

## 61. Monkey

Phú Hưng, Quảng Nam

11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries

Sandstone: H. 81 cm;

W. 44 cm; D. 43 cm

BTC 1561-BTĐN: 927/Đ69

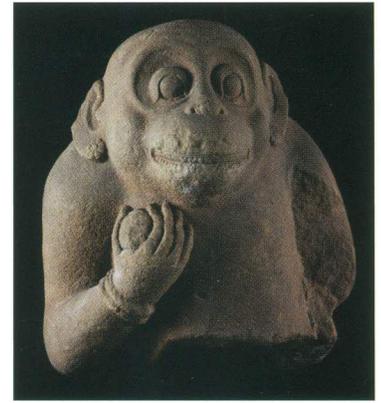


Fig. 1 Monkey torso from Phú Hưng.



Fig. 2 Legs of a monkey at a house near Phú Hưng site. (Trần Kỳ Phương)

1 Gopinatha Rao's account of a *Rāmāyana* scene might suggest this is a portrait of the monkey king Hanuman: 'The image of Hanuman is made to carry in both hands two cylindrical bodies which probably represent two *lingas*. The tradition is that when Rāma reached Rāmeśvaram he decided to set up a *linga* there in honour of Śiva; for this purpose he deputed Hanumān to fetch one from some sacred place. Before Hanumān returned, however, the auspicious moment for setting up the *linga* arrived, and Rāma thereupon installed there a locally obtained *linga* at the proper moment. Hanumān, who returned too late with two *lingas* is here represented thus.' (Rao 1914: 193-4). If this is this case, the cylindrical object kept in the right hand of the other Phú Hưng monkey bust looks a little more like a *linga*. (Fig.1)

Monkeys are the prominent images of Phú Hưng site, the most notable being a life-size in-the-round pair of temple monkeys (one now only a torso), carved with fine anatomical knowledge and an exceptional realism, that are unquestionably the most beautiful in Cham sculpture. The complete one sits with curled tail and prehensile foot meeting on a rare octagonal base. The face, with large round open eyes and large ears is captured in a vivid moment of attention. The posture is close to a *rājānilāsana* royal ease position and the animal wears a long *sompot* in two layers, falling to his knees, that is held at the waist by a belt with ten bells. The garment may be rippling in the wind in the Indic convention called *vāyyāpuritavasta*. (Banerjea 1974: 527) He wears double bracelets on wrists and ankles, he left hand holds a circular object against the chest and the right hand holds the same object on his thigh.<sup>1</sup>

The monkeys may have been installed as guardians of a Vaiṣṇava temple. If this could be substantiated archaeologically, it would be a first time in Cham sculpture. The Phú Hưng temple group has been considered a possible Vaiṣṇava foundation because it is closely related to the Khuông Mỹ temple group, where several friezes on the foundation wall have monkeys thought to be engaged in the battle with to rescue Sītā from Rāvaṇa's palace in Lanka (Levin 2008: 93-4; Griffiths et al. 2017). In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries monkeys appeared often in Cham temples in the Amarāvati polity, for example on the bas-reliefs of the foundation walls of Chiên Đàn temple group. A small statue of a seated monkey was found at the Mỹ Sơn D group (Parmentier 1919: 94; 1922: Pl. IX).

LHB/TKP