Sculpture - Camunda

Object: Sculpture
Place of origin: India (north, made)
Date: ca. 6th century (made)
Artist/Maker: Unknown
Materials and Techniques: Terracotta
Museum number: IS.68-1986
Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description
The goddess Camunda epitomises all that is terrific and horrifying in the Hindu vision. She is the terrifying aspect of the female element and is independently represented as an aspect of the supreme female deity Durga, and as one of the seven mothers (saptamatrikas) where she is seen as the consort of Siva in his wild ascetic form of Bhairava. Camunda is represented as an emaciated old woman of dark complexion, her skeletal figure adorned with garlands of skulls and snakes, laughing hideously. In this terracotta Chamunda has a terrifying countenance, capturing remarkably the savage mood of her destructive nature. Much detail is lost from this figure, including the ‘signature’ scorpion that usually adorns her breast.

Camunda became an important figure in the sakta cults in which female aspects of deities became the focus of worship in their own right. The worship of Camunda appears to have become prominent by the late Gupta period and it is to this era that this terracotta may be attributed. Terracotta was a favoured material for temple relief decoration, usually placed on the external walls of the sanctuary. Camunda had a secure place alongside Durga, of whom she is a manifestation, as seen in the rock-cut terraces at the 8th century Kailasa temple at Ellora.

Descriptive line
Camunda, terracotta, Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh, north India, circa 6th century

Physical description
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Dimensions
Height: 35.5 cm, Width: 23 cm, Depth: 13 cm

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URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O66638/camunda-sculpture-unknown/