

Bust of Viṣṇu (?)

The flared topknot above the diadem is made up of three lotus flowers somewhat similar to a now lost stele discovered in Mý Sơn sanctuary presenting a god sitting cross-legged on the coils of a multi-headed nāga – a *nāgarāja* like those found at Amarāvātī, eastern India, or possibly a Viṣṇu.² (see Fig. 10 page 93)

The diadem is shown in some detail with chains of pearls falling from the lotus flowers and below them are squares with circles suggesting gems. The deity's thick, carefully curled hair covers the forehead and falls to the shoulders. The heavy necklace is embossed with rounded, twisted shapes; the nimbus is a large radiating sun-like shape that is extremely rare in Cham sculptural works. Scholars have suggested it could be a bust of Viṣṇu who forms a Vaiṣṇava trinity which includes Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī-Padmāśrī/Padmāvātī (?).³ The ornaments suggest a late stage of the 'An Mý style' in the 6th to the 7th centuries.

In recent years, a number of sculptural faces were found in Thành Hồ citadel, Phú Yên province and Thành Cha citadel, Bình Định

province, in a similar art style to the An Mý reliefs. These recently found works were clearly locally made, but they bear some artistic characteristics with Mon-Dvāravātī sculpture of the same epoch, as well as with the Gupta art of India. Based on the integrated style of the reliefs and the architecture, we infer that these Brahmanical objects attest to a distinct sacred sculptural style maintained from the 5th to the 7th century.⁴ Dates ranging from the 5th to the 10th centuries have been proposed for these objects.⁵ Because the deities look slightly downwards, it has been suggested that they were originally placed in an elevated niche, probably on the roof of a brick temple (*candraśālā/kuḍu*) somewhat like of the 7th (?) century Candi Bhīma temple of Dieng Plateau in Central Java, Indonesia. (Fig. 2)

More elaborate research over a wider geography can be expected to define more exactly the An Mý style of sacred architecture and its relation to the other Champa kingdoms as well as other polities on the Austroasiatic mainland, as well as other early trading polities of the southern seas.⁶

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Fig. 2 Candi Bhīma,
Dieng plateau, Central Java.
(P. Sharrock)

- 2 Boisselier 1963: 30-1, Figure 7; Guy 2015: *ibid.*; 2009: 134-5; Baptiste 2015: 70-1.
- 3 Guy 2015: *ibid.*; Tiwari 1985: 185-6.
- 4 William Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016: 148-50; Trần Kỳ Phương et al. 2003: 846-48; Nguyễn Danh Hạnh et al. 2007: 806-09; Trần Kỳ Phương 1990: 231-33.
- 5 T. Zéphir 2005: 176-77; cat.1, in this volume; Tingley 2009: 200-01; Le Bonheur 1994: 258, fig.129; Guy 2015: cat. 16, 48-9.
- 6 Guy 2009: 140-52; Trần Kỳ Phương et al. 2015: 432-41.