

## 51. Wrestlers

Khuông Mỹ, Quảng Nam

10<sup>th</sup> century

Sandstone: H.102 cm; W.159 cm; D.53 cm

BTC 273-24.2



1 Trần Bá Việt, Đền Tháp Champa: Bí ẩn xây dựng [Champa temple-towers: Mysteries in construction] (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Xây Dựng, 2007), 118-119.

2 Henri Parmentier, 'Catalogue du Musée Cam de Tourane', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tomb 19, (1919), 64.

3 H. Parmentier *Inventaire Archéologique de L'Indochine (2) Monuments Čams de L'Annam* (1909 p. 266).

Located at Tam Xuân commune, Tam Kỳ city, Quảng Nam province, the site of Khuông Mỹ today consists of three standing temples. Though several architectural elements have suffered from extensive erosion, the remaining structures and foliate decorative motifs indicate that this temple complex was constructed between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> French officials collected a number of objects at this site in the late of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This relief was reportedly discovered by L. Finot and L. de Lajonquière in 1899. It was first sent to Musée de l'École in Sài Gòn, and then re-distributed to Musée de Tourane in 1918.<sup>2</sup>

Like the Polo Players [BTC 38-24.4], the relief once could have adorned a temple's staircase or foundation. Parmentier noted the remains of stairs on the far side.<sup>3</sup> Its square surface shows two wrestlers in symmetrical and dynamic poses. Facing forward, they fight with knees bent. Their inner hands grasp the other's thigh, while the outer ones are braced at head level, and hold scarf-like objects – Parmentier called the straps - whose purpose is unknown. Given its place of discovery, the relief is dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and attributed to the Khuông Mỹ style. However hardly could any defining characteristics of this art phase be discerned on the relief, except the