

63. Tympanum of Padmāvati

An Mỹ, Quảng Nam

11th-12th centuries

Sandstone: H. 78 cm;

W.74 cm; D.40 cm

BTC 1549-BTĐN 827/Đ56



Padmāvati, meaning 'lotus-born', is the name of a goddess who dwells in a lotus-pond, stands or sits on a lotus, and carries lotus flowers in her hands. This late An Mỹ pediment presents a goddess seated on a lotus throne holding two lotuses. With insistence, the contour of the pediment is ornamented with seven lotus-shaped flowers with the largest at the apex. This is a unique tympanum in Cham art with such a floral contour, suggesting the Padmāvati goddess. The central lotus on the contour combines with her conical diadem to produce a lotus-head goddess as sometimes represented in Indian art.¹ Padmāvati is a fertility goddess and is worshipped for the growth of crops and cattle. She is one of two consorts of Viṣṇu, the other is Laksmī. This tympanum was found at An Mỹ in 1982, together with three 5-6th century busts of Viṣṇu, Laksmī and Padmāśrī /Padmāvati.

In terms of iconographical features, the goddess is represented sitting in the half-lotus

yogic posture (*paṛyañkāśana*). Her hands rest on her knees supporting two lotuses, each with six petals. She wears a conical diadem composed of small petals and a crown ornamented three flowers (*kiriṭamukuta*) that is characteristic of Vaiṣṇava iconography. The lotus throne and her dress are unfinished. It is possible to compare the lotuses composed by thick petals carved on the contour of the tympanum to those of the lotus shapes represented in the decorative programmes of the Chiên Đản temple group, about 1.5 km east of the An Mỹ ruins, built during the 11th-12th centuries.

This tympanum decorated the main entrance to a medium-sized brick temple that was probably Vaiṣṇava. The ogival sandstone tympanum depicts a goddess who was worshipped as a tutelary deity to bring prosperity and fertility to royal religious foundations.

1 J. N. Tiwari: 'The statement in some iconographic texts that a beautiful lotus should be made on the head of the goddess (Padmāśrī/Padmāvati) is apparently to be understood as the description of the head decoration.' Tiwari, J. N. 1985. *Goddess Cults in Ancient India (with special reference to the first seven centuries A.D.)*. Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, p. 185.