometimes they stand on either side of the main deity as attendants or as guardian figures, sometimes fly in the sky or dance according to their nature. The *apsaras* and *kinnaras* and *kinnaris* [2/5] are most common from these Indian-originated semi-gods in Southeast Asian imagery.

Apsaras or heavenly nymphs, consorts of heavenly musicians called *gandharvas*, have already been described in the Vedas. They are the dancers of Indra's heavenly palace that fly freely between earth and heaven. They were born from the process of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, which is described in a famous Hindu creation myth, and are of such beauty that they even rob the attention of the ascetics. Their dance style is pure *lasya* or classical feminine style. Female kinnaris and male kinnaras, half-human, half-birds, are inhabitants of the mythical Himalayas. The act of flying in both cases is denoted by dance-related poses, often by a kind of kneeling position with one leg flexed at the knee with the lower leg upturned [4/8]. The many variations of the flying poses may be explained by the fact that the Natyashastra describes as many as ten karanas which can indicate flying (Vatsyayan 1977a, 285).

Another group of dancing semi-gods, popular in India but less frequently seen in Southeast Asia, are the *ganas*, earthly dwarfs [2/6]. In Hindu mythology they are attendants of Shiva, bulky, comical and somewhat childlike in their appearance. They also found their way to Buddhist imagery, specifically in the Amaravati School in South India, in Sri Lanka and, to a lesser degree, also in mainland Southeast Asia. Sometimes dwarfish dancers can also be seen referring to the *vidusaka*, the jester or the clown character of classical India Sanskrit drama, or just to court amusement (Vatsyayan 1977a, 306).

If the dance-derived poses of the heavenly apsaras and flying kinnaris and kinnaras reflect the codes of the Natyashastra's classical, or *margi* tradition, the uninhibited dance and merry-making of the ganas are related to the popular or *desi* dance traditions. The lord of the ganas is Ganesha, distinguished by his elephant head. During the Gupta period he was elevated to the realms of the gods and thus his dance images belong to the next group, that of dancing gods.

(d) DANCING GODS, *nrttamurtis*, were introduced in art during the Gupta period. The first and still the foremost of them is the dancing Shiva, whose cosmic dance has been described in several textual sources. As mentioned above, the Indus statuette of a male dancer from Harappa has sometimes been interpreted as the prototype of the dancing Shiva. Several regional versions of it developed[11], but this short description will focus on the southern type called the *Shiva Nataraja* because it was mostly South India from where the prototypes were transmitted to Southeast Asia.

The iconography of the Shiva Nataraja, literally meaning the King of Dance, developed over the centuries and reached its crystallised form in Tamil Nadu during the Chola period in approximately the 10TH–12TH centuries AD. It was the very period when the art of bronze casting reached its apogee. Using the "lost wax method" the Chola sculptors were able to reproduce, in metal, the exact proportions laid down by the Silpashastra and even the tiniest details of the gestures and movements dictated by the Natyashastra [2/7].

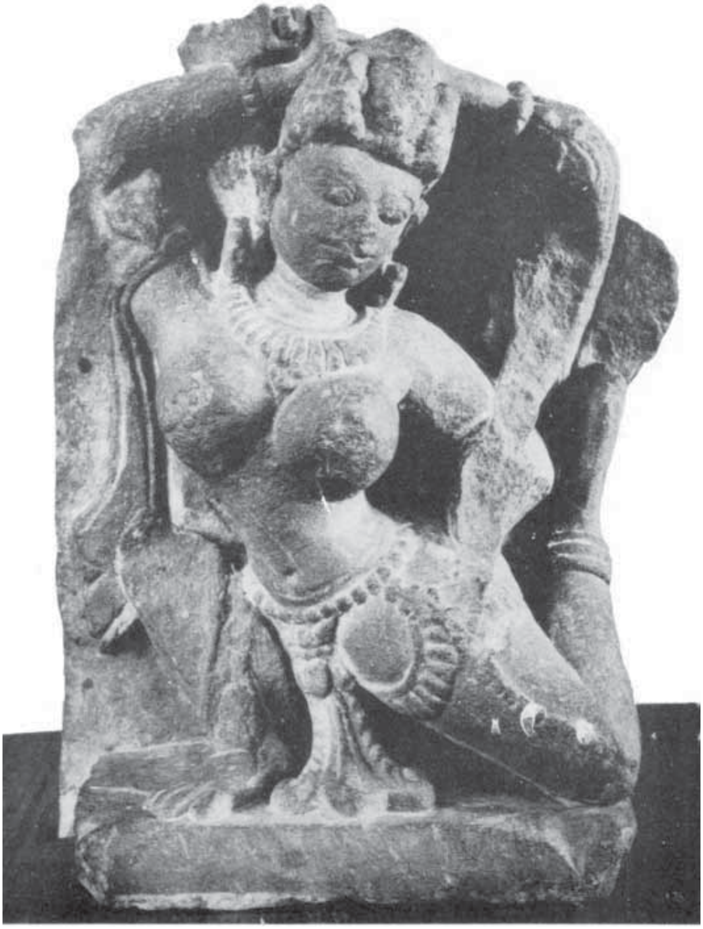


FIG 2/5
FLYING KINNARI, MADHYA PRADESH, CENTRAL INDIA, C. 10TH CENTURY.
PATNA MUSEUM.

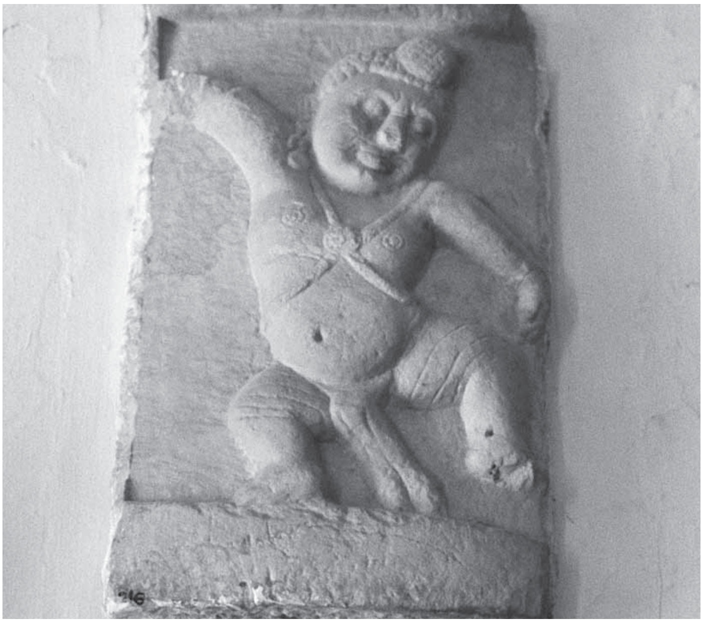


FIG 2/6
DANCING GANA, AMARAVATI, SOUTH INDIA, C. 100—200, CHENNAI MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.

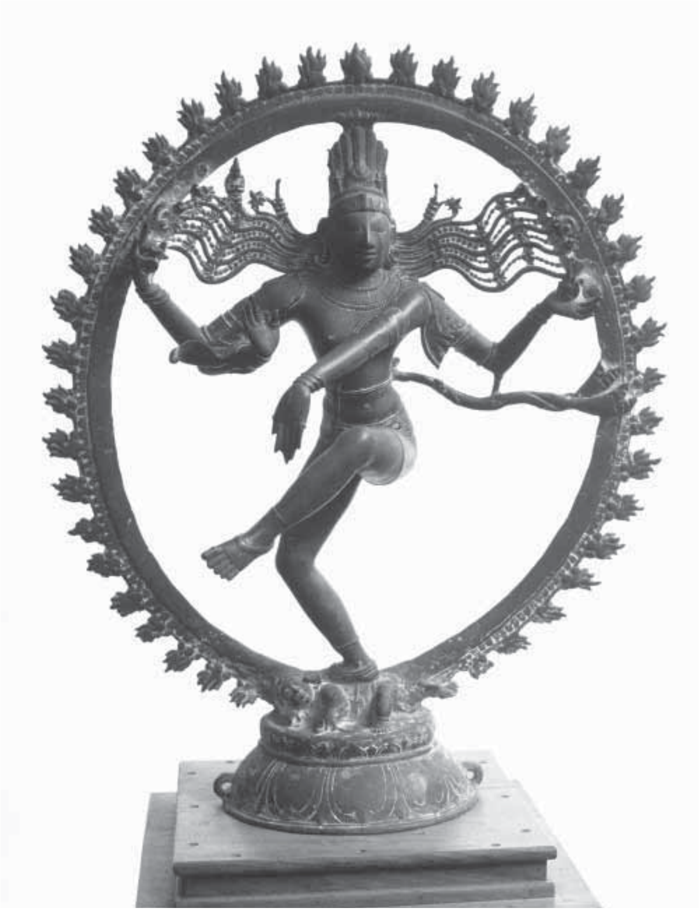


FIG 2/7
SHIVA NATARAJA, CHOLA DYNASTY 11TH CENTURY,
TAMIL NADU, SOUTH INDIA,
THANJAVUR ART GALLERY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.

The Shiva Nataraja represents Shiva as the destroyer/creator as described by devotional poetry dedicated to him. In the Hindu cyclical view of time Shiva's role is to destroy one era in order to create the next one, and this is what Shiva Nataraja statues portray. When he executes his cosmic *tandava* dance of destruction and creation he is surrounded by an arch of glory fringed by flames. The flame that he is holding in his upper left hand hints at the aspect of destruction while the drum, symbol of the pulse of the life, which Shiva holds in his upper right hand, refers to the aspect of creation. The lower left hand points to his lifted foot while the lower right hand is shown in *pataka* mudra. Multi-handedness, a feature typical of many nrttamurtis, is a practical way to manifest the deity's different aspects simultaneously. It also enables the sculptor to capture several frozen moments of a movement sequence in a static sculpture.

The main characteristic of Shiva's dance in the Chola iconography is the uplifted leg. His right leg is firmly planted on a dwarfish creature, which personifies one of the six enemies of enlightenment. The sculpture is full of symbolism. Shiva's braided hair is often decorated with his attributes: a laughing skull, a crescent moon and a cobra, and often also Ganga, the personification of the Ganges. The rasa, which Shiva's dance always evokes, is *raudra*. Even if many of these symbols and iconographical details were transformed or faded away when the dancing Shiva found its way to Southeast Asia, the figure, however, is always easily recognisable, for instance on the tympana of some of the Cham and Khmer temples. However, they were not based on Chola iconography, but on earlier prototypes, to be discussed later. Several versions of the Nataraja were illustrated in the manuals of Brahmanic iconography made in Thailand as late as during the first half of the 19TH century (Boisselier 1976, 231–233).

Shiva is not the only dancing Shivaistic god. As mentioned earlier, one of his sons, the elephant-headed Ganesha, Lord of the dwarfish ganas, also expresses himself by dancing. With his bulky body and short limbs, he often imitates his father's heroic dance in a humorous way. The female energy of the Shivaistic pantheon, personified as Devi, also dances [2/16]. She can manifest herself as an independent divinity, such as Kali and Durga, or she can take the role of Shiva's consort, Parvati.

If Shiva's dance epitomises the masculine tandava style of dance, it is Parvati who embodies the feminine *lasya* style. In a well-known type of Parvati statue of the Chola period she is portrayed walking gracefully and holding her left hand uplifted near her chin. This pose may not be immediately recognised as a dance pose, but all its elements, the relaxed hand in mudra indicating "walking about freely" and the uplifted hand indicating "holding a flower", can be traced back to the tradition of the Natyashastra.

However popular Ganesha otherwise is in Southeast Asia, a dancing Ganesha is rarely portrayed there. Dancing female divinities, on the other hand, can be found in the region, if not with a direct connection with the Shivaistic pantheon but rather belonging to the Tantric Buddhist iconography, which will be mentioned below.

In Vishnuism dance does not play such a central role as in Shivaistic imagery. Of the ten *avataras* of Vishnu only Krishna is depicted as a dancer. He dances as a cowherd playing the flute, as a boy subduing the *naga* Kaliya, and when revealing his divine character during a full moon night in the mystic *raas* dance. His dance aims to evoke the *srngara* rasa, the sentiment of love. In India Krishna's dance is often depicted in statues held on the altars at home or in the temples, in temple hangings, and in miniature paintings. In Southeast Asia a dancing Krishna never gained popularity, since the mythology and *bhakti* poetry praising Krishna's pastoral youth did not find its way to the region. Krishna is, however, sometimes depicted, especially in the Central Javanese and Khmer bas-reliefs, but very seldom dancing[12]. It was the heroic Krishna of cosmic battles based on the *Harivamsa*, a later appendix to the Mahabharata, who gained more popularity in Southeast Asia.

A specific group of dancing gods belongs to the Tantric tradition. They are seldom included in the studies of Indian dance images. They have, however, served rather directly as prototypes for dance images in Southeast Asia: in Peninsular Southeast Asia, in Java, and in the Khmer-influenced regions of mainland Southeast Asia. The Tantric dance images seem to be strongly influenced by the dancing deities of Shivaism (Pal 1997, 127, 132)

A common feature of most of the nrttamurtis or dancing gods is that they are usually shown in a frontal posture probably because the deities are supposed to give *darshan* or ritual viewing for their worshippers and meet them face to face. Another important characteristic of the nrttamurtis is that, according to Kapila Vatsyayan (1977a, 270), they can often be analysed in terms of the karanas described in the Natyashastra. As already mentioned, at the moment there exists only scant evidence that the Natyashastra and the Shilpasastras were directly known in Southeast Asia. Thus it is possible that their contents were spread orally, which could explain why the artists in Southeast Asia were not so strictly bound to their rules as were their Indian colleagues. Consequently the dancing gods in Southeast Asia went through a localisation process, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

(E) DANCE IMAGES RELATED TO THE NATYASHASTRA in India can be found in medieval temple complexes in South India[13]. The most famous of them are those carved on the towering 9TH century *gopura* gateways of the Shiva temple in Chidambaram [2/8]. They include ninety-three of the 108 karanas described in the Natyashastra. These small relief panels, together with other similar series and contemporaneous murals depicting dancers[14], constitute an important source material when one is trying to reconstruct the karana movement cadences of the Natyashastra. What makes these Chidambaram karana reliefs so particular is that they are accompanied by inscriptions of Sanskrit verses from the Natyashastra. Thus they form a kind of an illustrated dance manual carved in stone.

Since the karanas have practically disappeared from the living Indian dance styles it is understandable that the academic study focusing on these reliefs already has a relatively long tradition. By means of these reliefs and their inscriptions scholars and dancers have tried to reconstruct the karanas since the early 20TH century. Each panel shows one dancer in one frozen moment of a movement pattern. This led the early scholars to believe that karanas actually were static poses, an assumption which later research has renounced. The debate focusing on these panels has been very lively and has led to several attempts to reconstruct the karanas[15].

In Southeast Asia only one series of karana-related reliefs has been identified so far. On the outer balustrade of *candi* Siwa, the central shrine of the candi Loro Jonggaran or Prambanan temple complex in Central Java dedicated to Shiva, there are 62 reliefs showing dancers and musicians [2/15]. Since the restoration of the temple in the 1930s and 1940s a connection between these reliefs and the Indian karana system has been suggested. Recently, a more systematic study of these panels has been done by Alessandra Iyer (1998). The Prambanan karana panels are exceptional, not only because they are the only karana-related reliefs in Southeast Asia, but also because they predate the known Indian karana series by 100 to 200 years. They will be discussed further in Chapter 2.6.

The above categorisation with its five types of dance images is based on their subject matter i.e. what a dance image depicts or portrays: (A) a dance scene, (B) a dancer, (C) a semi-god, (D) a dancing divinity or (E) a karana. Dance images can also be observed according to the context into which they have been created. Besides portable art objects (I), such as free-standing sculptures, miniature paintings, temple hangings, it is easy to recognise two common contexts to which dance images regularly belong. The majority of the dance images and especially dance-related images that have been discussed belong to a narrative context (II), i.e. they form a part of the large narrative themes depicted on the temple walls either as series of reliefs or murals. Dance images often also form an integral element of the temple architecture (III). Consequently, dance images can be observed and interpreted as part of a greater iconographical programme covering the symbolism of the whole building.

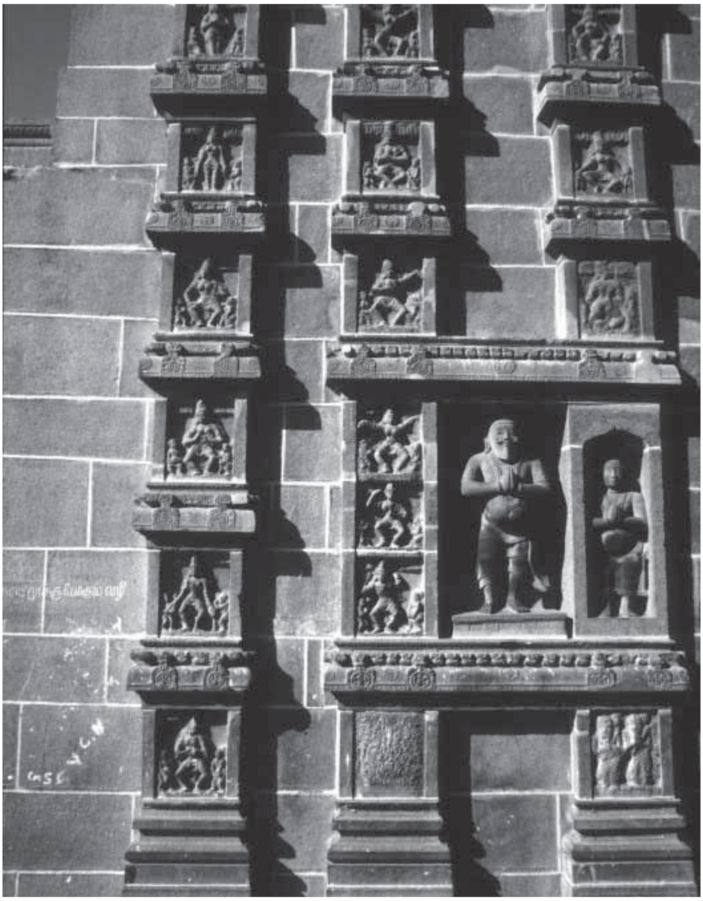


FIG 2/8
KARANA RELIEFS AT THE CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE, TAMIL NADU, SOUTH INDIA, C. 9TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1988.

(I) PORTABLE ART OBJECTS, now found mostly in museums and in private collections, provide plenty of information about dance. Miniatures painted or drawn in manuscripts form a valuable source of information on the forms of dance in India and, as will be seen, also in Southeast Asia. Many of the sculptures and reliefs now isolated from their original context, however, once belonged to the iconographical programmes of temples. Whenever possible, it is important to try to decipher their original distribution in the building in order to understand their function and symbolism.

(II) DANCE IMAGES IN A NARRATIVE CONTEXT in this study refer to dancing figures or figures in dance-related stylised poses, which belong to a larger visual narrative, such as temple murals or series of reliefs. Although they are not always as easily recognisable as dance images as, for example, the isolated images of dancing gods or karana panels they, nevertheless, give information about dance. They have not been studied extensively, probably because the focus in India has been more on the tradition of the Natyashastra and the Shilpashastra, which tend to conceptualise the dance and the human body.

Tracing the origins of visual narrative strategies in Indian arts has, however, led a group of Indian scholars deeply to the roots of both visual narratives and performing arts. As Vidya Dehajia

(1990, 22–31) and Jyotindra Jain (1990, 8–21) have proposed in their studies, both theatrical arts and visual narratives in India seem to have developed from the ancient art of storytelling, or at least closely side by side. This opens up interesting prospects of understanding the early developments in the pictorial arts and performing arts as well as their close interrelatedness in India and Indian-influenced Southeast Asia.

Dehajia has analysed the early narrative techniques applied in railing panels of the Bharhut stupa from the 2ND century BC in Central India and found several narrative methods employed in them. She has pointed out that some of the narrative methods are rather complex and that most probably "a first-time visitor to Bharhut was taken around the stupa by a monk who acted as a spiritual guide" (Dehejia 1990, 22). Bharhut was one of the first stupas to abandon wooden construction in favour of stone. So it is rather natural to speculate how the Bharhut reliefs developed. Early stupa railings in India imitate older wooden structures and the style of execution of the reliefs also bears similarities to that of woodcarving. This could indicate that there was an older tradition of wooden reliefs, which preceded the stone ones.

Yet another, or at least a parallel, line of development is possible. It is known that, at the same time that the earliest stone stupas were built, various kinds of literary material, such as the epics and descriptions of punishments in Hell, were narrated by picture storytellers, who used painted panels and scrolls to visualise their recitation (Brown 1997; Jain 1990, 8). The narrative methods and visual styles of devices developed probably side by side with oral tradition itself. This would suggest that the scrolls and panels may have served as prototypes for the later reliefs of the early stupas and temples, which explains their already sophisticated narrative methods. The stories were depicted on the walls of a temple or railings of a stupa and the "spiritual guide", who explained the pictures to the visitors, took the role of the storyteller. Thus the sacred building with its narrative pictures became a fixed and permanent pictorialisation of the oral tradition. The temple or stupa became a kind of a huge "storyteller's device" for the believers, who came to learn the holy stories during their pilgrimages.

In India and in some parts of Southeast Asia, as will be discussed later, the storytelling tradition served, at least partly, as the starting point from which the theatrical performances, based on the same oral material, may have developed. Jain has pointed out, referring to both ancient texts and story telling traditions that are still extant, that the storytelling performances were and are not only recitations but often

> …complement the word with the visual image and vice versa. In many cases, the composite narrative of the word and the painted image is amplified by the performance – facial and bodily gestures and postures, singing with or without the accompaniment of musical instruments, dance, theatrical rendering of scenes, and even audience participation. (Jain 1990, 8)

This opens up very interesting views both in the field of art history and theatre and dance history. The process could roughly be outlined as follows: (i) the starting point is the act of storytelling, i.e. the act of conveying the oral literary tradition. (ii) Gradually the storytellers started to employ different kinds of visual devices to illustrate their narration (panels, scroll paintings, shadow figures, puppets and in some cases even dolls). (iii) Storytelling was enriched by gesticulation, body movements, mime, dance, music etc. During this process the act of storytelling became more theatrical in character and, what is noteworthy, the narrative tradition and performing arts cross-fertilised each other.

This process could explain why the earliest surviving narrative reliefs already had very developed narrative strategies. Over the centuries even dance movements and gestures were adopted as integral elements of the storytelling. This may have gradually influenced the visual devises as approved gestures, poses etc. found their way into the panels and scrolls.

Jain has presented convincing evidence in support of this notion. According to him several pictorial devices used in the story-based reliefs of Sanchi, Bharhut and Amaravati are similar to those used in panels of the present "picture showmen" in India. Moreover, according to Jain there are "striking visual similarities and intrinsic connections between certain panels and scrolls of storytellers and the regional traditions of performances of shadow puppets, marionettes, and other three-dimensional figures" (Ibid., 20).

However, the interpretation which maintains that all visual narrative series in temples Indian and Southeast Asian temples should be read as visual representations of stories has been questioned by Robert L. Brown. In his study "The Jataka Stories in Ancient Indian and Southeast Asian Architecture" (1997) he argues that in some early Indian as well as Southeast Asian Buddhist monuments the series of paintings and reliefs depicting themes from these didactic stories, which were originally used for moral instruction, were actually not meant to be read as stories. Instead, according to Brown, they function more as icons than as narrative illustrations. He justifies this among others by the fact that in several cases the pictures cannot actually be seen or are seen only with great difficulty.

In India it was probably the increasing popularity of the Natyashastra and the Shilpashastra that changed the emphasis from the narrative process on the conceptualisation of the human body. In Southeast Asia the development was different. As mentioned, according to present knowledge there is only little evidence that these manuals were directly known in Southeast Asia. This can partly explain the quick localisation process of Indian prototypes, which is the subject of the next chapter. In mainland Southeast Asia the tradition of large series of narrative reliefs and murals continued until the 19TH century, giving us an opportunity to see the complicated interaction process described above to take place on several occasions. However, as the function of these large visual narratives (whether they were shown to visitors by spiritual guides, whether they existed merely to enhance the sacredness of the building or whether they were meant to be seen by human eyes in general) is far from explicit, the question of their function will be considered case by case.

Dance images in a narrative context, however, give enlightening information about the common roots of the visual and theatrical arts as well as their close interaction. Consequently, they explain many common techniques, conventions and stylistic similarities employed by them. But what exactly do they contribute to dance research? No doubt they serve as a kind of historical storeroom from which dance-derived poses, gestures, group activities etc. from different periods can be found. Thus they contain crucial documentation of the gradual transformation of dance, as will be seen in the following pages. The information given by dance images in a narrative context should, however, be interpreted with caution, since the portrayal of dance movements, gestures etc. may have been adapted to suit the conventions of the visual narrative and the needs of the medium in which they are executed i.e. as a painting, carving or sculpture.

(III) DANCE IMAGES IN AN ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT are very common in India and in Southeast Asia. In fact, many of the early Buddhist reliefs with their dance-related images and the early dance images in Hindu cave temples and frees-tanding temples are all still in their original architectural context. Also, the architectural context of many of the sculptures and reliefs now in the collections of museums can, to some extent, be reconstructed. In Southeast Asia the earliest surviving temple structures with dance images are the Champa temple towers in Central Vietnam discussed in Chapter 3.4.

Temple buildings in India, whether Hindu or Buddhist, have several symbolic connotations. A Hindu temple and sometimes even a Buddhist structure can be seen as the dwelling place of the deity or the Buddha. A Hindu temple can also be interpreted as to present the body of a *purusha* or primordial cosmic man. The most common symbolism however, refers to Mount Meru, the central axis of the universe, both in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. The symbolism of Indian and Southeast Asian religious structures will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

In India the analysis of dance images in the architectural context has followed established tradition: they have mainly been examined in connection with the karanas, mudras etc. as described in the tradition of the Natyashastra and the Shilpashastra. The emphasis has been on naming the movements and gestures rather than in analysing their role and distribution in the iconographical programmes of the temples.

All the above-mentioned types of dance images, which originally developed in India, found their way to Southeast Asia. Consequently, even there the majority of the dance images found in temples can be categorised, as above, according to their subject matter. Whether it is fruitful to analyse the movements and gestures found in these images according to the tradition of the Natyashastra and the Shilpashastra is another matter. Since, as already mentioned above, there is only meagre evidence that any of these manuals were actually directly known in Southeast Asia, the emphasis on the following pages will not be on naming the poses and gestures of Southeast Asian dance images according to the Sanskrit terminology formulated in the Natyashastra and other Indian manuals. The focus will rather be on observing the similarities and dissimilarities of the dance images when compared with present Southeast Asian dance styles. Furthermore the focus will be on the contexts into which dance images were distributed. Thus the images will be observed in their narrative and, especially, in their architectural contexts.

The Indian-derived dance images, which found their way to Southeast Asia, were only one aspect of a much greater phenomenon, that of the transmission of the whole Indian cultural heritage to the regions of Southeast Asia. This much debated process[16] will be the subject of the following two sub-chapters, whereas the last sub-chapter will focus on Javanese dance images and their gradual disengagement from the Indian prototypes.

2.4 Routes of the Transmission of Indian Influence

As already mentioned at the beginning of this capter, the earliest archaeological evidence indicating contacts between India and Southeast Asia has been dated to approximately 300 BC

(Higham, 2002: 131). This suggests that from that period onward latest Southeast Asia formed a link on the so-called Southern Silk Route, a network of maritime routes connecting the Empires of Rome and China. Southeast Asia was a natural junction of the trade routes between India and China. During the first Millenium AD the contacts between Southeast Asia and India were established and lead to the formation of early Southeast Asian kingdoms, which adopted many features from the Indian civilisation. Besides the (a) sea routes, Southeast Asia and India were, to a certain extent, linked to each other also by (b) land routes [2/9].

(a) The sea routes brought Indian traders and shippers from particular places in India annually back to Southeast Asia. The voyage through the Bay of Bengal was not too long and utilising the regular monsoon winds the trip was easy for even small boats. Of course, not only did Indians travel. Many Southeast Asians, particularly the Malays, are known to have been active sea-going people. The shortest route between India and China was through the Strait of Malacca while another, longer route led through the narrow strait between Sumatra and Java. The routes led still further to the coast of present-day Vietnam and to southern China.

Often, especially during the early centuries AD, the ships followed the Southeast Asian coastline and stopped at ports, where the exchange of goods took place. The earliest excavated port city so far is Oc Eo, in southern Vietnam, which served as an important international port for the kingdom of Funan until c. 600–650 AD (Miksic 2003, 4). The ports were usually located at the mouths of the rivers. The rulers of these port principalities controlled overseas trade, exchanging luxury imports for local products supplied from upstream. Thus trade increased

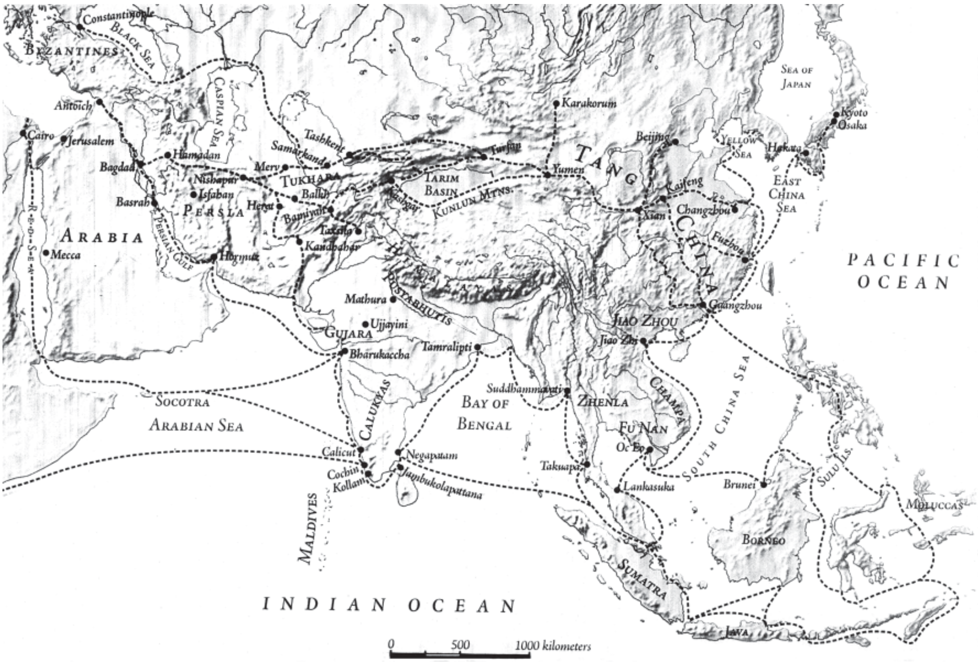

Constantinople
Black Sea
Byzantines
Caspian Sea
Sea of Japan
Antioch
Karakorum
Kyoto
Osaka
Cairo
Jerusalem
Tashkent
Samarkand
Turfan
Beijing
Yellow Sea
Hakata
Hamadan
Bagdad
Merv
Tukhara
Nishapur
Isfahan
Balkh
Herat
Tarim Basin
Kunlun Mtns.
Yumen
Tang
Kaifeng
East China Sea
Basrah
Persia
Bamiyan
Kashgar
Xian
Changzhou
Persian Gulf
Arabia
Mecca
Red Sea
Taxila
Kandahar
Hormuz
Fuzhou
China
Pacific Ocean
Mathura
Ujjayini
Gujara
Bharukaccha
Tamralipti
Guangzhou
Jiao Zhou
Jiao Zhi
Champa
South China Sea
Socotra
Arabian Sea
Calukyas
Bay of Bengal
Suddhammavati
Zhenla
Fu Nan
Oc Eo
Calicut
Negapatam
Takuapa
Lankasuka
Brunei
Sulu Is.
Cochin
Kollam
Jambukolapattana
Moluccas
Maldives
Borneo
Sumatra
Indian Ocean
Java
0 500 1000 kilometers

FIG 2/9 ASIAN TRADE ROUTES C. 600 AD. *ART & ARCHITECTURE OF FU NAN 2003.*

the interaction between the downstream rulers and upstream inhabitants. Through this river network the Indian influence spread further to the inland areas.

Later, more advanced navigation methods and more seaworthy ships allowed sailing farther from the shore. Thus ships could travel longer distances direct through the Straits of Malacca and the Java Sea. Ships sailing from India to Southeast Asia bore cargoes that consisted mainly of textiles, which were specially produced in India for the local markets of Southeast Asia. There they served as valued family heirlooms, as attire for royalty and as clothing (Guy, 1998). Thus these textiles served as the principal trading commodity and were exchanged for much valued spices, which were brought back in the ships to India and traded there further westwards.

(B) There was, however, also a northerly land route which linked India to Burma and further to South China. It led through Assam and Upper Burma to Yunnan and was actively used by Chinese Buddhist monks. According to the available historical evidence, it was used as early as the second century BC (Hall, 1981: 23). Although it was closed for some periods it was, however, the channel which linked the Burmese kingdoms with China. As foreigners travelled across the mainland, also the local trade within the region increased and new trade routes emerged connecting different parts of mainland Southeast Asia with each other (Gossling, 2004: 36).

Through these sea and land routes the Indian influence penetrated into Southeast Asia. The impact of the Indian influence has already been discussed above. According to George Coedes the elements of Indian influence could be defined as follows (Hall, 1981: 18): (A) a conception of royalty characterised by Hindu or Buddhist cults, (B) a mythology taken from the Buddhist tradition as well as from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and other Sanskrit texts containing a nucleus of royal tradition and the genealogies of royal families of the Ganges region, and (C) the observance of the *Dharmashastras*, the sacred law of Hinduism. To these one could also add the Indian cosmology with its central cosmic mountain, Mount Meru, and the highly hierarchic worldview created by it.

The India-influenced dance images found in Southeast Asia are deeply rooted in this heritage as a whole. They stem from the mythology and imagery of Buddhism and Hinduism, and they mainly illustrate figures and events described in the Sanskrit and Pali literature. As they are most often executed on the walls of stone temples created by the central courts, they consequently reflect the values of the upper strata of society, such as the conception of the god-king as well as the rigid hierarchical world-view of Indian-influenced cosmology.

Exactly how did the transmission process take place? It is believed that several groups of people acted as mediators: traders, Brahman priests and Buddhist monks, who arrived in Southeast Asia from India. When one considers the sea routes, all these travellers arrived in boats, which had to follow the seasonal pattern of the prevailing wind. Southwest winds dominated from May to November whereas the northeast wind dominated from November to May. This meant that the passengers were forced to stay in Southeast Asia for a considerable time to wait the for monsoon winds to change. Indian merchant venturers are known to have already sailed to east during the centuries before the present era (Higham, 2002: 233). By the 9TH century AD they formed merchant guilds which systematically took care of the trade with Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Some of these traders were Brahmans, who had become involved in trading activities (Stein 1998, 125).

The role of the Brahmans in this transmission process has often been emphasised. In India the Brahmans formed the highest of the four castes[17]. They held the prerogative of religious rites and royal ceremonies. They often also acted as royal advisors and even as ministers. Southeast Asian rulers are believed to have employed Indian Brahmans in order to imitate the practice of Indian courts and consequently to elevate themselves as god-kings (Hall 1981, 19). Thus the Brahmans are supposed to have had a decisive role in this transmission process. They had a considerable political influence, and as they were not committed to celibacy they could marry into local ruling families.

They advocated the Sanskrit literary tradition and they had the privilege of the holiest rituals. Indeed, local mythology in Cambodia claims that the Khmer culture was founded by a Brahman who arrived there by boat. Moreover, Khmer inscriptions tell us that a certain Brahman family was associated with the royal rites for over two hundred years (Jessup 2004, 62). Court Brahmans also took care of the royal rites at the court of the 11TH–13TH century Pagan (Aung-Thwin 1985, 34–36) and a similar practice is still thriving at the court of present-day Thailand, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Sometimes, as will be seen on the following pages, Brahmans are even believed to have acted as dance instructors.

Another important group of people who arrived in Southeast Asia from India were Buddhist monks. Which one of the two religious groups arrived first, the Brahmans or Buddhist monks, is not clear. However, the earliest Buddha statues found in Southeast Asia are dated to 200 AD (Vo Si Khai 2003, 44) whereas one of the earliest anthropomorphic Hindu image so far, a statue of Vishnu, is dated to 400 AD (Kwa Chong Guan 2003, 127). According to tradition it was King Ashoka (c. 272–31 BC), Buddhist ruler of the Maurya Empire in Central India, who sent the first Buddhist monk-missionaries to Southeast Asia, especially to the regions of present-day Myanmar.

Missionaries were, indeed, Buddhist monks later in Southeast Asia, too. As the earliest Buddha figures found in Southeast Asia show, the early contacts seem to have been particularly well-established in the coastal regions of South India, where Amaravati's great school of Buddhist sculpture flourished from 150 to 250 AD. Amaravati was one of South India's most important seaports and its influence spread to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Buddhist missionaries are known to have accompanied Amaravati seamen on voyages to Southeast Asia and further to China (Rowland 1977, 208)

The Southeast Asians, however, were not only passive recipients of foreign influences, but actively took part in the process. As traders and pilgrims they also joined in the traffic between Southeast Asia and India. For example, the propagation of Theravada Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia was carried out by Mon monks, who travelled to Sri Lanka to receive ordination and to study and collect manuscripts. The contacts between Southeast Asia and various holy centres in India, both Hindu and Buddhist, were very close indeed.

For example, in Nalanda, an important centre of Mahayana Buddhism in East India, a separate monastery was founded for the use of Indonesian pilgrims (Hall 1981, 21) and Burmese were active in rebuilding the East Indian Bodhgaya temple to commemorate the Buddha's enlightenment (Stadtner 2005, 150). Currently, it is believed that besides the Mon, the Khmer also travelled to India (Gosling 2004, 100). The pilgrims returned home with various ideas and conceptions of art as well as portable art objects, depending on whether the pilgrims themselves were Hindus or Buddhists and, of course, depending on their destination in India.

However, it is not always self-evident from where exactly in India these influences originated. Whether it is a question of architecture, sculptures or dance images, as is the case in the present study, the exact answer is only rarely certain. Although India possessed a unique theory of art and a unifying tradition of written manuals, the Indian tradition was by no means a uniform whole but rather an amalgamation of traditions; many of them have now disappeared.

One problem, when one is considering from where in India the cultural influences were adopted by Southeast Asia, is the absence of written historical documents. The earliest surviving inscriptions from the 3RD and 4TH centuries most often deal with local dynastic events and they give very little information about the contacts with India. Another problem is that the traditions of arts and architecture in India and Southeast Asia, although they have a lot in common, are far from identical. Since the earliest period when Indian influence was felt in Southeast Asia, the arts of the region have shown a diversity of influences from various parts and periods in India (Hall, 1981: 22–23). It is, however, possible to name some of the periods and dynasties in Indian history during which the contacts between Buddhist and Hindu India and Southeast Asia were particularly close[18]:

- The Amaravati school of sculpture, which has already been mentioned, and which influenced early Southeast Asian Buddhist art, flourished during the Satavahana dynasty. It ruled parts of the Deccan plateau between the 1ST century BC and the 2ND century AD and maintained vigorous trade from its ports with Southeast Asia. It was also the period of the formulation of South Indian Buddhist iconography (Knox, 1992). The principal monument of the period was the great stupa of Amaravati with its rich sculptural programme.

- During the Gupta period (c. 320–647 AD) the Buddha image was crystallised in northern and eastern India and the earliest known free-standing stone temples were constructed. It was also the period when Indian literature and science reached their heights. The dynasty ruled most of northern India, but its artistic influence reached even beyond India to the Himalayan regions and to Southeast Asia.

- In southernmost India the Pallava dynasty was the first of a series of southern kingdoms which had maritime contacts with Southeast Asia. The imperial Pallavas ruled the Tamil country from c. 558 to 728 and initiated the dravida-type temple architecture, which had a considerable influence on the development of Southeast Asian temple architecture. Their port was Mamallapuram with its first grand-scale stone reliefs and sculptures of the southern tradition.

- Later, from 862 to 1310 the whole of South India was ruled by the Chola dynasty. During the Chola period the Dravida temple architecture and bronze casting reached their peaks. The Cholas were sea-going people and they ruled Sri Lanka and had established contacts with Southeast Asia as well. In 1025 the Cholas even sent a large-scale expedition to various regions of Southeast Asia (Klokke 1998, 337).

- The Western Chalukya dynasty ruled the Deccan Plateau in 550–753. During this period many cave temples and free-standing temples were created in Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal. The iconographical models and style of sculpture of Badami and Pattadakal influenced the development of sculpture in Central Java and in the Champa kingdoms in present-day coastal Vietnam, as will be discussed later. The earliest large-scale series of Ramayana reliefs can be found in a temple in Pattadakal. It may have served as a prototype for Ramayana renderings in Southeast Asia.
- The Pala and Sena dynasties controlled the eastern parts of India from c. 750 to 1200. They were patrons of both Buddhism and Hinduism. This period marked the last florescence of Buddhism in India after which the Muslim invaders, as the phenomenon is traditionally explained, destroyed the important monastery universities of East India including the above-mentioned Nalanda. Pala-Sena influence spread as far as to East Java and to the neighbouring parts of mainland South Asia, especially to Pagan in present-day Myanmar.

Increasing archaeological evidence and the interpretation of epigraphic sources may throw more light on this complicated phenomenon in the future. However, merely a "contact" between two cultures is not enough to explain how the actual transmission of the whole culture and a birth of new traditions took place. An artistic tradition, whether that of dance, image-making or architecture, requires continuity, institutions and educational methods to thrive. The next sub-chapter seeks to summarise what is presently known about this particular aspect of this transmission process and focuses on the two main topics essential to the present study, i.e. dance and image-making.

2.5 Means of the Transmission

It is not exactly known how the Indian-influenced tradition of dance, image-making and architecture was passed on to Southeast Asian artists. The question is crucial for the understanding of the arrival of the Indian-influenced dance images and their gradual localisation in Southeast Asia. Most probably the answer is not a simple but rather a complex one, involving several kinds of cultural contacts, educational methods etc.

In India, as has been mentioned several times above, the long, originally orally transmitted traditions of dance, architecture and sculpture were passed on from the early centuries AD onwards by the shastra manuals. It would thus seem natural that the case was also the same in Southeast Asia. However, very few physical traces of any original Indian shastra treatises have been found in the whole region. A Sanskrit version of the Natyashastra is preserved in the National Library of Thailand and it was translated into Thai in 1968 (Nattayasat 1968), but how and when it came to Thailand is not known. Otherwise, the nearest equivalent for the Natyashastra in ancient Southeast Asia is the *Nawanatya*, a 13th–14th century manual, written in Old Javanese language, where it is possible to find some of the keywords used regularly in the Natyashastra (Iyer 1998, 92–93).

The Nawanatya, however, is not a manual for artists but for courtiers. It gives advice on how to behave when one is enjoying the nine royal amusements: hunting, fishing, drinking, gambling, love-making, pleasantries, fighting, sports and enjoying the scenery (Holt 1967, 286). In fact, for the purpose of this study it is extremely interesting to note that the court life in the East Javanese *kraton* palaces applied some of its terminology from the Natyashastra tradition. The Nawanatya, however, is still waiting to be translated and critically edited. In spite of that, merely its existence proves the close relationship between the stylised and strictly codified court etiquette and the Indian-influenced dance tradition, a phenomenon which will be discussed later in connection with the dance images in mainland Southeast Asia.

The absence of written versions of the Natyashastra and other shastra manuals should not mislead one to think that their contents were completely unknown in Southeast Asia. Firstly, as most of the early written sources, especially in mainland Southeast Asia, have been destroyed in the wars and by the humid climate, it is very plausible that the manuals and/or their localised versions were among the many lost treasures of the libraries, too. Secondly, the codifications embodied in these texts were originally orally transmitted. As the following pages will show, the literary, architectural and iconographic evidence suggests that this tradition was indeed known in Southeast Asia. One answer to the question of how the Indian-influenced dance tradition was passed on to the local dancers is revealed by some of the dance images themselves.

Among the dance-related reliefs of the ninth-century Buddhist stupa of Borobudur in Central Java, which will be discussed in detail in the next sub-chapter, we find female dancers accompanied by one or two male figures, which bear the iconographical marks of Brahman priests or dance masters [2/10]. They are bearded and corpulent and, as Clair Holt has described: "Animated and jovial, they stand with hands extended toward the dancer either

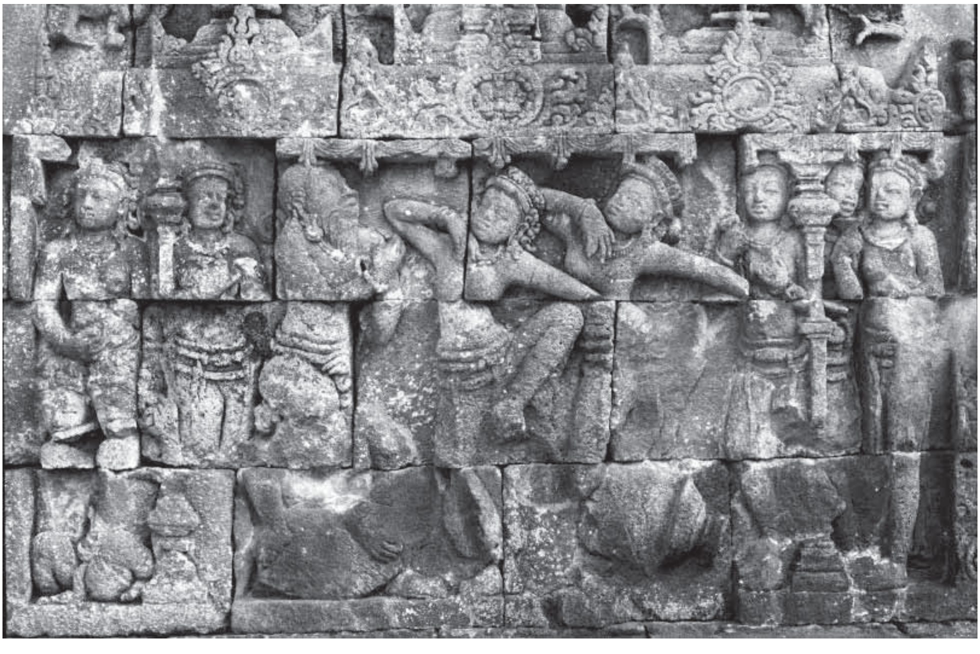


FIG 2/10 BEARDED BRAHMAN INSTRUCTING DANCERS, BOROBUDUR, CENTRAL JAVA, 9TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

gesturing or marking rhythms with rattles, bells or small cymbals, possibly emitting vocal sounds, apparently supporting her dance" (1967, 115).

These portrayals of dance performances can give one answer to how the dance tradition was passed on to local dancers. It was simply taught to locals by the Indian Brahmans, who had the knowledge of the Indian tradition and acted as *gurus*, or teacher-masters as well as spiritual guides. This seems to refer to the traditional Indian teaching method, that of the *guru-sishya* system, i.e. to the close personal contact between the master and his pupil. During daily contact the master guides and initiates his student into the secrets of the art according to the abilities and spiritual development of his pupil. The word "guru" is embedded in many of the Southeast Asian languages together with innumerable other Sanskrit words[19].

The devotional reverence the pupils show to their gurus is still today manifested in the *wai kru* ceremony in Thailand. The annual wai kru or "Paying Homage to the Teacher" ceremony of the dancers and traditional musicians always falls on Thursday, which in Thailand is regarded as Teacher's Day. In this very complex ceremony, which bears clear ancient Brahmanic features, the students and the junior teachers recall with gratitude the benefits they have received from their gurus (Dhanit, 1990).

Where did the gurus teach? Two possibilities seem plausible: in the temples and at court. Anyway, in the Hindu tradition dance was an important part of the temple rituals. In South Indian temples the *devadasis*, women dedicated to the service of the temple, danced before an image of the deity. The tradition is ancient and it probably reached its peak during the Chola period. It is known that in 1004 AD in the Chola kingdom as many as 400 devadasi dancers were recruited from minor temples for the royal Brihadisvara temple in Thanjavur (Guy 1997, 29). Similarly it is known that in the 12TH century Khmer temples employed hundreds of dancers (Higham 2001). As the life of the temple dancers was mainly limited to the temple premises and their art formed an important aspect of the holy rituals, it would seem logical that their education and training also took place in the temples, which in India and sometimes also in Southeast Asia functioned as a kind of universities.

The other natural environment for dance education was the palace. Indeed, until to the beginning of the 20TH century, when western-type educational institutions were gradually adopted by the Southeast Asian countries, the court dances and dance dramas were taught in the palaces. This is still the case in Central Java, where the *kratons* or palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta continue their function as important cultural centres. The courtiers, court ladies and even the rulers themselves were often trained dancers. The fact that the Indian-influenced culture was originally adopted by the highest level of society in Southeast Asia, that is the ruling class, supports the assumption that the Indian-influenced dance tradition also formed a part of the court life even in earlier times.

Besides the temples and courts, there could have been educational institutions of other kinds where the transmission of the Indian tradition took place. This is supported by the fact that in South India, during the 8TH to the 11TH centuries, when its influence on Southeast Asia is known to have been considerable, there were Brahman institutions called *salai* or *ghatika*. Basing his evidence on several Indian sources Phillip B. Zarrilli has established (1998, 30–31) that in these kinds of institutions the students learned arts, such as painting, music, staging

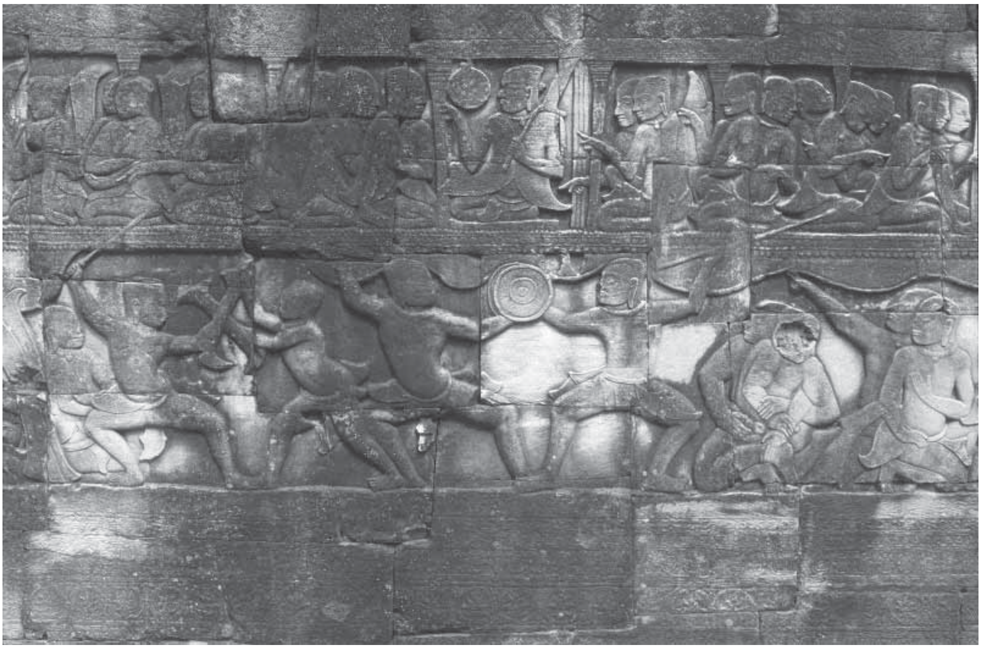


FIG 2/11 MOCK COMBAT OR TRAINING OF MARTIAL ARTS, BAYON, CAMBODIA, 13TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

plays and dancing. Many forms of martial arts were also taught, such as archery, use of swords and shields, daggers, sticks, lances as well as bare-hand fighting. Could it have been the case that among other aspects of South Indian culture the tradition of Brahmanic educational institutions was also adopted by the Southeast Asian kingdoms?

Bearing this possibility in mind, it is interesting to observe some of the dance-related reliefs, for example those in the 12TH century Bayon temple complex in Angkor. In one relief a mock combat or a martial art demonstration is shown [2/11]. The combat is observed by a sitting audience which seems to gesticulate knowingly when following the combat. The fighters are in the turned-out-legs position, which is regarded as the "most significant and long lasting influence" on Southeast Asian movement techniques (Sedyawati 1998, 10). Could this combat have taken place in a specific place dedicated to the art of fighting? The possibility of the existence of institutions where Indian-influenced dance and martial arts were taught side by side could partly explain the extremely close relationship of these skills in Southeast Asia even today.

So far we have discussed the transmission of Indian influence mainly in the terms of education. There are also other ways of cultural interaction, both material and immaterial. Let us consider first the immaterial cultural exchange. Not only did Brahmans and monk scholars travel, but so did artists carrying with them their skills and knowledge, whether it was a question of the art of architecture, sculpture, painting, music or dance. It is known, for example, that during the heyday of Sukhothai in Thailand craftsmen from Sri Lanka, also a predominantly Theravada Buddhist country, participated in the creation of the monuments of this Southeast Asian capital (Van Beek 1990, 110).

In the field of the performing arts we have clear evidence of artistic exchange between Southeast Asia and other regions from very early times. As early as 244 AD in Nanjing, in the then capital of China, an Office of Funan Music was set up. Funan was the earliest of all Indian-influenced kingdoms of Southeast Asia and it flourished in the south-eastern part of the mainland in the early centuries AD. Later Chinese sources mention that its musical tradition was cherished in China in as late as the 7TH century AD (Miksic 2003a, 9). According to other Chinese annals, a group of 32 dancers and musicians were sent from Upper Burma to the court of Tang China in 802 AD, and the Chinese court greatly appreciated their performances, which are known to have included Sanskrit words (Htin Aung 1937, 13; Singer 1995, 1).

There is even a reference of the 1960s (although at this moment still insufficiently verified) that a group of Cham dancers was sent to China and from there even further to the court of Japan (Royal Cambodian Ballet 1963, 9). The Champa kingdom, or rather a chain of kingdoms, flourished in the coastal regions of Vietnam from the 6TH to the 12TH centuries. This reference states that "(for) more than eight centuries Cham dancers and musicians performed, who were the descendants, or rather the heirs, of a troupe offered as a very precious gift by the king of Champa to the emperor of China, who later passed it on to the emperor of Japan."

The fact that the literary evidence stresses the cultural exchange between Southeast Asia and China is based on two factors. Firstly, due to the vassal relationship which many of the Southeast Asian kingdoms had with the court of China, both diplomatic missions and tributes were regularly sent to the Chinese court. Secondly, the dynastic annals recording these events belong to the long tradition of Chinese historic scholarship, which is usually very useful as source material, though of course they describe the history from the Chinese point of view.

The case with India is completely different. Although the contacts between India and Southeast Asia are self-evident, the Indian accounts of Southeast Asia are "couched in vague allusions and romantic fable" (Higham 2002, 235), typical of mythological literature. Thus our knowledge based on Indian textual sources concerning the actual cultural exchange between Southeast Asia and India, as well as about Southeast Asia in general, is very limited. We know, though, something about the exchange of artistic influences in the field of the performing arts between the regions of present-day Thailand and Sri Lanka.

As already mentioned, the cultural contacts between these countries were active, due to the sect of Buddhism they both shared. The Sri Lankan influence is crucial for Buddhist art in Thailand and even Sri Lankan craftsmen worked in its religious centres, but the exchange was not only a one-way process. Thai monks often visited Sri Lanka and in the 18TH century helped Sri Lankan monks to establish the annual *Perahera festival* in Kandy in its present form (Garnier 2004, 63). In this processional festivity, which originally had its roots in the Hindu tradition, the Buddha's tooth relic is carried around the city preceded by energetic *kandy* dancers [5/10]. This process of cultural exchange may have led to the development of the archaic *nora* tradition of South Thailand and Malaysia, with its undeniable resemblances to both the Kandy dance and the South Indian, Natyashastra-influenced traditions.

As the above quotation concerning the Cham dancers' journey to China and further to Japan probably makes clear, their art was not regarded merely as a kind of entertainment. In Asian, and specifically in the Southeast Asian context, many of the dance traditions were, and in some cases still are, regarded as sacred. For example in Central Java some of the dance forms, for instance a certain variation of the solemn and meditative *bedhaya*, a group dance generally performed by nine female court dancers, is defined as *pusaka*, a royal heirloom surrounded by a mystical aura. A similar magical power embodied in the dance traditions could have been one reason why the Tai of Ayutthaya, when they conquered Angkor in 1431, seized among other Khmer treasures probably also the dancers and their art forms (Mattani 1993, 39). Likewise the Burmese took the royal dancers with them back to Upper Burma when they, in their turn, conquered Ayutthaya in 1767 (Ibid., 46).

Thus it is clear that dancers and their traditions crisscrossed China and Southeast Asia, and especially within the region of Southeast Asia itself, profoundly influencing the development of traditions and their styles, at least at the court level. It is this interaction and cultural exchange within the region itself that should be kept in mind when one is focusing on the localisation process of Indian-influenced dance and dance images.

Owing to the lack of literary sources, as mentioned above, we have very meagre historical evidence of the concrete exchange of artists between Southeast Asia and India. One could, however, presume that dancers also travelled between these regions. Dance has formed an important part of temple rituals and court ceremonies both in India and Southeast Asia. Thus it would seem natural that dancers were sent from India to Southeast Asia and vice versa, although Southeast Asia did not have a vassal relationship with India as was often the case with China. In any case, religious or diplomatic missions could have included performing art troupes. The Brahmans and the monks, who went from India to Southeast Asia, could also have been accompanied by musicians and dancers.

We have so far discussed the transmission of the Indian tradition by means of education and immaterial exchange. There was also a very concrete, material exchange. As already noted above, it is assumed that the merchants, monks and pilgrims carried portable objects with them when arriving in or returning to Southeast Asia. For example the group of early Buddha statues related to the Amaravati style and found in the coastal regions of Southeast Asia is, as already mentioned above, a good example of this kind of objects. Dance-related sculptures, paintings and carvings could have served as models, if not always for the dance itself, but at least for the iconography of the dance images.

Two examples will clarify the phenomenon. In U Thong, in the central plain of present-day Thailand, a small earring in the shape of a kinnari has been excavated. It has been dated to the earliest centuries AD and it is believed to originate from India (Gossling 2004, 38). As discussed in Chapter 2.2 these half-bird half-human creatures were often depicted in dance-related poses. Although this kinnari earring is only one isolated example of small objects imported from India, it is obvious that similar kinds of objects have existed in much greater quantity. These kinds of small, portable objects and sculptures may have served as models for local artists when they started to create Buddhist and Hindu imagery, including a substantial repertoire of dance images.

Among these portable objects brought from India to Southeast Asia there were, without any doubt, large quantities of manuscripts. The Brahmans, monks and pilgrims brought them from the holy centres of India. These manuscripts were among the treasures of now vanished libraries.

Manuscripts could also contain things other than pure textual information. For example, the Indian manuals for architects and sculptors include graphic designs and iconographical models. Other manuscripts were sometimes, at least partly, illustrated too. In the collection of the British Museum there is a pair of wooden covers belonging to a 14TH century Buddhist manuscript (Buddhism: Art and Faith 1985, 73–74). The covers are painted with lively scenes of dancers and dancing musicians and it is most plausible that the illustrations of these kinds of manuscripts and their covers could have served as models for the Southeast Asian artists (Stadtner 2005, 75).

I would like to propose one more explanation as to how the portable objects could have influenced the development of Southeast Asian arts including dance and dance imagery. Although no clear textual evidence exists to support this theory, it would be possible that the storytellers' devices, such as picture panels and scrolls and maybe shadow puppets, were among the objects which found their way from India to Southeast Asia. There exist, in the collections of the Australian National Gallery and the Victorian and Albert Museum in London approximately 4,5–5 metre long cloths showing scenes from the Ramayana. They were found in Sulawesi and Bali, in present-day Indonesia, and were imported from India; they all seem to have been produced in the 18TH and the 19TH centuries (Maxwell 1990, 155; Guy 1998, 117). Whether they were used as storytellers' devices or theatrical backdrops is not known. Merely their existence seems, however, to prove that movable objects such as renderings of the Indian epics on cloths could indeed have been one way to popularise these stories in Southeast Asia. This possible process could be summarised as follows:

(A) The Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and other texts were adopted in Southeast Asia. In India many of these texts were, and sometimes still are, performed orally by storytellers. As discussed in Chapter 2.3, it is known that early Indian literary sources mention picture showmen, who used picture panels and scrolls to visualise their stories.

(B) As pointed out in the same connection, it is highly probable that these panels and scrolls served as prototypes of early Indian narrative reliefs.

(C) A similar process is also clearly recognisable in Southeast Asia. In the next chapter the phenomenon is considered in connection with the narrative reliefs of Javanese temples, whereas the chapter dedicated to the royal temple of Wat Phra Keo in Bangkok will discuss the phenomenon in the region of Thailand. The possibility of a similar kind of process will be considered in connection with the narrative reliefs of Angkor Wat.

One hypothesis of the present study is that the Hindu Brahmans and the Buddhist monks who arrived in Southeast Asia were accompanied by storytellers who were able to recite the Indian texts. According to established practice they often used devices to visualise the events of these texts to illiterate people. These devices, whether they were panels or scrolls, could have acted as stimulus when the Southeast Asian artists created the narrative reliefs for local temples and stupas. This could partly explain the rather complex narrative techniques and the crystallised style of these, sometimes huge, series of reliefs. Without any preceding visual tradition it is hardly possible that such a phenomenon would have occurred.

In Southeast Asia, as in India, the temple reliefs themselves were also used as a kind of narrators' device, carved in stone, when learned monks or temple guides took the role of the storyteller to explain the stories for pilgrims and other visitors. Later, in the times when the exchange process with India was not so active anymore, local styles in the storytellers panels, scrolls and shadow puppets became dominant, indicating that they were executed by Southeast Asian artists themselves. This resulted in the localisation of the styles of temple reliefs as well.

This phenomenon is clearly evident in the case of the Javanese temple reliefs. For this reason, and also because the Javanese dance-related reliefs give much important information about the process of the transmission of Indian influence, it is time to make a brief sojourn in Java, after which the focus will turn on the actual subject of this study, i.e. the dance images in the temples of mainland Southeast Asia.

2.6 An Example: Transformation of Indian-Influenced Dance Images in Java

For several reasons it is worthwhile considering the development which took place in Java during the so-called Central Javanese period from the 8TH to the 10TH century and during the East Javanese period from the 11TH to the 15TH century AD. Firstly, the dance-related images found in the Javanese religious structures are exceptionally numerous and, secondly, as already mentioned in Chapter 2.1, research into Javanese dance images is already an established discipline. Moreover, it is useful to dwell on this subject for a while because the developments in Java can be regarded as more or less analogous to the development in mainland Southeast Asia and because the regions had, as will be seen, political and cultural contacts with each other.

At the beginning of the Central Javanese period, in the early 8TH century AD, the region was ruled by the Buddhist Shailendra dynasty and the Hindu Sanjaya dynasty. Thus the area was divided into two cultural spheres. The Southern part was under Buddhist influence while the Northern part was under Hindu control. From c. 830 onward the Hindu expansion was predominant, although there seems to have existed remarkable tolerance toward Buddhism. The Central Javanese period ended for reasons not exactly known, and the transfer of political power from Central Java to East Java took place in the 11TH to the early 13TH century.

Central Javanese architecture shows clear Indian influence. It is believed that Javanese temples or *candis*[20] were designed by learned Brahman priests and Buddhist monks, who acted as the scholars and scientists of their age and who either possessed the Indian shastra manuals or at least were familiar with them (Hall 1981, 20; Holt 1969, 39). Jaques Dumarcay has studied the Javanese temple reliefs in search of information about the wooden architecture which preceded the surviving stone structures and has now disappeared. He states (1986, 1, 31) that the early wooden temples must have been constructed according to architectural canons derived from southern India, more specifically from the Pallava prototypes.

The function of the religious buildings in Java, as in most places and periods on the whole, was to accommodate the rituals characteristic of the prevailing religion and/or its specific sect. The Hindu and the Buddhist rites in Java, as well as in the other areas of Southeast Asia where Indian influence has been dominant were, according to Dumarcay, mainly of two kinds. Firstly, respect had to be shown to the principal statue or statues and, secondly, the circumambulation of the building had to be done. This had a decisive influence on the pictorial and sculptural programmes of the religious structures. The altars were the places for the statues of the main and secondary deities or the Buddha. These statues are mostly shown en face in order to enable the deity to "appear" (*darshan*) before the worshipper. On the other hand, the terraces of Javanese temples, where the ritual circumambulation (*paradakshina*) took place, formed a natural location for the often long series of narrative and/or didactic reliefs.

The rituals as well as the iconographical needs of the predominantly Shivaistic Hinduism practised in Java generated a specific form of temple, which remained in its basic structure more or less unchanged since it was crystallised in the candis of the Gedong Songo group at the beginning of the 8TH century (Dumarcay 1986, 16–17). Characteristic of Hindu candis, or ancient temples, are cruciform plans enabling the four main statues to be correctly located. The exterior of a Hindu candi is a tower-like structure with a dominant foundation, a platform and a body crowned by several false storeys.

The largest of all Central Javanese Hindu temples, and indeed of all Javanese Hindu temples, is the Loro Jonggaran group, also known as Prambanan. It was constructed c. 835–856 and it comprises altogether 227 candi structures [2/12]. The three main candis are dedicated to the Hindu *trimurti* of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu. The central candi, dedicated to Shiva, rises to a height of 47 metres. In the three main candis the circumambulation could take place, not only on the platform level as is the case with the smaller candis, but also on the upper terraces. They are decorated with narrative series of reliefs which, in the temples dedicated to Shiva and Brahma, tell the story of the Ramayana, and in the candi dedicated to Vishnu, illustrate the events of the Krishna cycle.

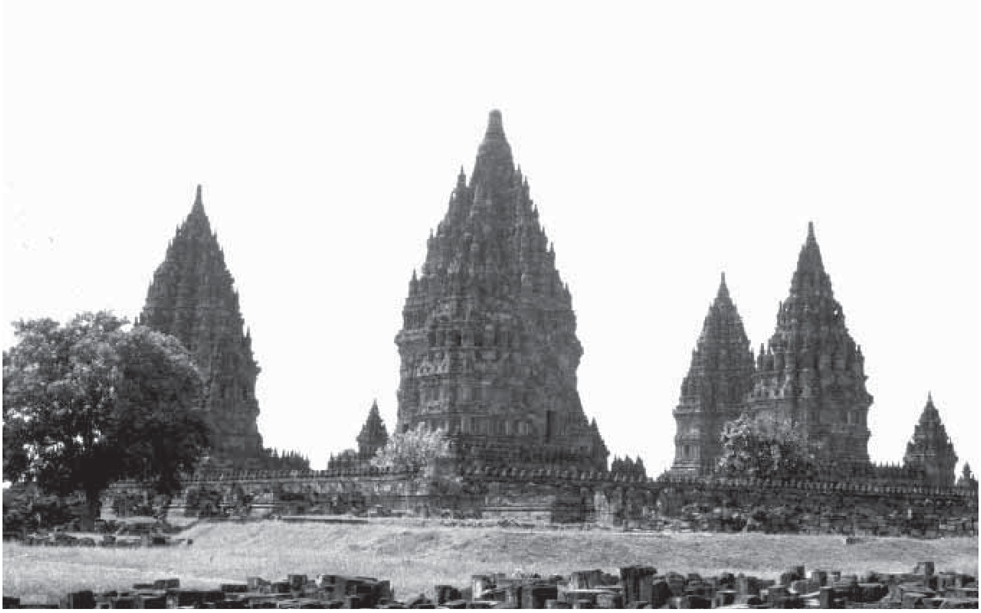


FIG 2/12 CENTRAL TOWERS OF CANDI LORO JONGGARAN (PRAMBANAN), CENTRAL JAVA, 835–856.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

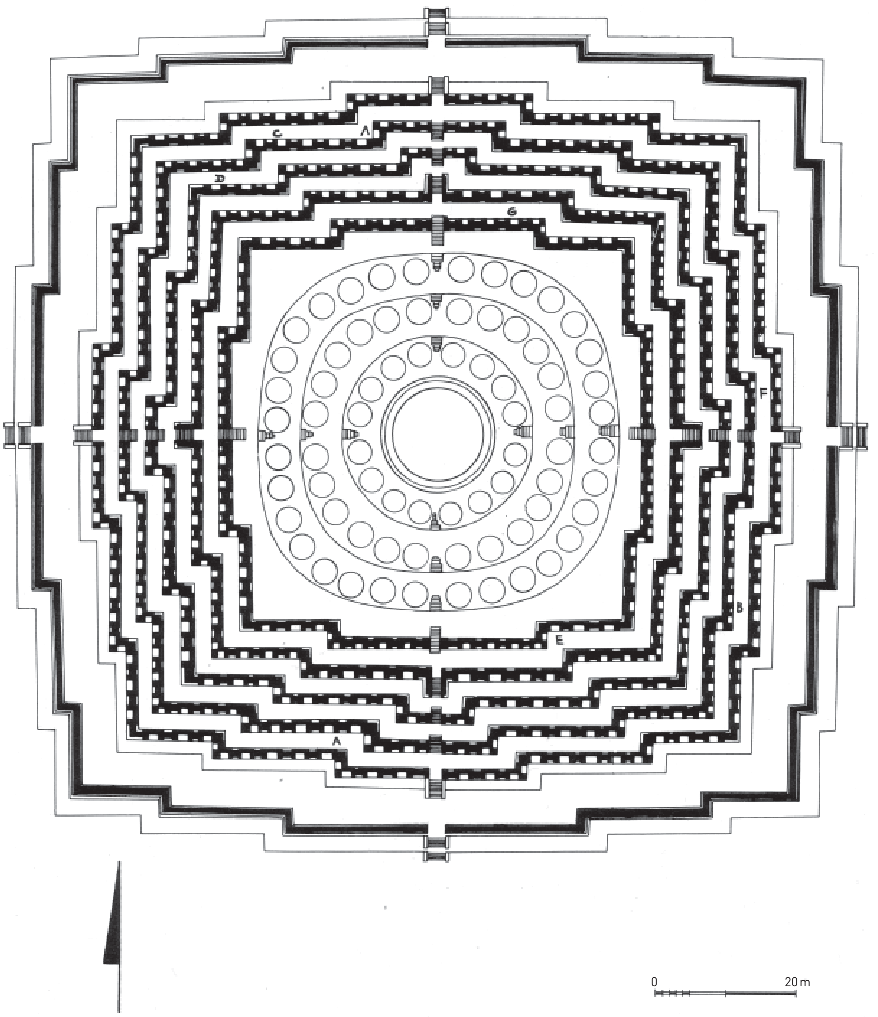


FIG 2/13 PLAN OF THE BOROBUDUR STUPA, CENTRAL JAVA, 9th CENTURY. *DUMARCAY 1978.*

The Buddhist shrines, on the other hand, did not follow this rather unchanged tradition of Javanese Hindu temples. Both the Buddhist temple architecture and the iconography changed with time. The plans of the Buddhist temple complexes were affected by complicated mandala formations. The development culminated in the stupa of Borobodur, which, in fact, forms a huge three-dimensional mandala with a plan of 113 by 113 metres [2/13]. Started in c. 775 its construction was intended to be a Hindu temple but later the plans were, however, changed and the Buddhist Borobudur got its final form in c. 835.

The eight terraces of Bororobudur, with the crowning main stupa at the top surrounded by minor stupas, form an artificial stone mountain. The symbolism of Mount Meru, as well as other Buddhist cosmological features, is apparent (Miksic 1991, 30–50). The lower terraces are built on a square plan symbolising the earth, whereas the upper terraces with stupas are circular and represent the heavens. The lower terraces were meant for circumambulation and were decorated with some 1300 relief panels of altogether 2,5 kilometres in length. As a whole, the structure forms a huge cosmological symbol and circumambulation through the terraces was intended to show the devotee, with the aid of the reliefs, the path to enlightenment.

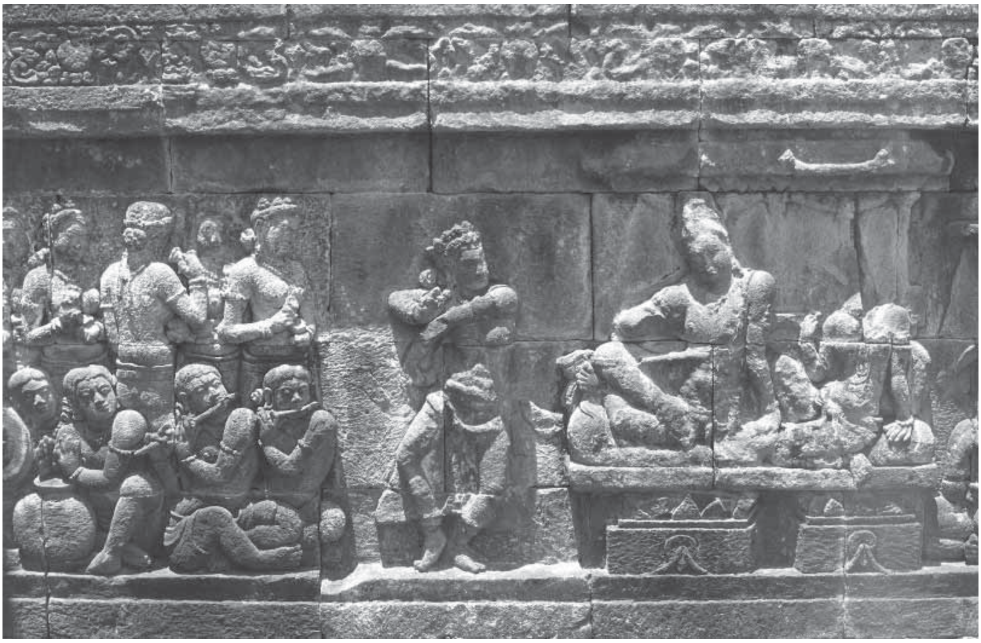
The reliefs on the base of the structure, now mainly hidden with a layer of stone, depict the sphere of desire (*kamadhatu*) with events from human life with its good and bad deeds as well as the corresponding punishments. The square terraces symbolise the sphere of form (*rupadhatu*). Here the reliefs depict the Jatakas or stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations, events from the Gautama Buddha's life, episodes from the life of bodhisattva Sudhana and finally several enthroned Buddha figures celebrated by heavenly beings. The circular upper terraces, with their hollow, punctured stupa structures enclosing Buddha statues together with the crowning central stupa, represent the sphere of formlessness (*arupadhatu*).

Most of the reliefs found in Loro Jonggaran and Borobudur are carved into stone bands or rectangular panels in contrast with some Indian temple reliefs, which can grow in an organic manner all over the architectural structure. The style of the Central Javanese reliefs reflects the Indian prototypes but it is softer, even sensual, and more restrained than in contemporaneous Indian sculpture. With many realistically depicted details these reliefs serve as an invaluable source material for diverse fields of research. What do they tell us about dance?

Let us firstly consider how the dance images are distributed and how they fit in with the classification system established in Chapter 2.3. At Borobudur dance images can be found in great numbers in the narrative series of reliefs on the walls and on the inner balustrades of the lower terraces. They belong mainly to the category of (A) dance scenes, which, as already mentioned, provide plenty of useful information, not only about the extent of Indian influence in the dance itself, but also about the social function of the dance, the instruments used to accompany it, the dance costumes etc [2/10, 2/14].

Among the Ramayana reliefs carved in the inner balustrade of the upper terraces of the two main candi towers, candi Shiva and candi Brahma of the Loro Jonggaran group, only one dance scene can be identified, whereas reliefs belonging to the type of (II) dance-related images in a narrative context can be found in abundance. On the outer balustrade of candi Siwa there are 62 reliefs, already mentioned in sub-chapter 2.3, showing dancers and musicians [2/15]. According to Alessandra Iyer (1998) they depict Indian karanas. If this assumption is correct, they belong to the type of (E) "Natyashastra-related dance images". As all the reliefs discussed here are still *in situ* in the temples, they also naturally belong to the category of (III) "dance images in an architectural context".

Many of these dance images clearly reflect Indian influence. Edi Sedyawati has identified the Indian-influenced dance images by comparing their standing and foot positions as well as arm and hand gestures with those described in the Natyashastra (1982, 61–63). Kapila Vatsyayan has compared (1975) the candi Loro Jonggaran's karana reliefs with Indian ones and has come to conclusion that the possible prototypes for the Javanese karana depictions could originate from the western part of South India, i.e. from the Aihole and Pattadakal areas. She points out that two specific karana types dominate the reliefs in Loro Jonggaran, *ghurnita* and *valita*, which are described in the Natyashastra. As her analysis is of the utmost importance for this study as a whole, I would like to cite her observations:



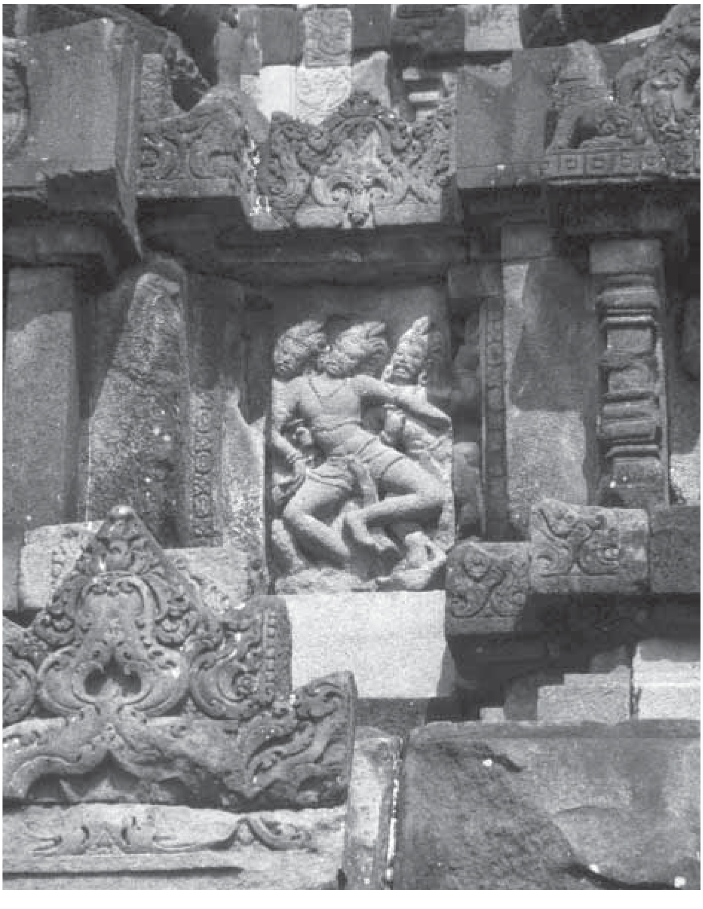


FIG 2/14
DANCER PERFORMING
AT COURT, BOROBUDUR,
CENTRAL JAVA, 9TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

FIG 2/15
RELIEF PROBABLY SHOWING AN
INDIAN-INFLUENCED KARANA,
CANDI LORO JONGGARAN
(PRAMBANAN), 835–856.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

> The common feature of both these *karana-s* is the common *suci chari* position and the names are indicative of bending swivelling and turning around. Innumerable examples from sculpture of India, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia can be identified vaguely as depicting a pose, whose chief characteristic is a triangular position of the lower limbs, akin --- to the demi-plié of Western ballet. Both feet (or certainly one) are turned out and the knees are bent sideways. This is the general *kshipta* position of the knees. Indeed this fundamental position becomes so common in the whole region after the seventh century that the sole reason for identifying a particular sculpture as dancing figure has been the presence or absence of this fundamental position. Nonetheless, the pose does not become a conventional stereotype until the seventh-eight century in India.
> (Vatsyayan 1977b, 3)

Alessandra Iyer has further analysed (1998) Loro Jonggaran's karana panels in relation to the Natyashastra's karana system and proposed more detailed proof about their interrelation. She has applied reconstructed drawings of the Natyashatra's dance technique created by the Indian dancer and scholar Padma Subrahmanyam. Using this method, Iyer has tried to identify the karanas depicted in candi Loro Jonggaran and to confirm the existence of a deep interrelatedness between the art of dance and sculpture in Java as well as the connections between Central Javanese and Indian dance traditions. She also proposes, according to an earlier identification (Stutterhaim 1989), that some of these karana reliefs depict Shiva's tandava dance. In an iconographical sense this would seem logical, since the central candi, where the karana reliefs are found, is indeed dedicated to Shiva. Unfortunately the panels were misplaced during the restoration project of the temple and thus their sequence is no longer the original one (Iyer 1998, 26–28).

Although fairly many of the Central Javanese dance images show undeniable Indian influence, it does not mean that all of them are related to the Indian tradition. Among the dance-related images one can identify several types of dances or even dance traditions, such as: (A) dance rituals, (B) communal dances, (C) recreational dances, (D) martial arts dances (E) acrobatics, and (F) court dances (Sedyawati 1982, 1998). As a general rule, the dances performed in a court context show a clear Indian influence (group f) [2/14]. However, many of the dances, most often those belonging to groups (A)–(E) do not seem to bear any resemblance to the Indian tradition and they may represent local, indigenous dance traditions (Sedyawati 1982, 73).

Furthermore, Sedyawati concludes, while specifically observing the dance-related reliefs of Borobudur, that the dance "represents either meritorious or debased behaviour. Meritorious, exalted behaviour is represented by the standard classical Hindu style, whereas base deeds are reflected in non-standard styles." (Ibid., 76). This phenomenon, i.e. the moral qualities of movements[21], which corresponds with the hierarchical world-view of the Indian-influenced cosmology, will be further analysed in connection with dance images in the temple context in mainland Southeast Asia. As a whole, this phenomenon will be referred to in the present study as the "hierarchy of movement".

A crucial question, when one is analysing a dance image, is always whether it portrays an actual dance performed during the period when the image was created, or whether it represents fixed iconographical conventions created to depict dance in general or a certain dance form specifically. One could, for example, easily speculate on the possibility as to whether the Indian-related dance images could belong to a borrowed iconographical sculptural tradition originating in India and as to wether the dances they depict were not necessarily practised in Central Java at all. However, there is a quantity of evidence which indicates that this was not the case and that the Indian-influenced dance tradition was actually practised during the Central Javanese period.

Even a superficial observation of the reliefs makes it clear that despite their sophisticated style they give very accurate information owing to their realistically depicted details. In the case of the dance-related reliefs we can find, for example, minute portrayals of easily recognisable Javanese musical instruments. In addition, the Brahman figures supporting some of the dancers seem in their animated poses to be well observed portrayals. Above all, the skilful and convincing depiction of varied movements of dance itself suggests that the dance images are not merely repeating iconographical models or textual rules but, in fact, are based on actual dance performances.

There is, however, one exception. The only actual dance scene depicted in the Ramayana reliefs of the candi Loro Jonggaran shows a coronation ceremony, where a vigorous sword and shield dance is performed by a female dancer [2/16]. Edi Sedyawati (1993, 183) has analysed this dance image that has often been referred to (Holt 1967, 120; Stutterheim 1989, Plate VIIe). She has confirmed its connection with the Natyashastra tradition. Thus it could represent an actual dance in vogue during the Central Javanese period. On the other hand, an exactly similar

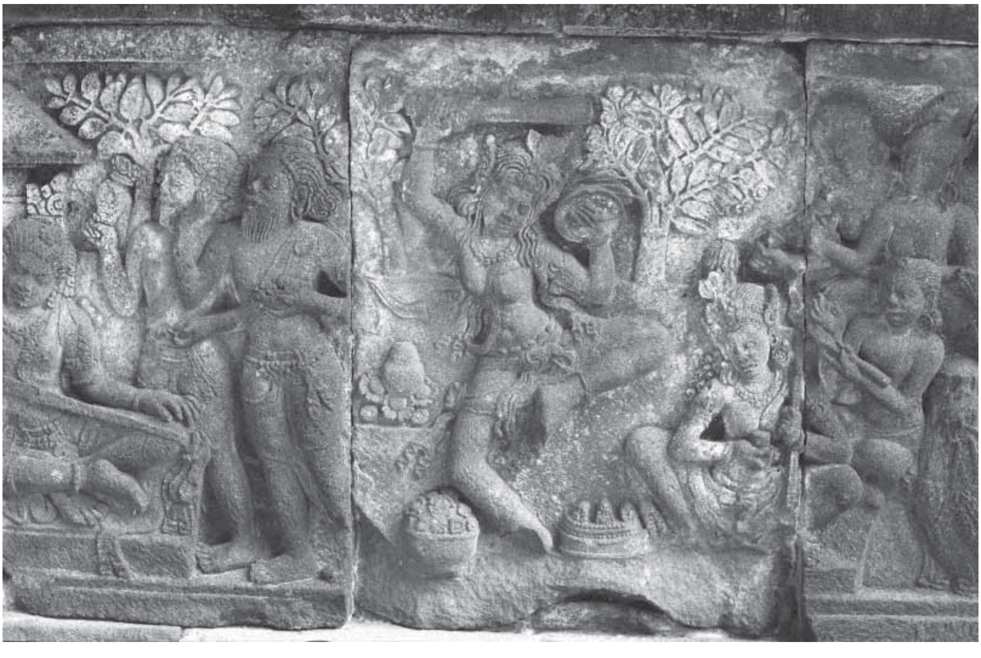


FIG 2/16 DANCING GODDESS, CANDI LORO JONGGARAN (PRAMBANAN), 835—856. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.*

kind of figure, in the same pose and wearing similar clothes and jewellery, embossed on a gold plate found from a Mon site of Si Thep in Thailand [3/21] can be identified (Dhida 199, 133). On similar small gold plaques, found at the same site, the Buddha or Brahmin gods are depicted according to the same then-established iconographical tradition. This suggests that the dancing female figure may also be based on the same visual tradition.

This dancing female warrior from the Ramayana series seems, so far, to be the only dance image from the Central Javanese period which could be traced back to a direct iconographic model, while other reliefs seem to be based on actual living dance traditions. This is further supported by the fact that the reliefs indicate that sometimes the Indian-influenced and indigenous dances were performed side by side and that in some of the Indian-influenced dances a dance scarf is used. A scarf is very rarely used in the Indian Natyashastra-related dances, whereas it came to be an inseparable element of the Javanese dances of later periods. This indicates that the use of a scarf was indigenous in its origin and was also adopted by the Javanese Indian-influenced court tradition (Sedyawati 1998, 73–75).

This intermingling of Javanese indigenous and Indian-derived elements strongly seems to support the idea that the dance reliefs, in fact, are based on the actual dance traditions of the period, because iconographical models or manuals originating in India do not know this kind of combinations of traditions exactly. Furthermore, this fact that two (or more) traditions were living side by side and merging with each other inevitably leads to the realisation of a mechanism so crucial for the localization process of Indian tradition and prototypes in Southeast Asia, i.e. the two-way exchange of influences.

Regarding Indian-influenced dance images, Alessandra Iyer in her study (1998, 199) of the candi Loro Jonggaran's karana reliefs has gone even so far as to hint at the distinct possibility that serial representation of karanas in relief form could have been "recycled into India" from Loro Jonggaran. This she supports by the fact that the karana reliefs of Loro Jonggaran predate the earliest known karana reliefs in India by 100 to 200 years. The idea is certainly interesting and brave. This author would not, however, go so far because of the fact that wooden temple structures were built, as mentioned above, both in South India as well as in Java before the present stone structures were constructed. They were also most probably decorated with carved reliefs. This practice continues in India even today in the form of, often huge wooden temple wagons, which are moved around the city during religious festivals. It is thus very probable that the series of karana reliefs have a longer history in India, since the present, still existing series reliefs, carved in stone, could have been preceded by wooden ones.

What is certain, according to the Central Javanese reliefs, however, is that the two-way process was going on in the island of Java itself, at least in the fields of dance and image-making. The indigenous and Indian-influenced dance forms had already influenced each other when the reliefs were executed while the Indian tradition was, at least at the court level, the dominant one. The process of interaction continued during the East Javanese period, as will be discussed next, but in such a way that the indigenous tradition started to overshadow the Indian-derived imagery.

From the early 10th century onward the Central Javanese kings focused their attention on East Java and in 929 they seem to have almost abandoned Central Java. There has been much specultaion about the reason for this drastic change. Maybe a volcanic erution could have been the reason, which was interpreted as a warning signal from the gods. The East Javanese period can be divided into four sub-periods.

During the first period, 929–1049, alliances with the Balinese court were founded and contacts with China were re-established. In 990 a war was declared between East Java and the Srivijaya maritime empire with its centre in Sumatra, which may have led to the destruction of East Java. A son of a Balinese prince and a Javanese princess, King Airlangga, reunited East Java by 1035. He divided his kingdom between his two sons, and from 1049 to 1222 the Western part, called Kediri, was the dominating one and consequently the period is called the Kediri period. Literature flourished but no remaining temples have survived. During the Singhasari period 1222–1292 Bali was made a vassal kingdom but the end of the period was overshadowed by the Mongol invasions. During the Majapahit period 1292–1500 the East Javanese culture reached its zenith. The second half of the 14th century in particular saw the flourishing of both literature and architecture.

The religion of the East Javanese period was syncretistic in character. The cults of Shiva and the Buddha merged together and resulted in new forms of iconography. Sometimes temple complexes contained shrines for both the Buddha and Shiva (Klokke 1998, 354). Meanwhile, the indigenous ancestor worship merged into the Indian-originated religions, creating a god-king cult in which the ruler was seen as an earthly incarnation of a god and dynastic temple complexes were built in which the deceased king or queen was worshipped in the form of a statue.

To a certain extent the East Javanese temples followed the Central Javanese models. The basic structure of a candi tower remained the same although there were also distinctive differences. An East Javanese candi usually has a high base consisting of several terraces with a narrow staircase leading to the slender body of the temple. Its roof has not as clearly demarcated false storeys as its Central Javanese counterparts, and a square pinnacle crowns its tapering roof structure. Most of the surviving East Javanese temples are made out of stone, but many brick and wooden structures were also constructed.

The free-standing cult images of the period do follow the Central Javanese, Indian-influenced tradition although it is probable that the style and iconographical models were no longer derived from South India, but rather from the Pala-Sena kingdoms in eastern India (Dumarcay 1986). A more drastic change occurred, however, in the style of the narrative reliefs, which were carved on the bases and the balustrades of the outer walls of the temples. They were executed as separate panels, as in the Central Javanese period or as continuous reliefs. From the beginning of the 13th century they no more echoed the Indian-influenced, round and sensual and even realistic "classical" style but were carved in a completely new style, known as the "*wayang style*" [2/17].

Wayang is a generic term, which has several meanings. It means a "puppet"; it can refer to a shadow and it also refers to a performance. Generally, the shadow play, *wayang kulit* is seen as the origin of the whole "wayang family". It includes several theatrical genres from the storyteller's scroll performances, *wayang beber*, to the three-dimensional wooden rod puppet theatre, *wayang golek*, and finally to the court dance drama *wayang wong*, in which the living

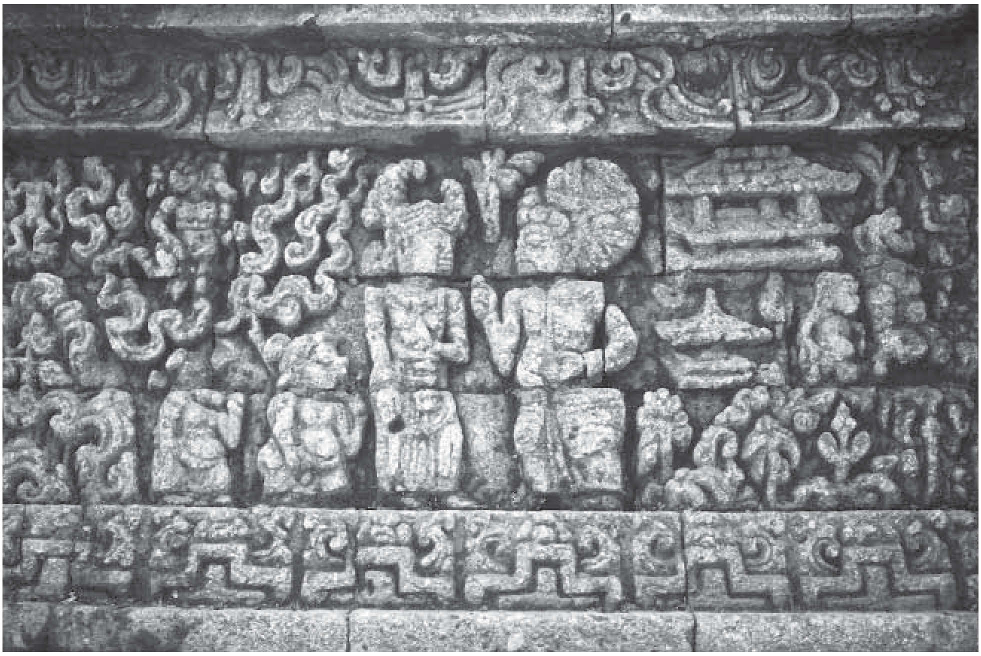


FIG 2/17 WAYANG STYLE RELIEF, CANDI JAGO, EAST JAVA, 13TH—14TH CENTURIES. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1995.*

actors take the place of the wayang puppets. All these theatre forms have much in common. Their principles of dramatic action, stylisation of movement, characterisation, costuming, basic role types etc. clearly stem from the same tradition and conventions. The earliest record confirming the existence of shadow theatre in Java dates back to 907 AD (Holt 1967, 128).

The present-day Balinese puppets represent an archaic style, which bear a clear resemblance to the East Javanese wayang style reliefs [2/18]. The Javanese puppets are, in turn, believed to have evolved into their extremely elongated and almost non-figurative style during the period of Muslim rule, which put an end to the East Javanese period by the end of the 15TH century. It is generally believed that the extreme stylisation of Javanese puppets reflects Islam's ban on making a human figure 22 [2/19].

Like the shadow puppets, especially those from Bali, the figures in the narrative panels of the East Javanese temples also follow the conventions of the wayang tradition. The torso is shown frontally, whereas the head, legs and feet are depicted in profile. The thin arms and small hands hang down stiffly alongside the torso if they are not lifted and shown in any of the wayang theatre's limited mudra-like gestures. The whole treatment of the reliefs is flat while the large, decorative headdresses of the figures, the Chinese-style cloud motifs and the stylised elements of the landscape often fill the backgrounds. Besides the stylisation of the human figures, the dwarfish servant figures, the *punakawan*, and the use of the tree-of-life motif as a dividing agent between the scenes also seem to connect reliefs with the wayang kulit shadow theatre.

The stories depicted in the East Javanese series of narrative reliefs are based on the localised versions of the Ramayana and other Indian mythological themes found in the Old Javanese

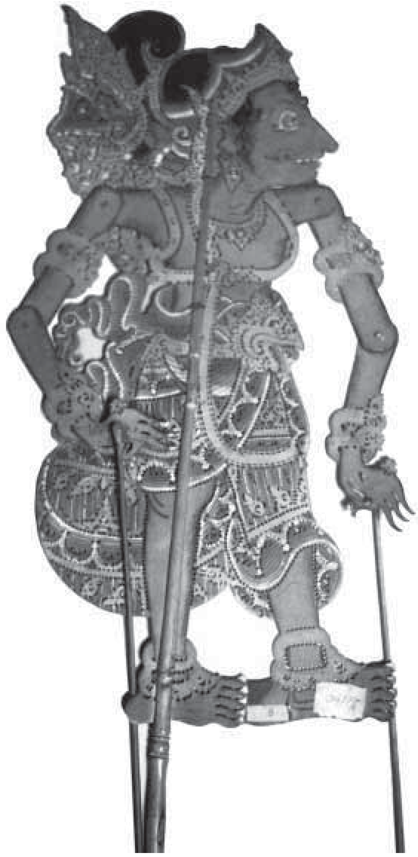


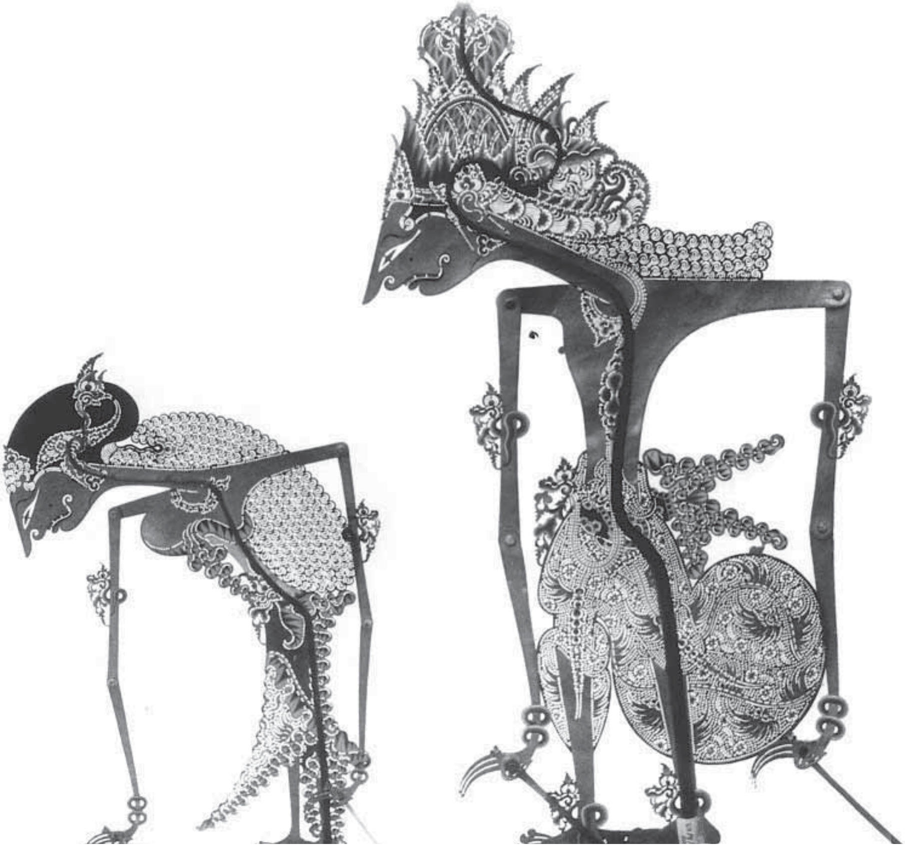
FIG 2/18
BALINESE WAYANG KULIT
SHADOW PUPPET, 20th CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1983.

FIG 2/19
SITA AND RAMA, JAVANESE WAYANG
KULIT PUPPETS, 20th CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1983.

texts. The stories that originated in India were, by this time, to a great extent merged with local stories and embedded in the local cultural climate. One can recognise a localisation process of the same kind both in the style of the reliefs as well as in the literary themes they depict. The mythological stories were retold and elaborated by local storytellers and court poets and the sculptural portrayals of these stories were also localised. Thus the reliefs lost the style and iconography derived from India during the Central Javanese period.

It is interesting to compare the Ramayana series of reliefs from the Central Javanese candi Loro Jonggaran with the East Javanese narrative reliefs. The Central Javanese Ramayana panels make full use of the Natyshastra-related poses, the conventional ways of sitting and standing, and especially the dynamic body positions which are related to martial arts, such as launching weapons. Common positions are those denoting archery as an activity typical of Prince Rama, the central hero of the epic [2/20]. These same Indian-related elements are repeated in many of the narrative temple reliefs and paintings, which will be discussed later. It is assumed that the figures in Loro Jonggaran's Ramayana panels were expected to emanate *bhava* and generate *rasa* as stated by the Natyashastra (Sedyawati 1993, 176).

On the other hand, most of this Natyashastra-related vocabulary in the East Javanese reliefs is no longer recognisable. Neither the stylisation of the figures nor the poses and sentiments



are derived from the Indian tradition but probably from the local theatrical practices (Sedyawati 1999, 11). The question naturally arises: as the style of the reliefs clearly shares many characteristics with the still extant wayang tradition, could it have been directly influenced by one or several genres of the wayang family? Because the stylisation of the human figures seems so clearly to imitate the poses and bodies of the shadow puppets it would seem logical that wayang kulit puppets served as prototypes for the figures of the narrative reliefs. On the other hand, the storytellers' scrolls of wayang beber tradition also utilised the more or less same kind of style. The history of scroll performances may be as long as the history of wayang kulit[23].

The whole question of the prototypes of the narrative reliefs is a crucial one for understanding the transmission of Indian influence and its gradual localisation in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia. Unfortunately no definitive answers will be available. For example, the earliest surviving Ramayana reliefs in India are the terracotta panels from the fifth-century Gupta period. From the same period but from the 6TH century there survives a series of rectangular stone panels, at least in their shape similar to those of the candi Loro Jonggaran (Dehejia, 1994: 10).

As has already been discussed several times, the early Indian narrative reliefs may have their prototypes in portable storytellers' devices, such as panels and scrolls. These together with manuscripts could have found their way to Java and other parts of Southeast Asia, where

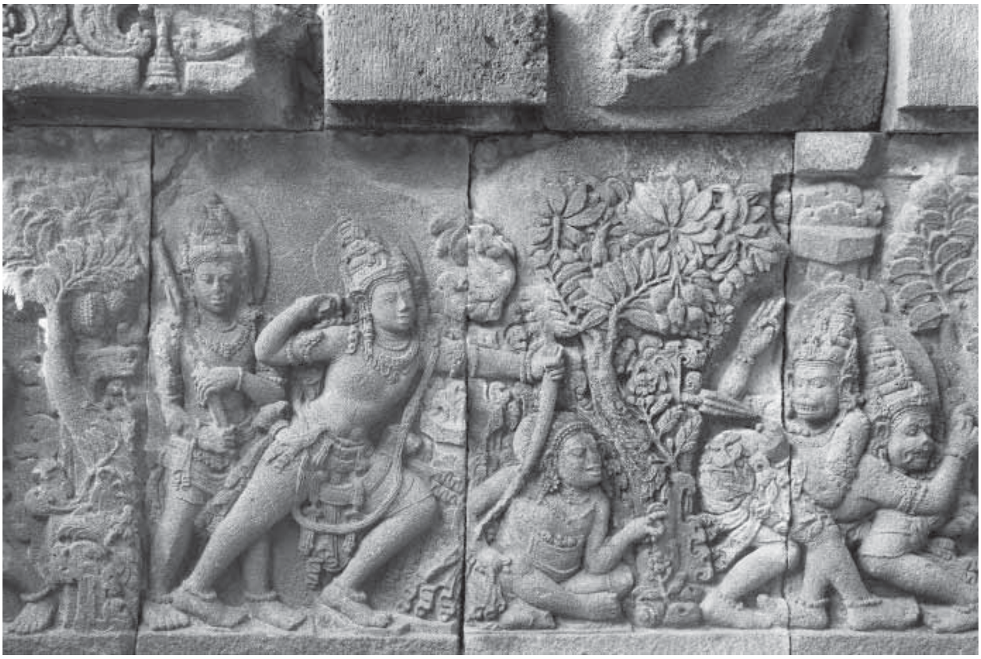


FIG 2/20 RAMA AS ARCHER. CANDI LORO JONGGARAN (PRAMBANAN), CENTRAL JAVA, 835–856.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

they served as models for local artists. This is supported by the fact, as mentioned above, that centuries-old, long cloths imported from India, and decorated with scenes from the Ramayana, have been found in Bali and Sulawesi. As the sway of direct Indian influence diminished during the East Javanese periods, the literary, visual and bodily expressions of the heritage that originated in Indian were localised through the long interaction process between the indigenous and Indian traditions.

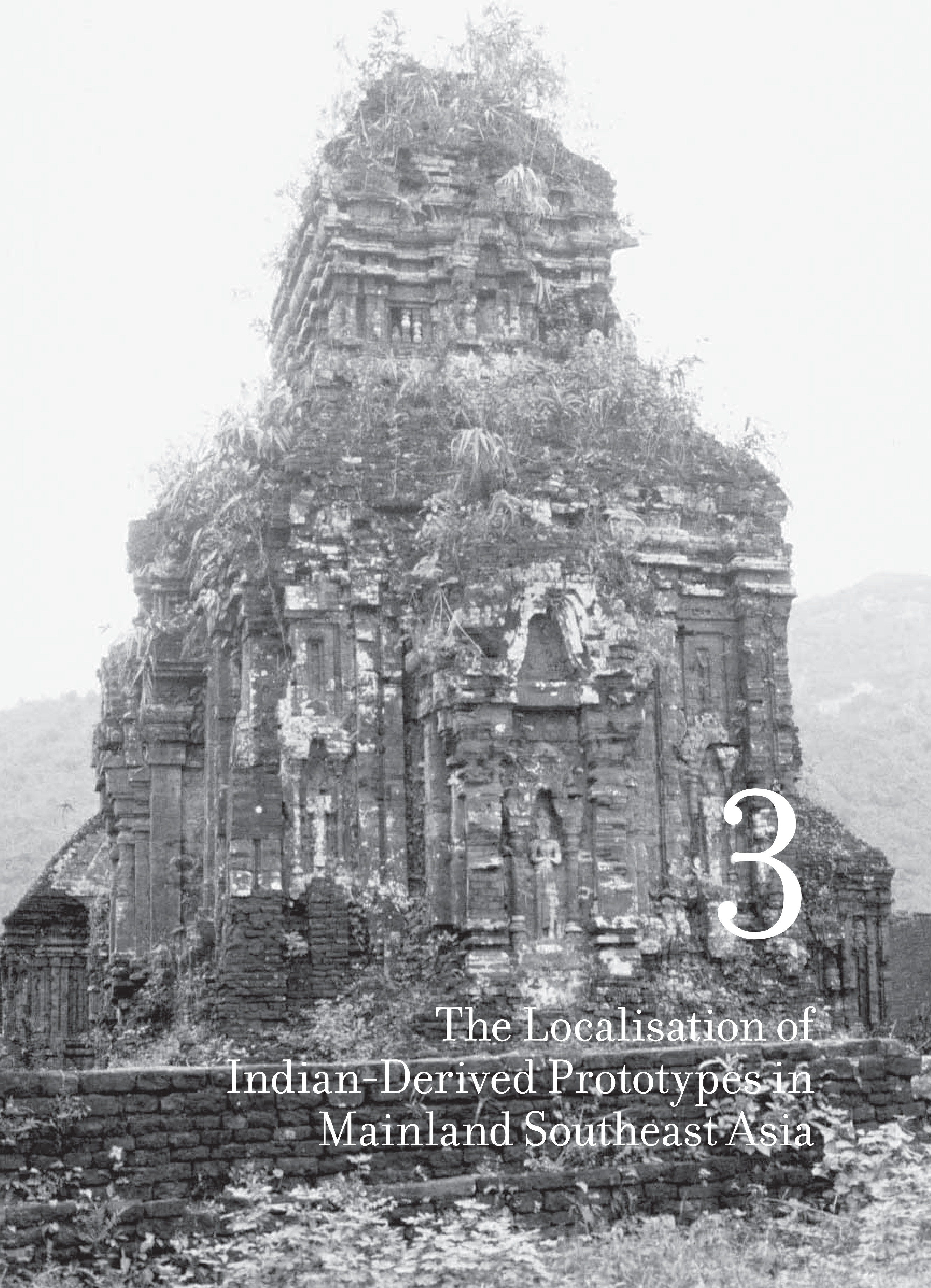
Many Indian-influenced elements can still be recognised in the present-day Javanese dance techniques, especially in standing positions and in some of the mudra-related hand gestures. However, the present forms of court dance also reflect, in their static poses, characterisation and conception of the human body, the models crystallised in the East Javanese narrative reliefs. The general outline of the long process of the merging of the Indian-influenced and indigenous dance and visual traditions in Java could be summarised as follows:

Before the 8TH century AD traditions of Indian literature, architecture, and dance were adopted through the transmission process described above. This is supported by the appearance of early art works, often portable, which were related to the Indian tradition, such as Buddha statues with their rasa expressions and mudra gestures. From circa 730 onwards there appeared the first surviving Indian-influenced stone sanctuaries. They were based on earlier wooden structures, which bare resemblances to South-Indian prototypes. From the 9TH century onwards the stone temples and stupas were decorated with series of reliefs which include many dance-related images. They combine both Indian-influenced and indigenous dance poses and scenes, and they give several kinds of information about the dance practices of the period:

During the Central Javanese period from the 8th to the 10th century Brahmans taught or accompanied dancers, who performed Indian-influenced dance. Indian-influenced dance was performed mainly within the upper strata of society. Indigenous dances were performed as rituals and entertainment, often representing "low" culture compared with the Indian-related courtly "high" culture. Thus the dance gained "moral" connotations. Indigenous and Indian-influenced dances were sometimes performed side by side and they influenced each other.

During the transitory period from the 10th to 13th century the direct Indian influence diminished and in the East Javanese period from the 13th to 15th century the narrative temple reliefs abandoned the Indian-influenced style and dance vocabulary in favour of a new wayang style, whose characterisation and rendering of scenes was based on indigenous theatrical traditions. During the Islamic period from the 16th century onward the present-day dance styles started to evolve. They combine elements from the Indian-influenced tradition with the overall aesthetics and characterisation of the wayang tradition. In painting the wayang style continued to predominate until the early 20th century, and it is still thriving, especially in Bali.

Although the above summary is highly simplified, it gives an outline of the basic phases of the localisation process of Indian-influenced dance and dance images in Java. It is useful to keep this chronology in mind while the focus is turned to the dance images of mainland Southeast Asia.



3

The Localisation of Indian-Derived Prototypes in Mainland Southeast Asia

PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR

3

The Localisation of Indian-Derived Prototypes in Mainland Southeast Asia

This chapter will examine early dance images found in mainland Southeast Asia [3/1], which are either based on Indian prototypes or at least clearly reflect Indian influence in the style, iconography and themes they depict. However, before we turn to this main subject, recent developments in the cultural studies of mainland Southeast Asia will be reviewed, after which we turn to region's sacred architecture and its cosmological symbolism in order to provide broad outlines of both the architectural and ideological contexts for the dance images.

The earliest states include Funan (c. 150–550 AD) in the Mekong Delta and Chenla (c. 550–800) in the Mekong Valley. Very little is known about their history. As their scant archaeological remains, such as ruined single-cell brick temple towers and brick and stone sculptures do not include any dance images, they will only be briefly referred to. They, however, formed the base on which the Khmer civilization developed from the 9th century onward. The vast Khmer dance imagery will be discussed in Chapter 3.5, whereas Chapter 4 will be dedicated to the most famous of the Khmer temple complexes, Angkor Wat.

One of the early states, the kingdom of Champa, which flourished in coastal Vietnam from the 7th to 15th century, provides a great number of dance images, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.4. Two dance images belonging to the circa 7th–9th century Pyu culture in present-day Myanmar will be explored in Chapter 3.6, after which the focus will be on early dance images in the regions of present-day Thailand.

Naturally, the present-day national borders do not correspond to the spheres of influence of the early cultures. The regions of Thailand, for example, functioned as crossroads for several of the early cultures. Sub-chapter 3.7 will first discuss two dance images belonging to the Mon culture of Dvaravati, which dominated the regions of Thailand from approximately the 6th to 9th century. Next one sculpture found in South Thailand will be explored; this sculpture, however,

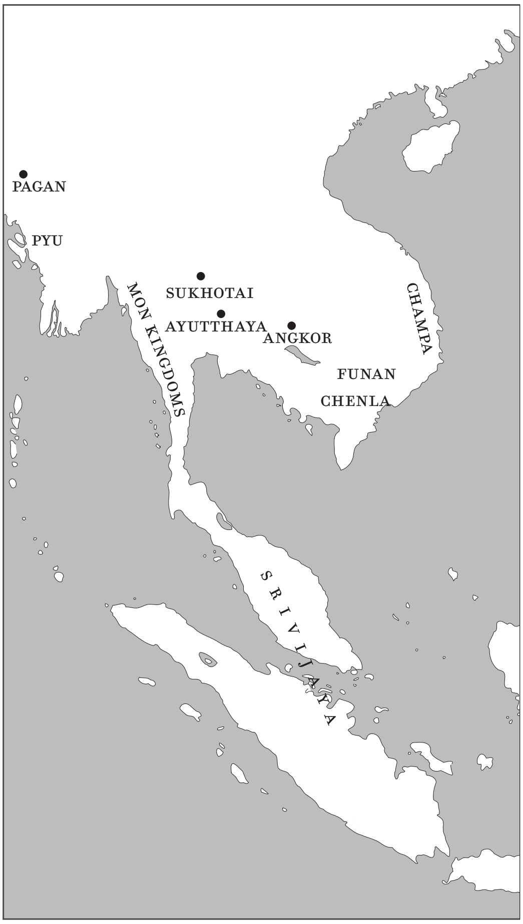


FIG 3/1
EARLY KINGDOMS AND CAPITALS OF MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA DISCUSSED IN THIS STUDY

belongs to the Srivijaya culture, which had its centre in Sumatra, in Insular Southeast Asia. Finally, Chapter 3.8 examines the few dance images belonging to the 13th–14th century culture of Sukhothai, which synthesised several of the region's earlier cultural influences and heralded what was to become the culture of Thailand's Central Plains, discussed in Chapter 6.

3.1 Recent Approaches in the History of the Arts

From the 1980s onwards research into Southeast Asian history and, consequently, the cultural studies of this region have developed rapidly. The works of earlier scholars, many of them with either a Euro-centric perspective[1] or with a heavy emphasis on the role of Indian civilization in the development of Southeast Asian cultures[2], have been questioned. Recently Southeast Asian scholars have been participating more and more in the discourse, for example, by cross-reading and re-interpreting the historical chronicles from their respective perspectives. New archaeological findings, sometimes revolutionary for the understanding of local history[3], have been made, and epigraphic evidence has been increasingly collected, translated and interpreted[4].

By critically employing this scattered evidence the new generation of scholars has been able to widen the scope of Southeast Asian studies. This has led, for example, to the abandonment of the rigid concept of the "Indianisation" of Southeast Asia. Increasing archaeological evidence makes it clear that the early kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia, although undeniable possesing features borrowed from India, grew organically from the earlier prehistoric societies[5]. Consequently the cultures discussed on the following pages were the results of a long process of the amalgamation of indigenous cultural elements with those selected from the Indian civilization.

Critical reading of early chronicles and the early 20TH century interpretations of history has led to the deconstruction of the official, often nationalistic narratives concerning the formulation of the present-day Southeast Asian nations. Consequently, as the political and historical framework of art and architecture is becoming clearer, their manifestations and stylistic changes are no longer regarded only as aesthetic trends and decisions. The role of art works as tools and strategies in propagating value systems and political ends is becoming evident[6].

The scope of cultural studies in general has widened simultaneously with these developments in Southeast Asian studies. The focus is no longer only on the "classical" periods with their stone buildings and stone and metal sculptures but also increasingly on vernacular and popular forms of culture as well as on "minor arts" such as crafts, textiles etc. In the Southeast Asian context this has meant that besides the periods generally regarded as classical, the indigenous architecture made of perishable materials, such as wood, bamboo and thatch, together with also artistic traditions of smaller ethnic groups, with often more or less direct lineage with prehistoric cultures, has now been seriously studied[7].

This has opened up a deeper understanding of the process which led to the formulation of the syncretistic cultures of the region. For example, the research into Southeast Asian textiles, which started in the early 20TH century mainly in the form of separate museum catalogues and studies, took a step further from the 1970s onward. It has not only opened up new paths in understanding this important art form itself but it has also provided a fresh insight into the questions of international contacts and trade mechanisms of Southeast Asia, so crucial for the study of the early kingdoms of the region[8].

Like the increasing availability of archaeological data and textual information, the present photographic and printing technologies now also provide an easy access to source materials, in this case visual ones. Although labelled by some academics as "coffee table books", many of these vastly illustrated publications, however, provide invaluable reference material for art historians[9]. Thus, comparison of visual materials and the rapid circulation of recent findings are now easier than ever before, which is of the utmost importance for a multidisciplinary study like the present one.

3.2 Types of Temple Architecture

During the last decades architectural and anthropological studies have examined not only Southeast Asia's Indian-influenced stone and brick monuments, but also its indigenous, vernacular types of buidings, in order to decipher the transformations of architecture in the region. It seems that in a vast area covering regions stretching from Melanesia and modern Indonesia to Japan, and from mainland Southeast Asia until the foothills of the Himalayas, the indigenous types of buildings has been a house on the stilts. Despite numerous local variations, the most common house type has a rectangular plan, often a saddle roof, while the whole structure is elevated on stilts.

In his book "Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific" (1997) Sumset Jumsai, the Thai architect and scholar, has established a theory according to which this kind of type of house is characteristic of the "water-bound" cultures which flourished on sea-shores, in river deltas and river valleys, mostly in monsoon regions. The earliest visual evidence in mainland Southeast Asia confirming the existence of this type of building can be found in the engraved tympana reliefs of the Dong Son bronze gongs from the mid-first Millennium BC (Waterson 1991, 18–19), already discussed in Chapter 2.2. Architecturally this type of building, which still continues to be constructed in many areas of Southeast Asia, seems to represent the indigenous culture of the region, which has not yet been influenced by Indian prototypes.

In India, the earliest existing religious structures are early Buddhist *stupa* mounds from the second century BC and cave temples from c. 200 BC to 150 AD. A stupa, or a memorial monument, is the most wide spread of all the Indian types of buildings. Together with the Buddhist doctrine, it spread to Sri Lanka, the Himalayan regions and Southeast Asia. The earliest stupas in India were hemispherical in shape and crowned with a multiple stone umbrella. An umbrella signified veneration for royalty, the Buddha or a sacred object. The cave temples, on the other hand, are believed to reflect, in their many details, earlier wooden temple architecture. Their most common shape is that of a *chaitya* or assembly hall, a structure necessary for Buddhist rituals. A third type of Buddhist structure is *vihara*, providing living quarters for monks. It developed from a simple hut into a more complex building with a central courtyard and surrounding cells.

In the beginning, it is believed, Hindu and Buddhist architecture basically shared the same types of building. The earliest existing free-standing Hindu stone sanctuaries in India are from the 6TH to 7TH century AD. Soon the main characteristic of a Hindu temple, the roof structure or *sikhara*, started to develop, resulting in several local tower variations during the heyday of Hindu architecture in the 9TH to the 13TH century. The two main sikhara types are the northern *nagara* and the southern *dravida* types. A fully developed nagara tower is curvilinear in shape and narrows towards to its top and is crowned by a cushion-like element. The dravida-type sikhara, on the other hand, stems from stepped pyramid-like wooden structures and has maintained its emphasis on horizontal terrace levels.

Buddhist and Hindu rituals had different demands for the sacred buildings. Although the ritual circumambulation was practised in both religions, sermons and congregations were an essential part of the ceremonies in Buddhism, which led to the development of assembly halls. In Hinduism, on the other hand, the holiest rituals were carried out by Brahman priests and, thus, no large interior space was required. The *garbhagriha* or inner sanctum of a Hindu temple is thus generally very modest in size and often just large enough for the cult image and a small group of priests. Temple ceremonies included, for example, music and dance performances, which regularly took place in pillared *mandapa* halls, either growing directly from the main body of the temple or loosely annexed to it. Temples were often surrounded by railings or galleries with *gopura* gate structures.

When Buddhism and Hinduism started to spread to Southeast Asia at the beginning of our era the ritual requirements of these religions also led to the adaptation of these originally Indian types of building. The earliest existing Indian-derived structures are variations of Hindu temples in Java and in mainland Southeast Asia. As already discussed in Chapter 2.6, it is believed that the earliest Javanese Hindu temples were based on the early South Indian wooden architecture, which preceded the existing stone structures (Dumarcay 1986, 1, 31). From the 7TH century onwards, stone and brick sanctuaries and their remains indicate that the sacred structures in mainland Southeast Asia were also often made of durable material, such as stone, laterite and brick. Thus a completely novel architectural tradition that of Indian-derived sacred stupas and temples, executed in durable materials, was implanted in the earlier, indigenous and predominantly wooden architectural tradition.

The earliest Hindu temples in mainland Southeast Asia already show several local variants of Indian-derived prototypes. The 7TH–8TH century sanctuaries in the regions of the kingdoms Funan and Chenla have either a square or an octagonal ground plan (Jessup 2004, 39, 42–47). Sometimes the inner chamber is surrounded by an ambulatory corridor although the single-cell model predominated. A Hindu shrine in the neighbouring Champa took the form of a so-called *kalan* temple tower, which was sometimes constructed in groups of three and combined with mandapa halls and gopura gate pavilions. As in Java, the rather serene form of these towers with an emphasis on the horizontal seems to indicate the influence of South Indian dravida architecture, which may have been reached the mainland regions either directly from India or via insular Southeast Asia.

In the realms of the Khmer culture the temple architecture developed further from the Indian prototypes. From the 8TH century onward the single-cell sanctuaries were often constructed on an artificial, stepped mountain, a feature characteristic of Southeast Asian architecture and probably derived from earlier indigenous animistic traditions. The structures grew as the towers were installed on high basements in form of stepped pyramids and connected with each other by galleries. The temples became increasingly complex, a process which culminated in the 12TH and the 13TH century state temples, such as Angkor Wat, and finally they surpassed all the known Indian prototypes in size and in their systematic intricacy.

The transformation of a stupa is another example of how an Indian-derived prototype was localised in mainland Southeast Asia. This originally rather simple structure consisting of a square base, a hemispherical body crowned by a series of stone parasols, retained much of its original characteristics in Sri Lanka, while in Southeast Asia it has been treated in surprisingly various ways. As has been seen, the 9TH century stupa of Borobudur in Central Java already combined the stepped pyramid structure with the shape of a *mandala*. In mainland Southeast Asia the earliest existing stupa type seems to be the Pyu-derived cylindrical stupas in present-day Myanmar, discussed in Chapter 5.

The Sri Lankan, archaic stupa, which spread to the mainland together with Theravada Buddhism, retained its status throughout the centuries due to its association with the orthodox

Theravada sect. Numerous local variations developed, however, side by side with it. In present-day Myanmar this led to a bell-shaped stupa standing on a large terraced platform, the largest of them being Shwedagon in Yangon, which surpasses even the great stupa of Borobudur in size. In the regions of modern Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, the stupa developed numerous shapes, most of them tended to elongate its body crowned by a series of umbrellas while the body and base was often cut to form multiple vertical, angular corners.

As in early Indian architecture, so in mainland Southeast Asia the types of building cannot strictly be divided into Hindu and Buddhist ones. A stupa, of course, remained purely as a Buddhist monument, but all the other sacred types of building were shared by both religions. The Hindu temple tower was amalgamated with the stupa in the regions of modern Thailand when the Thai adopted the *prasat* tower from the Khmer, which resulted in a *prang*, a memorial tower sharing its function as a reliquary with the stupa. In Pagan, in present-day Myanmar, the Buddhist temples, which share their name *gu* with that of the Indian cave temples, *guha*, developed into huge, vaulted brick sanctuaries topped with both stupas and superstructures with undeniable features of the northern Indian nagara-style Hindu temple towers.

In the predominantly Theravada Buddhist regions of modern Thailand, Laos and Cambodia the need for large interior spaces suitable for congregations was solved by separate assembly halls, the *ubosot* for the monks and the *viharn*, derived from the Indian *vihara*, for the laymen. These rectangular, often three-aisled halls are examples of the intermingling of the indigenous "water-based" wooden architectural tradition with the Indian one. Their functions are dictated by the Indian-derived religions, but the types of building themselves, with their complicated multi-tiered roof structures, stem from the age-old local tradition. The indigenous wooden architectural tradition still lives on for example in regions of North Thailand and Myanmar.

The localisation process of Indian-derived architectural forms in mainland Southeast Asia is given above only in rough outline. On the following pages the rich variety of types, resulting from this process, will be dealt in greater detail, culture by culture. All these structures provide different kinds of solutions for the distribution of their iconographical programmes, to which the dance images, the main topic of this study, belong. Their placement is, of course, partly determined by the spaces and shapes of the surfaces characteristic of each of these specific types of building. More than that, the distribution of the iconographical programmes is, however, dictated by the overall symbolism of these sacred structures, which has remained more or less unchanged in the whole region of mainland Southeast Asia since the arrival of the Indian influence.

3.3 Temple and Cosmology

A Hindu temple, both in India and Southeast Asia, can be seen as the dwelling of the god where he or she is venerated as the most honoured guest. In India, a Hindu temple can also be interpreted as representing the *purusha* or primordial cosmic man. Consequently, the architectural elements of the temple were identified there with the parts of the body, with the tower as head and trunk, and the inner sanctum as *garbhagriha* or womb. The temple complexes of Southeast Asia have served as centres of *bhakti*-related worship just as in India, but owing to the lack of textual evidence it is not known whether in Southeast Asia the temple was identified with purusha also.

It is of the utmost importance, when one is observing the dance images in the architectural context in India and in Southeast Asia, to focus on the overall symbolism of the building to which the images belong. The main tower of a Hindu temple and the circular Buddhist stupa construction represent Mount Meru (often identified with the Himalayas), the abode of gods and the central axis of the universe, a common feature of all Indian and Indian-influenced cosmologies.

The classical cosmologies of India's own religions, i.e. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, all started to appear after the middle of the first millennium BC[10]. Their roots are, however, much longer originally emerged from the more simple cosmology of the Vedic period (c. 1600–500 BC). The focus here will be on the Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies, since Jainism remained purely as an Indian religion, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism also spread to Southeast Asia.

During the centuries from Vedic times to the period of Puranic literature (c. 300–700 AD), and further to the so-called "Medieval" times (c. 600–1500 AD) the cosmologies became increasingly complex. However, the basic structure of the cosmos remained more or less the same. Both Hinduism and the Buddhism share the concept of the central axis or the world mountain, Mount Meru in Sanskrit, Sumeru in Pali [3/2]. This is surrounded by four continents on the four cardinal points, one of them inhabited by humans, and further by

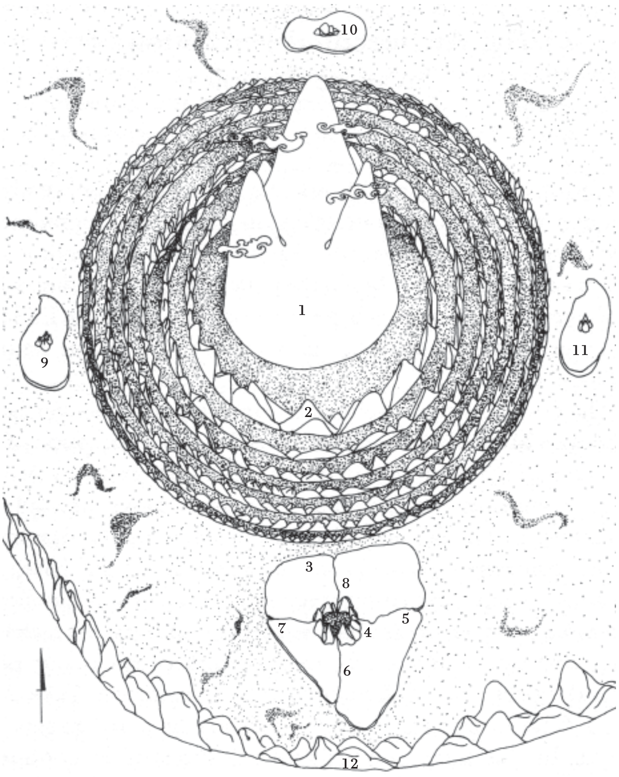


FIG 3/2
SOME OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS
OF THE BUDDHIST COSMOS:
1. MOUNT MERU
2. THE SEVEN CHAINS OF MOUNTAINS AND THE SEVEN OCEANS AROUND THEM
3. JAMBUDWIPA, THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE
4. LAKE ANAVATPA
5. THE GANGES
6. THE INDUS
7. THE OXUS
8. THE TARIM
9. THE WORLD OF ROUND-FACED CREATURES
10. THE WORLD OF CRESCENT-FACED CREATURES
11. THE WORLD OF SQUARE-FACED CREATURES
12. THE CHAIN OF QUARTZ MOUNTAINS, CHAKRAVAN, SURROUNDING THE UNIVERSE

DUMARCAY 1986.

circular mountain range. The universe, vertically connected by Mount Meru, is divided into three superimposed levels. The underworld and the hells form the lowest level, the world of humans the middle level and that of heavens the highest. All these levels are, as a rule, divided into several sub-levels.

The cosmologies are not limited only to cosmography, or the geography of the universe. They also refer to the inhabitants of the universe and to the various, more or less, fantastic measurements of space, to the life spans of different creatures, of gods and finally of the whole universe itself. These, as many other details, vary greatly according to different religions, their sects and as different historical periods.

The lowest levels of this hierarchical universe are reserved for sinners and the demons torturing them, as well as *asuras*, some kinds of anti-gods. Then follow the spheres of animals, humans and semi-gods. At the topmost levels of Hindu cosmology dwell the gods, with Indra as their head, whereas the Buddhist cosmos ends with the level of formlessness. These spheres manifest moral qualities. Through the reincarnation process the Good move up and the Bad down and consequently the whole universe is ethicised. Though highly generalised, this structure of the tripartite universe and the earth consisting of four continents centring on Mount Meru, form the basic structure for both Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies.

The cosmology is reflected in several ways in the arts. For example, the mandala, a cosmic diagram, in which the sacred centre is surrounded by the four cardinal points, is a two-dimensional adaptation of the concept. On the other hand, Hindu temples with their towers and the Buddhist stupa with its square base and circular body portray the same idea three-dimensionally. But how differently do they refer to the same symbolism! When the stupa, in its early forms, is clearly articulated and serene, a Hindu temple in its abundance reflects the same basic cosmology repeating and multiplying the tower theme, and covering the whole with figures of gods, dancers and loving couples.

Vatsyayan has noted (1977a, 12) that in terms of aesthetics the Hindu temple "represents heaven on earth, it arouses wonder (*wismaya*) and leads to the aesthetic experience of *abdhuta*." When dance images are observed against this vibrant architectural and cosmological backdrop, full of symbolical and even ethical connotations, it is clear that the distribution of dance images within this three-dimensional cosmic map becomes utterly important.

It is argued that the adaptation of India-derived cosmology in Southeast Asia was a rather smooth process since the regions already had their own cosmologies which, according to several scholars, seemed to share some basic features with the Indian ones[11]. For example, according to Roxana Waterson, most indigenous belief systems of the Indonesian archipelago "share the concept of a three-tiered cosmos, consisting of a middle world inhabited by humans, sandwiched between an upper and a lower world." (1991, 93). She continues by stating that "most indigenous cosmologies named four cardinal points, though Hindu influence in some areas led to an elaboration of this schema." (Ibid., 94). Sumet Jumsai, who has compared transformations of cosmologies of different peoples and periods, especially in the regions of the West Pacific and Southeast Asia, argues that the "Hindu-Buddhist cosmological model, with Himalayas identified with Mount Meru, is then merely the latest and most elaborate of these transformations" (Sumet 1997, 15).

The earliest existing cosmological text in mainland Southeast Asia, related to the Indian tradition, is the famous Theravada Buddhist cosmology "The Three Worlds" or *Traiphum Phra Ruang* or, in brief, *Traiphum*[12]. It is attributed to the 14th century King Lithai of Sukhothai in present-day Thailand. It is said to be based on 30 different Buddhist sources. It has probably been somewhat altered when it has been copied and recopied over the centuries. New interpretations of it were made by order of King Taksin and King Rama I at the turn of the 19th century. Its influence on the traditional Thai worldview cannot be overestimated. Indeed, it has had a profound influence on the formulation of not only the worldview, but society and arts as well, in the whole region of present-day Thailand, and also later in Cambodia and Laos, which from time to time were under Thai rule, and to a certain extent in Burma, too (Herbert 2002).

The art historian Henry Ginsburg summarises the structure of the universe described by the Traiphum as follows:

> Although popularly interpreted as heaven, earth and hell, the three worlds of the title properly refer to three realms of existence according to Buddhist philosophy. The first realm is that of sensual desire which includes all of hell, the earth, and the lower levels of heaven; it contains 11 different levels. The second world comprises 16 middle levels of heaven where material elements barely exist. And the third world contains the four highest heavens where material elements no longer exist at all. These are the highest reaches, in which the ultimate goal of *nirvana* or extinction is virtually achieved. (Ginsburg 1989, 13)

The Traiphum has been studied by several scholars in connection with the visual arts (Boisselier 1976; Ginsburg 1989; Santi 2000), which is understandable since it has been depicted in many temple murals and has the honour of being placed behind the principal Buddha image, on the west wall of Thai temples. The text also exists in the form of illustrated manuscripts.

Mattani Rutnin has studied the kind of information that can be obtained from the Traiphum as far as the performing arts are concerned (1993, 31–35). She points out that the text mentions that in a certain realm of human existence "all men and women have perfect beauty. They dance, sing and make merry all day long." She also points out that the text refers to different types of dance. There is, for example, a reference to a dance where human dancers imitate the movements of birds (a very common form of dance in the region still today). There is also a reference to a dance form which, according to some Thai scholars, could be the prototype of the dance technique of the monkey roles in the present-day classical *khon* mask theatre.

A further study of the text reveals that dance is performed in the sphere of men at the court of the king (Reynolds & Reynolds 1982, 178) and that after death, if a human being has gained merit during her or his life, she or he will be also entitled to enjoy, among other heavenly pleasures, the dances of *devatas* or semi-gods (Ibid., 214). Dance is practised on several occasions in the higher realms of the heavens (Ibid., 228–229). On one occasion no less than 3,888,417 dancing devatas are mentioned (Ibid., 227). What is especially enlightening is that the Traiphum even describes, albeit in broad outline, the repertoire of these dancing heavenly beings, which includes both "dramatic dances" and "individual dances" (Ibid., 231).

From the point of view of this study, the most interesting feature in the Traiphum is its hierarchical construction and description of different beings inhabiting its numerous realms. The lowest one is the realm of hells, which is depicted in juicy details. Moving up from the hells, the next three realms are those of animals, ghosts and demons. In the chapter dedicated to animals, mythical creatures are described, so central to Thai imaginary and imagery. Among them are *garudas* or great birds and *kinnaris* and *kinnaras*, half-bird half-human beings, all of them often depicted in the visual arts and dance.

The demons were, in fact, originally beings of the higher existence, but expelled to the lower realms by the god Indra because of their bad actions. Indra is the head of the main gods of Hindu mythology, who rules on the top of the world's central mountain but still belong to the realm of desires. In the realm of form reside the so-called *brahma* gods, their head being the creator god Brahma. They are extremely beautiful, tall and practically immobile and thus no dance is any more practised (Ibid., 251). The ultimate level, the realm of the absence of form, is inhabited by beings which have no bodies, only consciousness.

The realm most often depicted in the iconographical programmes of the temples is the realm of desire, the lowest of the three worlds. This is easy to understand, since aggressiveness and passion, so central to dramatic representations, are reserved solely for beings inhabiting this particular realm. They have many shapes, with animal, demonic or human features. The higher we reach in the heavens, the more refined and gracious are the poses and gestures of the completely impersonal heavenly beings. When we finally reach the ultimate realm, nothing is left to be represented, a practical problem for visual artists, which the Thai painters have solved by depicting empty palaces floating in the air (Santi 2000, 130).

3.4 Dance Images of Champa

The kingdom of Champa, or as was most often the case, rather a network of Cham principalities, flourished on the coastal regions of present-day Vietnam from the early centuries AD to the second half of the 15TH century, after which, much reduced in size, it survived until the middle of the 19TH century. The first Sanskrit inscription mentioning the name of Champa dates from the early 7TH century. Much of the information concerning Champa's history, and particularly its earliest periods, is based on Chinese annals because Champa was located in the vicinity of China's most southern commandery and it regularly sent tributary missions to China.

The region of Champa with its river valleys served as an important stop for the maritime trade route system of the "Southern Silk Road" connecting China to Southeast Asia, India and further to the Mediterranean world. The principal Cham sites, with traces of brick-built temple towers, are scattered around the coastal regions and partly on the plateaus of the interior. Champa's history was overshadowed by wars, victorious as well as disastrous, especially with the Khmer. It was finally swept from the political scene by the Sinicised Vietnamese in the 15TH century.

The wars, diplomatic relations and especially the peaceful trade put Champa in contact with other regions and cultures: China, Chenla, Java, Srivijaya, Dvaravati and India. The influence of most of these cultures is recognisable in Champa's arts although, at the same time, is has an unmistakable flavour of its own, at least during the heyday of Champa's culture, which roughly covers the period from the 7TH to the 12TH century. The legacy of Champa's arts includes brick temples, full-round sculptures both in stone and bronze, high reliefs, bas-reliefs, ceramics and embossed metal works.

The predominant religion of Champa was Hinduism in its Shivaistic form, which in Champa developed in its own way. It was marked by "Shivaite royal ceremonies and a reliance on Shivaism to protect the land and the lineage" (Boisselier 2001, 29). On the other hand, it also included worship of the goddess Bhagavati, which was regarded as the protectress of southern parts of Champa. Vishnuism played a minor role, whereas Buddhism in its Tantric Mahayana form was popular for a period from the 9TH to the 11TH century, during which time Chinese influence can be recognized in some of the religious sculptures.

The tradition of temple architecture, which was established in the 7TH century, includes rather small-scale brick structures. Stone was used mainly for doorposts and lintels or for decorative parts such as the tympana reliefs. The main types of sacred buildings were the Indian-derived entrance pavilion (*gopura*), hall structure (*mandapa*) and, above all, the single-cell temple towers, which are called *kalan*.

The kalan tower-shrines, as well as their sculptural decoration, show Javanese influence (Guillon 2001, 66; Le Bonheur 1998, 258). However, kalan towers do not emphasise the mountain ideal in the exactly same way as the Central Javanese and Khmer temples do with their dominating foundations and stepped terraces. Vertical lines dominate the Cham temples. The main element is a monumental projection of the door on the facade and the corresponding false doors on the other three sides. The theme of the door and its arches is often repeated in miniature around the structure, which is covered with a stepped roof. The kalan towers were sometimes built in a row of three or grouped together with other, above-mentioned types of structure. Unfortunately, the Cham architecture has suffered much because of the climate, neglect and especially because of the war during the 1960s.

The only dance-related reliefs still *in situ* in their original architectural context are tympana reliefs representing the dancing Shiva in temples such as the 10TH century Po Nagar, and the 13TH to 14TH century Po Klaung Garai. They, together with several other dancing Shiva tympana in museum collections, belong to the type of (D) dancing gods as well as (III) dance images in an architectural context. Most of the other surviving Cham dance images are carved, often as high reliefs and more rarely as bas-reliefs, on different kinds of pedestals or altars. About these Jean Boisselier has written:

> The starting point of any discussion of Cham sculpture must be the pedestals and altars on which it figures so abundantly. They are the essential link between the deity and the shrine, and in the art of Champa they take on an importance which is not seen elsewhere, both in their dimensions and in the themes they illustrate. (2001, 31)

These kinds of reliefs, which are not located in the outer walls or niches of the shrines but are rather sculptured elements of their interiors, avoid the rough classification given in Chapter 2.3. They could naturally be classified as belonging to the type of (III) dance images in the architectural context considering their original function. However, they are now mainly in the collections of museums and thus their exact original function and placement is often unknown. In any case, if one observes the subject matter of these altar and pedestal reliefs one can classify them belonging mainly to the types of (A) dance scenes and (B) portrayals of dancers.

The collection of some 300 sculptures and reliefs in the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Danang, in Central Vietnam, and the much smaller collection at the Musée Guimet in Paris together with those reliefs and sculptures which are still *in situ* or in minor site museums, form the rather limited core of all Cham sculpture. Within this sculptural legacy the number of dance images is remarkable. For example, a couple of dozen dance-related reliefs are included in the collection of the Danang museum. In this study it is only possible to discuss some of these works. This selection is made to serve three purposes: to use the information gained from the previous research, to cover the main categories of dance images described above, and to emphasise the degree of the localisation process of the Indian-influenced tradition.

The motifs of the dancing Shiva, found in the tympana reliefs, show a remarkable iconographical variety (Guillon 2001; Vatsyayan 1977b). These reliefs served as anthropomorphic representations of the main deity of the temple, which was represented on the main altar as the non-anthropomorphic *linga* standing on its *yoni* base. The earliest surviving example of the Shiva tympana reliefs, from the 8th century, shows a probably ten-armed Shiva dancing (the upper body and the arms are badly damaged). On the lower level the Nandi bull, Shiva's son Skanda, the Goddess, worshippers and musicians, are shown (Guillon 2001, fig. 3; Art of Southeast Asia 1998, fig. 552). The legs of the dancing Shiva are not depicted in the typical pose of Chola bronzes but in a position already familiar from the Central Javanese dance reliefs described in Chapter 2.6. In the same connection the similarities between the Central Javanese dance images and the 6th to 8th century prototypes of the Western Chalukyas at Badami and Pattadakal were referred to. When one compare this dancing Shiva with an example from Badami [3/3] its iconographical and stylistic roots seem to lead to the same region and period, either directly or via Java.

Another tympanum relief dating from the early 10th century depicts Shiva with sixteen arms surrounded on the lower level by naga spirits and musicians [3/4] (Guillon 2001, fig. 61; Art of Southeast Asia 1998, fig. 139). He does not hold any attributes in his hands but the fingers of all the hands form a mudra. The mudras of Cham art do not always exactly correspond to the Indian mudras, but in this case the mudra could be identified as *aralam*, which is an uncommon feature in Shiva iconography (Vatsyayan 1977b, 16). However, it would seem to be an apt expression for one of the Shiva's vigorous tandava dances, since it denotes, among other things, a violent storm. The absence of attributes in Shiva's hands and the rhythmic repetition of the arms emphasise the continuity of Shiva's powerful movement.

A later representation of Shiva showing iconographical similarities to this Cham Shiva can be found in the 10th–13th century Prasat Phnom Rung in once Khmer dominated Southeast Thailand [3/14]. It has ten arms with fingers forming a similar kind of mudra. The pose of the legs is basically the same as in the Cham figures but much lower, as it tends to be in Khmer dance images, as will be seen in the following pages. A group of dance images bearing iconographical similarities to these works is the Tantric Hevajra sculptures, which will be discussed below in the next sub-chapter.

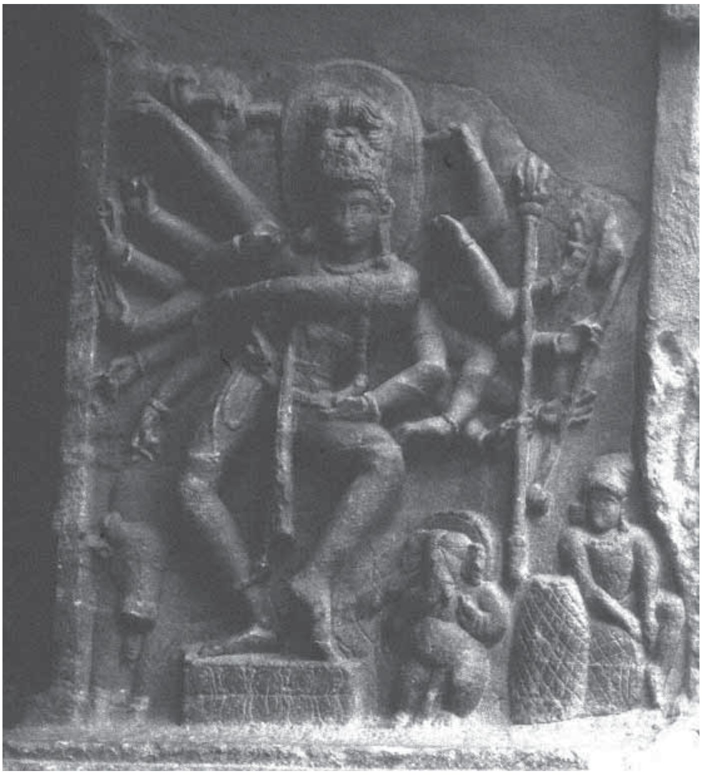


FIG 3/3 SHIVA NATARAJA, BADAMI, WEST INDIA, WESTERN CHALUKYA DYNASTY, C. 580. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1989.*

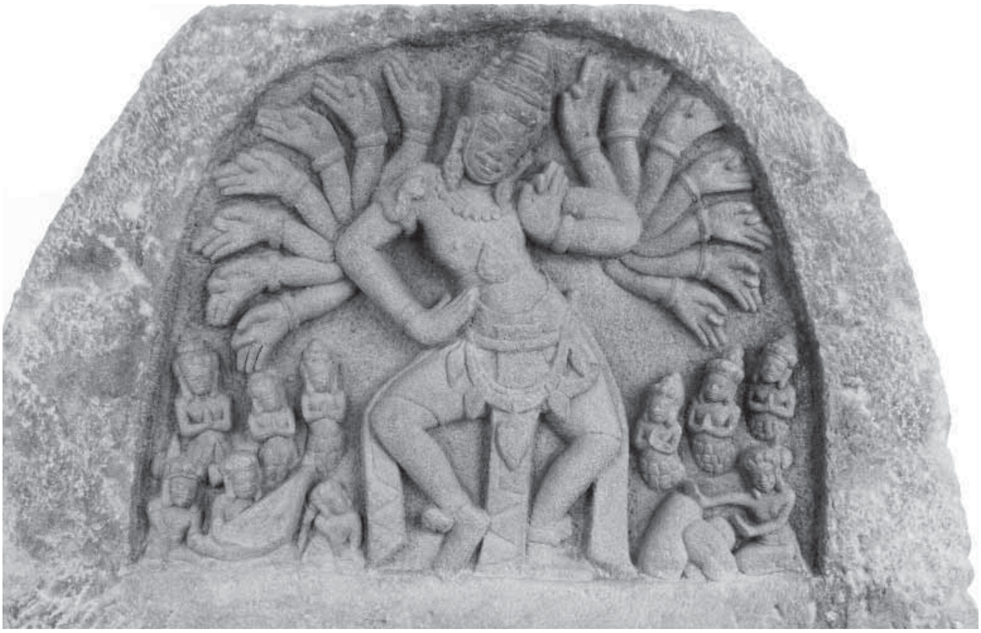


FIG 3/4 DANCING SHIVA, CHAMPA C. EARLY 10TH CENTURY. DANANG MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*

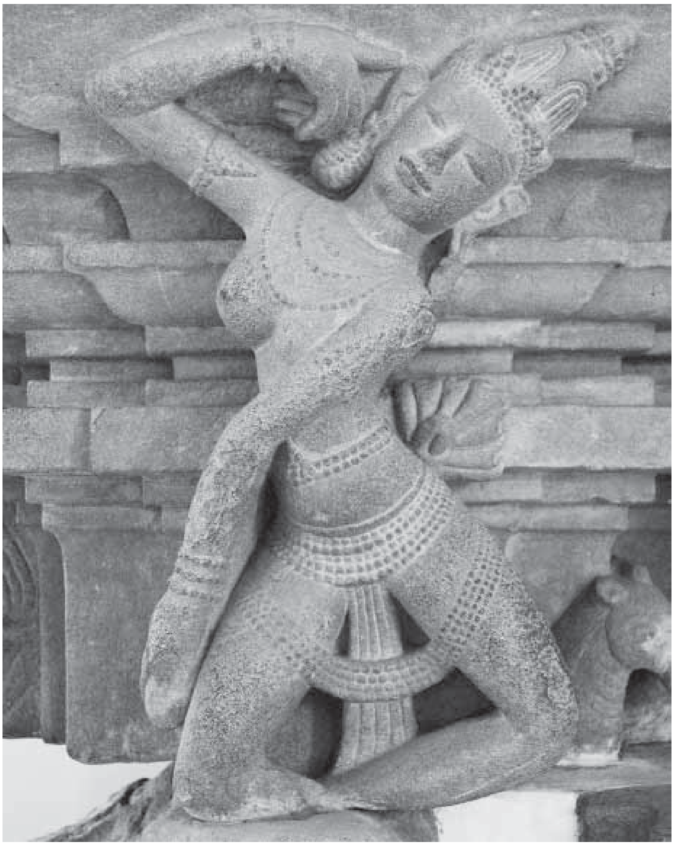


FIG 3/5
"TRA KIEU DANCER" FROM A PEDESTAL, CHAMPA 10TH CENTURY, DANANG MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

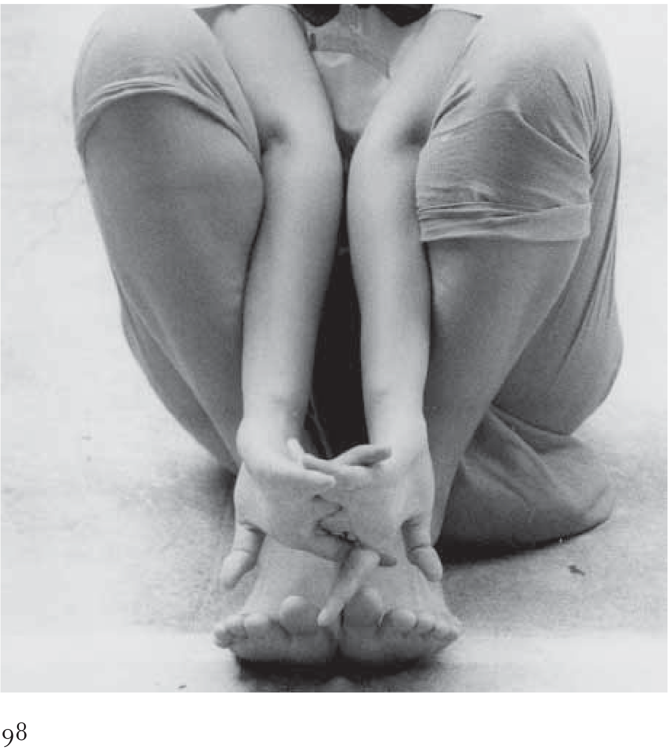


FIG 3/6
FLEXIBLE ARMS BEING TRAINED IN THAILAND.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1983.

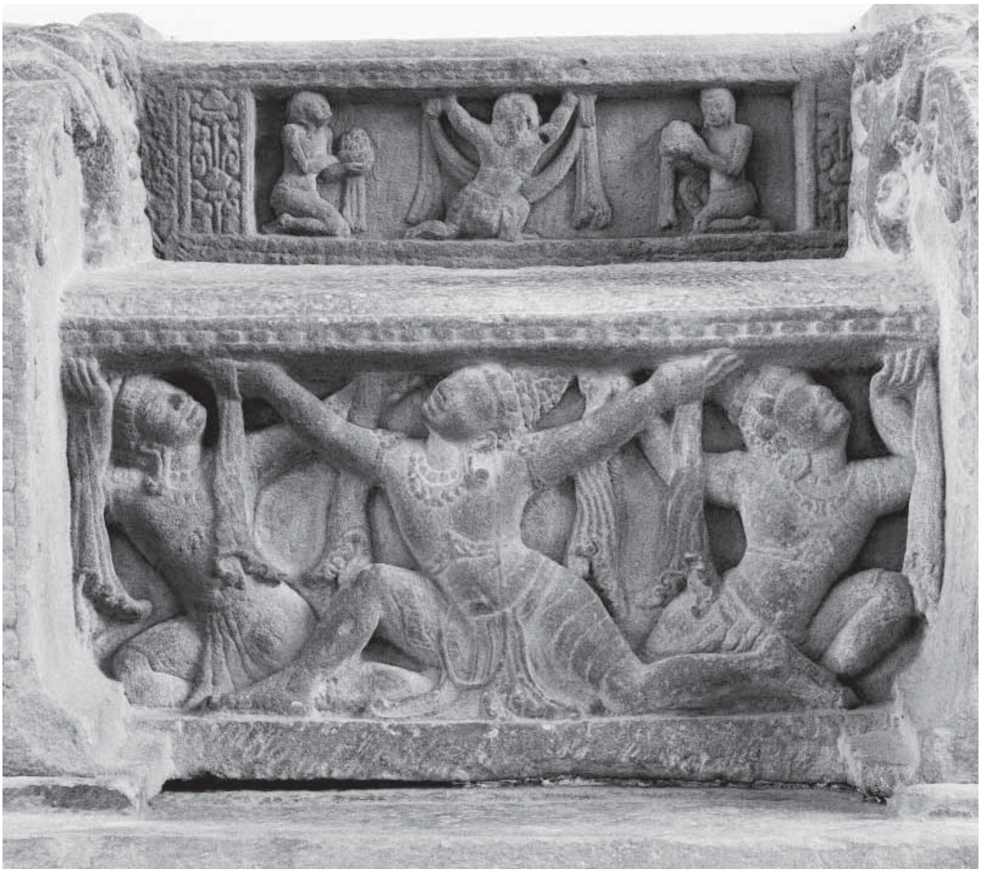
One reutilised Shiva tympanum has survived from the period of the decline of Cham art in the 11th–15th centuries (Guillon 2001, figs. 34, 38). It now belongs to the kalan of Po Klaung Garai. Again we have the legs in the same pose, familiar from Central Javanese dance reliefs and the Badami and Pattadakal reliefs in India. The dance no longer seems to express that furious energy demonstrated by the earlier Shiva reliefs described above. The deity appears harmonious, almost static, as he holds attributes in four of his six hands: a trident, an axe, a bowl and an object, which could be identified as a flame, while the two uppermost hands form the *anjali* mudra denoting salutation. These three examples of dancing Shiva images already show the innovative approach, which characterises the Cham sculpture. Although the basic standing pose remains the same in all of these examples, the theme, however, is reinterpreted in surprisingly various, even unique, ways.

Probably the most widely illustrated of all the Cham sculptures, the 10th century "Tra Kieu dancer", belongs to the type (B) portrayals of dancers [3/5]. It is a rather well preserved portrayal of a dancer sculptured on a large pedestal, which would have been at least three metres on one side by about 1.15 metres in height. The other figures depict more dancers as well as musicians. It has been pointed out that this dance image clearly reflects Indian and Javanese influences (Guillon 2001, 120). Kapila Vatsyayan has analysed the dance pose in the terms of the Natyashastra as follows:

> ...we find a figure from Champa which can be easily identified as a dance figure: although the lower half of the figure is broken, it clearly suggests the outward *ksipta* position of the knees, and a clear *karihasta* position of the arms: one hand swings across the body in *lata* and the other is held near the ear exactly as in the description of the *Natyasastra*, only the hand near the ear is not in *tripataka* as prescribed by the text, but is possibly a *alapadma* or a *pallava hasta*. (Vatsyayan 1977a, 278–79).

As elaborated above, the pose and the gestures of the Tra Kieu dancer reflect Indian influence. In the dancer's pose one can, however, recognise one particular element, which is seldom present in Indian or even Javanese dance images. It is the over-bent elbow joint of the left arm, which could easily be seen as the artist's inability to portray human anatomy. However, it can also be interpreted as the earliest so far known surviving portrayal of the technical and aesthetical characteristic which was still a distinctive feature in classical Javanese and, especially, Thai-Khmer dance techniques. In Thai dance this kind of over-bent elbow is called "beautiful arm" and there are special exercises to reach this almost inhuman linear effect [3/6]. In some dances, for example, the dancer, who is accompanied by rhythmical music bends his or her elbow several times to the ultimate, bent position, and releases it back to the normal position.

If the above interpretation is correct, the Tra Kieu dancer reflects, to a certain degree, the localisation process of the Indian-influenced dance tradition in Champa culture. This also applies to another famous pedestal dated to an even earlier period, the 7th century. This pedestal, which once supported a large *linga* and its *yoni* basin, shows groups of dancers on the risers of its stairway [3/7]. The pedestal is otherwise decorated with musicians as well as ascetics in various activities. According to Emmanuel Guillon (2001, 73) the whole structure, which shows



Indian Pallava and Sri Lankan influences, shows Mount Kailasa, the Shivaistic equivalent to Hindu-Buddhist Mount Meru, while the now missing linga symbolised the god Shiva dwelling at the top of his mountain. Consequently, the reliefs would represent the ascetics occupying the caves of Kailasa and the semi-divinities celebrating the deity.

According to the above analysis the dancers would be semi-divine beings. They have also been called as "telamon deities in flying postures making offering" (Art of Southeast Asia 1998, ill. 551). The location of the figures seems to support this interpretation since in India, as already mentioned above, the semi-divine beings are also often found in a kind of intermediate spaces, like in this case, on a pedestal. However, these worshippers are not *apsaras*, the most popular of all Indian semi-divinities, since according to their anatomy and moustaches they seem to be male dancers. Vatsyayan has identified them as *devas*, minor divinities. and analysed their poses and gestures according to the Nathyashastra tradition (1977b, 6). The dancing male figures of the lower panel provide "a perfectly balanced rhythm for the space they occupy, with scarves supplying the vertical straight lines, while the faces lean almost in the horizontal, gazing upwards towards the deity" (Guillon, 2001, 74). The figure in the middle seems to support the stairway, while the figures on the sides seem to praise the divinity. The faces of the dancers express joyous devotion, characteristic of the *bhakti* experience that originated in India.

FIG 3/7
PEDESTAL WITH DANCERS, CHAMPA 7TH CENTURY,
DANANG MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*

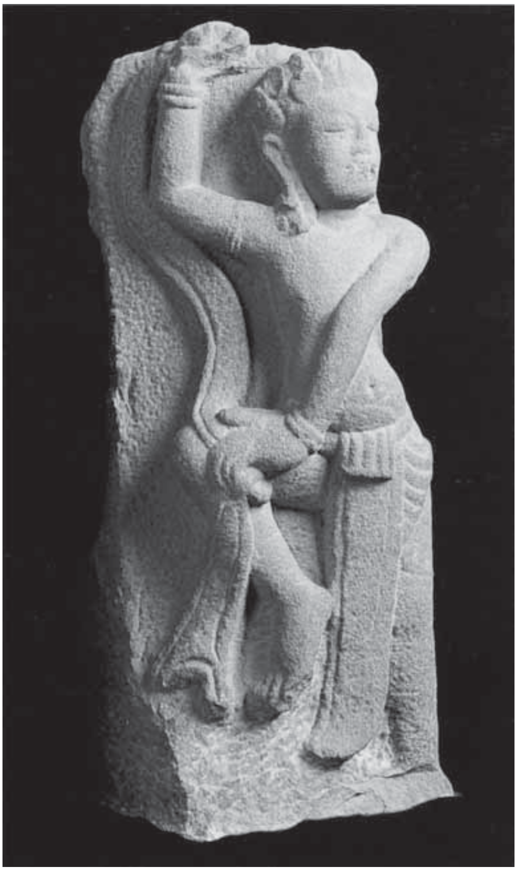


FIG 3/8
MALE DANCER WITH A SCARF, CHAMPA 12TH CENTURY,
DANANG MUSEUM. *GUILLON 2001* .

The central figure in the upper panel has turned his muscular back to the viewer while waving a long scarf in his hands as if offering it to the deity. The side figures are in frozen poses and hold offerings in their hands. The poses and gestures of the dancers in the lower panel are clearly Indian-influenced, but what is striking is the dominant role the dance scarves have in these panels. As has already been pointed out in connection with Central Javanese dance images, the use of dance scarves is rare in the Indian Natyashastra-related traditions, whereas scarves are depicted in Central Javanese reliefs and they have become an integral element of Javanese dances of later times.

It is remarkable that these dance reliefs show the dominant role of the scarves in Cham dance in a very early period, in the 7th century, which is over a century earlier than any of the surviving dance images in Central Java. The use of the scarf in dance continued in Champa, as can be seen from two 12th century high reliefs showing male dancers with long scarves [3/8]. These male dancers with one uplifted leg are identified as *dvarapalas* or guardian deities and despite their rather simple pose their movements can be traced back to the Natyashastra tradition (Vatsyayan 1977b, 5). As stated above the prominent role of the scarf, however, seems not to belong to the Indian tradition. Could the use of scarves be one element the Chams adopted from Java, or could it be possible that the practice was adapted from Champa by Java via the active sea routes?

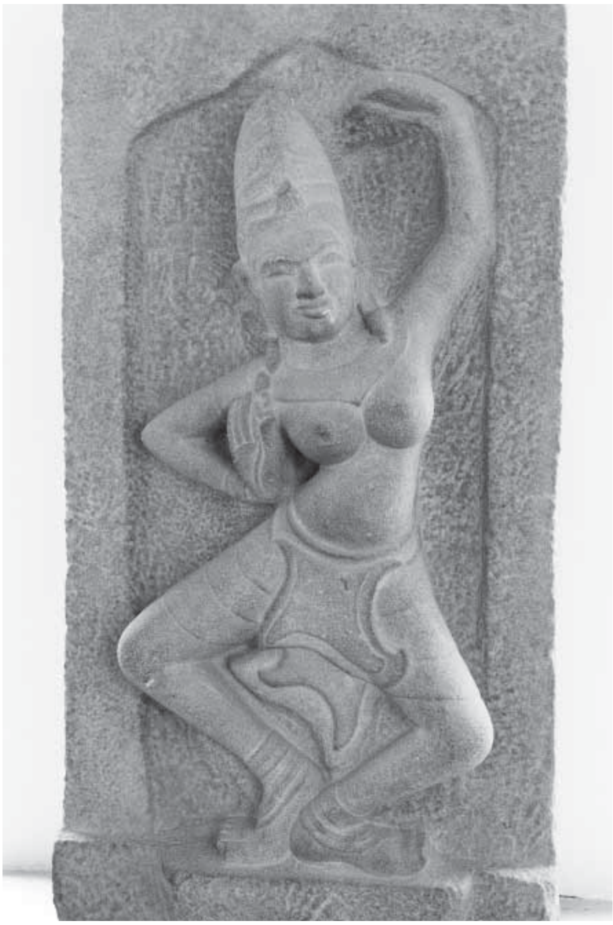
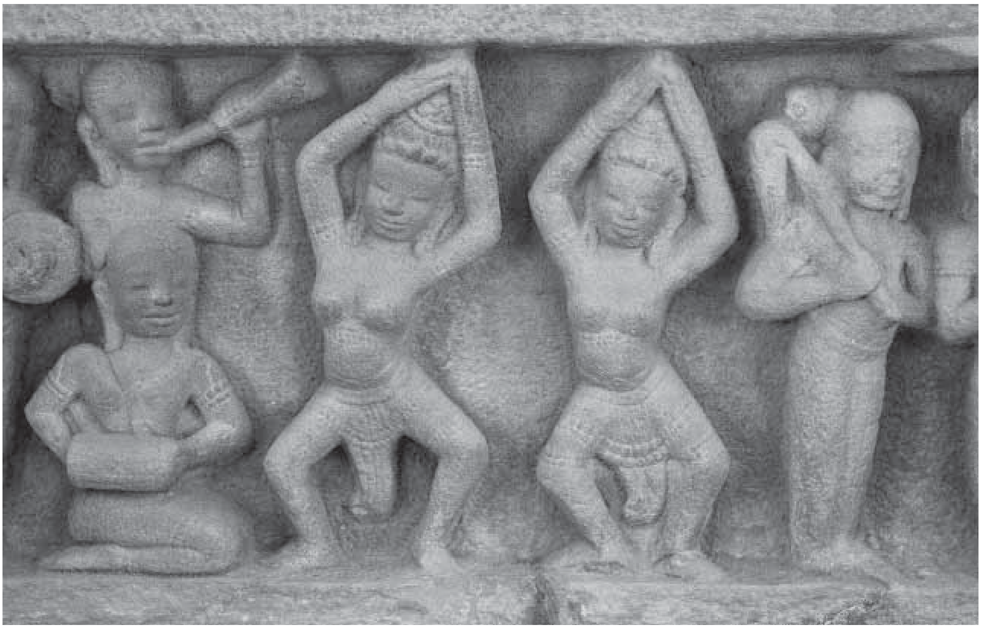


FIG 3/9
DANCER, CHAMPA 12TH CENTURY, DANANG MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*

FIG 3/10
DANCERS AND MUSICIANS IN A LINTEL, CHAMPA 11TH CENTURY, DANANG MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*



As the two pedestals referred to above show, the Cham dance images reflect the localisation process of Indian dance and dance images. The over-bent elbow of the *Tra Kieu dancer* and the dominant role of the scarf in some of the Cham dance images are clearly indigenous or at least Southeast Asian features. However, Indian influence continued to thrive during the whole Champa's golden period as can be seen, for example, in two dance reliefs from the 12TH century [3/9] and in a lintel relief from the 11TH century showing female dancers and musicians [3/10].

In the lintel the dancers hold their hands above their heads in a salutation mudra while their open legs are in a typical Indian-influenced position that has already been discussed several times. The asymmetry of their pose may be explained by the fact that the reliefs show not the first movement of the salutation, but one of the following movements when the dancers bend their bodies from side to side. These kinds of invocation dances or sequences of dance still belong to the repertory of Indian dances, for example to the alarippu[13] of bharatanatyam, as well as to some Thai ritual dances. The salutation is often done on three levels: the lowest one is the blessing to the ground on which the dance will take place, the middle one is a salutation to the gurus, and the highest one, depicted in this relief, is offered to the gods.

One could conclude that Indian, especially Southwest Indian, influence is prominent in the Cham dance images, although they are only seldom based on direct Indian models, maybe because the Indian influence could have been, at least partly, received via Indonesian islands. The rich variations of iconographical details and the dance movements depicted seem to suggest that both the tradition of dance and image making developed in Champa in its own way. The indigenous elements were intermingled with Indian elements even at a very early phase, i.e. in the 7TH century at latest, as is indicated by the prominent role of the scarf in dance. Yet another non-Indian feature became apparent in the 10TH century. That is the over-bent elbow, which, as will be seen in the following pages, was to be an important technical and aesthetical speciality of dance in many regions of mainland Southeast Asia.

3.5 Khmer Dance Imagery

The Khmer empire of ancient Cambodia flourished from the 9TH to the 15TH century. Even from the beginning of the period of its days of glory the state centralism was concentrated in the region of Angkor, near the Tonle Sap or Great Lake. The civilization of Angkor had its origins in the Prehistoric Iron Age. The capital, which bears marks of a long-lasting constant urban renewal, controlled the provinces through a network of shrines, both state and family temples (Higham 2001, 5–6).

The predominant religion was Hinduism, most often in its Shivaistic form. Vishnuism as well as forms of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism were also practised for shorter periods. Indian influence started to spread to the region at the latest during the early centuries AD, when two kingdoms or chains of kingdoms, Funan (c. 150–550) and Chenla (c. 550–800), flourished in the Mekong Delta area. It is now believed that the religion, in spite of its undeniable Indian features, was, in fact, a result of a long process of the intermingling of indigenous belief systems with religions that originated in India (Higham 2001, 47; Roveda 2005, 11–15). This resulted in a special kind of syncretism, characteristic of the Khmer civilization.

One of the features of this syncretism was the elevation of the king to the realm of the gods. The conception of *devaraja*, which translates as "god-king", is mentioned twice in the surviving stone inscriptions. It is probably the most widely discussed phenomenon in the the whole Khmer culture. No consensus about its exact meaning, however, has been reached among scholars (Jessup 2004, 62–63; Roveda 2005, 15).

Traditionally the history of Angkor begins in the 9TH century, when King Jayavarman II declared himself as a devaraja, after, as stated in an inscription, he returned from "Java". The term "Java" has often been interpreted as referring to the distant island of Java, but recently another solution has been suggested. It is possible that the place of his stay was the Champa kingdom nearby, in the coastal area of present-day Vietnam (Higham 2001, 56).

Jayavarman II established his capital first near the present-day Roluos, and later in the Kulen Mountains, both in the vicinity of Angkor. From this period onward the Khmer kings started to construct state temples. The form of a temple was initially a raised pyramid, a kind of artificial mountain, on which a linga, the symbol of Shiva's creative power, was placed. The king identified himself with Shiva and thus the linga became the focal point of the whole state. As was customary in India and Southeast Asia in general, the Khmer temples also represented Mount Meru, thus reflecting the ideas of Indian cosmology in their structure and symbolism.

The temples housed statues of the deified king and his ancestors, whose names were combined with the names of Hindu gods. The state temples developed from simple stepped pyramids to more complex structures, finally combining all the architectural elements known by the Khmer. The culmination of the architecture of the state temples is the 12TH century Angkor Wat, which with its some 600 metres of narrative reliefs and nearly 2000 female figures will be the subject of Chapter 4.

There exist two main groups of Khmer dance images, free-standing sculptures and bas-reliefs. No manuscript illustrations or murals have survived. The free-standing sculptures and some of the reliefs are now in the collections of museums, such as the National Museum of Phnom Penh, the National Museum of Bangkok, and the Musée Guimet in Paris. The majority of the surviving reliefs, however, are still *in situ* in temples, the most important of them being the state temples of Angkor Wat and Bayon. Dance-related reliefs can also be found in several smaller temples.

In all, one can talk literally of thousands of dance-related images. They cover most of the categories described in the Chapter 2.3. The only type of dance images so far not identified in Khmer art are the dance images directly related to the Natyashastra. Thus we can find in Khmer art (A) dance scenes depicting a dance performance, (B) various kinds of portrayals of dancers, (C) semi-gods, either dancing or depicted in dance-related poses, and (D) dancing gods. Although many free-standing dance statues exist (I), the majority of Khmer dance images belong to the type of (II) dance images in a narrative context. As has already been made clear, the large visual narratives are carved on the walls of the temple complexes and, consequently, most of the dance images also belong to the type of (III) dance images in an architectural context.

(A) Dance scenes depicting a dance performance are usually, as already mentioned earlier, the most informative types of images for the use of dance research, since they show the act of dance in various contexts i.e. accompanied by musicians, in an architectural setting, surrounded by an audience etc. The majority of the Khmer dance images depicting a performance can be found in the long narrative reliefs in both Angkor Wat and Bayon. They are often portrayals of military processions [3/11]. All details such as the weapons carried by the soldiers, war elephants, banners, honorary parasols etc. are depicted in great detail and correspond to the 13TH century travel account by the Chinese Zhou Daguan, which will be analyzed in Chapter 5. Some dance performances taking place in wooden palaces and pavilions add to our knowledge about Khmer dance practices [3/12]. The dances shown in these reliefs cover a wide range of movement techniques from acrobatic circus-like performances, relaxed social dances [3/13], martial arts demonstrations [2/11], dance-like military processions [4/10] to clearly Indian-influenced female dances [3/12, 4/4].

These portrayals of actual performances are very useful when one is analysing any other type of Khmer dance images. For example, they throw light on the hundreds of independent figures of dancing girls, which are either shown dancing alone, in a group of two or three, or in a row formation [4/4]. Traditionally these figures are automatically labelled "apsaras" and consequently they would belong to the type of (c) semi-gods. They are regularly depicted in an extremely open-leg position, which can be already recognised in a rare 10TH century free-standing stone sculpture (Jessup 2004, ill. 88).

This position with its many variations is, as stated several times above, usually regarded as the most dominant Indian-influenced feature in the dance images in Southeast Asia from

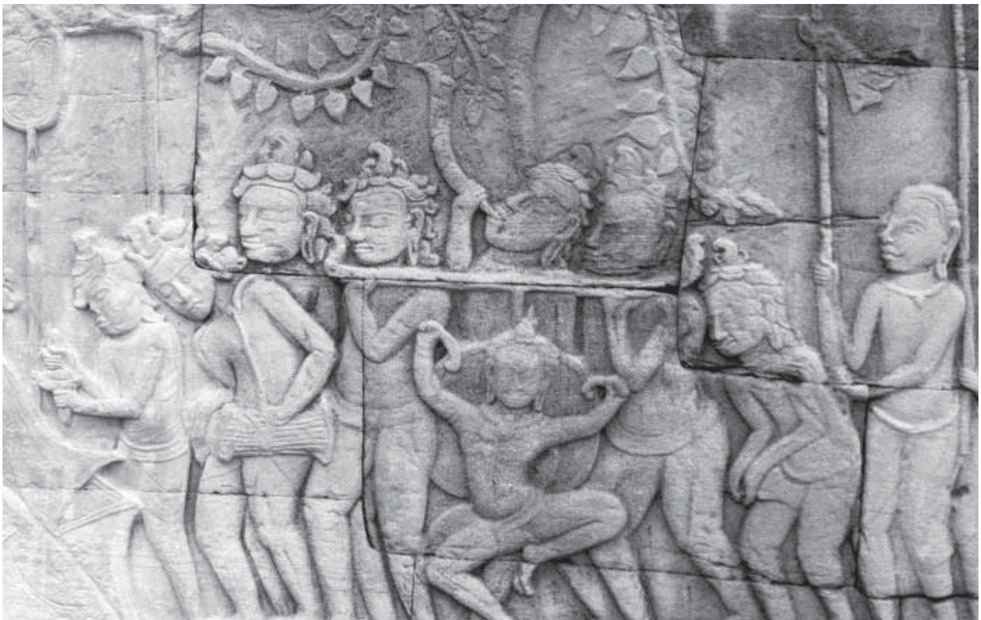


FIG 3/11 MILITARY PROCESSION WITH A DANCING DRUMMER AND OTHER MUSICIANS, BAYON 13TH CENTURY. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.*

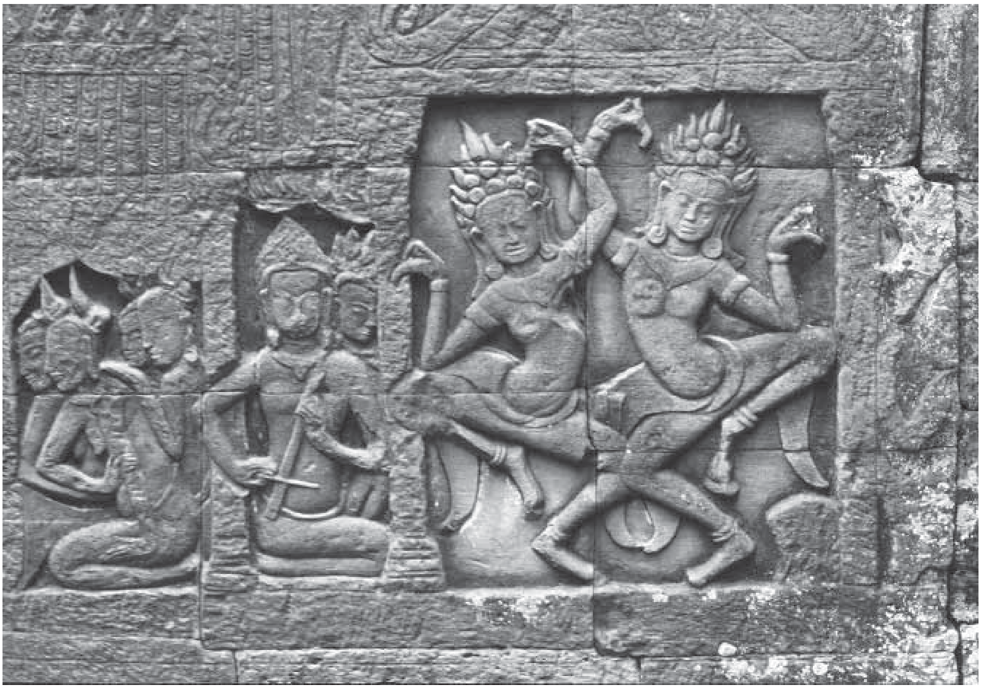


FIG 3/12 DANCERS AND MUSICIANS IN A WOODEN PALACE OR PAVILION, BAYON 13TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

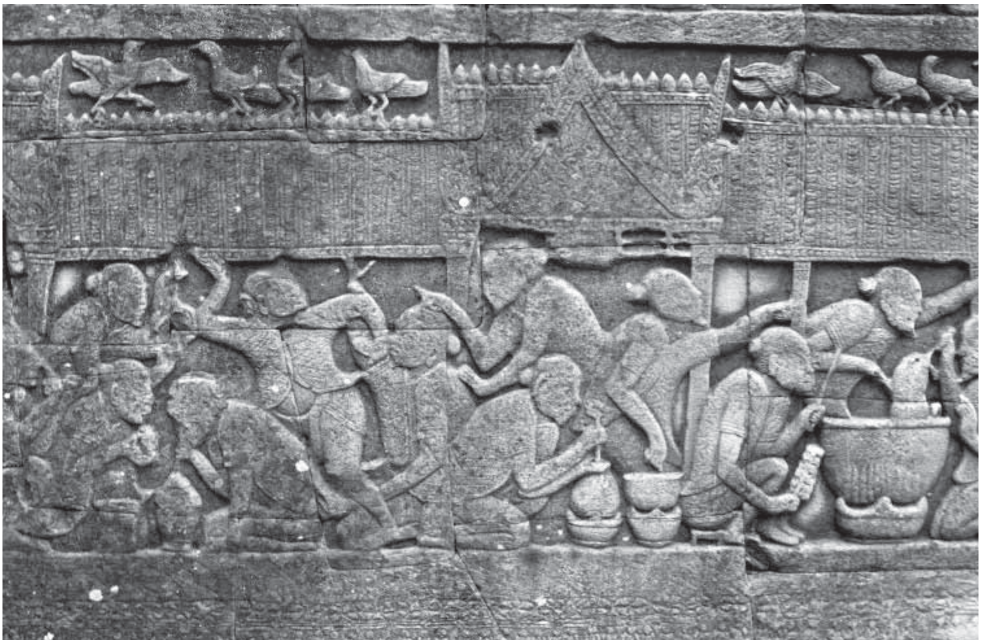


FIG 3/13 RELAXED SOCIAL DANCING, BAYON 13TH CENTURY. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.*

approximately the 8TH century onward. In Khmer dance images, however, both the supporting and the raised leg are strongly bent often resulting in an exceptionally low position. Most of the dancing "apsaras" convey an impression of dynamic movement, since keeping the balance in this position for a longer time seems nearly impossible.

Only a limited number of other body movements can be combined with these kinds of leg positions. The torso is often stiff and erect, sometimes slightly sideways bent. The most dominant movements are those of the arms and hands. In fact, most of the elements of body and hand movements can be analysed according to the Sanskrit terms established in the Natyashastra[14]. However, there does not seem to be direct Indian influence anymore. The lowness of the position gives the movement an unmistakable "Khmer" flavour. Above all, the strongly backward-bent fingers, which were already recognisable in some of the earlier Cham examples discussed above and, in one Mon dance image, discussed below, regularly appear among the otherwise often Indian-influenced Khmer hand gestures. It suggests that the localisation process of Indian influence was already well established during the Angkorean period.

Whether these, probably the most well known of all Khmer dance images, actually show apsaras can be questioned. Apsaras depicted in typical flying positions can be found in many of the mythical series of reliefs in Angkor Wat. Their poses as well as their narrative context clearly indicate that they really are apsaras. On the other hand, most of the independent female dancers, whether dancing alone or in groups, are not shown in flying poses, but in the low, open position, the most common dance pose among Khmer dance images. This could indicate that they or at least some of them, in fact, are actual temple dancers so often referred to in the inscriptions discussed in Chapter 4.1. Thus they would fall into the category of (B) portrayals of dancers. The question of identity and role of these female dancers is made more complicated by the existence of thousands of reliefs showing female figures in standing or walking positions, often holding flowers or mirrors in their hands. These figures are also often called "apsaras" or sometimes "devatas". The identity and role of these female figures and their relation to dance will be discussed in Chapter 4 in greater detail.

The type of dance images depicting (D) dancing gods was not as popular in Khmer art as it was in Indian dance imagery. In Khmer reliefs the most dominant god shown in a dance pose is Shiva in the form of Nataraja. He is frequently carved in the temple pediments. There are many fine examples of Nataraja pediments still *in situ*[15]. The popularity of the motif is easy to understand since Shivaism was frequently the predominant form of Hinduism in Khmer culture. The superiority of Shiva over other Hindu gods is often made clear by the iconography. Sometimes Vishnu and Brahma kneel on both sides of the dancing Shiva, and in Wat Phnom Rung Shiva dances above a relief depicting Vishnu [3/14].

In Khmer art Shiva is most often shown with ten arms, although sometimes he is depicted with only two arms. The high uplifted leg crossing the lower body, as in the South Indian Chola prototypes, does not dominate his dancing pose, which is much lower and clearly has the same origins as the poses of the dancing Cham Natarajas [3/4]. As discussed above, the origins of this type of Nataraja seem to be in West India [3/3]. He can hold attributes in his hands but often, as in the exquisite Nataraja in Wat Phnom Rung, all his ten hands are in *aralam* mudra, indicating storm among other things. As in the western Indian-inspired Cham Nataraja reliefs in Khmer

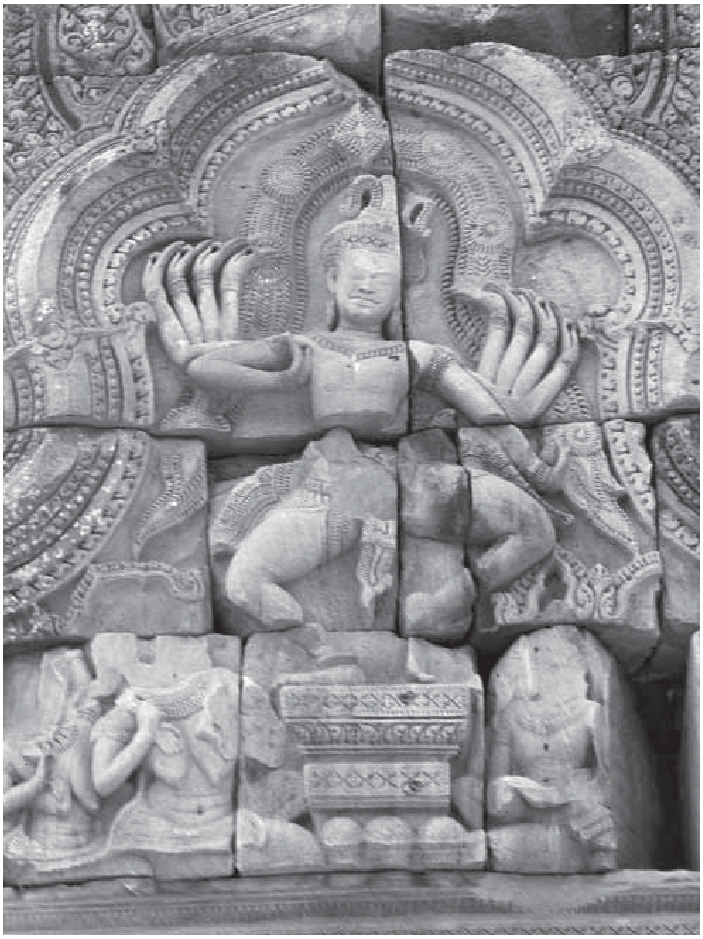


FIG 3/14
DANCING SHIVA,
WAT PHNOM RUNG, THAILAND,
11TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.

versions Shiva is also frequently flanked on a lower level by his consort Uma, his son Ganesha, his acolytes, *rishis* and musicians. In Khmer reliefs Shiva often wears the typical royal Khmer crown.

Besides Hinduism, most often in its Shivaistic form, and in the case of Angkor Wat in Vishnuistic form, Khmers also practised Buddhism that was introduced around the same time as Hinduism. Inscriptions reveal that already in the 7th century Khmers were familiar with both the Theravada and Mahayana sects. Buddhism had its apogee in Angkor at the end of the 12th century when Jayavarman II ordained a form of Mahayana Buddhism to be the state religion. Tantrism was also practised in the Khmer empire for a short period. The earliest surviving inscriptions mentioning Tantrism are from the 10th century. The 12th century temple of Phimai, in particular, in present-day Thailand, was a centre of Tantric cult. The local ruler venerated the Tantric deity Vajrapani, a form of the Buddha who converted all other deities to Buddhism (Roveda 2005, 12).

Most of the Tantric dance images belong to the category of (D) dancing gods, although in the extremely complex and varied pantheon, or rather pantheons, of Tantrism, it is not always so unambiguous as to whether a certain figure should be classified as a god or a semi-god. Tantric dance images can be found both on the lintel stones and the door pilasters of the Phimai temple. In a lintel stone over the eastern entrance the Tantric god Trailokyavijaya is dancing on two male bodies. Over the northern entrance door female dancers are celebrating the four Buddhas, and in the pilasters of the doorways Vajrasattvas dance on the corpses of their enemies. The dance pose of Trailokyavijaya and the female dancers repeat the extremely low and open pose already discussed above. The pose of one of the dancing Vajrasattvas, however, is exceptional. His lower body is shown in profile whereas his torso and face are shown frontally. It has slight similarities to the stamping male dancers discussed in connection with some of the Cham dance images [3/8] and especially to the male dancers found in the ruins of a Srivijaya temple in Sumatra [3/22].

All the above-discussed Tantric dance images naturally belong to the category of (III) dance images in architectural context. There is, however, an interesting group of dancing Tantric gods and semi-gods in form of free-standing bronze sculptures belonging mainly to the Phimai school of Tantrism. They are now scattered around the world in museums, such as the Bangkok National Museum and the Musée Guimet in Paris, as well as in private collections. The most frequently depicted god among these rather small bronzes is the dancing Hevajra. He is a Buddhist counterpart to Shiva Gajasambara (Roveda 2005, 273) and he has also been associated with bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Felten & Lerner 1988, 235). Several dancing Hevajras survive, pointing to the importance of this frightening god in the school of Phimai Tantrism. The exact role of Hevajra in this sect is, however, not known.

The Khmer Hevajra statues depict the deity with eight heads or faces and sixteen arms in a dancing pose. He is often shown in the most common Khmer dance pose, i.e. one leg uplifted and both legs strongly bent. There is also at least one example where he is shown in a pose in which both legs touch the earth (Felten & Lerner 1988, fig. 37). The pose is the same in which the Khmer Shiva Nataraja is generally depicted. In fact, as stated already in Chapter 2.3, the Tantric deities rely strongly on the iconographic models of the Shivaistic deities. A Khmer Hevajra usually holds in his sixteen hands different attributes listed in the Tantric texts (Felten & Lerner 1988, 235). Hevajra is dancing on one or several corpses symbolising ignorance. The conical formation of Hevajra's eight heads strongly resembles the multiple heads of deities found in some earlier Khmer reliefs [4/8]. The same kind of multi-faced mask is still used today in the *khon* masked dance theatre of Thailand [6/17] and the *lakhon kol* mask theatre in Cambodia by the performer of the role of the demon king Ravana of the Ramayana epic. The phenomenon will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

According to a Hevajra statue and other dancing Tantric sculptures in the collection of the Musée Guimet in Paris and an example published in Felten & Lerner (1988, fig. 34), it seems that the Tantric sculptures were, at least sometimes, arranged in a kind of mandala formation. The majestic dancing Hevajra is flanked by minor dancing deities, most often yoginis, female Destroyers of Ignorance. These kinds of three-dimensional Tantric mandalas, constructed from separate small sculptures, will be discussed in Chapter 3.7 in connection with a Srivijaya dance image found in South Thailand. There are, however, considerable stylistic differences between the Srivijaya/Javanese and the Khmer Tantric figures. The former group repeats the

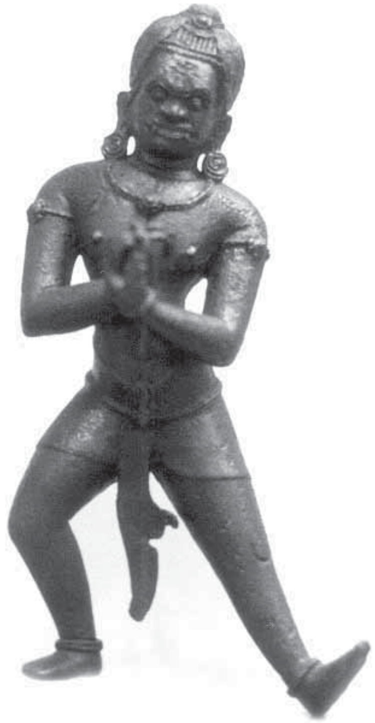


FIG 3/15
DANCING TANTRIC DIVINITY OF TERRIFYING ASPECT, 12TH CENTURY, BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.*

poses derived from the Indian tradition very exactly, whereas the basic dance postures of the Khmer statues most often show the extremely low, dynamic pose so common in Khmer dance imagery in general.

However, there exists one very interesting exception to this rule. In the collection of Bangkok's National Museum there is one dancing divinity of terrifying aspect [3/15]. It was found in a precinct of the Phimai temple and it is dated to the 12TH century. It has been described in an exhibition catalogue as follows:

> The frowning eyebrows, protruding eyes, and two long fangs are marks of the divinity's 'terrifying' aspect, often seen in Tantric iconography. His hair is dressed with chignon on top. He wears earrings not unlike those of Dvaravati style, as well as a necklace, decorated belt, armlets, and bracelets of matching design. His *sampot* or waist-cloth has a butterfly motif in the rear, which suggests some connection with the Khmer style of the Baphuon (eleventh century). The right foot is a replacement. The original pedestal, now missing, probably bore the figure of a corpse on which the divinity was dancing. Divinities of this sort, dancing on corpses, are well known in Tantric sculpture. Indeed one of them is represented on the lintel over the east door of the central tower of the Pimai temple, so the identification seems fairly certain. Certain scholars call this bronze a dancing Mara; but as no other images of such a subject are known, the theory seems fanciful. (The Sculpture of Thailand 1976, 32)

The dance pose of this deity is clearly Indian. This kind of moment, when the dancer's supporting leg is slightly bent and the other leg is outstretched while its toes point up, is very common in many Indian dance traditions. It is usually a short moment in a dance sequence, where the movement is repeated symmetrically to the right and to the left according to the speed of the rhythm of the accompanying music, which also dictates the change of the mudra. Here the mudra could perhaps be interpreted as *bhutadamara*, denoting warding-off evil. It would suit the theme of figure. If the above-suggested hypothesis were true, the figure would have been dancing on a corpse, the personification of Ignorance, the archenemy of Buddhism.

This small statuette, only 16 cm high, is remarkable in its superb portrayal of a clearly Indian-derived dance pose. At first sight it would be easy to suppose that it was imported from India. The analysis sited above, however, makes it clear that the statue is of local craftsmanship since its earrings are Mon-influenced and its waistcloth has Khmer-related designs. Thus the statue is not only a unique type of Tantric dance image but it also throws light on the stylistic complexities of the Phimai school of art which, when observed from the point of view of the Khmer tradition, seems to form part of it, but when observed from the Thai point of view, seems to form a tradition of its own.

To this group of Khmer-influenced sculptures found in present-day Thailand belongs two small fragments of bronze reliefs depicting lively female dancers [3/16]. Their original function is not clear and their execution is exceptional. They are cast as flat sculptured reliefs within a frame, which could indicate that they formed parts of some kind of pedestal, altar, other furniture or architectural detail. The dancers do not seem to have much in common with Khmer dance images. Their long waist wraps and hairdos differ from the Khmer prototypes.

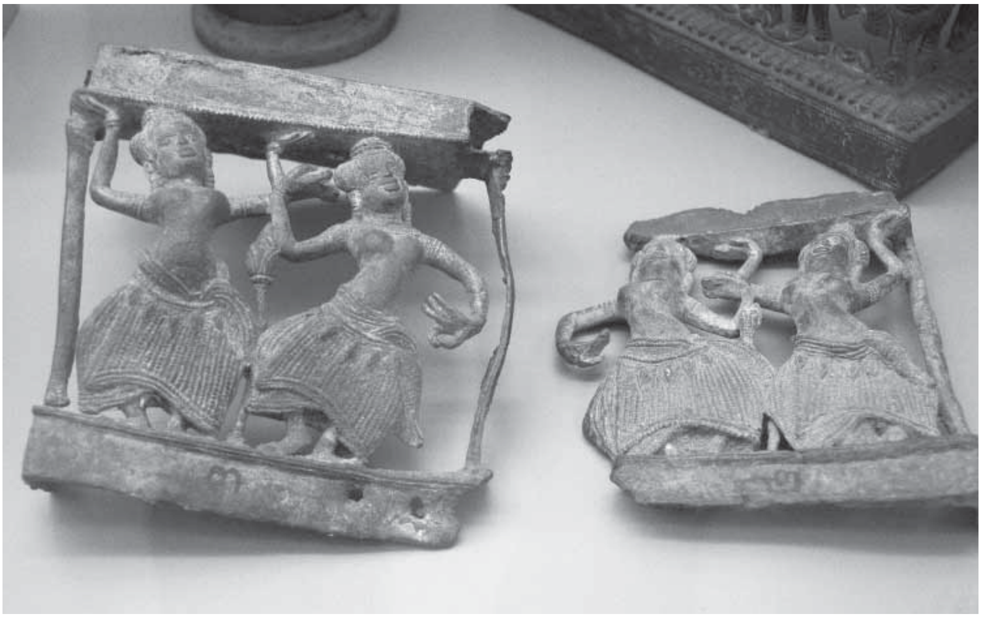


FIG 3/16 FEMALE DANCERS, C. 12TH CENTURY, BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2005.*

Their arms are in rather square positions while some of their hand movements resemble Indian mudras. Their legs are not in the uplifted position but in a rather low position and clearly indicate Indian influence. Their fingers are, however, in the strong backward bent position, characteristic, as discussed above, of some early dance images in mainland Southeast Asia.

So far in this sub-chapter the Khmer dance images have been broadly discussed according to their subject matter and their portrayals of dance poses. Some mention has also been made of their narrative and architectural contexts. Chapter 4 will discuss the dance imagery of the Angkor Wat temple complex, which is generally regarded as the epitome of the whole Khmer culture. The focus will be on two types of dance images, i.e. (II) dance images in the narrative context and (III) dance images in the architectural context. References are naturally also made to Khmer dance images in general as discussed above.

3.6 Pyu Dance Images

The Pyu culture, which is still rather little known, flourished in the Irrawaddy River basin in present-day Myanmar between the 7TH and the 9TH centuries at the latest and had its roots in the early centuries BC (Stadtner 1998, 43). Its principal centres were Srikshetra, Beikhtano and Halin. Since the 1970s other sites have also been excavated and the picture of this early, urbanised period may become clearer in the future. Who exactly the Pyu were is not known. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group but their origins remain an open question. However, during the flourishing of their culture the Pyu had joined Southern Silk Route system with its maritime contacts with other parts of Southeast Asia and India. Through the land routes missions were also sent to China, where various kinds of information about the Pyu kingdoms was recorded in the court chronicles.

The religion of the Pyu reflects the international contacts. The main form of religion was most probably influenced by the South Indian Pali Buddhism, a precursor of the later Theravada Buddhism. Some remains indicating Brahmanic influence also exist (Myint-U 2001, 85). Religious sculpture also shows, however, Tantric Mahayana influence. The South Indian Buddhism may have been adopted via the sea routes. The Mahayana influence may have a resulted from the traffic on the land routes connecting the regions with Yunnan, China and East India, especially the region of Benares. East India continued to serve as an important source of inspiration for the Burmese culture during the following centuries as well.

The architectural remains of the Pyu sites include traces of brick monasteries as well as stupas or pagodas of a kind of egg or elongated barrel shape, which is easy to recognise. They stand on circular platforms. The Pyu temples were rather small and square in shape while hallways surrounded the solid centre of the structure. More evidence remains from sculpture of the Pyu. Several dozens of sculptures can be attributed to this culture. They include stone, terracotta and metal reliefs and sculptures. They are now mainly in the National Museums of Yangon and Pagan and in the site museum of Hmawza, all of which are in Myanmar (Stadtner 1998, 45). Their main theme is the Buddha figure. However, among the Pyu reliefs there are two works which can be defined as dance images.

When one considers how little is known about Pyu culture in general, it is exceptional that there exists written evidence about the Pyu dance. It is recorded in the Chinese annals. As already mentioned earlier, a troupe of Pyu dancers and Mon musicians were sent to the court of Tang China in 801. The chronicles give a full description of the instruments used in the performances as well as of the materials of the costume and ornaments worn by the performers. The dances were performed by groups, varying from two to ten dancers among them tattooed men. The performances were received with great appreciation by the Chinese court and minor titles were bestowed on the group leaders (Singer 1995, 1).

Both of the two existing Pyu dance images show male dancers. Perhaps the best-known Pyu metalwork, now in the collections of the National Museum in Yangon, consists of five separate bronze reliefs, approx. 15 cm in height, depicting three dancing musicians and two dancers [3/17]. They may have belonged to a larger piece, which is indicated by small holes at the back of the figures. These figures were found inside a large metal bell in Hmawza. They are dated to c. the 6th to 7th century and they "are undeniably marked by an Indian quality" (Stadtner 1998, 46–47, 71).

Two of the musicians are clearly depicted with their instruments: a flute and a pot drum. The third musician evidently plays the cymbals. This kind of small standing orchestra playing the above instruments was often shown in Indian dance reliefs from the 7th to the 12th centuries (Vatsyayan 1977b, 7). On the left hand side of the Pyu dancer there is either a child or a dwarf performer who seems to comically comment on the actual dancer. His facial features do not show any child-like qualities and thus the figure could be a dwarfish jester, common in Indian theatrical practices.

The principal dancer is in a lively position with an uplifted right foot and a bent body, the left arm bent upward and the hand almost touches his ear. The positions of the legs and feet

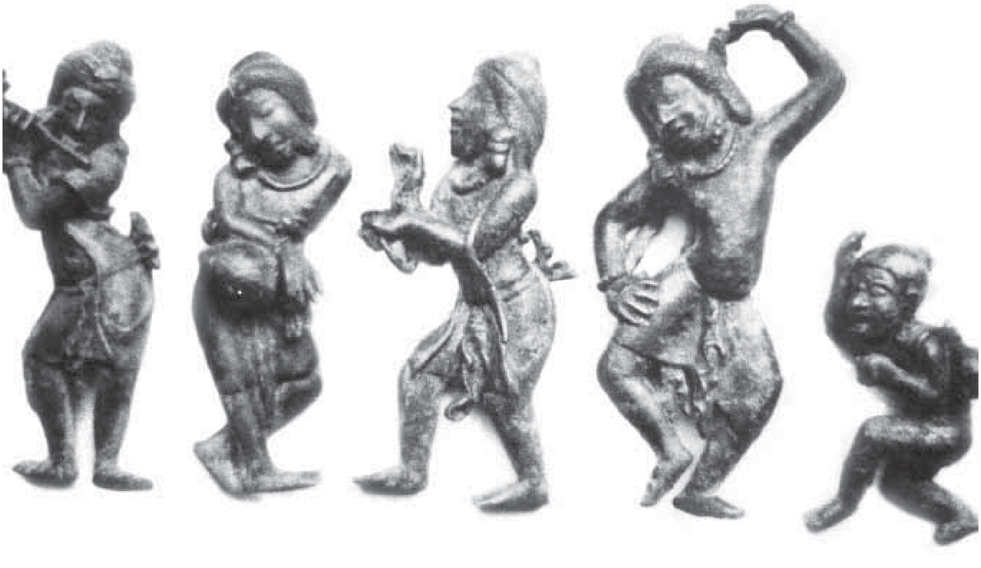


FIG 3/17 PYU DANCERS AND MUSICIANS, 6TH—7TH CENTURIES.
REPRODUCED FROM A PHOTOGRAPH IN THE YANGON NATIONAL MUSEUM BY THE AUTHOR IN 1983.

clearly resemble Indian dance (Vatsyayan 1977b, 6). However, the angular arm movements as well as the bent body bear undeniable similarities to the technique of present Burmese dance. Although the figures are now separated from their original context, and their present order may be later reconstructed, they definitely belong to the category of (a) dance scenes, in which a dance performance is portrayed. The varied, lively poses of the figures together with their facial expressions make them certainly in their overall musicality and rhythm a remarkable and touching document of early Southeast Asian dance.

The other surviving dance image could also be defined as (a) a dance scene as it shows a dancer surrounded by musicians and maybe other male dancers [3/18]. However, the bulky, child-like body of the principal dancer, whose face, hand and legs are unfortunately damaged, could also be identified as (c) dancing semi-god, that of a gana. The ganas, described in Chapter 2.3, are dwarf attendants of Shiva, who were also adopted by Buddhist imagery. They were popular motifs in Sri Lanka during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva periods and as in South India in the repertory of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda sculpture in the 2nd and the 3rd centuries AD [2/6]. As mentioned above, it is believed that from these centres the Pyu adopted the specific kind of Buddhism they practised.

The expression of the dancers and musicians seems to be very cheerful, a mood characteristic of the earthly ganas. The dancer's right leg is uplifted and crosses the lower body. The left arm is uplifted while the right one points downwards. The costume ornaments and hairstyle bear similarities to the gana figures found in Polonnaruva (A Guide to Polonnaruva 1982, 51). This lively terracotta relief has most probably belonged to a series of panels, since another panel

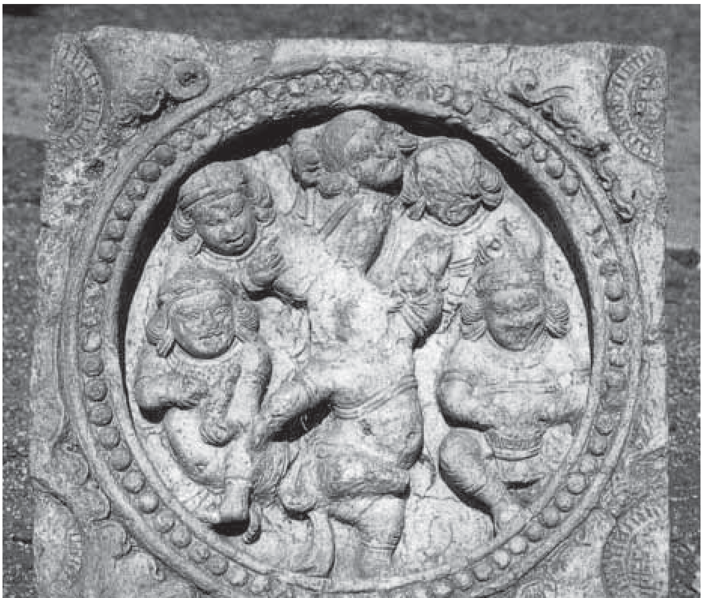


FIG 3/18
TORSO OF A DANCING MALE FIGURE WITH MUSICIANS, PYU , 5TH–6TH CENTURIES, BAGAN NATIONAL MUSEUM.
ART OF SOUTHEAST ASIA 1998.

with a similar style and side ornaments has survived (Art of Southeast Asia 1998, plate 242). This panel again shows short, bulky men in different attitudes. Here the central theme is not a dancer but two bulls in front of male figures. One could suppose that these two plaques, which both are dated to circa the 5th to 6th century, have belonged to an iconographical programme in a temple or a stupa, a tradition which continued during the following Pagan period, although then these reliefs were mostly glazed.

One should not, perhaps, draw far-fetched conclusions about Pyu dance based only on two surviving dance images. However, it appears that the dancing gana is based on South Indian iconographical prototypes. The group of the bronze reliefs, on the other hand, seems to indicate that the Pyu dance had a strong Indian flavour although the style may have already been localised. It is indicated by the angular poses of the arms and the prominent bend of the back, which are typical features of Burmese dance still today. After the destruction of the last Pyu city in 832 much of the Pyu traditions was integrated into the culture of the Burmese of Pagan (Aung-Thwin 1985, 21–23), among them also the tradition of dance (Singer 1995, 2; Zaw Pale & Khin Win New 1998, 55).

3.7 Early Dance Images from the Regions of Present-day Thailand

Prior to the founding of the Tai[16] kingdom of Sukhothai in 1238 the regions of present-day Thailand served as a meeting point for three cultures, which were already firmly related to the above-described cultural network connecting China, Southeast Asia and India. One of the successors of the state of Funan, situated to the west of the Champa kingdom and the Khmer empire, was the Dvaravati kingdom[17]. It was ruled by the Mon, who had their old political and cultural centres in Nakhon Pathom, in present-day South Thailand, and in Pegu, in present South Myanmar. The eastern, peninsular, regions of southern Thailand again had their political and cultural contacts with the Srivijaya maritime "Empire" with its centre in Southeast Sumatra. The south-eastern parts of Thailand, on the other hand, had even from the late 6th century been under the domination of Khmer-speaking principaltities. By the 11th century many of the Mon-controlled territories were lost to the Khmer Empire governed from its political, religious and cultural centre at Angkor, near the Tonle Sap Lake, in present-day Cambodia (Aasen 1998, 29–56).

All of these three cultures had their own variations of indigenous belief-systems and religions originating in India, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Tantrism. With their distinguished artistic traditions these cultures provided elements for the rich syncretism which was to characterise the culture of the region even in later times. Among the varied art objects found in present-day Thailand belonging to this period, roughly covering the 7th to 14th centuries, there are also dance images. Although few, however, they give valuable information about the forms of dance and dance imagery prevalent in the region during this period of formulation of what was to become in the following centuries Thai[18] culture. The first two examples of dance images to be discussed in this chapter belong to the Dvaravati culture, whereas the third one belongs to the Srivijaya culture. Some of the Khmer-influenced dance images found in these regions have already been discussed in Chapter 3.5.

As already mentioned, the Dvaravati kingdom was ruled by the Mon. Dvaravati influence was dominant in central and southern parts of present-day Thailand from the 6TH to the 11TH centuries and in the northern parts from the 3RD to the 13TH centuries. Politically, the Mon were organised as a kind of network of more or less autonomous principalities (Aasen 1998, 29–39). The predominant religion of the Dvaravati kingdom was Buddhism, first in its South Indian Hinayana and later Sri Lankan Theravada forms, although objects and reliefs connected to Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism have also been found. The connections with Sri Lanka, however, dominated the creation of the Mon culture.

Little survives of actual Dvaravati architecture except laterite foundations on which the brick buildings once rose. Mon architecture reflected the Indian prototypes. The body of a Mon stupa was usually either in the shape of a stout bell surmounted by a pointed pier or had successive, superimposed rings, which became smaller as they rose higher. On the walls of the structures were depicted mythical animals and semi-gods of the Mount Meru cosmology. They were executed either as terracotta or stucco reliefs. The whole construction with its reliefs was often painted (Guillon 1999, 84).

The main themes of Dvaravati full-round sculpture were the Buddha figure and the *dharmacakra* or the Wheel of Law. Both reflect Indian influence although in Dvaravati the originally Indian dharmacakra motif developed in its own way (Gossling 2004, 58). Stylistically the Buddha figures were first related to the Amaravati tradition. Later, Gupta and post-Gupta, and finally Pala influences are recognisable. The stone sculptures are rather formal in character, emphasising symmetry and frontality. Terracotta and stucco reliefs, on the other hand, show tendencies toward realism, even naturalism. This is especially true in the case of the stucco figures, which were easier to produce than the terracotta reliefs. The first example of Mon dance figures discussed in this chapter belongs to this group of stucco reliefs.

In the collection of Bangkok's National Museum there is a fragment of an 8TH to 11TH century stucco kinnari, which once formed a part of the decoration on a temple wall in Nakhon Sawan, south of Sukhothai [3/19]. It shows a winged female figure with a prominent, crown-like headgear. Her body is bent in the exaggerated *tribhanga* position. Her right arm is thrown across the upper body and the left arm is uplifted and bent from the elbow. Dhanit Yupho, an authority on Thai dance, has tried to compare this figure with the drawings based on the Chidambaram karana reliefs discussed in Chapter 2.3. He has come to the conclusion that the the kinnari's pose bears similarities to the Natyashastra's *lalita* position (Mattani 1993, 16). Mattani Rutnin, on the other hand, has pointed out some similarities between the kinnari figure and Sri Lankan tradition:

> …the *kinnari* dance figure (found in Ban Kao), for example, has the dance posture, costumes, wing, sash and crown similar to the surviving Lanka dance. This figure expresses Indian dance styles, which include moving waist and hip while and moving arm to the opposite side of the hip (these are not popular for Thai dance). (Mattani, 1998, 151)

However, as the pose of the kinnari's upper body bears undeniable similarities to the pose of the famous Cham Tra Kieu dancer [3/5], analysed by Vatsyayan above, it may be worthwhile to

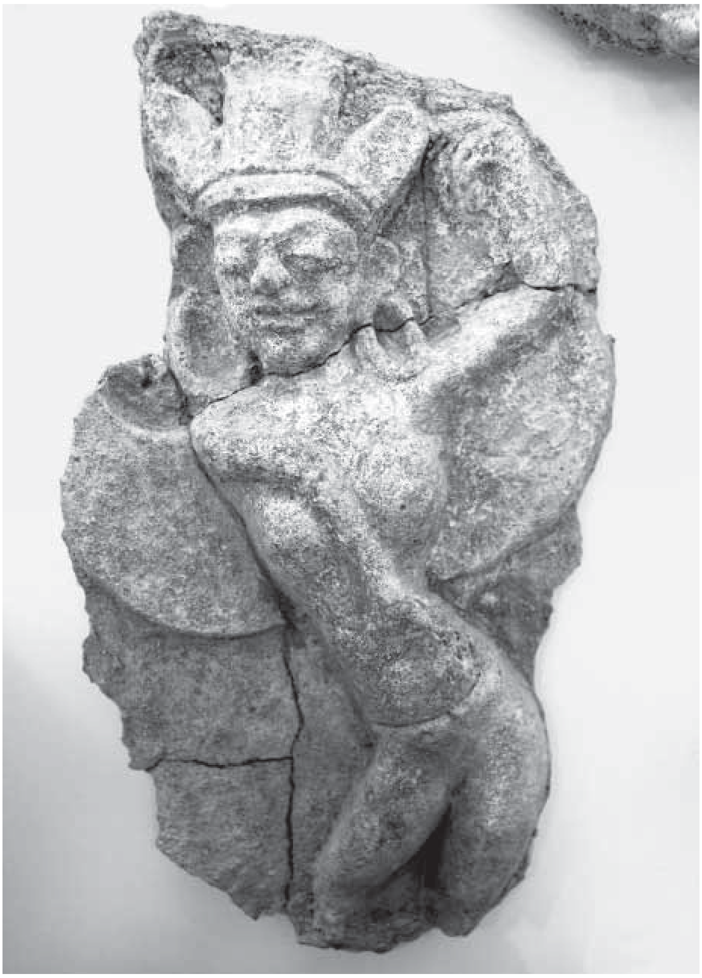


FIG 3/19
DANCING KINNARI OR A
HUMAN DANCER PERFORMING
A KINNARI DANCE,
MON STUCCO RELIEF,
8TH—11TH CENTURIES,
BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

compare these figures with each other. The Tra Kieu dancer has the typical Indian-influenced open-leg position, whereas in the kinnari figure the partly damaged legs seem not to repeat this position. In both reliefs the over-bent elbow joint, discussed above in connection with Cham dance images, is a dominant feature. The interpretation of the finger position of its surviving left hand is difficult owing the rough workmanship of the kinnari. It could be interpreted as repeating the position of the Tra Kieu dancer's right hand.

On the other hand, when one is familiar with the hand and finger movements of many Thai folk and classical dances, one can easily recognise similarities between them and the kinnari figure. Thai dances often emphasise the extremely elastic finger movements in which the fingers are excessively stretched backward, an aesthetical and technical speciality with its own training methods [3/20]. Thus the kinnari's upper hand could also be seen repeating this kind of movement. If this interpretation is correct, the kinnari figure, while echoing Indian and Sri Lankan traditions, also represents localisation of these traditions with its over-bent elbow and backward stretched fingers, both features typical of dances of this region still today.

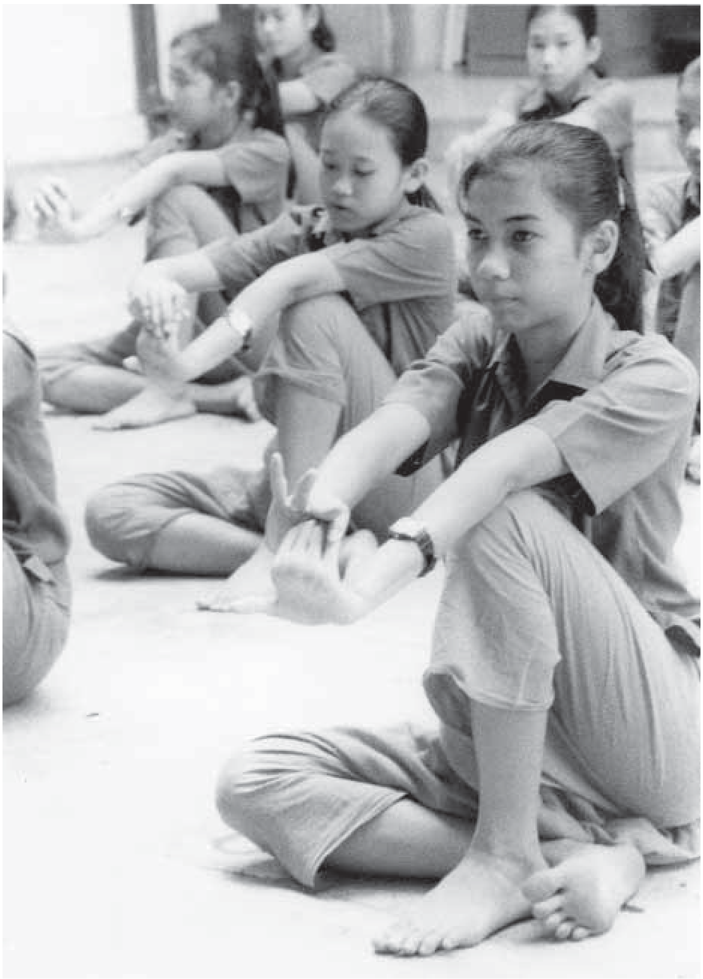


FIG 3/20
TRAINING OF THE BACKWARD-BENT FINGERS IN THAILAND.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 1982.

Although this kinnari figure is now in the museum collection, it once formed a part of a temple and thus belongs to the category of (III) dance images in an architectural context. Art and theatre historians have identified this figure as a kinnari probably because of its wings. If this assumption is correct, it belongs to the group of (C) dancing semi-divinities. This kinnari is, however, not depicted in any of the many Indian-derived poses denoting the act of flying. Thus it could also portray a human dancer with artificial wings performing the dance of a kinnari[19].

Another example of dance images related to the Mon in Thailand is a small embossed gold plate found in Si Thep, in Petchabun province [3/21] (Dhida 1999, 133). It shows a female dancer with her left leg uplifted and bent in an energetic pose, waving a sword above her head with her right hand while holding a shield in the left hand. As already discussed in Chapter 2.6, an exactly similar kind of a dance figure can be recognised among the Ramayana series of reliefs in the candi Loro Jonggaran, in Central Java. Edi Sedyawati has analysed its pose as follows:

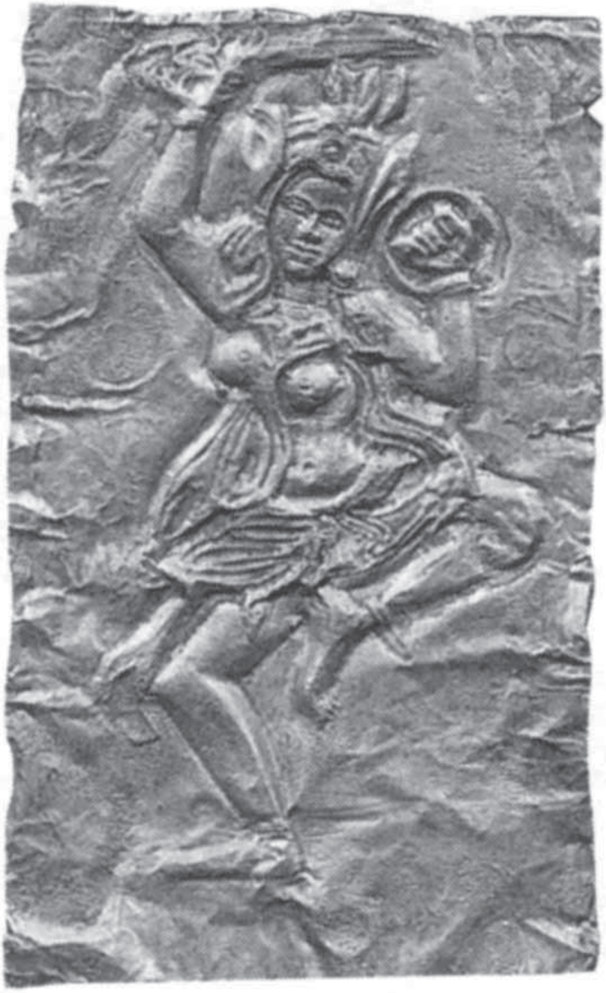


FIG 3/21
MON-PERIOD MINIATURE GOLD PLATE SHOWING A DANCING FEMALE DEITY, PRIVATE COLLECTION. *DHIDA 1999.*

> A female dancer is depicted in an *ardhaparyanka* standing position, waving a sword above her head with her right hand and with her left hand holding a shield by the side of her head, the shield facing the back of the head. Compared with the description of *nyayas* (ways of fighting) given in the Natyashastra, it shows conformity with either the *bharata* or the *kaisika* way of fighting.
> (Sedyawati 1998, 73)

Since the pose and even the details of clothes and jewellery are identical in both images, this analysis, although based on a Javanese Ramayana relief in Central Java, applies to this Mon gold plate as well.

The small size of the embossed gold plate could easily indicate that the plate belongs to the type of (1) portable art objects, which found their way from India to Southeast Asia through the various trade and pilgrimage routes. However, the fact that this dance image belongs to a group of stylistically and technically related plates indicates that they are locally made. This is supported by the fact that the style and iconography of the Buddha figure and Brahmanic god, which belong to the same group, clearly reflect the iconographical conventions of Dvaravati art. Thus the dance image is most probably locally made but based on the same, maybe iconographical prototype which originates in India as the female dancer in Loro Jonggaran.

To summarise the information given by the dance images discussed above one may conclude that the Indian-derived prototypes were repeated in the case of the dancing female deity embossed on a gold plate. On the other hand, the stucco kinnari, which once belonged to a pictorial programme of a sacred building, also clearly shows, features of the localisation process while repeating, to a certain extent, the Indian and/or Sri Lankan prototypes,. These features include the over-bent elbow and, if my interpretation is correct, the backward stretched fingers too.

While Dvaravati created a more or less homogenous artistic tradition, the peninsular regions of present-day Thailand had several multicultural contacts, resulting in a diversity of artistic traditions. One dance image, an almost unique one, has been found in this region. It is related to the Srivijaya kingdom, which controlled from the 7TH to the early 13TH centuries regions in the Malay Peninsula and present-day peninsular Thailand from southeastern Sumatra. The political power Srivijaya enjoyed was probably due to the strategic location of its centre in Sumatra's coastal regions, which nearly all the maritime traffic passed (Klokke 1998, 337). While Dvaravati merely formed a chain of loosely affiliated principalities, Srivijaya, on the other hand, is believed to have been a kind of centralised kingdom (Gossling 2004, 87).

Dvaravati art was mainly based on the Theravada Buddhist tradition, whereas that of Srivijaya was as much Brahmanic as Buddhist. The Buddhism that was practised was mainly the Mahayana, often with Tantric features. Contacts with East India's religious centres, particularly with the Nalanda monastery-university, were well established, as mentioned in Chapter 2.4. The art of this "maritime empire" in its diversity of styles reflects the various contacts Srivijaya had during its history. The early sculpture reflects South Indian Pallava influence, while the art of the 8TH to 11TH centuries strongly reflects East Indian Pala-Sena as well as Central Javanese influences (Subhadradis 1980, 27). Besides the maritime contacts with India and Java, Srivijaya was also connected with mainland Southeast Asia, as far as Champa and the southern regions of present-day Cambodia (Boisselier 1975, 73). Srivijaya also had established ties with China, where embassies were regularly sent (Klokke 1998, 337).

The repertoire of Srivijaya sculpture, executed both in stone and bronze, includes Buddha figures, bodhisattvas (particularly Avalokiteshvara) and Hindu deities. They are now mainly in museums in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Less is known about Srivijaya architecture because the buildings were mainly constructed of bricks, which do not survive in the humid tropical climate. Another reason is that the present city of Palembang, in southeastern Sumatra, is now believed to have been built on the ruins of the ancient centre of Srivijaya, which makes excavations very difficult.

One temple, however, may give some idea of the Srivijaya-influenced architecture of peninsular Thailand. It is the ruined, brick-built stupa at Wat Kaew, in Chaiya, which was a regional centre of Srivijaya. Many important Srivijaya sculptures have also been found in Chaiya

(Aasen 1998, 39). The chedi shows Central Javanese influence, while stylistic connections with the Cham kalan towers are rather obvious. Otherwise, all that survives of Srivijaya architecture are the remains of brick-built stupas and basement structures scattered around the regions once ruled by the empire.

A considerable number of these remains are found in Padang Lawas, in Sumatra. The basement of the temple of Bahal I includes rare examples of surviving Srivijaya dance images. Dancing male figures with swords in their hands are depicted in rectangular relief panels, carved in brick. The pose of one of them is almost identical with the Cham dvarapala dancer already discussed above [3/22, 3/8]. They both have an uplifted right leg, which gives the impression of energetic dance, maybe a kind of stamping movement. Their right arms are lifted over their heads. The Srivijaya dancer has a sword or stick in his uplifted hand, whereas the Champa dancer holds a dance scarf. Other differences can be found in the position of the left arm. The Srivijaya dancer has bent his arm holding his hand at the level of his stomach, whereas the Cham dancer's arm is in the over-bent position discussed above. The facial expression of the figures also differs: the Srivijaya dancer has demonic, mask-like features, whereas the Cham dancer expresses noble solemnity.

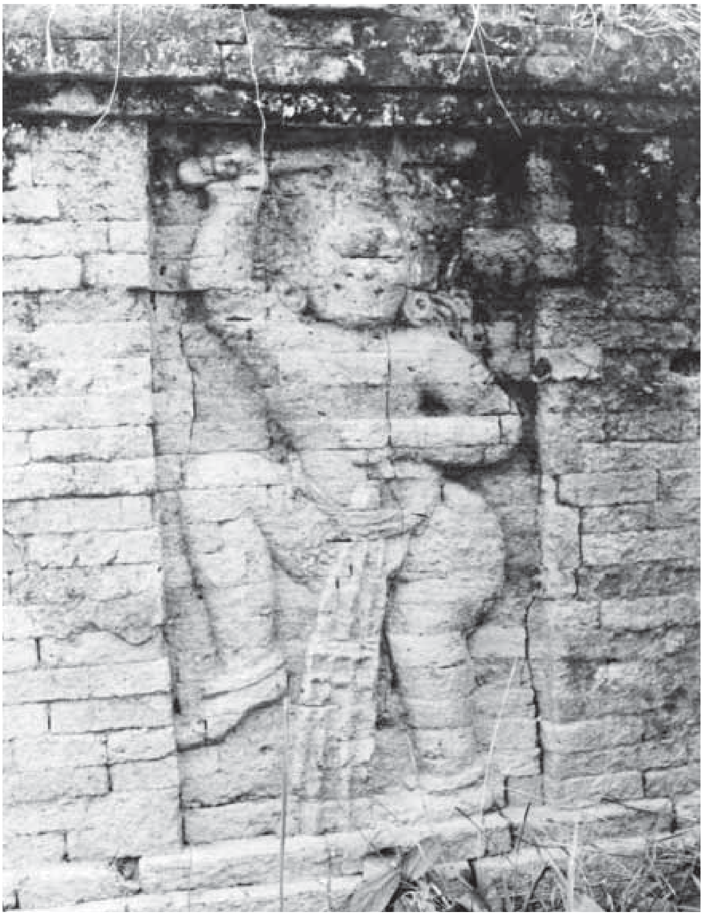


FIG 3/22
DANCING MALE FIGURE
IN THE BASEMENT OF THE
BAHAL I TEMPLE,
PADANG LAWAS, SUMATRA,
13TH–14TH CENTURIES.
THE ART OF SRIVIJAYA 1980.

The pose of the Cham dancer has been analysed by Kapila Vatsyayan (1977b, 5) and she has pointed out the links between the Natyashastra-tradition with this particular and other nearly similar dancing Cham dvarapala figures. Considering the above-mentioned contacts between Srivijaya and Champa it would seem possible that these dance images refer to a dance tradition shared by both Champa and Srivijaya. The function of the Cham dvarapala relief stelae was to protect the building into which they once belonged. The Srivijaya dancers with their frightening facial features and martial-arts-like movements could also have had a protective function. However, Satyawati Suleiman has pointed out that the dancers give an impression "as if they were representing some tantric rites" (1980, 18).

The Srivijaya dance image discussed above clearly belongs to the main category of "dance images in an architectural context". On the other hand, to classify it according to its subject matter is more difficult. If the figure is a dvarapala or another kind of guardian deity, it belongs to the type of (c) Semi-divinities, but this can not be verified.

Similarly, the only Srivijaya-related dance image found in peninsular Thailand so far avoids any definitive classifications. It is a full-round bronze sculpture of 12.5 centimetres in height [3/23]. It belongs to the collection of Songkhla National Museum in South Thailand and it has been published in two of its museum catalogues. It depicts a dancing female figure in a maximal open-leg position. The figure has been identified in the 1983 museum catalogue as "Bodhisattva" and dated to the 9th–11th centuries (Guide to the Songkhla National Museum 1983, 39) and in the 2000 museum guide as a "Female Hermes" and dated to the 14th–15th centuries (Siriphan 2000, 184).

One can compare this dancing figure with a group of small-scale bronze figures similarly standing or dancing on oval lotus stands found in Java. They are statuettes, dated to the 10th century, which are believed to have formed a Buddhist mandala (Versunkene Königreiche Indonesiens 1995, catalogue numbers 28 A–R). They show Vajrayana Buddhists deities in various, often dance-related poses (M, L, P, K, O). One of the deities (O) stands in an almost similar pose as the dancing "bodhisattva", although its legs are not as extremely open as in the Srivijaya figure. This leg position, in which the tighs are turned outwards while the feet are placed at some distance from each other, is called *mandala stahana* and it has already appeared in Indian dance imagery in the Amaravati period, in the 2nd century AD (Vatsyayan 1977a, 299) [2/3]. A group of Tantric statuettes including a dancing figure in a similar attitude is also in the collection of Jakarta National Museum.

The position of the Srivijaya figure as well as the objects it holds, a mirror or disc in the left hand and an unidentified object in the right hand, seem to suggest that the figure depicted is indeed the same as in the Javanese mandala statuettes. Edi Sedyawati has identified the Javanese statuette as Vajrasphota, the Goddess of the Chains, one of the four guardian deities of the mandala of the Diamond Sphere (Versunkene Königreiche Indonesiens 1995, catalogue no. 28 O). Thus it is very probable that the Srivijaya figurine also depicts not a bodhisattva, but the Tantric Goddess of Chains and has originally belonged to a larger group of statues forming a mandala.

The extended open-leg position of the goddess is very interesting. As noted above, the mandala stahana has already been depicted in the Indian dance images in a very early period. However, it is remarkable that this maximal open-leg position is a common characteristic in the nora dance tradition still practised today in the very regions where the Srivijaya figurine was found. In *nora*

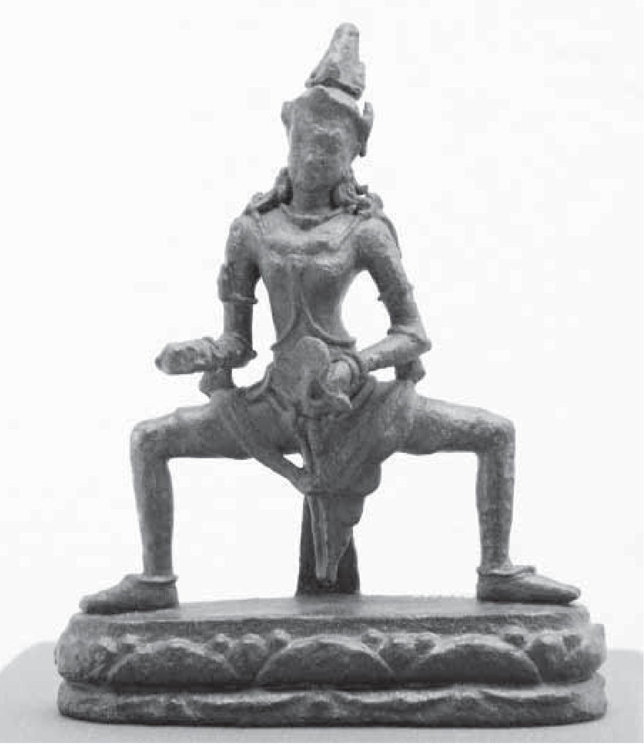


FIG 3/23
DANCING TANTRIC GODDESS,
9TH—11TH CENTURIES,
SONGKHLA NATIONAL MUSEUM.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.

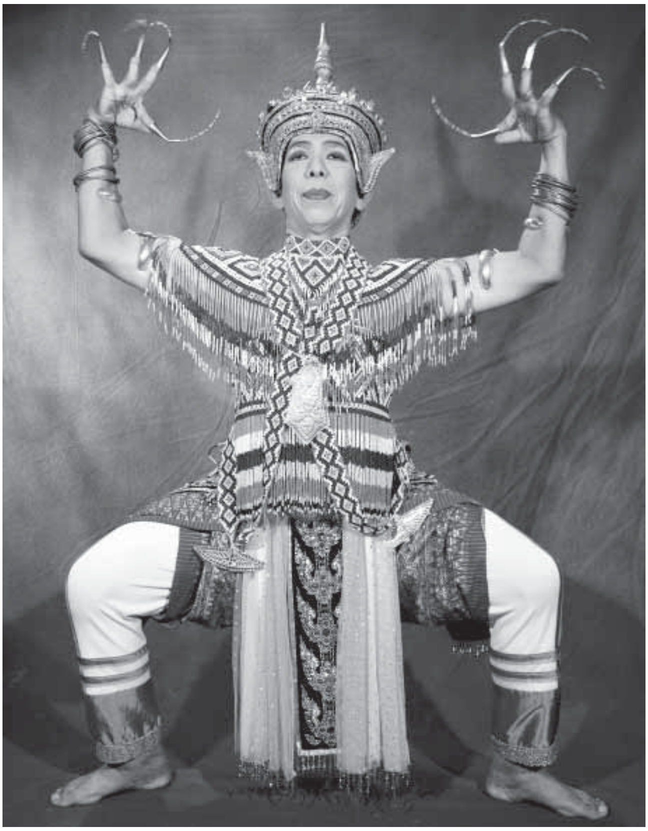


FIG 3/24
ACHAN THAMMANIT DEMONSTRATES
ONE OF THE BASIC POSES OF NORA
TECHNIQUE FROM SOUTH THAILAND.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2006.

dance this position can serve as the basic standing position [3/24] or it can also be a position in which the dancer moves around by means of slight sideway movements of the outstretched feet. The nora teacher Ajan Thammanit Nihomrat has studied the statue and compared its pose with nora technique. According to him, the pose is identical with nora's movement sequence[20]. This basic position and this particular moving technique can also be easily identified in the martial-arts-influenced *chhau* dance tradition of West Bengal in East India.

This opens up interesting prospects. As the Vajrayana iconography that was followed in Srivijaya was based on the East Indian, mainly Nalanda-centered, school one could speculate on the possibility that the dance poses of these mandala statues imitated the now completely lost East Indian Tantric dance tradition. The open-leg position and the particular movement techniques found in the East Indian chhau folk tradition can perhaps still echo this old Buddhist dance tradition. This would lead to the assumption that some elements of the nora dance technique could have been received from East India via Srivijaya.

3.8 The Dance Images of Sukhothai

The Thai or, to be more accurate, Tai-speaking people (since the present term Thai referring to the Thai nation, was formulated as late as during King Chulalongkorn's reign in 1868–1910) migrated around the 10TH–11TH centuries in large numbers from Yunnan in southern China to regions of present-day Thailand. There they met the Indian-influenced cultures of the Khmer in the east and the Mon in the west. According to the traditional rendering of Thai history, the first independent Tai Kingdom was Sukhothai (1240–1438). During this period the Tai created their own art style, which was eclectic at the beginning, combining elements from the Mon, Khmer, and the Srivijaya maritime empire in the south, and from Sri Lanka, from where they adopted, through the Mon, the core of their culture, Theravada Buddhism.

In fact, several Tai principalities and kingdoms evolved in parallel of which Lanna Tai in the north was one the most closely connected with Sukhothai. It had, in fact, served as a Khmer outpost in the 12TH century (Aasen 1998, 75). Through dynastic connections and intermarriage with the older ruling Mon and Khmer elite, the Tai of Sukhothai gained political power and independence, which ended when it became a vassal of another Tai kingdom, Ayutthaya, in 1350. Sukhothai was finally incorporated into it in 1438.

The supposedly earliest literary evidence of Thai culture and history in general is the c. AD 1293 stone inscription attributed in the 19TH century to King Ramkhamkhaeng, the third sovereign of Sukhothai and architect of its power. The authenticity of the inscription is, however, now questioned (Peleggi 2002, 38). Whether the document is authentic or not does not concern this study, since the information given by it, as far as dance is concerned, mainly contains different terms for musical instruments and forms of merry-making already mentioned by Mattani Rutnin in her book "Dance, Drama and Theatre in Thailand" (1993, 28).

A much more important text for the purpose of this study, and originally a Sukhothai period text, is the famous Theravada Buddhist cosmology "The Three Worlds" or "Traiphum Phra Ruang" or in brief "Traiphum", which has already been discussed in Chapter 3.3. It is attributed to the 14TH century King Lithai of Sukhothai and it gives a detailed description of the 31 levels of the Theravada Buddhist cosmos. It mentions dance in several connections. It has deeply influenced the temple architecture of the region as well as its iconographical programmes.

Sukhothai and her two satellite cities, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet were recorded in the Unesco World Heritage List in 1991. They are now well kept historical parks, easy to visit. In the centre of Sukhothai's power mandala stand the remains of Wat Mahathat temple, which served as the spiritual and political centre of the kingdom. The designation "Wat Mahathat" indicates that the central structure of the temple contains an important relic of the Buddha himself. The architectural features of the complex reveal clearly the elements of which the Sukhothai culture was constructed.

The central tower is surrounded by four stupas or *chedis* reflecting the styles of Srivijaya and Sri Lanka. They alternate with Khmer *prasat* towers, which remind one of the period when Sukhothai was a Khmer outpost. The central sanctuary tower enshrining the relic epitomises the Sukhothai style architecture. It is derived from the Khmer prasat tower but elongated and crowned by a lotus bud motive. This kind of structure, also found in other Sukhothai period temples in neighbouring cities, is commonly called as the lotus bud chedi. It is seen as a symbol of Sukhothai's suzerainty over its vassal cities (Van Beek 1999, 108). Thus the Tai builders reinterpreted the Hindu Khmer sanctuary tower in the Theravada Buddhist spirit. The most common building material for the chedis and towers, as well as for the cubic *mondops* housing the Buddha statues, was brick, and to a lesser degree laterite.

Theravada Buddhist rituals demanded large assembly halls, not known in the Hindu-Khmer culture where the holiest rituals involved only small groups of priests. The Tai assembly halls are of two types. An *ubosot* or *bot* is a chapel in which the monks are ordained. It is the holiest building of a wat or a temple-cum-monastery complex. Its sacredness is made clear by the eight *sema* stones or boundary markers. A *viharn*, on the other hand, is an assembly hall for both the monks and lay-people, and it houses one or more Buddha images.

Both of these building types have a similar rectangular floor plan, raised plinth, a high ceiling and a steep, multi-tiered gable roof. Brick and laterite was used for the basements, plinths and pillars of the halls. The walls were either open or made of brick with very small vertical window openings or rather series of narrow slits in the walls. The multi-tiered roof structure, on the other hand, was constructed of wood reflecting the long tradition of Tai wooden architecture as still seen today in the traditional wooden Thai houses (Nithi & Mertens 2005, 14).

Sukhothai's Wat Mahathat, completed in the middle of the 14TH century, comprises almost 200 chedis and the remains of several assembly halls. If compared, for example, with the great Khmer temples discussed in Chapter 6, Wat Mahathat seems to be more loosely organised. The central chedis, mondops and assembly halls are arranged in a straight line but otherwise the buildings are scattered around the compound rather freely. In great outline and in many of its details the complex, as well as the city itself was, however, based on the Buddhist cosmological principles (Aasen 1998, 76, 79; Ringis 1990, 62–63). The tradition of the linear arrangement of central buildings but otherwise rather loosely organised wat compounds with chedis, mondops, towers and halls mushrooming during the centuries, is still a living practice in Thailand today.

The iconographical programmes of Sukhothai temples were executed by several media. The focus of the programmes was the statue of the Gautama Buddha, executed either in brick and stucco or in bronze. There may have existed wooden statues too, but none has survived. Sukhothai sculptors are generally given the credit for expanding the iconography of the Buddha statue by creating a new type of image, the walking Buddha. Thus the Sukhothai iconography included all the four poses early texts mention, i.e. the standing, the walking, the sitting, and the reclining Buddha (Van Beek 1999, 113). Bronze casting was highly developed and the surviving walking Buddha statues in bronze, with their oval faces, highly stylised features and linear elegance are regarded as hallmarks of Sukhothai art. Large Buddhas were also executed as brick and stucco sculptures inside of the mondops or as reliefs on the temple walls.

The visual programmes of the interiors continued on the inner walls as murals. Only a few traces of mural paintings survive, too scant to give any exact idea of the period's painting. In Wat Chedi Chet Theo in Si Satchanalai there are surviving fragments showing a Buddha and celestial beings. They are arranged in registers and they have been interpreted as depicting either the Buddha with kneeling devata (Boisselier 1976, 74) or as a Buddha from the past with kneeling bodhisattvas (Santi 2000, 19). The best preserved examples of Sukhothai's pictorial art are graphic in character. Inside of the double walls of the Wat Si Chum mondop, lining the walls and the ceiling of a narrow corridor there was a group of 100 dark grey-green schist slabs with engraved Jataka illustrations. Some of these unique engravings are now at the National Museum of Bangkok. Jean Boisselier has called this series as "the earliest repository of Thai iconography" (1976, 75).

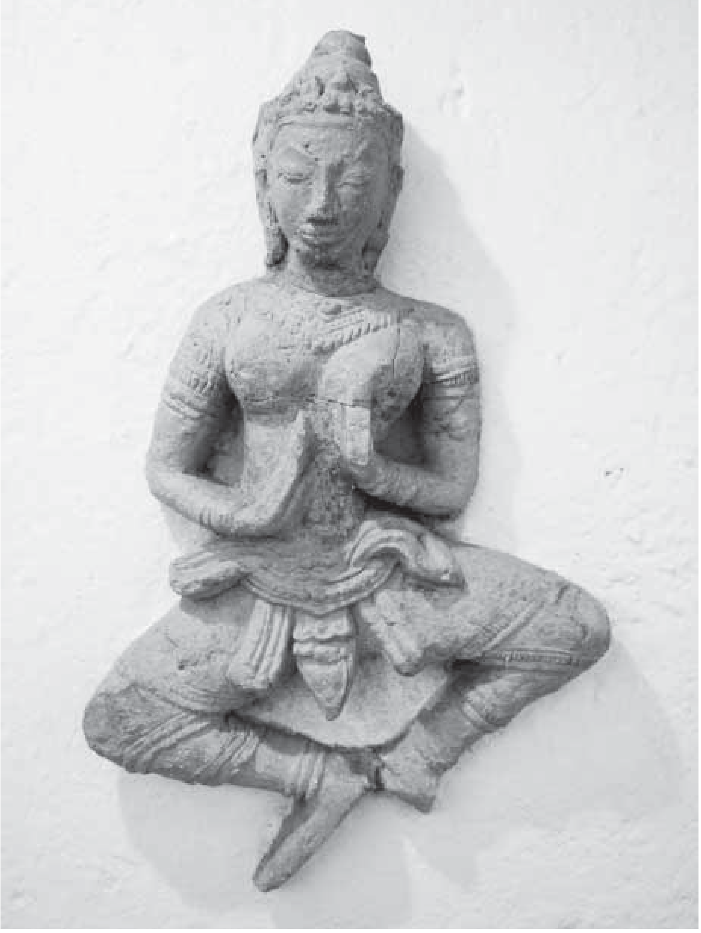
The style of the engravings and the surviving murals, with their linear execution as well as their human figures with elongated halos and slightly tilted heads, is clearly influenced by the Sinhalese-style paintings, as still seen today in the Tivanka Image House in Polonnaruva (Ibid., 75). This strong Sri Lankan influence on Sukhothai art may be due to the direct contacts between these two Theravada Buddhist centres. There is also a possibility that Sri Lankan craftsmen and monks participated in the creation of Sukhothai's religious art and its Theravada Buddhist iconography, since groups of them are known to have been living in Sukhothai during this period (Van Beek 1999, 121).

More survives from the iconographical programmes of the Sukhothai period temple exteriors: details made of terracotta and glazed ceramics as well as plenty of stucco reliefs and their fragments. Most of the terracotta and ceramic fragments are now in museums, but a considerable number of the stucco reliefs are still *in situ*, on the walls of the religious structures.

The main export product of Sukhothai was its ceramics, commonly known as *Sankalok* ware[21]. The kilns of Sukhothai and its satellite cities produced a huge amount of ceramic vessels, often decorated with under-glaze paintings or covered with a green-greyish celadon glaze. Architectural elements made of glazed ceramics were applied to the temples as roof finials and other details. Their motifs include mythical creatures inhabiting the universe described by the Traiphum, such as asura demons, devatas, kinnaris, naga heads and monster-like makaras. As far as one can conclude, basing one's conclusion on the collections of architectural wares exhibited at the moment in the National Museums of Sukhothai and Bangkok, it seems that they did not include any actual dance images.

However, one terracotta dance image from the region of Sukhothai has survived. It is now in the Kamphaeng Phet National Museum. It is a reddish terracotta figure showing a dancing

FIG 3/25
TERRACOTTA RELIEF SHOWING A DANCER, FORMERLY PART OF THE ICONOGRAPHICAL PROGRAMME OF WAT CHANG ROP IN KAMPHAENG PHET, 16TH–17TH CENTURIES, KAMPHAENG PHET NATIONAL MUSEUM. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*



woman [3/25]. It is a silhouette-like figure without any background, of approximately 40 by 25 cm in size. It belongs to the series of terracotta figures which decorated the main bell-shaped stupa of Wat Chang Rop in Kamphaeng Phet. The stupa's visual programme includes large brick and stucco elephants with floral backgrounds in its lower square base. The upper base of the now destroyed stupa had 44 scenes from the Buddha's life, sculptured in stucco (Guide to Sukhothai, Si Sachanalai and Kamphaeng Phet Historical Parks 2003, 202). They have now almost disappeared, but beneath them some of the terracotta reliefs depicting birds have survived. The dancing figure probably belonged to this lower register.

In the museum the image is dated to the 16TH–17TH centuries, i.e. to the period when Kamphaeng Phet served as a northern provincial centre for Ayutthaya, defending the capital against Burmese attacks. However, as the image belongs geographically and stylistically to the Sukhothai school, and is classified by Mattani Rutnin as a "Sukhothai dance image" (1998, 153), it will be discussed here.

There is no doubt that the pose of this female dancer is related to Indian-derived dance technique. The bent knees and the uplifted heels create an impression of dynamic footwork

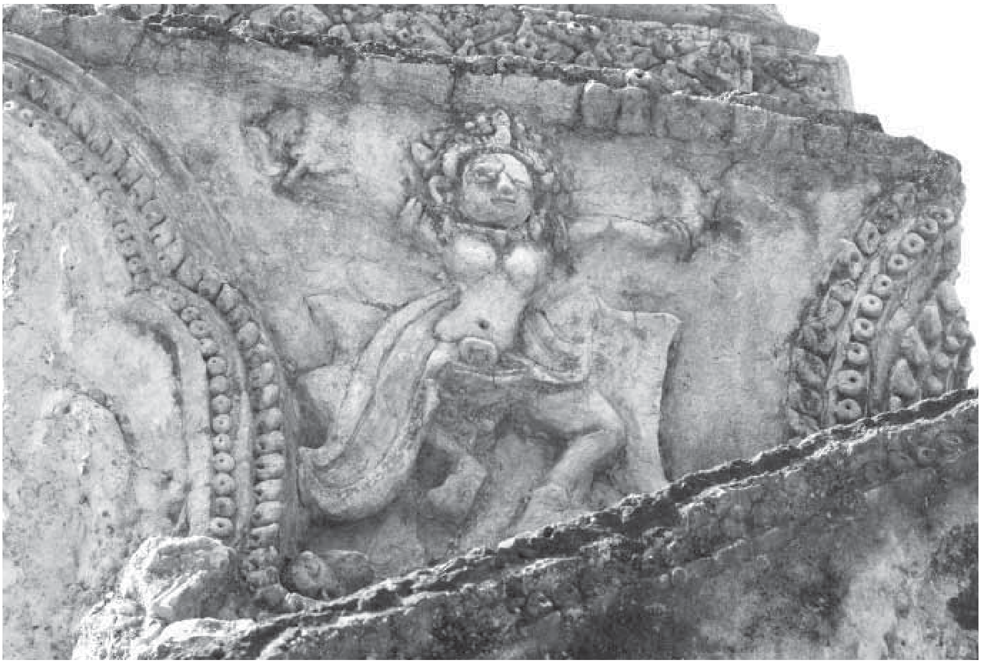


FIG 3/26 DANCER IN A STUCCO-COVERED GATE TOWER OF WAT PHRA RATTANA MAHATHAT IN CHALIANG. THE TEMPLE WAS INITIATED IN THE 13TH CENTURY, BUT THE RELIEF IS PROBABLY LATER. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2007.*

which is characteristic of many Indian dance traditions still today. The hands in front of the torso seem to portray an Indian-influenced mudra-like gesture. However, it is very likely that the image is not merely an iconographical loan from Indian tradition, since similar poses, with slight variations, can also be found in Khmer dance imagery, although executed in a different style. This could imply that a dance tradition incorporating this kind of poses could have spread to a larger area, covering the Khmer territory as well as the Central Plains of Thailand.

The most common medium for the iconographical programmes of the outer walls of Sukhothai's religious structures was stucco. The tradition of stucco reliefs was adopted from the Mon. The iconography was, however, often derived from the Sinhalese tradition of Sri Lanka, although some of the motifs, such as garudas and demonic figures serving as "Atlases", stem from the region's earlier Khmer tradition (Roveda 2006, 458–496). The old Khmer temples and the eclectic Sukhothai buildings were covered with a new kind of iconographical programmes reflecting the "Theravadin religious fervour" (Ibid., 458.).

Few dance images can be found among these kinds of reliefs. They are still *in situ*, in the small stucco-covered shrine-like constructions surmounting the east and west entrances of the megalithic enclosure of Wat Phra Rattana Mahathat in Chaliang village near Si Satchanalai [3/26]. The complex was originally initiated as a Khmer temple in the 13TH century, but new layers were added later. Roof tiles found in the compound and as the iconographical features of the entrance towers indicate the influence of the 13TH century Khmer Bayon style (Guide to Sukhothai, Si Sachanalai and Kamphaeng Phet Historical Parks 2003, 121).

The small towers are capped with four human heads facing different directions. They clearly reflect the iconographical speciality of Angkor's Bayon temple, as each tower of the Bayon complex is crowned with four human faces. As Wat Phra Rattana Mahathat served during the Sukhothai period as a Theravada Buddhist shrine, it seems unlikely that the heads on the top of the entrance towers could represent Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattvas. Indeed, Vittorio Roveda has proposed that the heads represent devatas, so prominent in Theravada Buddhist cosmology (Roveda 2005, 496).

Beneath the heads there are four niches with sitting human figures. In the lower parts of the tower, in the four triangular walls connecting the tower to the roof of the gate, there are dancing female figures. In the main entrance three of the four dancers are still in rather good condition, whereas in the south entrance only traces of the dancers are left. The dancers are shown in the Indian-influenced leg position that has already been discussed several times with bent knees and with one raised feet. The arms are stretched wide open. On the other hand, the over-bent elbow joints are clearly visible and the fingers are strongly bent backward.

Similar leg positions could be recognised in several of the early Indian-influenced dance images discussed earlier in this chapter. The wide open arm position, however, is unique in the early dance images of mainland Southeast Asia. This arm position is common in the many, still living dance traditions of South India, such as bharatanatyam. It is also one of the characteristics of the processional Kandy dances of present-day Sri Lanka, which use similar arm position frequently combined with the leg position shown in the reliefs [5/10].

As the Sri Lankan influence was so prominent in several fields of the Theravada Buddhist Mon culture as well as in the culture of Sukhothai, it would seem likely that the dancing figures repeat a dance sequence of a Buddhist processional dance, a tradition still alive in Sri Lanka. This is further supported by the impression of extreme speed and dynamism created by the figures, both typical features of Sri Lankan processional dances. Localisation of the Indian-Sri Lankan tradition is, however, clearly evident in the over-bent elbows as well as in the bent backward fingers.

4

Angkor Wat: Dance and the Hindu-Khmer Cosmology

PHOTOGRAPH VELI ROSENBERG

4

Angkor Wat: Dance and the Hindu-Khmer Cosmology

Angkor Wat is the largest religious building in the world. Located in Angkor, the long-time centre of the Khmer power, the temple of Angkor Wat with its five central towers, colossal gateway, moats and galleries decorated with over 600 metres of narrative bas-reliefs is regarded as the apogee of the whole Khmer culture. Angkor is the name conventionally given to a group of successive Khmer capitals and their hundreds of stone monuments located on the northern shores of the Great Lake, the Tonle Sap in present-day Cambodia. It was the political and religious focus of Khmer civilization, which in its heyday, from the 9th to the 15th century, ruled the fertile lowlands of present-day Cambodia and much of modern Thailand.

As mentioned already in Chapter 3.5 in connection with Khmer dance imagery in general, the Angkorean civilization had its origins in the Iron Age. The Indian influence is already recognisable in the cultures of the predecessors of the Khmer culture, Funan and Chenla, which flourished in the Mekong Delta area c. 150–800 AD. The Khmer practised Hinduism mainly in its Shivaistic form and to a lesser degree in its Vishnuistic form as well as Mahayana Buddhism. In 802 King Jayavarman II declared himself devaraja or god-king, a practice which was to dominate the political order and culture of the Khmer until the end of their hegemony.

The simple, rather modest single-cell sanctuary towers of Funan and Chenla were transformed by the Khmer into stepped pyramids which housed a *linga*, the focal point of political power. The tradition of state temples was established in the 8th century. In the course of the centuries the state temples grew in size and became architecturally increasingly complex. The most monumental of the Khmer state temples is the 12th century Angkor Wat, which is also the largest temple complex at Angkor covering a rectangle of 1.5 by 1.3 km [4/1]. Exceptionally, it was dedicated to the god Vishnu instead of Shiva. This is reflected both in the themes illustrated in its reliefs as well as in its overall concept. The complex faces west, the direction dedicated

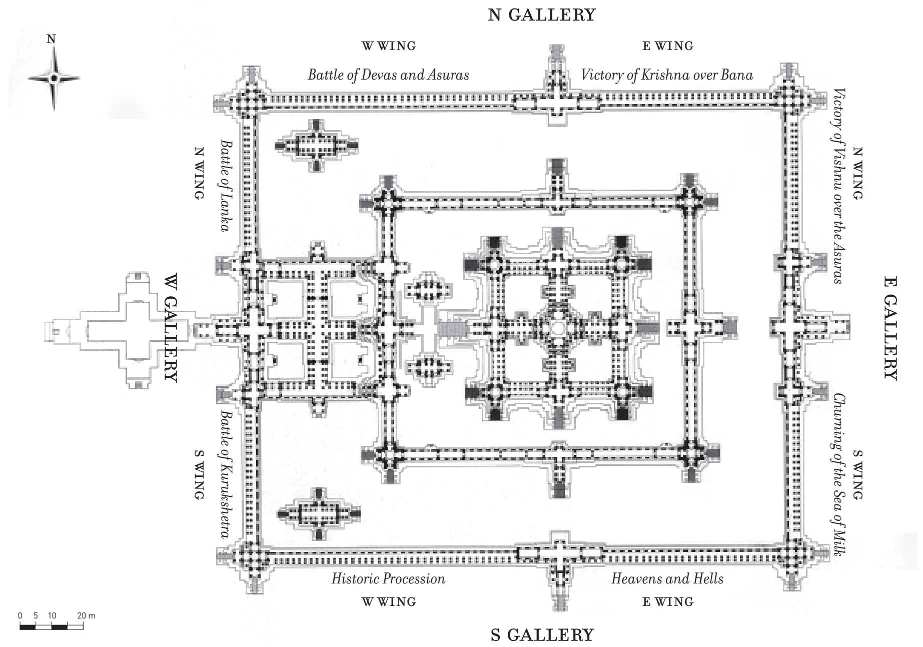

N GALLERY
W WING
E WING
Battle of Devas and Asuras
Victory of Krishna over Bana
N
N WING
Battle of Lanka
Victory of Vishnu over the Asuras
N WING
W GALLERY
E GALLERY
S WING
Battle of Kurukshetra
Churning of the Sea of Milk
S WING
Historic Procession
Heavens and Hells
W WING
E WING
0 5 10 20 m
S GALLERY

FIG 4/1 PLAN OF ANGKOR WAT. *FREEMAN & JACQUES 1999.*

to Vishnu, instead of east, the direction of Shiva. The builder of the temple was Suryavarman II (1113–1145 or later), one of the most prominent rulers of Khmer history, who considerably extended the kingdom.

The next great ruler and one of the world's most megalomaniac builders was Jayavarman VII (1181–c. 1220), who adopted a form of Mahayana Buddhism as the state religion. He constructed roads, chains of guesthouses and hospitals, tens of temples and above all, the new capital of Angkor Thom in the middle of older the capitals of Angkor. His state temple, Bayon, topped by towers in the form of huge four-faced human heads, marks the end of the greatness of Khmer architecture with its complex and rather chaotic plan as well as somewhat degenerated building technique. Bayon, with its two series of narrative bas-reliefs, however, serves together with the reliefs of Angkor Wat, as the most important visual sources for the study of history and forms of culture of the Khmer, including dance.

The Khmer empire started to decline after the reign of Jayavarman VII. Angkor was first conquered by the Tai in 1352 and again in 1431, after which it was abandoned as a capital. At both occasions, it is believed that the Tai brought dancers and artists back from Angkor as hostages to their own capital, Ayutthaya (Mattani 1993, 39). The Khmer heritage deeply influenced the development of later Thai culture, whereas the Thai culture, dominated by Theravada Buddhism, became predominant in the area of the former Khmer empire. The capital was moved from Angkor to Phnom Penh in the 15th century. The whole Hindu-Khmer culture and its great building tradition were completely forgotten to the extent that "not even an oral tradition survived" (Mannikka 1996, 2). Angkor and its largest temple, Angkor Wat, were "discovered" with great fuss by the western colonial eye in the late 19th century. Angkor Wat, however, had never been "lost". In fact, it had served all the time, with only minor alterations and additions, as a Theravada Buddhist shrine.

4.1 Dance, Temples and Textual Sources

When one is studying dance, or any aspect of Khmer civilization, the primary textual sources are inscriptions executed mainly on stone slabs[1]. So far approximately 1200 inscriptions in Sanskrit and in Old Khmer have been found and studied (Roveda 2005, 17). They are extremely important documents. They are often official inventories of various goods, such as cattle or long lists of slaves given to the temples together with valuable ritual objects. They give, however, some interesting information about dance or, to be more precise, about dancers. They also reveal how profoundly the Khmer culture was influenced by India. First of all, the language used in the sacred context was Sanskrit. Moreover, the inscriptions refer often "to things Indian: Brahman priests and sacred texts, gods and goddesses, constellations and planets…" (Mannikka 1996, 1).

What do the inscriptions tell us about dance? They, at least, make clear how important an element dance was in Khmer culture, especially in temple rituals. In his study of the civilization of Angkor, Charles Higham has referred to dance-related inscriptions starting from the period of the early kingdom of Chenla in the 6th to the 9th centuries until the final peak of the civilization during the rule of Jayavarman VII in the 13th century (2001, 41, 48, 113, 126, 129). An early Chenla inscription mentions a rather modest number of 17 dancers among gifts given to a temple. However, it is notable that even during the Chenla period the existence of male dancers is referred to.

It seems that, following Indian practice, employing girls as temple dancers was regarded as a form of merit making in Khmer society. For example, a priest visiting provincial temples made offerings including dancers and singers. By the time of the rule of Jayavarman VII the dance groups had grown in size. Inscriptions mention among other employees of the temple of Ta Phrom 615 female dancers and 1000 dancers in the temple complex of Preah Khan. When the king's son listed his father's achievements in an inscription, he mentioned no less than 1622 female dancers.

Bernard-Philippe Groslier has analysed (1963) some of the inscriptions referring to dancers[2]. It is interesting to note that the Brahman priests seemed to be in charge of the training of musicians. Groslier states: "…the stele from Sdok Kak Thom describes a holy Brahman, who held the office of the Kingdom's High Priest, as being both versed in the fearful science of the occult and, also, as being an acknowledged authority on the art and music." According to Groslier the inscriptions give valuable information about the social status of dancers. It seems that dancers came from all levels of society. The inscriptions mention that two dancers came from an important family which founded the temple Prasat Beng Vieng and further that "a male-dancer and a male-singer could acquire sufficient wealth to enable them to make offerings to a temple, sumptuous enough for the King of Angkor himself to see to it that their wishes were carried out by appointing inspectors for that purpose."

Groslier concludes that "both members of aristocracy and even Khmers of very lowly birth participated in dances." He also points out a very interesting contradiction in the textual and visual sources. The visual sources, such as the reliefs of Angkor Wat, have traditionally been interpreted as depicting only female dancers, whereas the inscriptions often mention male dancers. "Is it just by chance that those whose names have come down to us were men?" Groslier asks finally. This question will be discussed further in the following pages.

Besides the inscriptions, there exists a single surviving literary source in the form of observations recorded by a Yuan dynasty Chinese emissary, Zhou Daguan (Zhou Ta-Kuan), who spent a year at Angkor at the very end of the 13TH century. It describes various aspects of life in the Khmer capital, such as buildings, clothes used by the people, slaves, writing, trade, agriculture, customs, flora and animals etc. For the purpose of this study it is interesting to note that it was not only the Khmer temple architecture but also the structure of the court that followed the *mandala* idea of Indian cosmology: "The sovereign has five wives, one for the principal apartment, and four for the cardinal points." (The Customs of Cambodia 2001, 31). This seems to suggest that the whole life at the court of a the devaraja was organised to reflect the structure of Hindu cosmology. This ceremonial quality of court rituals is further reinforced by Zhou Daguan's account of a royal procession:

> When the sovereign goes out, troops are at the head of the procession. After them come the standard-bearers, the flag-bearers, and the musicians. Just the palace women, numbering between three and five hundred, in clothes with floral designs, flowers in their hair, holding candles in their hands, form a battalion. Even in broad daylight they light their tapers. Then come the palace maidens carrying the gold and silver royal utensils and a whole panoply of ornaments, all very special; I do not know their purpose. Then come the female palace guards holding in their hands lances and shields; they too form a section by themselves. Next come carts drawn buy goats and horses, all decorated in gold. The ministers and the princes are all mounted on elephants. In front of them one can see from afa their innumerable red parasols.
>
> After them come the king's wives and concubines, in palanquins, chariots, on horseback, and on elephants; they have certainly more than a hundred parasols flecked with gold. Behind them comes the sovereign himself, standing on an elephant and holding in his hand the precious sword [of state]. The tusks of the elephant are also sheathed in gold. [Around him] are more than twenty white parasols flecked with gold and with gold handles. Numerous elephants surround him, and there are more troops to protect him. (The Customs of Cambodia 2001, 101–102)

The accuracy of this lively account is visualised in one of the great relief panels at Angkor Wat. The Procession of Suryavarman II, although executed a century earlier, shows many of the details described by Zhou Daguan at the end of the 13TH century. Dance is directly mentioned only once in Zhou Daguan's observations. He describes an annual festival in the eight month when "there is the ai-lan [ngai-lan], the dance." The information about dance given by the surviving textual sources is scanty, yet it throws some light on some important aspects relevant to this study.

According to the textual sources it seems that dance formed an integral part of the temple rituals. Dance was also performed in public during various festivities. Both men and women worked as professional dancers. Dancers could come even from the higher classes and some of them could have been wealthy. The structure of the court followed Indian-derived cosmological rules and court ceremonies were marked by theatrical features.

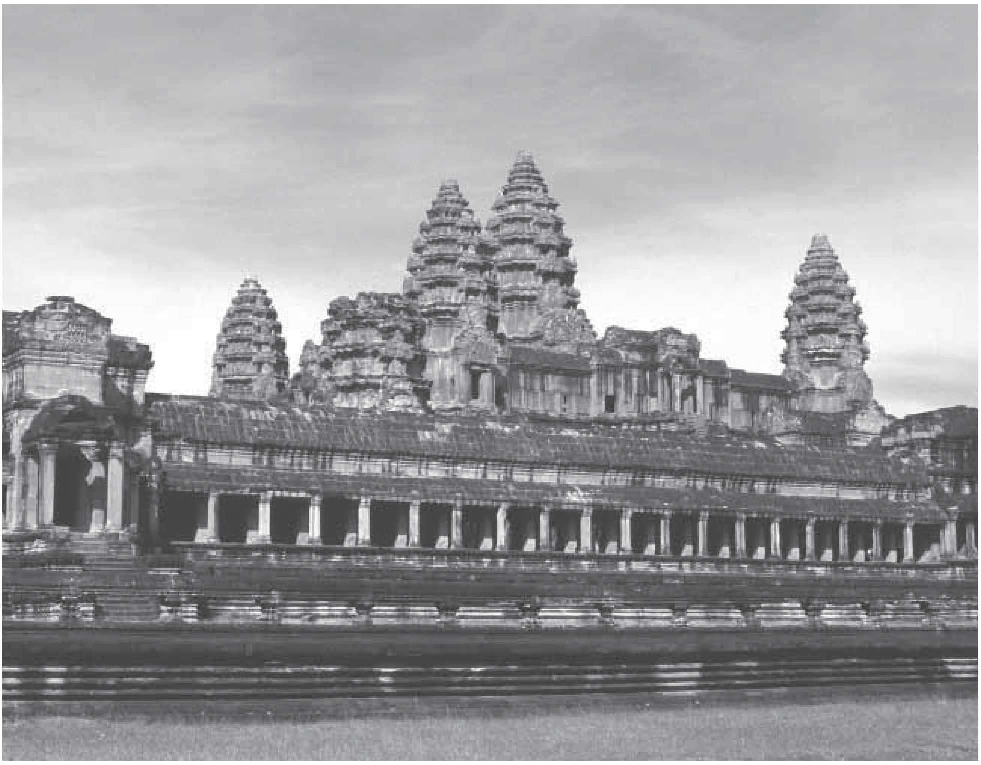
4.2 The Temple and its Reliefs

Khmer architecture developed from the single-cell sanctuaries already known in the Funan and Chenla periods. Jaques Dumarcay, who has studied the wooden prototypes of Southeast Asian brick and stone temples, has observed (1995, 77) that a certain early brick temple is a more or less realistic representation of a wooden building. In its realisation in durable material, one can recognise a mixture of elements of Indian origin and local carpentry. The transition of this kind of small single-chambered brick temple towers to more complex forms took place approximately during the reign of Jayavarman II in the 9TH century, when the ruler was elevated to divine status. Thus more complex temple structures appeared with multiple towers on the top of a rising series of platforms.

The largest of these kinds of temples, Angkor Wat, was built, as already mentioned above, by King Suryavarman II in the early 12TH century. The whole area of Angkor Wat, which covers 200 hectares, is surrounded by a 190-m-wide moat. Two causeways at West and East cross the moat connecting the temple proper with its outer enclosure. Because of its exceptional orientation to the west, which is believed to have been dictated by the fact that the temple was dedicated to Vishnu, the western gopura gate tower is bigger than the other three gopuras. Many believe that the area between the moat and the actual temple structure was once a city presumably built of light materials, such as wood and bamboo (Freeman & Jacques 1999; Jessup 2004, 147).

The temple complex itself combines three main components known in Khmer architecture: (i) a terrace-like stepped pyramid, (ii) temple towers on top of the terraced mound and (iii) surrounding concentric galleries. Of these architectural elements the youngest are the galleries. They developed not earlier than the 11TH century, whereas the other two elements were already known from the beginning of Angkorian civilization. It is highly likely that Brahman priests who used these basic elements planned Angkor Wat. Whether those architects were familiar with the Indian *shastra* manuals is not known, but it seems to be universally agreed that the symbolism of the temple refers to Indian cosmology with Mount Meru as its central axis.

Thus the central tower at the top of the huge mound represents the central peak of Mount Meru whereas the four flanking towers symbolise the four surrounding peaks [4/2]. The walls and galleries are the mountain ranges which are surrounded by seas represented by the moat. In this spatial symbolism the sacredness accumulates in the centre, which is also the highest level in the construction, and decreases in the outer and lower skirts of the complex. The Mount Meru symbolism of the central tower, which perhaps housed a statue of Vishnu, is further emphasised by skilful dramatic architectural effects:



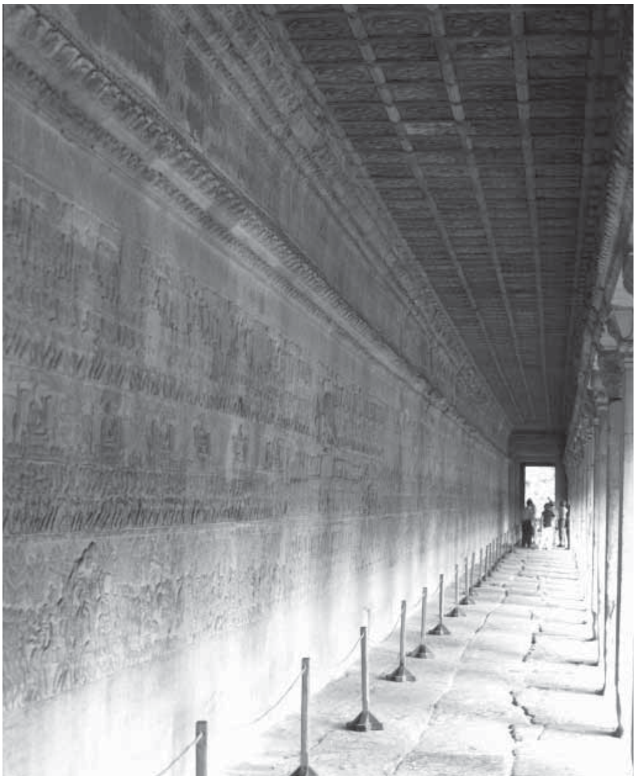


FIG 4/2
CENTRAL TOWERS OF ANGKOR WAT SYMBOLISING THE FIVE PEAKS OF MOUNT MERU, IN THE FRONT ONE OF THE GALLERIES WITH THE LARGE PANELS, 11TH CENTURY.
PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.

FIG 4/3
GALLERY WITH LARGE PANELS WITH A RECONSTRUCTED WOODEN CEILING. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.*

> The 1st enclosure, with its magnificent central tower, was the realisation of Mount Meru and the ultimate shrine of Vishnu. The impact that one feels when reaching it is all greater because one is facing it after emerging from the intimate, shaded surroundings of the cruciform pavilion, or the darkness of a 2nd enclosure gallery. Just the view of its elevation is imposing: from ground level to the top of the main tower is a height of about sixty-five meters. After climbing the high and steep main staircase, in itself an arduous act of 'separation' from the rest of the temple, one reaches the gallery of the 1st enclosure, with its very large windows with stately balusters, and pillared galleries on the inside. The white Cambodian light streams from everywhere, making these the brightest and most sunny corridors of Angkor Wat, demonstrating the masterly use of light's symbolism by the Khmer architects. The elevation is so high, the light so intense, and the decoration so sophisticated that one feels elevated far above the surroundings. (Roveda 2002, 257–258)

The visual programme carved on the walls of Angkor Wat is enormous. It includes bas-reliefs carved on lintels, pillars, pediments, half pediments, and finally, the most famous of all Angkor Wat's reliefs, the Large Panels in the galleries of the third enclosure [4/3]. The Large Panels alone provide 520 by 2 metres of visual storytelling, to which one can add 48 metres of reliefs in the corner pavilions. On the outer walls of the upper levels, on the inner walls of the galleries and flanking the doorways in several places there are hundreds of female figures, so-called "apsaras" or "devatas". The reliefs show scenes from the Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the Puranas and an official narrative of Khmer history.

Thus the walls of the temple contain, in visual form, fundamental principles of religion, ethics, politics and philosophy of the time the temple was built. The whole visual programme was, however, not completed during the reign of Suryavarman II, the reliefs in the northeast corner of the third enclosure being executed in the 16th century.

4.3 The Dance Images of Angkor Wat

This sub-chapter will discuss the dance images and dance-related images found in the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat. The first group, the so-called dancing "apsaras", are the best-known dance images of the complex. The second group, refined ladies in a standing pose, often referred to as "devatas" is not always recognised as dancing figures. This chapter aims, however, to show that this interpretation is also possible. The third group of reliefs discussed is the large narrative panels, which include hundreds of figures shown in dance-related attitudes, many of them indicating various forms of fighting. Finally, this subchapter will focus on the lesser known "Tapestry Reliefs", imitating textiles and including medallions with dancing figures.

(1) DANCING FEMALE FIGURES

The most obvious and, without any doubt, the most famous dance images on the walls of Angkor Wat are the dancing "apsaras". They are portrayed in a low, open position, the heel of the uplifted leg often touching the tight of the supporting leg. It is the most common dance pose among Khmer dance images and has already been discussed in Chapter 3.5. They are not something unique to the visual programme of Angkor Wat but can be found in many other Khmer temples as well. In fact, the "apsaras" are the first figures a visitor encounters when entering Angkor Wat. On the walls of the outer gallery there are carved dancing female figures, which seem to form a continuous line of dancers set in a background of so-called tapestry reliefs [4/4]. When seen more closely it becomes clear that these dancers can, in fact, be divided into groups of three: the central figure and the side figures, which repeat a variation of the movement to the left and to the right respectively.

Similar kinds of groups of two or three dancers are also common in other parts of Angkor Wat as in other temples, especially in the upper parts of pillars, where they are often depicted as dancing on lotus flowers. This kind of "apasara" groups can be interpreted in two ways: as actually showing two or three different dancers performing side by side or as depicting sequences of a continuous dance in same way as film does, as series of still pictures one after another. The second interpretation becomes more tempting when one keeps in mind the fact that the South-Indian dances[3], which could have been distant prototypes of Khmer dance, emphasise the symmetry of movements in such a way that the movement is often first shown frontally and then repeated in profile from both sides.

The dancing "apsara" figures are such common motifs in Khmer temples that it would be easy to assume that they represent a kind of fixed iconographical convention about how to visually refer to a dancer or the act of dancing. Accordingly, they would not necessarily be reliable portrayals of any actual dance of the period but merely a kind of symbolic representations of dance. However, very similar female dancers are also shown in the narrative reliefs of Angkor Wat and the later temple of Bayon. Most often they form a part of a military procession [3/11] but sometimes dancers with similar movements and costume are also portrayed in an everyday context on the walls of Bayon. One relief from Bayon is very informative: it shows two female dancers performing with musicians inside a wooden building, probably a palace or a pavilion [3/12]. If we compare the poses of these dancers with the "apsaras" found in Angkor Wat it becomes clear that although the low-bent, open legs of both groups of dancers bear strong similarities, the arm and hand movements, however, vary greatly.

In the case of military processions the dancers are surrounded not only by musicians, carrying their portable instruments, but also by military staff marching or riding elephants and carrying different kinds of weapons, parasols etc. All the details are depicted in great detail corresponding to Zhou Daguan's account of a royal procession cited above. Since all human beings with their costume, musical instruments, weapons and paraphernalia are portrayed realistically, one could assume that the same is the case with the dancers too. Thus the isolated "apsara" figures, although they do not belong to any realistically portrayed setting like their counterparts in military processions or in the palace scene, could also, in fact, be interpreted as representing the actual dance tradition of the period.

(2) STANDING OR WALKING FEMALE FIGURES

Another group of female figures is the static, standing females often found flanking doorways and in great abundance on the walls of the uppermost terraces of Angkor Wat [4/5]. Similar figures can also sometimes be found within the narrative panels (Roveda 2002, fig. 120). Even in a narrative context they always keep their typical static pose. Their poses cannot immediately

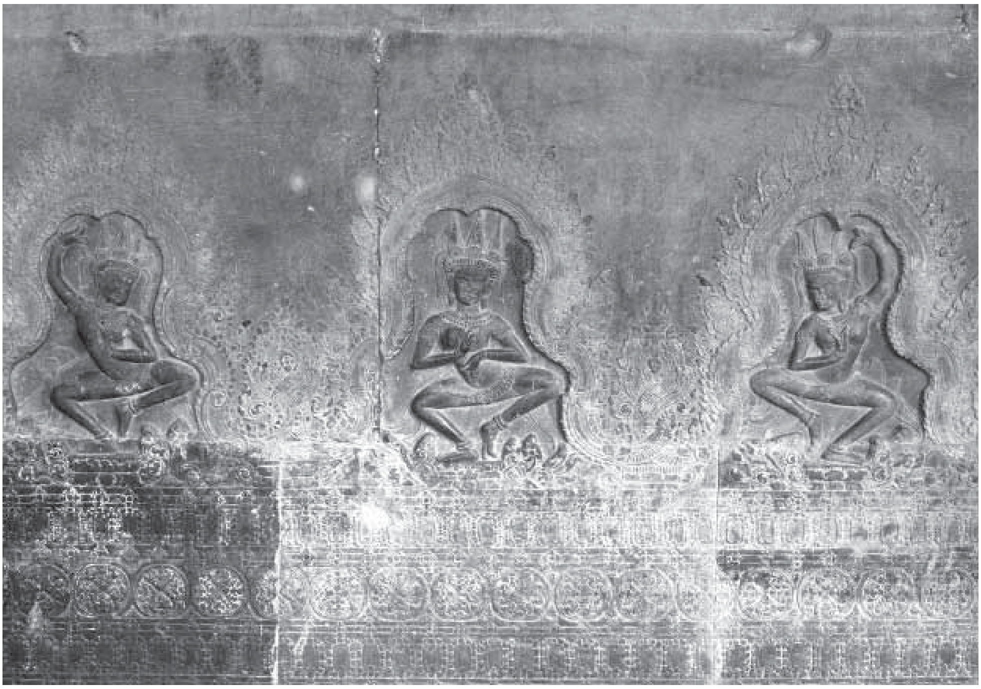


FIG 4/4 DANCING FEMALE FIGURES, USUALLY REFERRED TO AS "APSARAS", AND BENEATH THEM AN EXAMPLE OF THE SO-CALLED TAPESTRY RELIEFS. *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.*

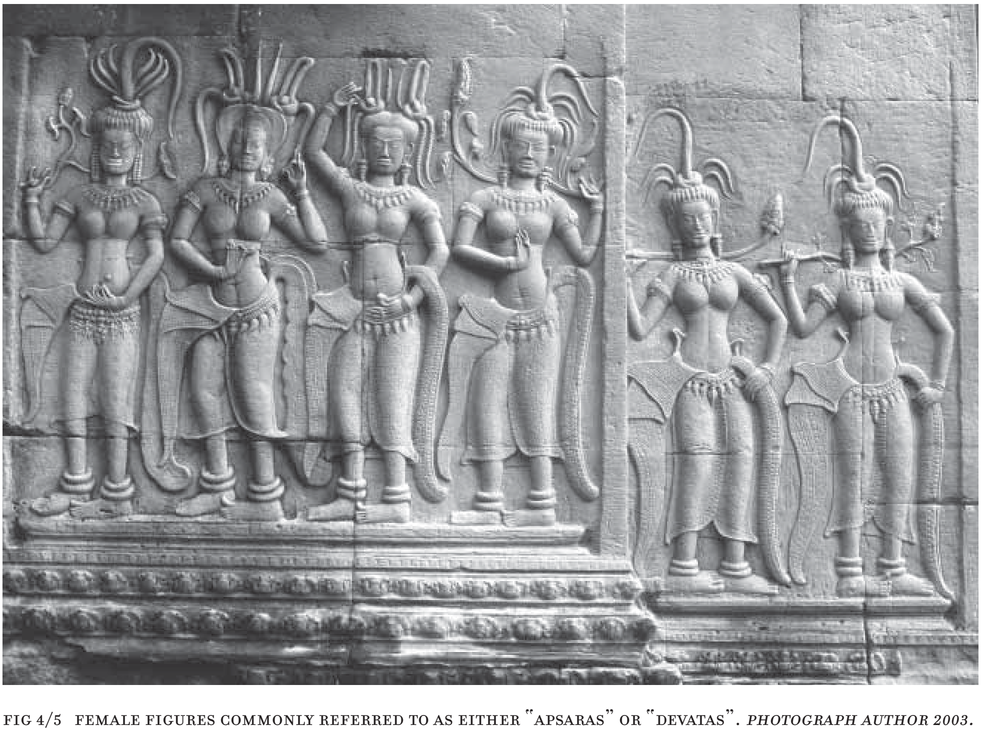


FIG 4/5 FEMALE FIGURES COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS EITHER "APSARAS" OR "DEVATAS". *PHOTOGRAPH AUTHOR 2003.*