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The Prambanan statues

The significance of Krom's work for the archaeology of Java is too well known to need any further elucidation. Until the Second World War his description of the Loro Jonggrang complex, which formed part of his *Inleiding tot de Hindoe-Javaansche Kunst* provided a useful guide for visitors and students alike. His description of the statues here, which is presented in English translation below, still is today. This part is especially important for its confirmation of the observations of technical and artistic imperfections in some of the statues of the Śiva temple by several scholars before Krom, and also for its decision of the question of whether these imperfections are to be explained in terms of errors on the part of the makers or whether they are a result of the fact that the statues we now find here are not the original ones but were installed here later as replacements for others whose identity remains to be investigated further.∗

[Following the prescriptions laid down for the devotee, Krom has entered the Śiva temple by the eastern gateway to circumambulate its passageway pradaksinā. After his description of the reliefs on either side of the ambulatory, he once more follows the ritual prescribed route for the statues, briefly mentioning Śiva Mahādeva, Śiva-Guru (Agastya), Ganeśa, and Durgā. His more detailed description of the statues follows a different route, however.]

In the west Ganeśa sits on a throne. The god is shown in his usual guise, in which he can be met a thousand times elsewhere in Java: with the skull and crescent moon in his head-dress, the snake caste cord and he is four-armed. In his left front hand he holds a small food dish with the tip of his trunk, in his right front hand is his broken tusk; in his rear left hand is found an axe, and the rear right hand holds aloft a rosary. The bottom of his throne, which is 1.42 m wide and projects 1.20 m from the rear wall, is enclosed by the plinth of the chamber, consisting of two flat panels, which passes along it; the front section is decorated with particularly fine foliage; this is connected to the back piece which is decorated with a nimbus and is surrounded by a rim of flames.

The Bhāṭāra Guru [Agastya] in the southern chamber stands on a lotus cushion against a backpiece decorated with a nimbus; he wears his usual goatee beard and is fairly heavily built. In his left hand he once carried a water pot, while his right hand holds a rosary against his chest. On the right side against

the backpiece stands a trident, and a fly-whisk is draped over his left shoulder; on this same side a tip of his clothing blows up against the backpiece. Of the now restored pedestal much less remained than of those in the other two chambers. However, it must have been of the same kind as the thrones of the other two deities; a fragment from the backpiece with a rim of flames shows that stylized *makaras* once decorated its lower section. However, something peculiar happens here: namely, that the backpiece restored in accordance with the information derived from that fragment does not seem to match with the statue of the god at all; the back section of Śiva-Guru [Agastya] is 80 cm wide, while according to the backpiece of the throne there should only be an image of 50 cm in this place.

Remarkably, something similar has also occurred in the northern chamber, which is dedicated to Durgā, the Loro Jonggrang of Javanese tradition. The unquestionably beautifully finished statue of the goddess, once again provided with a backpiece and nimbus, depicts the richly attired Mahiśāsuramardini standing on the buffalo which is turned towards her left. She has eight arms, and in her right front hand she holds the animal's tail, while with the left she grasps the hair of the Asura, who with club in hand, a chain with a skull round his neck and a striking ornament composed of pointed strips hanging from his belt, stands on top of the animal. In her other hands the goddess has on the right side an arrow, sword, and flaming disk, and on the left side a bow, shield and winged shell. The statue has survived remarkably well; only the nose has been damaged. Although quite a lot of the actual pedestal had disappeared, the form of the backpiece, with its rim of flames and *makaras*, could be readily discerned. If the statue is placed in front of it, then most of the *makaras* and the rim of flames is hidden. Whereas there is no doubt that the Ganeśa statue clearly belongs with its throne, this is certainly not the case with the statues in the other chambers. Therefore, one has to draw the conclusion that these thrones were originally intended for statues of more modest proportions, or that the sculptor and the architect failed to take sufficient account of each other's work as the result of some misunderstanding.

On the eastern side, as is also the case at Kalasan and Sewu, the space which corresponds to the above-mentioned chambers serves as the ante-chamber to the actual temple chamber which lies behind it, to which it offers a 1.66 m wide ingress. On either side of this entrance there is an image of a deity to serve as a temple guard. These are well-known servants, originally manifestations of Śiva; they are about 1.25 m high, not taking into account the lotus cushion which serves as their pedestal. They are clad in fine array and have a nimbus. The one on the right supports himself with his left hand on a club which has been placed beside him, while he holds his left arm against his body; the one on the left holds
a fly-whisk, which hangs over his left shoulder, in his left hand, and a rosary is visible in the palm of his right hand, which hangs down held open; on the same side there is a trident depicted on the backpiece. As discussed earlier, these divine figures, like those found at Gedong Songo, Selagriya, and Singasari, should be interpreted as Mahākāla and Nandiśvara, who are also designated in the Smaradahana as the guardians of Śiva's gate.

At the rear of the chamber one mounts one step and then, having passed along a passageway 2.20 m long, stands in the actual adyton, which is 7.14 m square; here, on his pedestal in the middle of the room, the main figure of this sanctuary and thus of the whole temple complex rises in all his glory: Śiva as Mahādeva.

Śiva's pedestal is austere and simple; it has the usual yoni form with flat mouldings, including that in the middle between the upper and lower panels. A remarkably fine snake's head, which supports the drainage spout turned towards Śiva's left side, can be counted among the most successful art works in the Loro Jonggrang. The pedestal is 1 m high; although it was discovered smashed to pieces, the statue of the god as reassembled now measures 3 m. Śiva stands on a lotus cushion against a backpiece; his slender body is, of course, attired in a fine costume, with finely worked chains and girdles. A tiger skin is cast around his loins and is visible over his sarong; naturally neither the snake as caste cord, the head-dress adorned with the skull and crescent moon nor the third eye on the forehead have been omitted. The Mahādeva has four arms; the right front hand is raised in front of his chest and the left, which is held at the level of his belly, carries a round knot; the right rear hand holds a rosary and the left a fly-whisk. Furthermore, on the right side there is a trident against the backpiece.

The internal arrangement of the sanctuaries of Brahmā and Viśnu is the same. The temple chamber, which covers an area of 5.44 by 5.46 m above the base, is entered through a passage 4.28 m long and 1.26 m wide. The walls are smooth, with the exception of two projecting stones 1.58 m above the floor, probably lamp brackets, in each of the side walls.

In the centre stands a large statue, 2.40 m high, of the god to whom the temple is dedicated; against the rear wall there are another three smaller representations of the same god. The main image, just like that of the Śiva temple, is raised on a simple, yoni-shaped pedestal, with the spout supported by the snake on the left side of the god; underneath the pedestal is once again the temple pit.

The four Brahmā statues, which remind us that Śiva was also represented four times in his temple (as Mahādeva, Guru, Nandiśvara, and Mahākāla), had all been smashed to pieces. Now the main image has been more or less pieced together;
fragments of two of the others are still at Prambanan; the third, after various peregrinations, has also returned there. The large statue is naturally decked out with divine panoply and is immediately recognizable by its four heads, the rearmost of which looks towards the backpiece. Writers compete with each other in praising the fine workmanship and the noble expression of this Brahmā image. Of the three smaller images, all of them are 96.5 cm high and stand on lotus cushions.

The middlemost once had four arms; on his right side was an eight-armed and on his left side a six-armed representation of the god. In his right rear hand the four-armed image has a trident, and in the left a staff; probably, the left front hand hung down with the palm held upwards, while the right probably held a lotus bud. The six-armed statue was furnished with awesome attributes, on the right side a sword, a shield and an arrow, and on the left side a shell and bow, while the sixth displayed a mudrā; five of the hands of the eight-armed Brahmā were without attributes and showed a mudrā, while the others had on the right a lotus bud and a handle, and on the left a small flower pot. It is clear that the express purpose was to give Brahmā completely different appearances.

In the Viṣṇu temple the large image, like the main statues in the other temples in this row, is standing and has four arms; there has been relatively little damage. The front right hand rests on a club beside the god; in the palm of the left hand is visible a triangular object with its point facing downwards. The attributes in the rear hands are the flaming discus in the right and the winged shell in the left. The statues against the rear wall all measure about 1.20 m. The central one represents the god in his two-armed form; in his right hand he holds up a shell, while on his left arm sits a small four-armed Lakṣmi adorned with a separate nimbus. Her front right hand lies in the varamudrā, while the front left hand holds a lotus bud against her body; the right rear hand grasps a rosary and the left carries a banner. This statue is now in Batavia [Jakarta] and the other two were in Yogyakarta, but have since been returned to their proper place. On the right side of the central statue is a Vāmanāvatāra; who holds his right leg straight up in the air, prepared to take decisive steps, and he has his right arm in front of his chest, while his left hand rests on a club. The third small statue is a Narasiṁha, recognizable by its lion's head with flowing mane, which holds the recumbent body of Hiranyakашaipu against his right thigh and arm, while tearing open the latter's belly with his left claw so that the intestines are exposed to view.

The main statue in the Nandi temple is a representation more than 2 m long of Śiva's mount. The bull with a hump on its back lies with its right foreleg folded in front of its body; and its tail, which is curled around its body to the left, is wrapped around a stone slab; its horns have been lost. The Nandi is
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undecorated; it is located directly in front of the Śiva statue in the opposite temple, which is clearly visible from this vantage point. Against the rear wall are images of Sūrya and Candra, both on lotus cushions, which rest on a wagon drawn by horses. As it should be, the team of the sun god consists of seven horses, and that of the moon god of ten. The images themselves rise about 1 m above the lotus cushions. They are magnificently equipped. Sūrya holds a lotus blossom in front of his body with both hands. In his right hand Candra bears the soma plant and in his hand carries a banner. The Śaiva character of the latter is highlighted by his third eye.

In the temple opposite the Viṣṇu temple [candi B] there was a four-armed statue of Śiva in a quite damaged condition, but with the pedestal and the body still present. The head, which is a very finely carved piece with high head-dress, death's head, crescent moon, and third eye, is now in Batavia.

Having already mentioned them incidentally, we shall not concern ourselves with details of the great number of statues and fragments which can be found on the site, most of them separated into sorts. We shall confine ourselves to describing a large, unfinished Brahmā image which was found near the Brahmā temple. As its measurements and attributes correspond with those of the main statue in the temple, the guess made by Jochim that this piece was originally intended for the sanctuary but was rejected for some reason to be replaced by the other seems highly probable.

Literature

Inventaris no. 1332.