

58. Brahmā tympanum

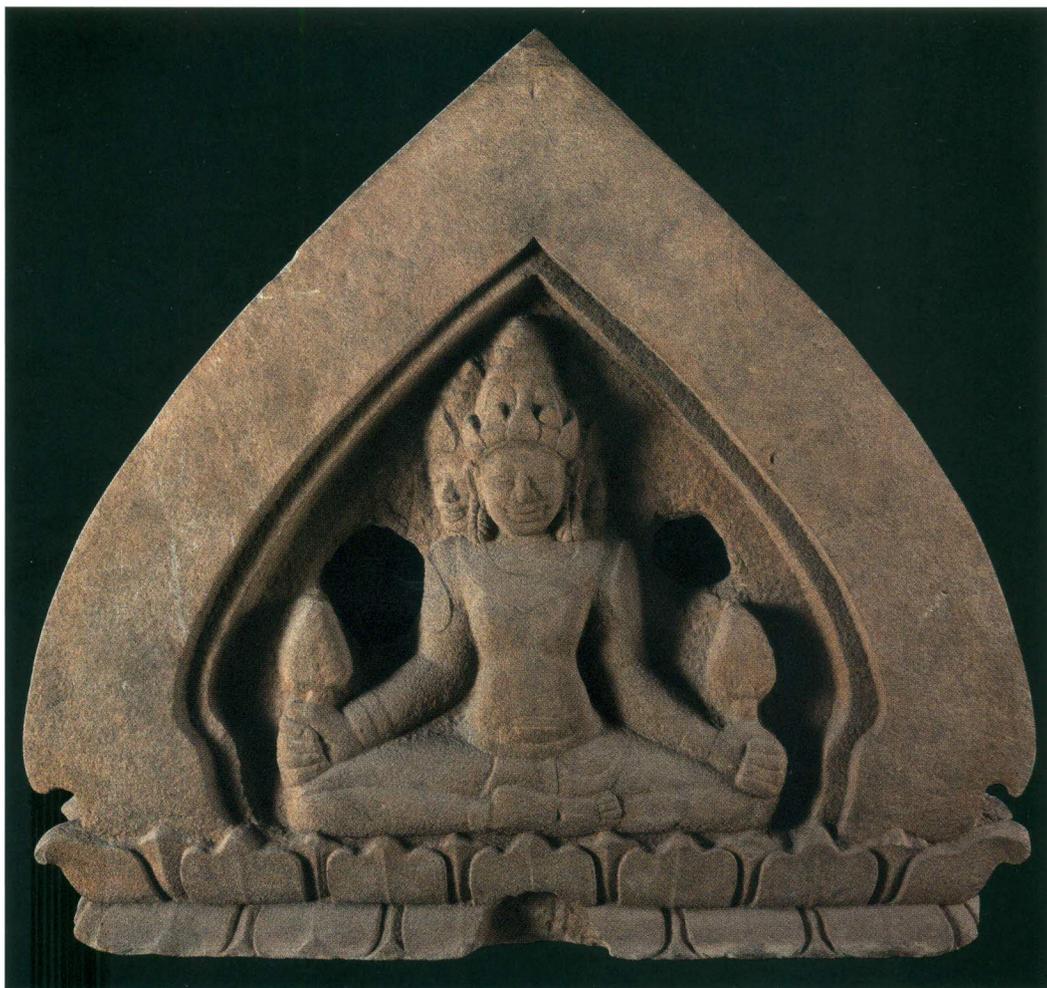
Phú Húng, Quảng Nam province

11th-12th centuries

Sandstone: H. 110 cm;

W. 114 cm; D. 44 cm

BTC 1537 - BTĐN 801/Đ42



The tympanum of Brahmā discovered in Phú Húng in the early 1990s, was transferred to the museum in 1993-94. Brahmā is the creator of the universe, along with Śiva Maheśvara, Umā and Viṣṇu, who were worshiped in the first stela of king Bhadravarman/Phạm Hồ Đạt (r. 380-413) erected in the Cham royal sanctuary of Śrīśānabhadreśvara at Mỹ Sơn in the end of 4th or early 5th century (Golzio 2005: 60).

In Cham art, the figure of Brahmā first appeared in the mid-8th century at Mỹ Sơn E1 temple. He was carved on tympana reliefs in the following centuries but never sculpted in statue form as the main god of a Cham temple (Finot 1901: 13). On this tympanum, the god wears a conical chignon or *kirīṭamukuta* ornamented with a diadem with five jewel-fleurons and a lotus. Brahmā has three visible faces, with one hidden behind. The pupils are hardly incised and the smile is sweet across his wide mouth. The jewelry, largely unfinished, includes earrings made of bands of threaded rings that fall to his shoulders, high and pointed armbands (*aṅgada*) and his

chest supports a heavy necklace (*hāra*). The god is seated in *paryāṅkāśana* posture on a large lotus blossom throne (*padmā-pīṭha/padmāsana*). The slim body is clothed in a *sampot* that reaches the knees and is folded at the waist into two layers. He holds two large lotus buds.

The tympanum is shaped with an unusual, large, triangular contour and was probably set into a large scale brick temple. Stone which was largely applied in Cham temples in the 11th century and the weight of the tympanum may have been reduced by drilling out two holes at the back.

Phú Húng ruin is a large pile of bricks and stone some 500 meters east of the Khương Mỹ tower group near Tam Kỳ city, Quảng Nam province. Phú Húng ruin was rediscovered in the early 1990s, after being first described by Henri Parmentier (1909: 245-6) as a big ruin where a small edifice remained and sculptural stone work included figures of human and animals for architectural decoration. He said the main temple faced east and was close to a large square pond called Ao Bà Yàng ('Pond of the Goddess').

1 According to Japanese architect Yutaka Shige-eda, Phú Húng was probably originally a complex of three temples (personal communication in 1994).

2 In 1994-5 at Phú Húng, the author saw statues of gods, dancers, lions, elephants, *garuḍas*, monkeys, horses dug out by the villagers. The styles varied, suggesting especially, there were many sandstone blocks decorated on the cornice representing the sanctuaries were restored over a long period.