

## 55. FEMALE

An My, probably 5th century

Stone, H: 47 cm × W: 50 cm × D: 21 cm

Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, D43

1

Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zephir, eds., *Trésors d'art du Vietnam: la sculpture du Champa v–xv siècles* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Musée des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, 2005), 176, catalog entry by Zephir, 5th-century date; Albert Le Bonheur, "L'Art du Champa," in *L'Art de l'Asie du Sud-Est* (Paris: Citadelles et Mazenod, 1994), 253–77, 7th–8th centuries; Ho Xuan Tinh, *Di Tich Cham o Quang Nam—Vestiges chams a Quang Nam—Cham Relics in Quang Nam* (Tam Ky: Nha Xuat Ban Da Nang, 1998); Tran Ky Phuong, "Cultural Resource and Heritage Issues of Historic Champa States in Vietnam: Champa Origins, Reconfirmed Nomenclatures, and Preservation of Sites," ARI Working Paper No. 75 (September 2006): 16–17, dating to the eighth century; Emmanuel Guillon, *Hindu-Buddhist Art of Vietnam: Treasures from Champa*, English translation (Thailand: River Books, 2001), 162, dates the male bust in the same style to the tenth century; Miriam Lambrecht and Christian Schicklgruber, eds., *Vietnam: Art et cultures de la préhistoire à nos jours* (Brussels: Snoeck and the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 2003), dates the figure to the tenth century.

2

See Lambrecht and Schicklgruber, eds., *Vietnam: Art et cultures de la préhistoire à nos jours*, figs. 131 and 188.

3

As Zephir has convincingly argued, a similar figure discovered in Binh Dinh Province (illustrated in Ngo Van Doanh and Nguyen Van Ku, *Dieu Khac Cham—Champa Sculpture* [Nha Xuat Ban Thong Tan: VNA Publishing House, 2004], 276) displays a distinct base; it clarifies that these busts are complete as they now exist. See Baptiste and Zephir, eds., *Trésors d'art du Vietnam*, 176.

4

Ibid.

5

See illustrations in Pham Thuy Hop, *Suu Tap Dieu Khac Cham Pa; Tai Bao Tan Lich Su Ciet Nam (The collection of Champa sculpture in the National Museum of Vietnamese History)* (Ha Noi: Bao Tang Lich Su Viet Nam [National Museum of Vietnamese History], 2003), plates 1–4, 37–40; also illustrated in Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire du Champa: recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie* (Paris: l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963), figs. 3–5; Jean Boisselier, "Arts du Champa et du Cambodge preangkorien. La date de Mi-so'n E1," *Artibus Asiae* 19 ¾ (1956): 197–212.

6

Were this correct, we would have to consider the work a later copy of early styles.

This figure was discovered in 1982 at the site of An My (Quang Nam Province), where two sculptures of *dikpalas*, a *linga*, and two related busts lay amid the ruins of several brick buildings. The dating of the busts is uncertain; they have been variously assigned to the fifth through tenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty in dating these pieces lies in the fact that comparable pieces in a dateable context in Champa do not exist. Comparisons could be drawn to Gupta or post-Gupta Indian sculptures, most obvious in the treatment of the long curls of the male figure found at the same site.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the stylized treatment of this female's breasts does not fit in with the greater naturalism of the early period; rather, it accords with the latest depictions in Champa art.

Their uniqueness as busts, rather than complete figures,<sup>3</sup> poses questions of how they were used—whether as icons, or as part of the architectural decor. A single, similar example with a noticeable base, from Binh Dinh Province,<sup>4</sup> may argue that they were set up as freestanding images inside a temple; use of a partial image as an icon would be unusual in any Hindu or Buddhist context. An alternative is suggested by comparison with Indian art, where busts sometimes appear in false windows of a temple tower. In Champa, fragmentary smaller heads, with hair like the male figure mentioned above, may have been used in this manner, but more likely in the common Cham practice of inserting a stone head on a brick figure carved into the wall of a temple.<sup>5</sup>

Later Cham art suggests another possible use of these busts, as *kut*, the ancestor stelae that were set up for royalty in a temple, and which were sometimes adorned with a human torso. The unusual head scarf of this female, unknown elsewhere in Cham art, with the cloth falling over her shoulders and held in place by her diadem, may identify her as a royal figure rather than a goddess. The cloth

that covers the figure's hair might suggest a later, Islamic milieu, in light of the conversion of some later Cham to Islam.<sup>6</sup> If she is a royal figure, and these stelae were intended as *kut*, the question of their date remains. Would they be contemporary with the *kut* that appear in the fifteenth century, or forerunners of the *kut*, created in an early archaizing style?

### LITERATURE

Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zephir, eds., *Trésors d'art du Vietnam: la sculpture du Champa v–xv siècles*, 2005; Emmanuel Guillon, *Hindu-Buddhist Art of Vietnam: Treasures from Champa*, 2001.