Technical Report on the conservation of selected archaeological artefacts found in My Son, G group

by Patrizia Zolese, Lerici Foundation, University Polytechnic of Milan

Among the large amount of objects found out during the excavations have been selected 26 samples to be restored and later on displayed inside the Exhibition Room.

The selection of the objects has been carried out following an historic and artistic principle to facilitate the comprehension of G group monumental complex’s decorative apparel.

Both architectural than sculptural decorations are in terracotta, sole sample of the use of this material in the whole My Son site.

The only sandstone samples are those related to the pedestal that hosted the main divinity to which the temple was devoted, and some corner accents that adorned the roofing of kalan and gopura.

During the excavations have been recovered about 1500 artefacts, among which numerous fragments of imported Chinese ceramic together with local pottery used for ritual purpose.

This material has been acquired to be displayed inside the Exhibition Hall too, since it is not yet well known in the Cham historic and artistic context.

The recovered material was in fragmentary state of conservation, and showed calcareous encrustation on the outer surface. The objects have been therefore subjected to a preliminary washing in distilled water, to remove the most resistant encrustations that have been then removed using a lancet.

The samples of most relevant dimensions have been restored using epoxy resin, while water-soluble glue has been utilized to join the small fragments.

On the objects has been performed any plaster supplement hiding the cracks, to not alter the artefact itself.

CARDS OF SELECTED TERRACOTTA OBJECTS

Inv. n° 0004: fragment of terracotta decoration, showing the folded left knee and part of the feet of a female deity, seated in Indian position.

Colour: light brown (7.5YR 6/4)
H. 13 cm.
W. 10 cm.
Thick. 5 cm. (max)
Location: G – general surface – SE corner

Inv. n° 0091: Terracotta accent fragment, showing a makara head. One side carving.

The makara is represented with wide opened mouth and the tongue is characterised by a line of carved semi circular hooked floreal decoration. Enlonged bulging eye, with ribbed eyelash. Horn shaped eyebrow. The cheek is decorated by three spiral elements. The ending part and tenon are missing.

Colour: light brown (7.5YR 6/4)
H. 30 cm. (pres.)
W. 33 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 8.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A1 – S

Inv. n° 0136: fragment of terracotta architectural decoration, showing part of a deer or gajasimha’s body.

Colour: brown (7.5YR 5/4)
H. 14 cm. (pres.)
W. 13 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 5 cm. (max)
Location: G – general surface – N side

Inv. n° 0175: Kala mask, probably belonging to G1 platform, almost perfectly round in shape. Mostly preserved. The point of the right horn and the right eyebrow are missing. The point of the canine is missing too. The mask was carved before firing. Almond shaped eyes, with round bulging pupils and hairy eyebrows, rendered in vertical incised ribs. Between the eyes on the forehead, is placed a pointed tuft, rendered in three overlapping stepped semi-exagonal motives, maybe symbolising a third central horn. Over the eyes are two harts horns. Large and flat nose in the middle of the face, with two clear nostrils. The jaws are open, with roundish cheeks, with one incised line underlining the shape of lips raised in a fierce sneer. The lower jaw is not represented. A row of seven teeth, are enclosed by two elongated and pointed canines, projected at the sides of the mouth. Two small and pointed ears are placed on the cheeks.
Colour: light brown (7.5YR 6/4)
H. 30 cm.
W. 30 cm.
Thick. 9 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A2 – 2

Inv. n° 0240: terracotta tenon, carved on both sides with floreal pattern. One main side shows a complete Cham inscription, carved in two lines on a polished surface. The opposite main side shows a shorter inscription.
Colour: brown (7.5YR 5/4)
H. 51 cm. (pres.)
W. 15.5 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 10 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A2 – 2

Inv. n° 0241: fragment of terracotta architectural decoration showing a doe’s face.
Colour: reddish brown/reddish yellow (5YR 5/4-6/3)
H. 18.5 cm. (pres.)
W. 19 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 8.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A2 – 2

Inv. n° 0284: terracotta architectural decoration, showing a flying wild bird. The head is missing. Long and polished neck, plumbed body, rendered in six horizontal rows of half circular motives, incised by a thin chisel before firing, plus a series of vertical incised lines going rightward. Open wings, squared and slightly pointed, decorated with a series of carved ribs. The left wing is bigger than the other, to give the perspective of the flight. The ending part is missing. Surface refined by a flat stick. Recomposed by three fragments.
Colour: reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4)
H. 43 cm. (pres.)
W. 51 cm. (max)
Thick. 11 cm. (max)
Location: G3 – Interior Area, Sect. 1, NW side – on foundation filling layer, 2

Inv. n° 0285: terracotta fragment of triangular antefix, with a central vertical incised line. The outer sides are decorated by hook shaped leaves.
Colour: brown (7.5YR 5/4)
H. 32 cm. (pres.)
W. 29.5 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A1 (laterite wall collapsing) – 2

Inv. n° 0289: terracotta accent, carved on both sides with floreal pattern. Part of the tenon is missing. One side shows a fragmentary Cham inscription, carved on a polished surface.
Colour: reddish yellow/grey (5YR 7/6-6/6 7.5YR 7/4-5/)
H. 45 cm. (pres.)
W. 29 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 6.5 cm. (max)
Location: G3 – Interior Area, sect. 1, NW side – on Foundation Filling layer 2

Inv. n° 0297: terracotta trilobed antefix, with pointed top, pierced in the middle. The right lower part is missing.
Colour: reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/6)
H. 26 cm. (pres.)
W. 20 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 4.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A1, on the collapsing of laterite wall, S side – 2

Inv. n° 0310: Terracotta accent fragment, showing a makara head. One side carving.
The makara is represented with wide opened mouth and the tongue is characterised by a line of pointed tips. Enlonged bulging eye, with ribbed eyelash. Horn shaped eyebrow. The ending part and tenon are missing.
Colour: reddish yellow/reddish brown (5YR 6/6-5/3)
H. 29 cm. (pres.)
W. 22.5 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 7.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench A2, near laterite wall, S side – 2

Inv. n° 0312: terracotta tenon, squared section. On one side is carved the Chinese ideogram “Chen”, or “Tran” in the Vietnamese translation. The surface shows fingermarks and signs of chisel.
Colour: light reddish brown (5YR 6/4)
H. 32 cm. (pres.)
W. 9 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 8 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench B1 – S

Inv. n° 0313: cfr. supra. Squared section, slightly pointed at the end. On one side, together with the Chinese ideogram, is carved one vertical band.
Colour: reddish brown (5YR 5/4)
H. 23 cm. (pres.)
W. 8.5 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 5.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Trench B1 – S

Inv. n° 0349: complete terracotta trilobed antefix, with pointed top, pierced in the middle. Reconstructed by four pieces.
Colour: light brown/reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/4-6/6)
H. 26.5 cm.
W. 21.5 cm.
Thick. 6.5 cm. (max)
Inv. n° 0376: fragment of terracotta tympanum showing a female deity (Laksmi?), seated in the Indian position with straight chest and folded knees. The image has lost the upper part and some of the left side. The head is missing, remains only a globular earring posed over the right shoulder. Still visible a triangular plain collar over the flourishing breast, the slender waist with navel, and a double – folded skirt with a turned – over central flap. The outstretched arms keep a lotus bug and are posed over the folded knees. Part of the right hand is missing, as well as the left lotus bug and part of the left knee. Recomposed by two fragments.

Colour: light reddish brown (5YR 6/4)
H. 21.5 cm. (pres.)
W. 33 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 7 cm. (max)

Location: G – N side – general surface

Inv. n° 0418: terracotta fragment of truncated pyramidal finial. Is preserved only the topping part.

H. 12 cm. (pres.)
Colour: reddish brown/yellowish red (5YR 5/4-5/6)
W. 12 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 4 cm. (max)

Location: G – Trench E5 – 1

Inv. n° 0423: pottery fragment of small globular jar, carinated on shoulders. High neck and ring rim. Small handle on the shoulder, bottom is missing. Stoneware, with light brownish glazing. Recomposed by five fragments.

Colour (glazing): dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/4)
Colour (stoneware): light grey (5Y 7/2)
D. (rim) 7.2 cm.
D. (max) 8.6 cm.
H. (pres.) 7.6 cm.
Thick. (min.) 0.3 cm.
Thick. (max) 0.5 cm.

Location: G – Trench B1 – 2


Colour: pink (7.5YR 7/4)
D. (max body) 23 cm.
D. (base) 10.6 cm.
Thick. 0.5 cm.
H. (pres.) 11.3 cm.

Location: E7 – Trench B1 – 6

Inv. n° 0444: Qingbai Lid fragment with dotted underglazed decoration.

Colour: Light greenish colour.
D (rim) 5.4 cm.
H. (pres.) 2.2 cm.
Thick. (min) 0.3 cm.

Location: G – Trench B1 – 2
Inv. n° 0456: sandstone fragment representing a female breast, belonging to G1 pedestal. Not well polished surface. Rounded section (D: 8 cm), the breast presents a small projection in the middle. Colour: brown (7.5YR 5/4)
H. 9.5 cm.
W. 9 cm.
Thick. 9 cm. (max)
Location: G- A3 – 1= (US2)

Inv. n° 0582: terracotta fragment representing a Gajasimha body. Recomposed by four pieces. Body: One side carving, the animal is represented in profile. The neck is decorated by a stepped band, a globular collar and a vertical band pattern, representing the mane. Wing motive decoration above the foreleg. Chiselled marks. Iron inclusions. Coarse manufacture on the back. Colour: reddish yellow (5YR 6/6)
H. 35 cm.
W. 36 cm.
Thick. 10 cm. (max)
Location: G- Tr. B3, outside wall- (US4)

Inv. n° 0890: terracotta Kala mask, almost perfectly round in shape. Mostly preserved. The nose, the left cheek and the buldging eyes are missing. The mask was carved before firing. Between the almondshaped eyes on the forehead is placed a pointed tuft, rended in four overlapping stepped semi-exagonal motives, maybe symbolising a third central horn. The jaws are open, with roundish cheeks, with one incised line underlining the shape of lips raised in a fierce sneer. The lower jaw is not represented. A row of nine teeth, are enclosed by two enlonged and pointed canines (one broken), projected at the sides of the mouth. Two small and pointed ears are placed on the cheeks. Chiselled marks. Overfired surface and iron inclusions. Colour: light brown- brown (7.5YR 6/4 5/2)
H. 27 cm.
W. 27 cm.
Thick. 10.5 cm. (max)
Location: G – Sq. I 9 – (S) = (S0)

Inv. n° 0892: terracotta Kala mask, probably belonging to G2 platform, almost round in shape. The antlers are partially broken and the left buldging pupil is missing. The left check is missing, as the right lower part of the jaws. The mask was carved before firing. Almondshaped eyes, with round bulging pupil. Between the eyes on the forehead, is placed a pointed tuft, rended in three overlapping stepped semi-exagonal motives, maybe symbolising a third central horn. Large nose in the middle of the face, with two nostrils. The jaws are open, with roundish cheeks, with one incised line underlining the shape of lips raised in a fierce sneer. The lower jaw is not represented. Still visible a row of six teeth, enclosed by two enlonged and pointed canines (right one is missing)
projected at the sides of the mouth. Two small and pointed ears are placed on the cheeks. Overfired and eroded surface, with iron inclusions. Finger marks and broken tenon mark on the back.

Colour: brown (7.5YR 5/2), very pale brown (10YR 7/4)

H. 27 cm.
W. 24 cm.
Thick. 11 cm. (max)
Location: G2 – Tr. D3, S Side – 1= (US2)

Inv. n° 0900: fragment of terracotta Nandin head, rounded carving. The ears and the horn points are broken. The gibbous neck shows a collar, decorated in the frontal part with globular motive. The almond-shaped eyes and the mouth are incised on the surface. The forehead, between the horns, shows a rounded section hole (D: 5 cm, L: 17 cm ca.) finishing at the bottom of the neck (D: 4.5 cm). Overfired surface with chiselled marks.

Colour: light brown, brown, dark gray (7.5 YR 6/4, 5/4, 4)

H. 24 cm. (pres.)
W. 38 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 25 cm. (max)
Location: G4 – B2 (N Side) – 2 = (US5G4)

Inv. n° 0902: fragment of terracotta doe head, represented in profile. The head is turned on left. Still preserved the muzzle and the neck, while the upper part of the head is missing. The drop-shaped eye and the double-line eyebrow are incised on the surface. The incised mouth is marked by two semicircular lines and the nose shows a curly decoration. A similar curly incision is visible on the cheek. Overfired surface with chiselled marks.

Colour: reddish brown (5 YR 5/4)

H. 21 cm. (pres.)
W. 28 cm. (pres.)
Thick. 12 cm. (max)
Location: G – C5 – 1 = (US3)

Inv. n° 1023: fragments of terracotta decoration showing the lower part of an unknown male deity. Recomposed by several fragments. The decoration is in a very bad state of conservation. The deity is represented in dancing position, with folded knees. Still visible the stomach with the navel. The figure wears a three rounded folded sampot decorated with globular motive, central pointed band and pleated skirt. The deity stands on some (probably two?) twisted makara bodies, rendered as snakes with pointed tails. One fragment shows a makara muzzle close to the deity opened right hand. The wrist is ornated by a bracelet with globular motive. Another fragment shows a second makara muzzle but the hand is now lost. A similar fragment was found in trench C1, layer 1: probably belonging to the same or to a similar decoration, it shows another makara muzzle close to the left hand holding a lotus bud.

Colour: light brown/brown (7.5YR 6/4 5/4)

H. cm.
W. cm.
Thick. cm. (max)
Location: G2 – Tr. D3, SW Corner –1 = (US )