



Vṛṣabha, the 'male', the 'bull', also called Nandin the 'joyous' is all of this and at once the mount of Śiva, his emblem and Śiva himself. The bull of 'marvellous' (*adbhutam*) aspect is traditionally shown seated, patiently awaiting his master, the head turned towards him. In Śaiva sanctuaries, he appears most often in the temple forecourt, facing the cella. In the most important monuments – and it was perhaps the case at Trà Kiệu where this impressive sculpture was discovered at the end of the 19th century – Nandin was perhaps protected by a small pavilion (*nandi-maṇḍapa*), frequently of perishable material (bamboo, wood, straw), but sometimes of brick or stone.

At the time when the 'garden of sculptures of Tourane' (Đà Nẵng) hosted numerous pieces in great disorder, this bull was one of the prized ones, placed to advantage on part of the base of the pedestal of Trà Kiệu.¹ It is true that the work is admirable and of an exceptional size.² The animal, of a rare majesty, projects a tranquil force imprinted with sweetness that the sensitivity of the modelling captures with art.

The feet turned to the side, the tail curled along the flank, he has been given a sumptuous chest necklace adorned with buds of flowers forming a frieze, gold jewels and large bells attached to a strap and held by a double linked chain. On the head a chain, also linked and dressed with an open lotus flower between the ears, is held on the neck with a large, finely detailed jewel and draped with garlands of flowers and ornaments. The sensitivity of the modelling and especially the care given to the jewelry, all suggest the mid-10th century.

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- 1 MAFV 2005, photograph no. 2.
- 2 Other representations of Nandin are known in Champa. Among these, one should mention those of Phong Lệ and Cẩm Vân, both in Đà Nẵng.