

# 4 RETHINKING CHAM TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

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There are two types of temple structure in Cham religious architecture – the open-sanctum temple and the closed-sanctum temple. The first type comprises four wooden pillars supporting a terracotta tile roof that forms an open sanctum with a bright interior in which to set a richly carved altar with narrative sculptural works around for a central *yonī-liṅga* sculpture. Open-sanctum temples are known from the fifth to the eighth centuries. The second type uses brick applied with corbel technique to make a closed sanctum with a dark interior to house a minimally decorated pedestal for the *yonī-liṅga*. Closed-sanctum temples appeared during the later period of Cham art, from the late eighth and the ninth century onwards, including brick or stone-brick structures which were built until the seventeenth century. This paper reconsiders the relationship between the structure of Śaiva temples and the sandstone square sandstone pedestals installed in them from the seventh century CE onwards.

The analysis deployed here differs from that of previous historians of Cham art, who made a clear distinction between architecture and sculpture and formulated separate chronologies for their respective evolutions (Stern 1942; Boisselier 1963). It proposes integrating architecture and sculpture by examining the structure of temples and sculpted pedestals from each period, in order to better clarify the overall chronology of the arts of Champa.

## Open-sanctum temple

Regarding the first type of the Cham temple architecture including open-sanctum temples, we can refer to the recent archaeological excavations at Trà Kiệu site in Quảng Nam province, the site itself located in the former Simhapura, capital city of Amarāvati polity. The results of the excavations have presented some very significant findings related to these buildings, lasting from the fourth to the seventh centuries. The excavations, conducted by an international team of Vietnamese, British and Japanese archaeologists, were led by

Ian Glover of University College, London, who recorded that

... the deposits at Hoàn Châu (Trà Kiệu site) were over three metres deep with superimposed damaged brick floors, underlain by layers of gravel and sand, and contained a series of fragmentary brick and stone “columns” which had been dug into the deposits to a depth of at least one metre and which we believe to be basal supports for large timber posts installed to support a heavy tiled roof, the tiles from which were scattered through the deposit. By the end of the 2000 season enough of these had been found to reconstruct the partial outlines of a pillared hall with very incomplete brick floors which have been extensively robbed early after abandonment. (Glover, Nguyen Kim Dung, Prior 2005: 636).

The excavations at Hoàn Châu site during 1997-2000 revealed the vestiges of four large buildings (thought to be storage depots for trade goods), with column bases supporting wooden pillars made of broken brick, pebble and stone. Brick floors, tiles, eaves-tiles belonged to various different building stages from the second to third centuries CE (Yamagata, Nguyen Kim Dung 2014: 20-66). Based upon the technique employed in the foundations of the buildings with tiled roofs and wooden pillars (*banzhu/板柱*), Yamagata concluded that the Cham were probably beholden to Chinese construction techniques during the first centuries CE (Yamagata 2011: 85-8; 2005: 622-32).<sup>1</sup> The earliest wooden structure up the valley from the capital at Mỹ Sơn, according to the inscription of king Bhadravarman (c. 380-413), was a temple dedicated to Bhadrēśvara, the benevolent form of Śiva who was the tutelary of Cham sovereigns. This wooden temple was destroyed by fire two centuries later under the reign of king Sambhuvarman in the seventh century (Majumdar 1985: III, 12).

In 1927-8 at Trà Kiệu the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) carried out a 9-month excavation led by Jean-Yves Claeys, which discovered two main temple foundations