

COLLECTION OF CHAM SCULPTURES AT HUE ROYAL ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM: FROM THE HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT TO THE QUESTION OF THE POLITY IN HUE REGION

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Manuscript received: 20/08/2022; Peer-reviewed: 30/09/2022; Accepted: 30/11/2022

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Abstract

Cham sculptures in the Cham Section of Khai Dinh Museum (present-day Hue Royal Antiquities Museum) were collected from different places in the Hue region from the first decades of 20th century. Among them are many important artifacts that can be helpful in identifying the date of some Cham relics in Hue based on the comparison between them and other artifacts of the same type and style in other identified places. This information together with other written documents can contribute to reviewing historical data of the Hue region in the Cham's period.

Key words: Champa, sculptures, date, history, type, style, religion

1. The establishment of Cham Section at Hue Royal Antiquities Museum

The Cham Section of the Hue Royal Antiquities Museum (briefly mentioned as Museum afterward) was initially set with its foundation by the first discovery of the Cham sculpture found at Nham/Giam Bieu village (Huong Ho, Hue city) and moved to place on the Museum's yard in 1914. It is the most distinguished stone sculpture that has been preserved in the Museum and marked at the beginning of the Museum collections of

history and arts collected by the Association des Amis du Vieux Hué (AAVH) at the time.

The Cham Section was established in the area of the Museum based on a Decree dated December 26, 1927 in order to display a collection of typical Cham artifacts at the Museum, and this activity was conducted under the scientific guidance and supervision of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) (Jabouille 2003: 174-175). J.Y. Claeys, the permanent member of EFEO, Archaeological Inspector, was in

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charge of the establishment of the Cham Section.

The number of Cham sculptures increased gradually with another discovery of a linga in Xuan Hoa village (Hue city) and other Cham sculptures in the next few years. Besides, this collection was also enriched by a group of Cham sculptures excavated from Tra Kieu (Quang Nam) that was also carried out by J.Y. Clayes in June, 1927, and later from Thap Mam (Binh Dinh) in 1934. Artifacts found in these excavations were distributed to different museums in Vietnam at the time, among them was the Khai Dinh Museum (present-day Hue Royal Antiquities Museum).

In order to facilitate the display of Cham artifacts, an old granary in Quang Tri was taken to set behind the Museum under the consultancy of the architect De Saint-Nicolas, member of the Museum's Administration Board, as the displaying room of Cham sculptures without any visual conflict with the adjacent Long An architecture that was once the royal palace of the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945) and reused as the Library, then the main displaying hall of the Museum. In 1928, the room for the Cham Section was completed and put in use. Afterward, the construction had been renovated several times. The latest renovation took place in 2016, changed its

direction and opened to the public after many years in closure.

2. From some Hue-originated Cham sculptures of the Museum, review the history of Hue region

The result of a survey in 1905 in Thua Thien Hue by L. Cadière recorded 15 places of Champa relics and objects. Though this number is not the final result, he provided the detailed description with valuable information about the form, measures, physical condition and topography of the place (Cadière 2020: 132-137). Among Champa sculptures in the Museum's collection, Cham sculptures found in the area of Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue, especially the area of Hue city and its outskirt consist of some important ritual sculptures, such as yoni-linga, or the Shiva statue worshiped in a temple, or the statue of Agni -the God of Fire, ascetic, Makara's head, or some architectural components of large size, such as the pillar base, or the temple's top, etc. All are evidence for the abundance and diversity of various sculpture types reflecting the material civilization that once existed in the area of long-term cultural integration between local culture of Cham people and other regional cultures.

The topic of Champa in the north of Hai Van pass has been studied in many works of different researchers. Some of them based on the archaeological survey's results to identify the date of

place, such as Hoa Chau citadel, Thuy Xuan and Thuy Bieu villages, or Quang Dien district where Champa pottery along with Chinese ceramics were found, dated from 7th-10th centuries, and Loi citadel dated around 4th century because fragments of Champa roof tiles with grooved lines and fine pottery are similar to the upper layer of Tra Kieu (Lam Thi My Dung 2019: 39).

Another hypothesis came from the object in a private collection found underwater in the Huong river: an ovoid jar that may indicate the existence of a site around Hue dated from the 2nd century CE (Yamagata Mariko et al. 2019: 54). Ovoid jars* are evidence of the earliest settlement at Tra Kieu and were also found in quantity at Go Cam (Quang Nam province). Locally made, perhaps serving as containers for oil, this particular vessel spreads over a fairly limited area that included Quang Nam, Ly Son island and possibly Hue. They seem to have been in use exclusively during Tra Kieu I phase (ibid.: 61).

But the history of the Hue region in the age of Champa is still lacking in important fragments for its completed picture. Especially, Anton O. Zakharov based on some Champa epigraphs in the north of Hai Van pass to suppose that probably Champa was not Linyi,

and that “If my reasoning about the kings of Linyi is correct and if, as Chinese sources state, this Linyi reappeared even after the disastrous invasion by Liu Fang in 605 CE...it seems that it was able to survive despite Campā’s expansion to the north” (Zakharov 2019: 151-152).

Andrew Hardy (2019: 234) mentioned an idea of “integrating kingdom” in his research on “Champa, Integrating Kingdom: Mechanisms of Political Integration in a Southeast Asian Segmentary State (15 century)” providing another idea about entities of Champa kingdom’s existence with the integrative mechanisms deployed by the precarious institution positioned at the pinnacle of this type of geographically dispersed and multi-centered kingdom, subject to centrifugal forces and constantly required to invest resources in integration.

Though these hypotheses still need more evidence, it evokes the potential possibilities that help figure out the linkage between historical materials and relics on sites including Champa sculptures in the Museum’s collection, firstly the group of Champa sculptures found in Hue region.

* Ovoid jar may have been used as containers for storage and transport. After four samples of residue traces from ovoid jars were examined, the

jars were identified as storage vessels for unsaturated oils such as palm oil (Glover, Nguyễn Kim Dung & Prior 2005: 635-652, cited from Zakharov 2019: 152)

2.1. Some typical sculptures from Nham/Giam Bieu (Huong Ho, Hue city)

Nham/Giam Bieu village (belonging to the present-day Huong Ho ward, Hue city, on the northern bank of the Huong river) was mentioned in a report by Edmond Gras, Director of the Treasury in the Central of Vietnam, member of AAVH and Chairman of the Museum Administration Board during 1923-1925 when he did a field survey in this area and discovered some relics of Champa culture. It is the God statue (Shiva) numbered ĐKC 01 (Fig.1) with the missing head. This statue was firstly found in 1910 on a promontory near a stream at Nham/Giam Bieu village. Then, the statue subsided and fell into the stream because of the landslide. In 1915, Edmond Gras and some people from AAVH tried to trace it back, hired local divers to pick it up from the water bottom and brought it to place in front of the Long An palace that was the library at the time (present-day the main hall of the Museum) (Gras 1997: 369-377).

The 127 cm-high statue was made of light gray fine sandstone with very balanced proportions and a majestic figure with a large belly. It is in good design and fits with a human being dimension but his head, two hands and two feet are missing. The neck root

bears a few circular features indicating folds. The upper part of the body is naked revealing a strong but soft figure of breast and wide shoulders. The belly is slightly bulged, covered with a sampot*, tied around by a simple belt with a knot at the back; the front flap in front of the belly is pulled up above the belt to hold the cloth firmly so the lower part creates 3 zig zag folds with the short outer layer. The cloth covers down near the ankle.

Though there is no musculature shown on the stout body, and the round belly is bigger than that of a normal man but enough to be supposed as a statue of a divinity rather than a pregnant woman as in a hypothesis at the beginning of 20th century (Odend' Hal 1915a: 473).

Later, Claves (1934: 52) pointed out that *"its replica that was almost intact still existed at Mi-son on an altar dedicated to Çiva himself, of which he is in the human figure. In Javanese art, moreover, there is a tendency to represent the supreme God of Çivaism as a replete Brahmin. A similar tradition may have existed in Champa"*. This information leads to a hypothesis that probably this sculpture depicts Shiva God that has the same date with that of My Son.

* The type of dress uses a rectangular cloth wrapped around the waist, the tail at the ends is

tied together between the legs, held by a belt, like a pair of pants rather than a skirt.

According to Trần Kỳ Phương (2003: 110), the special importance of this statue is helpful for us in identifying the role of Nham/Giam Bieu relic in the Cham relics system along the Huong river. With such a big and standard statue as Shiva, Nham Bieu can only be seen in the main temple of royal sanctuary, like My Son that was dated 7th-8th centuries.

In the same provenance of Nham/Giam Bieu, in addition to the above statue, some fragments of Champa sculptures but not clear enough to recognize the original shape, and a threshold were brought to the museum (Odend'Hal 1915b: 472).

The threshold ĐKC 84 is in rectangular shape and has two parts: the lower part was made as the first stair with two round holes that may be created to hold the door poles, and the higher part was made as the main body of the threshold with two bigger rectangular holes that may connect the door frame with the wall of construction. The threshold is footworn but still in the original shape (Fig. 2).

Based on the results of the field survey and the aesthetic characteristics of the above-mentioned statue ĐKC 01 and the decorated offering pedestal that was not given further details, together with other

fragments found in Nham/Giam Bieu site where is on the north bank of the Huong River (about 2 km west of Thien Mu Pagoda), Trần Kỳ Phương commented: *"Locating in a complex that was in a corresponding relation to the Loi Wall, there must be important temples in Nham Bieu-Thien Mu area in the past to play the role of a religious center of a mandala in present-day Hue region."* (Trần Kỳ Phương 2003: 52)

2.2. Sculptures from Xuan Hoa relic (Thuy Xuan, Hue city)

The Xuan Hoa relic was identified at the northeast of Loi citadel, near Tuong Van pagoda (Thuy Xuan ward, Hue city). Once, there was a Cham temple in this area but it collapsed a long time ago, then another temple was constructed on its foundation (called Ba Giang temple) to court the favorable weather. Under the reign of Minh Mang emperor (1820-1841) of the Nguyen era, it was called the temple for the Rain God. Later, this temple was moved to 5-6 meters southward. At present it is the temple for the Red Eye Goddess*, and a sandstone door tie still remains in front of the temple, 130cm in length, 39cm in width, 11cm in thickness (Nguyen Van Quang 2016b: 65).

In 1917, L. Cadière discovered a group of 5 artifacts and brought to the Library (later museum) from this relic, including:

* Placed within the garden of Mr. Tran Thai Bao, Thuy Xuan ward, Hue city (Nguyen Van Quang 2016b: 65)

The Makara head numbered ĐKC 23 depicts a fairly complete Makara head with the long 4-layer trunk that is curved at the end, the two wave-formed layers created the eyebrow above the big round goggle eyes; big, erected ears and chubby cheeks with worn details of decoration. A small figure is released from the mouth but broken fully, just left with a part of the right hand. (Fig. 3).

The head of Makara-the legendary sea creature ĐKC 08 (Fig. 4) is also fairly big and elaborately carved. A small figure of goddess reaches out of the gaping mouth of the monster, but the stonework was left roughly finished, or it probably was worn over time. It is a decorative symbolic element of the temple architecture, still rudimental but depicted with its stylized amalgam of crocodile snout, elephant trunk decorated with foliate brackets, and the clear petal-shaped ear like the ear of a pig.

In Hindu mythology, Makara is the vehicle of the River Goddess Ganga, wife of Shiva, appears as the most popular symbol of the Hindu culture, and presents the source of all existence, fertility, and a protective emblem.

The big size of these two architectural elements reflects the huge dimension of the building. For this point, it can be seen that the area of Xuan Hoa once had a lot of Hindu architecture belonging to the local

community. In corresponding to the geographical location of southeast Loi citadel that was identified with date around 4th-5th centuries (Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung 2017: 214), it must be a relationship between the building of the above sculptures and the Loi citadel relic, at least in terms of Champa civilization's continuity. In a research on the Loi citadel, Nguyen Van Quang commented: "*The discovery of Champa temple relic near the Loi citadel ...shows the relationship between the political- administrative center of the Loi citadel/the holy citadel and the religious center/holy land Son Dien/Xuan Hoa in the structure of a Champa mandala, meanwhile the other factors such as the holy estuary/Tu Hien sea port, the holy river/Huong river, and the holy mount/Kim Phung mount, are definitely identified*" (Nguyen Van Quang 2016b: 65-66).

The Linga ĐKC 38 (Fig.5) was also discovered by L.Cadière at Dàng/Giàng temple near Tuong Van pagoda (Xuan Hoa, Thuy Xuan, Hue city). It is also in big size with a square section at the base, octagonal in the center and circular at the summit (107cm in height, 33,5cm in diameter, 32cm x 32cm base). With this shape, the linga contains in itself the three deities. Brahmā, the creator, occupies the lower part of the *līṅga*, hidden under the earth. It symbolizes the neutral principle. This section, called '*brahmabhāga*' is square (*caturaśra*).

Viṣṇu, the preserver, occupied the central part masked by the pedestal. It symbolizes the female principle (identified here with Devī: the pedestal *yoni*). This '*viṣṇubhāga*' is octagonal (*aṣṭāra*). Rudra, the destroyer, appears at the summit (*rudrabhāga*), symbolizing the masculine principle. Circular (*vṛttam*) in section, it is the only visible part of the *liṅga* when it is inserted into the pedestal, and receives the cult (*pūjā*), also named *pūjāṃśa* (Baptiste 2018: 191). There is a missing part on the circular section of the *liṅga* that may be intentionally chiseled off.

Linga is the phallus of Shiva, the origin of the most sacred representation of Shiva, symbol of the vital and creative power, and it "was made the center of a religious cult" by Jayavarman II from pre-Angkorian times (Roveda 2005: 11). This *liṅga* is in the same shape with the *liṅga* of Tra Kieu* that was identified with date of 10th century (Fig.6) but the missing part on the circular section of the *liṅga* in Xuan Hoa showed that probably it did not have the fire mark like that of Tra Kieu but it might be the place attached to the Shiva's head, like the *mukhalinga* (one-faced *liṅga*) found in My Son in 2021 (Fig. 7).

During the consecration rite, people often cover the top of the *liṅga* with a golden *kosa* and lustrate the *liṅga* with

water so that the water will flow to a sacred water-pipe in shape of the spout on the *yoni* at the bottom of the *liṅga*. This is an important worshipping ceremony, and the sacred water was believed to be the source of land's fertility.

The Cham inscriptional record points to the offering of *lingakosa* as the pre-eminent ritual activity enacted by the Cham royalty in their pursuit of and maintenance of power. The donation of *kosa* as expensive royal gifts may be understood to form part of the fulfillment of Brahmanical sacred duty, the religious giving by a devotee to his deity. But a review of the dedicatory inscriptions of Champa suggests that this was no ordinary religious donation. *Kosa* consistently appears as the single most important gift made by a Cham king to his temple, or more precisely, to his deity. The veneration of the state *liṅga* through the endowment of *kosa* appears at the heart of Cham devotional worship, and forms a key part of the quest for divine affirmation of royal authority (Guy 2018: 90-95).

There was another *liṅga* pedestal found at Phu Dien temple (8th century). Anne-Valerie Schweyer assumed that this temple was also dedicated to the Shiva cult under the form of *liṅga* (Schweyer 2011: 207). The emblems of the *liṅga* found in the region of Thua

* Dimension of the *Linga* found in Tra Kieu: 85cm in height, 27,5cm each side of the base

Thien Hue reflect the importance of Champa temples in this region at the time, when linga was seen as the temple's sacred empowering emblem and the symbol of legitimacy (R.Hall 2018: 21).

In the group of Champa sculptures from Xuan Hoa relic, the Gajasimha high-relief ĐKC 41 whose head is missing was identified as the architectural metope (*Fig.8*), depicted in standing posture.

Gajasimha in Hinduism is the mount of Shiva, often portrayed as the guardian of temples. It has an elephant's head and a lion body. In Hinduism, the elephant's head symbolizes the wisdom and power of a god, and the lion body represents the monarchy. At the Cham temple, the Gajasimha statues are placed at the entrance as the doorkeeper.

Being different from the Gajasimha of Thap Mam (Binh Dinh province) that is created as independent statue*, the Gajasimha of Xuan Hoa (Hue) is just a high-relief unit, part of the building.

There are two other sculptures of Gajasimha in the museum collection, including ĐKC 39 (*Fig. 9*) and ĐKC 40 (*Fig. 10*) (unknown exact provenance, but supposed to be found in northern

Hai Van pass area). They are all in the form of high-relief sculptures, depicted vividly in a joyful posture with the trunk curled inward and modeled as it captures the suspended moment when the elephant is about to raise the trunk to trumpet its triumph. The ornamental details on these sculptures were carved more sophisticatedly and skillfully than that of Xuan Hoa, with jewelries on the neck, curved tail and long mane. Compared to the Gajasimha from Thap Mam (12th century) housed at Da Nang Museum of Champa Sculpture with the elaborated carving (*Fig.11*), the Gajashimha ĐKC 41 of Xuan Hoa (Hue) is still in rough condition. This Gajasimha and the pair of ĐKC 39-40 probably had an earlier date than that of Thap Mam.

According to Phan Anh Tú (2016: 94), the Gajasimha is popular in Champa sculpting art that belonged to the style of Thap Mam in Binh Dinh, but the Gajasimha of Xuan Hoa, and other places in the north of Hai Van pass area, though they are not round statues, are evidences of the early Cham sculpting arts prior Vijaya period†.

The tower's top ĐKC 43 is an architectural element decorating the top of Champa tower found at Xuan Hoa. It is the 42,5cm-high pyramid with

* One of them is being kept at the Danang Museum of Cham sculptures, recognized as the National Treasure in 2020

† Vijaya is generally understood as located in the modern province of Binh Dinh (Amandine

Lepoutre 2019: 91). Regarding the localisation of Vijaya in the modern province of Binh Dinh, it is reasonable for the 12th and 13th centuries (Vickery 2005: 39-40; 2011: 386, cited from Amandine Lepoutre 2019: 92)

the square base of 36 cm each side, ornamented with flower leaf design. The stone was shaped as a large flower with two layers of petals surrounding the pistil in the center divided into two parts and distinguished by a concave line, the top was broken (Fig.12). Unfortunately, no other architectural details of the Xuan Hoa relic were brought to the museum for a better understanding about this temple. However, what was brought to the museum from the Xuan Hoa relic showed a large-scale Champa architecture that was dedicated to the Shiva cult in the early period. Although there is not enough evidence to prove that the sculptures found in Xuan Hoa had the same date of 4th-5th centuries of the Loi citadel, it is likely to be dated before the 10th century.

2.3. Sculptures from Linh Thai relic (Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue)

Among the Champa relics that remain in Thua Thien Hue, Linh Thai relics are fortunate to keep many vestiges on the status quo and valuable information in historical documents.

Linh Thai mountain (Vinh Hien, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue) is located on the coast, occupying an important position near the Tu Hien estuary (Fig.13). In the past, the tower was located on the top of the mountain at an altitude of more than 140 m above sea level, the highest position in the Cham towers along the Central coast.

Historical documents of the 16th century recorded at the time that "*on the mountain there was a towering ancient tower*" (Duong Van An 1997: 20). In the time of Nguyen Lords, in 1667 Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu went to visit Quy Son mountain (later Linh Thai mountain) and saw a famous sacred ancient tower on the top of the mountain, then he asked "*to urge the army and people to move the tower to another place to get land for a Buddhist temple*" (National Historiographers Office of the Nguyen Dynasty 2002, Vol. I: 81). At the top of the mountain, the place where the tower was moved has a large rectangular ground, an area of about 15,000 square meters (Ngo Van Anh 2015).

Among 5 Champa sculptures that have been supposed to be brought from the Linh Thai relic, two of them are remarkable portraits of the ascetic. The remaining sculptures include those of Kinnari dancers and an incomplete relief of the upper part of the human figure.

The ascetic ĐKC 06 is depicted in the form of a sitting man with a firm body and wide chest, crossed legs hidden under the front tie of loincloth, his hands are clasped to the chest (Fig.14). The figure was placed against a wall, the right part of the supporting stone was broken off but enough to assume this work was from the tower's ornament.

He wears a plain bonnet with no decoration, the brim of the bonnet that is in the shape of a double braided band covers the forehead and part of his hair on two sides of the head. Two ears are long and reach the shoulders. The eyebrows are delicately carved with slightly slanted eyes revealing round pupils. The pursed lips with the lower lip that is slightly protruded give the face a serious expression. The sides of the nose have lines that show natural wrinkles. There is a strand of bead on his chest, two arms are also decorated with two upper armbands and the bracelet is the string of round beads. With upper body naked, he wears a short plain loincloth with a U-shaped crease in the middle below the belt that falls in two layers, the lower layer is larger. In the center of the belt there is a triangular pendant.

According to Trần Kỳ Phương who was invited to assess the Champa collection of the museum, this tympanum was created in a very special way that has not seen in elsewhere of the Champa sculpture with the stone roughly finished, especially at the face and two hands. This work was made by inexperienced sculptors.

The posture of this ascetic resembles the two sculptures KS009 and KS008 housed at the Faculty of History (Hue University of Sciences)

that were brought from Linh Thai relics during 1977-1978.

The sculpture KS009 depicts an ascetic sitting with the same posture with the above-mentioned ascetic ĐKC 06, but the sculpting art of the latter is cruder with the neck jewelry is just a line, not a chain; and the long beard is clearer. Most of the wall behind the ascetic and a part of the left thigh were missing (*Fig.15*).

He also wears a plain bonnet but the top is in U shape; the brim of the bonnet has a big line in the center with two parallel lines on two sides. The loincloth is also the same style, but all the details were worn out.

The ascetic KS008 is depicted with the same posture but his loincloth has only one layer (*Fig.16*); the sculpting of face with big eyes and thin mustache trait bring his face a more elegant trait than that of the ascetic KS 009. The wall behind him is still intact and in the shape of a tympanum. In spite of differences in depicting the necklace or the gesture of crossed legs, these two sculptures KS 008 and KS 009 are analogous to those of adorned ascetics from Thap Mam (Binh Dinh) that were supposed to be dated 12th-13th centuries (Baptise P./Peter D. Sharrock 2018: 267). In this case, the question is what happened to the state's form in this area at the time when it was in the state of flux between the governance of Dai Viet and Champa rulers. The

existence of Linh Thai temple-tower shows that Champa rulers were still strong enough to be able to gather labor and materials to build this construction during the 12th-13th centuries in this area in order to serve their demand of religious practice.

The ascetic ĐKC 18 in the museum collection was also appraised by Trần Kỳ Phương with the provenance of Linh Thai relic but this figure is different from the two above-mentioned ascetics in details, such as the posture of his hands and legs, style of the clothes or headdress, etc. with different trait (Fig. 17). The thumb and the index finger of his right hand keep a strand of beads to his chest while the left hand puts in front of his belly in the open posture upward.

His high-domed hair bun is decorated by a string of beads placed around his forehead. The smiling mouth and eyes, the long face with a triangular beard make his face fresh and calm. His necklace is composed of a chain of round beads that looks like pearl beads, the same style with his armbands and bracelets.

The posture of this ascetic resembles with the ascetic ĐKC 06 but in different traits. He is seated in legged pose of ease with feet crossed on a stone step, his back against the wall of the tympanum. The loincloth has a flared flap falling from the bell and hanging in loops, part of the loincloth

wraps over the thighs and leaves some drapes.

The tympanum of ascetic is popular in Champa architectural sculptures with protective symbolic meaning. This ascetic is a nice sculpture presenting elegant traits on his face, gentle pose of hands and legs. Compared to two ascetics collected from Linh Thai relic KS 008 and KS 009, being placed at the Faculty of History (Hue University of Sciences), this sculpture ĐKC 18 might be from Thap Mam for the style similarity, found and brought to the museum by the Association des Amis du Vieux Hue.

Trần Kỳ Phương categorized Linh Thai in the early period of Champa history in northern Hai Van pass where belonged to Ulik in 11th-13th centuries, when *"Hindu and Buddhist dynasties wanted to flaunt their power via magnitude constructions. Many temples tend to be built on high hills for a more impressive view. The architectural style synthesizes many exotic elements in decoration as well as in construction techniques creating many bigger temples and towers than those of previous periods...Most of temple-towers were built in the harbor commercial center where international exchanges were concentrated"*(Trần Kỳ Phương 2012). The existence of a Champa temple-tower at Linh Thai in 11th-13th centuries shows that in spite of the move of capital Tra Kieu from the north of Hai Van pass to Tra Kieu in the

south in the 7th century, religious and political activities of Champa people in this region still remained until the next few centuries.

Also coming from Linh Thai, a top of the tower is currently housed at the Museum of Thua Thien Hue History, recognized as the National Treasure in 2020. The big sized tower top includes two parts (the base and the top) but they have a united design of a stylized lotus that looks like a carambola – a very special shape in Champa sculpted top of Champa tower in the Central of Vietnam. It also reflects the skillful designing and sense of art of Champa sculptors.

2.4. Sculptures from Thanh Trung (Quang Vinh, Quang Dien, Thua Thien Hue)

Thanh Trung is within the area of the ancient Hoa Chau citadel (so-called Hoa fortification *). Based on the ceramic wares dated around 9th-10th centuries found in cultural layers of the excavation in this area and other archaeological results, the citadel's date was identified in 9th-early 10th centuries (Nguyen Van Quang 2011) but this area was not a residential area. Sharing the same idea about the role of Hoa Chau citadel in Champa history, a group of researchers supposed that in this period Hoa Chau “*did not contain a large population, then during the*

Champa period, the Hoa Chau was probably a military or transportation center” (Do Truong Giang et al 2017: 85). However, the existence of many Champa sculptures worshiped in local religious buildings or left on site (Nguyễn Phước Bảo Đan et al. 2021: 47-49) as well as the two big-sized sculptures brought from Thanh Trung to place at Khai Dinh museum at the first decades of 20th century (Parmentier 1919:10-11) raised the questions about Champa religious buildings in this area at the time.

The pilaster ĐKC 02 was mentioned briefly in BAVH 1915 with a short sentence, but described with more details by H. Parmentier in 1919. It is a part of a piedroit or a pillar, with three faces that have rich decoration with two types of lotus petals, the normal one on the top and the stylized design on the body. Between the upper part that was formed as a big lotus bud connecting to the lower base is by a horizontal transformed section. (*Fig. 18*). There is a round hollow in the heart. The asymmetrical arrangement of ornamental carving patterns shows that blocks of stone were put into place for constructing before decoration. Workers did it with their creative sense without calculating the dimension of each side, so they must carve a pattern of half flower petals or half leave to fill

* Duong Van An (2009), *O Chau can luc*, Nxb Giao duc, Ha Noi, 2009, p. 85

the corner as an incomplete flower. This type of decoration of leaves in low relief is of unusual richness in the Champa sculpting art of architecture.

The circular pedestal ĐKC 42 was registered into the museum list in 2001 with the provenance of Nham/Giam Bieu. However, according to the description of Odend'Hal in 1915 (Odend'Hal 1915c: 474), and more details in the description of H. Parmentier in 1919 (Parmentier 1919:10-11), it was among sculptures found at Thanh Trung and The Lai. It is in the form of a circular base with a square hole in the center which had to receive a standing statue or a linga. The spout is missing and only marked by an open drainage mouth. The elaborated decoration of the pedestal was formed by two rows of elegant lotus leaves with florets on the top layer (*Fig. 19*). The square hole in the heart of the base reflects that it must be connected with the upper part holding the set of yoni-linga as the complete offering pedestal of Tra Kieu* (*Fig. 20*).

Trần Kỳ Phương (2018a: 38) based on the archaeological survey's results collected by Jean-Yves Claeys when he conducted the excavation in Tra Kieu during 1927-1928 and the pedestal found in this site to give conclusion that the religious constructions in Tra Kieu dated the first centuries AD. Another offering pedestal bearing the same

form and decorative style with the pedestal of Thanh Trung is an example from Ha Trung (Quang Tri province) numbered BTC 47-22.6, with dimension of 30 cm in height and 126 cm in diameter (*Fig. 21*), dated end of 7th century (Trần Kỳ Phương 2018b: 128). The only difference is that the Ha Trung pedestal was carved with a floral pattern around the body. For this point, it can be seen that from the pedestal of Thanh Trung to that of Ha Trung is a process of completion in which the carving technique was improved from the simple carving line to the more elaborated carving. Regarding to the local history and the similarity of the above pedestals, the pedestal of Thanh Trung (Hue city) may belong to an important religious construction of the first period of the Cham architectures in Hue region, and it probably has the same date 7th century of the Ha Trung pedestal, or even earlier.

In conclusion

The territory of Thua Thien Hue is not quite vast but the Champa relics and sculptures are of variety. Apart from some objects brought to the museums and universities, many other Champa relics of different types including scripts, religious statues, decorative elements or architectural components, etc. still remain in many places in Thua Thien Hue area. The practice of Shaivism cult in form of the

* 190cm diameter, 54cm high

linga shows that the religious architectures were built at the early period of Champa history in Thua Thien Hue area.

So far, around 40 places in Thua Thien Hue relate to the Champa relics or objects with the identified form: fortification (like Loi citadel, Hoa Chau citadel, Phu Oc citadel *), sculptures (like linga, yoni, high reliefs, statues..), architectural components (pilaster, door tie, tympan), relics of tower, stone stele... Many of them are of large dimensions. Their material shows the continuous development of the brick temple-tower as My Khanh relic, Lieu Coc relic to the constructions of combination between brick and stone for supporting and decorating, as relics of Nham/Giam Bieu, Xuan Hoa, Linh Thai, Thanh Trung, etc.

The practice of Shaivism cult in form of the linga shows that the religious architectures were built at the early period of Champa history in Thua Thien Hue area. During 7th -12th centuries, there existed a certain type of Champa state in Thua Thien Hue area that left large sized buildings in Hue area and reflected a fairly prosperous society of Champa community at the time when they had proper labor force and economic strength to construct such the religious

architectures of high technique, and the religious life had developed with strong Hinduism influence. The owners of these architectures were also the religious practitioners who occupied high positions in Champa society at the time and through the practice of religion they assisted their power and their orthodoxy. In other words, they were leaders of Champa territory in the north of Hai Van pass in the early period of Champa history, almost at the same time as Tra Kieu. It raised the question about the equivalent polity of Champa in Hue in relation to Tra Kieu. If the hypothesis of Anton O. Zakharov is proved, Champa sculptures in the Museum's collection, firstly the group of sculptures found in Hue area is the evidence of the polity in this territory before 12th century (the proposed date of Linh Thai relic in corresponding to the Gajasimha from Thap Mam, Binh Dinh). Or they may help offer insights into this period when the entity in this region did not disappear, but 'slowly absorbed into Vietnam', as in Hardy's phrase (Hardy 2019: 252).

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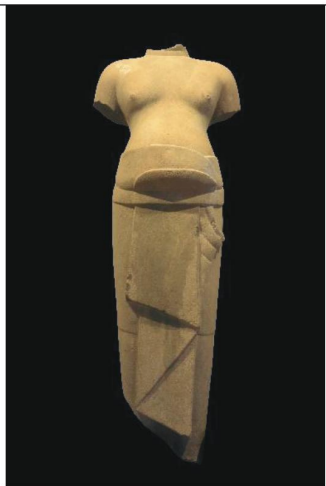

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ILLUSTRATION LIST




No.	CONTENT	PHOTO
1.	Shiva statue ĐKC 01 Nham/Giam Bieu, Hue city H: 127cm (Photo: Hue Royal Antiquities Museum/H.R.A.M)	
2.	The threshold ĐKC 84 Giam Bieu, Hue city L: 157,3cm H: 30,6cm W: 45,8cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)	




Collection of Cham sculptures at Hue Royal Antiquities Museum: from the history of establishment to the question of the polity in Hue region

3.	<p>Makara head ĐKC 23 Xuan Hoa, Thuy Xuan, Hue city H: 92cm W: 57,4cm T: 17,2cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
4.	<p>Makara head ĐKC 08 Xuân Hóa, Thủy Xuân, Huế city H: 86,5cm, W:68,5cm, T: 26cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
5.	<p>Linga ĐKC 38 Xuan Hoa, Thuy Xuan, Hue city H: 107mm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
6.	<p>Linga BTC 104-2.2 Tra Kieu (Quảng Nam), 10th century H: 85cm W: 27,5cm (Da Nang Museum of Champa Sculptures) (Photo: Tran Kỳ Phương, Vo Van Thang, Peter D. Sharrock, 2018)</p>	

7.	<p>Mukhalinga My Son (Quang Nam), 7th-8th centuries H: 146,5cm; W: 41,5cm; (Photo: Tran Ky Phuong (2019), <i>Vibrancy in Stone: Masterpieces of the Đà Nẵng Museum of Cham Sculpture</i>, River Books, Thailand, p.40)</p>	
8.	<p>Gajashimha ĐKC 41 Xuân Hoa, Thuy Xuan, Hue city H: 45cm; W: 70cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
9.	<p>Gajashimha ĐKC 39 Binh-Tri-Thien region (?) H: 73.9cm; W: 62.2cm; (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
10.	<p>Gajashimha ĐKC 40 Binh-Tri-Thien region (?) H: 71.5cm; W: 70cm; (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	


Collection of Cham sculptures at Hue Royal Antiquities Museum: from the history of establishment to the question of the polity in Hue region

11.	<p>Gajashimha Thap Mam (Binh Dinh), 12th century National Treasure (Da Nang Museum of Champa Sculptures) H: 214cm; W: 85cm; D: 103cm (https://thoidai.com.vn/can-canhh-2-bao-vat-quoc-gia-tai-bao-tang-cham-da-nang-128022.html)</p>	
12.	<p>Tower top ĐKC 43 Xuan Hoa, Thuy Xuan, Hue city H: 42,5cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
13.	<p>Map of Champa relics' locations in Thua Thien Hue province (H.R.A.M)</p>	

14.	<p>Ascetic ĐKC 06 Linh Thai, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue H: 62 cm W: 53 cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
15.	<p>Ascetic KS009, 12th-13th centuries Linh Thai, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue H: 29cm W: 50cm (Photo: Faculty of History, Hue University of Sciences).</p>	
16.	<p>Ascetic KS008, 12th-13th centuries Linh Thai, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue H:59cm; W: 55cm (Photo: Faculty of History, Hue University of Sciences).</p>	

Collection of Cham sculptures at Hue Royal Antiquities Museum: from the history of establishment to the question of the polity in Hue region

17.	<p>Ascetic ĐKC 18 Linh Thai, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue (?) H: 77cm T: 17,5cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
18.	<p>Pilaster ĐKC 02 Thanh Trung, Quang Dien, Thua Thien Hue H 91 cm W: 52,5cm T: 51cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
19.	<p>Pedestal ĐKC 42 Thanh Trung, Quang Dien, Thua Thien Hue H: 25,5cm T: 24cm D: 120cm (Photo: H.R.A.M)</p>	
20.	<p>Pedestal BTC 95-22.2, 10th century Tra Kieu (Quang Nam) H: 128cm W: 190cm D: 190cm (Da Nang Museum of Champa Sculptures) (Photo: Tran Ky Phuong, Vo Van Thang, Peter D. Sharrock, 2018)</p>	

21.	<p>Pedestal BTC 47-22.6, late 7th century Hà Trung (Quang Tri) H: 30cm W: 126cm (Da Nang Museum of Champa Sculptures)</p> <p>(Photo: Tran Ky Phuong, Vo Van Thang, Peter D. Sharrock, 2018)</p>	
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