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The Field of Ancient Cham Art in France: A 20th Century Creation

**A study of museological and colonial contexts from the late
19th century to the present**

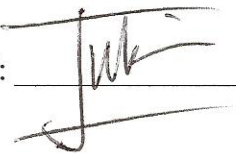
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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Art and Archaeology
May 2013

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis takes a new look at the art of ancient Champa. Breaking away from traditional studies, it looks at the art not in its ancient Cham context, but rather through its present and recent past contexts.

The study asks “What exactly is Cham art?” To answer this, I examine not only the artworks, but also the museums and exhibitions, the display and classification.

After an introduction explaining the background to the research, Chapter 2 contrasts two statues of Ganesh in French museums, tracing their biographies and questioning what constitutes Cham art. In Chapter 3, I examine the architectural line-drawings of Henri Parmentier, which have represented Ancient Champa visually for over a century, revealing the complex temporality within which they mediate between the present and multiple pasts.

Chapter 4 looks at the history of the Danang Cham Sculpture Museum through the choices and decisions of the men who have shaped Cham art into what it is today. In Chapter 5 I investigate how Cham art was displayed in a series of exhibitions in museums and a department store basement in the United States, Paris and Brussels, while Chapter 6 is a study of a major Cham exhibition at the Musée Guimet, examining its narrative threads and historical and colonial interconnections and its implications for Cham art history.

I conclude that Cham art is much more than just the physical traces of the Cham past. It is the preserving, displacing, labelling, copying, interpreting and displaying of the art that makes it what it is just as much as its original functions. I suggest, therefore, that the field of Cham art studies as we understand and view it today is actually something of our own invention, a largely 20th century construct. We do not yet know, therefore, what the Ancient Cham art of the future will be.

Acknowledgements

This study has been long in the making and many people have helped, guided and berated me along the way. Special thanks go to Elizabeth Moore for her unfailing patience and continual encouragement. I am also grateful to Peter Sharrock and Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, Ian and Emily Glover, Stephen Murphy, Emmanuel Guillon and the members of SACHA, and many others too numerous to list, who have given me assistance and encouragement through their sound and critical advice, their stimulating conversations and their generous hospitality. I am indebted to Barbara Franklin and Ngo Thi Khanh whose families adopted me during the course of many visits to Southeast Asia. My thanks also go to the staff of the Musée Guimet, the Musée Cernuschi, the EFEO, the Danang Museum, the Quai Branly, the Rochefort Museum and the French National Library for their help and for allowing me access to collections and archives. Last, but by no means least, I owe everything to my family and especially to Long for putting up with me.

The final stages of this thesis have been marked by the deaths of my older brother Stephen and my mother Barbara just four months later. A journalist, novelist, biographer and life-long militant, Barbara was an inspiration to all of us and instilled in me a love of words and books. My greatest thanks and admiration therefore go to her.

To the memory of my mother and brother

Barbara Hooper
(1929-2012)

and

Stephen John Brown
(1956-2011)

Note on Spelling, Names and Translation

Without diacritics many Vietnamese words are either unrecognisable or open to confusion, therefore, for ease of reading I have opted to write most Vietnamese words with their full diacritical markings. Throughout much of the 20th century, however, this was not standard practice and many works, often for typographical reasons at the time, were published without any diacritical markings at all or, alternatively, with simplified, non standardised markings. In some places, therefore, for the sake of consistency and clarity, where I have quoted directly from such works, I have inserted diacritics on words where the original work did not include them. For ease of reading, I have not felt it necessary to indicate this each time in the text.

However, I have chosen to write without diacritics those names, particularly place names, for which there is a standardized, commonly recognized English spelling, such as Hanoi, Danang, Hue, Saigon and Ho Chi Minh City, while maintaining the Vietnamese Hà Nội, Đà Nẵng, Sài Gòn and so forth, in some quoted passages where this does not hinder understanding. For other place names, including all Cham sites, I have preferred to use the Vietnamese spelling with full diacritical markings, thus Mỹ Sơn, Đồng Dương, Trà Kiệu, Qui Nhơn and so on. I have, though, kept original spellings in all book and article titles, and have maintained the wide variety of different spellings for Champa and Cham reflected in older texts, such as “Kiam” “Čam” or “Tjam-Pa”.

To avoid confusion, where Vietnamese writers have published under their names written without diacritics, I have maintained this spelling. Vietnamese authors appear in the bibliography with all

their names in the standard Vietnamese order of surname followed by first names without separation by commas, thus Ngô Văn Doanh, Trần Kỳ Phương. In the few cases where Vietnamese authors have published with their names in standard Western order, that is first name followed by surname, I have inverted this in the bibliography omitting the comma to match the other Vietnamese authors.

During French colonial rule, some cities in Vietnam had French names, notably Danang, which was known by the French as Tourane. I use the two names interchangeably throughout this study, preferring Tourane when talking of the colonial era and Danang for the post-independence period. Similarly, I deliberately refer to Indochina (*Indochine*), Cochinchina (*Cochinchine*), Annam and Tonkin when these colonial French names reflect the texts, the people and the period referred to. At other times I refer to Vietnam and the modern provincial names.

The seeming inconsistency of this alternating use of Vietnamese and colonial terms and the inclusion of words both with and without diacritics does not, I hope, hinder understanding, and merely reflects the complicated reality of the existing literature.

Throughout the thesis I refer to the École Française d'Extrême Orient by its commonly used acronym EFEO, and to its bulletin as the BEFEO. These and other abbreviations are listed at the start of the bibliography.

Finally, all translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

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Photographs are by the author unless otherwise mentioned.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What is Cham art?

“Every relic thus exists simultaneously in the past and in the present”
David Lowenthal¹

This thesis takes a new look at the art of ancient Champa. Breaking away from traditional, largely French, art historical Cham studies, I look at the art not in its ancient Cham context, but rather through its present and recent past contexts. Since little is known about the history of Cham relics between the decline of the Cham civilization in the late 15th century and the establishment of French colonies in Southeast Asia in the second half of the 19th century, the main period of focus of the study is from the late 19th century to the present day. That is from the moment when a handful of French amateurs began to “discover”, dig up, dust-off and classify the ancient artworks and put them on display in museums. This period saw the conversion of sacred Asian sculpture into Western *objet d’art*. The scope of the study spans both the colonial and post-colonial periods, as well as the period of decolonisation that links them. For the sake of concision, in the title of the study I refer to this period as the 20th century, although it has its roots in the 19th and now continues well into the new millennium.

¹ Lowenthal (1985: 241)

1.1 Rationale for and Background to the Thesis

Cham art has now been studied and written about for well over a century. However, while authors invariably define what Champa is, usually in an opening paragraph or two of the article or book², none it seems find it necessary to define what they mean by Cham art. In all the works on Champa it would appear that the concept of Cham art, or the art of Champa, is a given and needs no definition. Presumably, Cham art is taken by these writers to be the art produced by the civilization we call Champa. This, though, is far from straightforward, since what we term Champa has undergone a radical revision in recent decades. This thesis quite simply asks, therefore, “What exactly is Cham art?” To answer this question, I examine not only the artworks, but also the museums and exhibitions, the display and classification techniques, as well as the people, often invisible or anonymous in art historical studies, responsible for the preservation, study and presentation of the artefacts. All of these play an important role in the creation of what we term Cham art. As Nora Taylor has observed of the institutions set up to display ancient artefacts both in French Indochina and in France, “these museums also helped to write art history by means of making sense of the archaeological finds and displaying them in a coherent order”, and “classification of artefacts became a key element in the process of writing art history” (Taylor 2000a: 49-50).

The study grew, in part, out of a series of art and archaeology post-graduate seminars on Approaches to Critical Thinking held at the School of Oriental and African Studies

² For examples of this, see, for instance, the opening paragraphs of Trần Kỳ Phương (2006) or Nguyen Tian (2005).

in London between 2001 and 2003. The central, never fully resolved problem of these discussions was always how to link the theory on the one hand and the research on the other. Somehow, the theory always seemed to remain exactly that, while the research was firmly anchored in an empirical base barely influenced by the theory. This study hopes to go some way towards achieving a link between the two, in an area – the ancient art of Southeast Asia – where, up until now, study has invariably focused solely on the distant past without reflecting the present.

Three basic concepts underlie the study. The first is that meaning is never fixed within a work of art, but rather is always produced and therefore constantly changing and unstable. In this study, therefore, I view the production of meaning as a function of context since, in the words of Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, “things mean differently in different contextual settings” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 15). The second concept refutes the frequent assertion that art works on display in museums are “out of context”, where context presumably refers to a supposed, and often largely imagined, “original” context. Instead, this thesis understands artworks to be always firmly *in* a context. However, in existing academic studies on Southeast Asian art this current context is largely ignored, or at best over-looked, and only a supposed original context at the time of creation is emphasised. Thirdly, this study highlights the fact that the past (events that have happened) and history (how we recount these events) are two different things: “the past and history float free of each other, they are ages and miles apart”, since “history is a discourse about, but categorically different from the past” (Jenkins 2003: 7). Furthermore, as survivals or traces of the past, museum objects pose a particular problem with regard to this distinction, since “in general, the objects preserved in museums come from out of the past so that the observer experiencing them in three-dimensional space must somehow also cross a barrier of

change in time” (Stocking 1985: 4). The problematics of museum display lie at the heart of this thesis.

Cham sculptures have a history dating back a thousand years and more, but traditional Cham art historical studies, focussing almost exclusively on the moment of creation, have tended to ignore the thousand-year history of these objects, which have survived through time as physical traces of the past. As Stocking has observed, “the objects viewed by museum observers are ‘survivals’ not only of the past from which collection wrenched them, but from those later pasts into which any given act of exhibition has placed them” (Stocking 1985: 4). I choose to highlight these later and more recent histories of the artworks. Following Igor Kopytoff and Richard Davis, I favour the concept of biography, rather than history, since I perceive the sculptures, and the museums and exhibitions that display them, as having lives, both present and past, lives which influence the ways we approach and understand the art today (Kopytoff 1985; Davis 1997). By opening up the lives of these art objects, museums and exhibitions, I aim to develop new ways of viewing, displaying and understanding the problematic meanings of Cham art, since “removed [...] from their original contexts in space and time, and recontextualized in others that may or may not seek to recreate them, the meaning of the material forms preserved in museums must always be acutely problematic” (Stocking 1985: 4).

A major component of this thesis is the theme of fragments. What now remains of the civilization of Champa is highly fragmentary in nature, with the fragments widely dispersed in museums and collections around the world. Moreover, recent scholarship now more or less unanimously embraces the idea that what we have traditionally called Champa was probably never a unified state or kingdom, but rather a series of

loosely linked smaller polities. That is, something much more fragmentary than the monolithic block envisaged up until recently.

1.2 The Art of Champas – Recent Revision of the Cham Historical Narrative and its Implications for Cham Art

Writing in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, in 1992, Keith Taylor suggested that “Champa is a generic term” and that “what is generally understood as Cham history is a twentieth-century rationalization of scraps of evidence from inscriptions and Chinese sources”, and that consequently “the very concept of Champa must be redefined”. He proposed that, rather than signifying a unified kingdom, “Champa should more properly be understood as an archipelagically-defined cultural-political space” (Taylor 1992: 153). In one short opening paragraph, Taylor appears to turn on its head a century of received understanding of Cham history. Or does he?³

In the second paragraph Taylor continues that “the *land of Champa*⁴ at its maximum extent stretched along the central coast of what is now modern Vietnam from the Hoanh Son massif (Mui Ron) in the north to Phan Thiet (Mui Ke Ga) in the south, a distance of almost 1000 kilometres”. However, in the light of the first paragraph, what exactly *is* this “land of Champa”? If we are to take this as Champa in what Taylor refers to as its generic sense, then by what criteria are the separate components of the “archipelagically-defined cultural-political space” being linked? Doesn’t this second paragraph, in fact, imply the concept of something unified that the first paragraph has

³ An earlier modified version of this and the following paragraphs was published in the *Lettre de la SACHA* in 2005 (Brown 2005: 18-20).

⁴ My italics

so clearly pulled apart? And herein lies the conundrum. Writing over a decade later, William Southworth, echoing Taylor, proposed that “Champa is a *generic*⁵ name” (Southworth 2004: 209), an expression he also employed at the start of his 2001 thesis on the origins of Champa in central Vietnam (Southworth 2001: 21), one of the first major works on Champa to take up Taylor’s revision . I suggest that, in fact, what we should understand by this is rather that Champa *ought* to be a generic term. In general usage, however, far from having a generic meaning, it seems to me that the term Champa actually operates quite specifically, conjuring up a Champa entity, a concept of something, however ill-defined, which exists, or existed, in time and space. We might take note, for example, of the seeming contradiction inherent in the title of Southworth’s 2004 essay, “The Coastal States of Champa”. The problem is the same as that in Taylor. What is the Champa, generic or otherwise, that these “coastal states” are a part of? A geographical area? A time period? A political space? The problem with all of these is that they constantly throw us back to some sort of unity, the very thing that the revisionists are moving away from. A recent essay on Champa heritage by one of the leading Vietnamese Cham art historians, Trần Kỳ Phương, opens with a classic one-paragraph introduction on the history of the “Champa kingdom”. However, the beginning of the very next paragraph then states that the “Champa kingdom can be described as a mandala, which indicates that the kingdom was not one unified political entity but it was rather a federation of several regions which had their own political centers” (Trần Kỳ Phương 2006: 4). Referring to it as a “kingdom” at all is clearly, therefore, highly misleading.

The “Champa” and “Champa kingdom” being employed by Taylor, Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương in these examples presumably stands as a sort of short-hand version

⁵ My italics

of something along the lines of *that which we used to understand as Champa*. No such long-winded explanation is needed, however. We have no problem in understanding that what is being referred to is a temporal and spatial concept that once flourished within what is now central Vietnam. Even though no such entity may ever have existed in reality, clearly the term continues to make sense for us, largely, I believe, because this Champa has become such a well-anchored concept. Even while historians pull the old view of Champa apart, we continue to use the old to understand the new. Perhaps we would do well to bear in mind that the revisions are precisely that, *re*-visions of earlier views. One doesn't exist without the other.

Two decades after Taylor's statement, there appears now to be a wide acceptance of these new revisions of Cham history and a general consensus that there may never have been one unified Cham polity or state. As Ricklefs and others have noted in one of the most recent histories of Southeast Asia, "it is now almost universally accepted that 'Champa' was not a single kingdom, but rather a series of kingdoms extending along the Vietnamese coast" (Ricklefs et al. 2010: 58). Indeed, for the better part of a decade now, similar such remarks have started to preface most new writing on Champa. For example, in his 2002 re-working of an earlier volume on the archaeology of mainland Southeast Asia, one of the most comprehensive works to-date on the early history of the region, Charles Higham recognises that "what seemed to early scholars a series of provinces within a homogenous state might not be the case". Higham accepts that "there may never have been a period when Champa was unified into one state" (Higham 2002: 168 and 170). Similarly, nearly all the contributors to the catalogue of the 2005 Musée Guimet Cham sculpture exhibition acknowledged this new view of Champa (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a). However, despite this growing consensus, the old, well-established version is unlikely to go

away in a hurry. As Michael Vickery has pointed out, even some recent works perpetuate the old view for today's students who may be unfamiliar with the earlier works themselves (Vickery 2004).⁶ In this study, I too continue to talk about Champa since it is the only label we have to refer to the ancient civilization of the Cham people, however, my aim is to demonstrate that, in terms of the ancient art, this Champa is largely a modern construct.

While Taylor may be the first to have formulated so clearly the ideas for a total revision of Cham history, the problems inherent in the study of the history of the early kingdoms of Southeast Asia and the need for such revision had been long in circulation. Several papers presented at a colloquy held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1973 dealt with the problems of attempting to reconstruct the histories of early Southeast Asian states or polities. For example, Claude Jacques' paper, "Funan, 'Zhenla': the reality concealed by those Chinese views of Indochina", examined the pitfalls of using Chinese sources in an attempt to establish a history of Funan and Zhenla (Jacques 1979). It is interesting to note here Jacques' use of the term "Indochina", which seems oddly anachronistic as far as Funan, Zhenla or the Chinese sources are concerned, but, it seems to me, highly relevant in terms of our own 20th century understanding of the history of the region, since it was during the colonial period that the ground work of modern research was started. In another paper, Jeremy Davidson, writing specifically about Champa, claimed that "the study of Champa is still in its infancy" and that "our knowledge of Champa remains so fragmentary, vague, and inaccurate that the whole subject must be reworked"

⁶ This essay has been republished several times in slightly revised forms. See also (Vickery 2005) and (Vickery 2011)

(Davidson 1979: 215-216). This idea of infancy seems to recur with relative frequency, and was repeated, for example, by Southworth in his essay on the coastal states of Champa where he writes about the “modern study of Champa” being “still in its infancy” (Southworth 2004: 231). However, maybe such an infancy label is a little misleading, for is it not, in fact, our accurate understanding of the Cham past that is in its infancy, rather than the study of it? After all, the studying has been going on now, albeit sporadically, for well over a century. Is it not precisely this century-long history of research, of collecting, surveying, digging, deciphering, translating, displaying, restoring, writing and reconstructing that informs our understanding of Champa? If all we had were the recent revised histories of Champa by Taylor, Southworth, Vickery and others without a century of earlier studies, the problem would be entirely different. What they are all calling for is not for the history of Champa to be written, but for it to be *re-written*. And while it is greatly to be hoped that historians will continue with this process and publish the results of their findings, even when such publications appear, the bulk of the preceding literature will stay with us as part of the Cham landscape.

Where exactly, though, does all this leave Cham *art*? Just how is the art historian to go about applying the material remains of the art and architecture to “an archipelagically-defined cultural-political space”? If we try to re-contextualize the artwork, that is the physical traces of the past which exist in the present, in the past, we must have recourse to history. This, however, now raises the question of *which* history? We have only to look at the term *Cham art* itself to make the point, for we give one umbrella term to art that comes, we now accept, from independent polities which may well have been totally separate politically, geographically and temporally.

If the various polities were independent, with possible links about which we appear to know virtually nothing, then we need to re-examine on what grounds we lump all the art together. That is, we need to ask the question what *is* Cham art?

Whilst the answers might, ostensibly, appear unproblematic, each possible answer seems to meet with an obstacle. If Cham art is art from Champa, we come up with the problem of what Champa is. If Cham art is simply art created by the Cham people, we know very little about them. Furthermore, it is now generally recognised that there was in fact a mixing of ethnic groups in the Cham polities. Nor is Cham art easy to define temporally, since what we refer to as Cham art spans almost a millennium. If, on the other hand, we attempt to see Cham art in terms of its stylistic and formal qualities, this too is difficult, since the styles appear to have changed, sometimes dramatically, over time and space. In the light of the revised historical view of Champa, Cham art becomes highly problematic. No art from Champa, if no Champa, rather, if anything, art from *Champas*. If, of course, this art from different geographical regions bears certain resemblances, then there is, perhaps, a sense in giving it a generic term. However, if we have little idea of the relationships, if any, between these different regions, then clearly this does not take us very far. The major reason, it seems to me, for giving all the art work one generic term is simply because we always have. Moreover, we have, apparently, little difficulty with the concept; the notion of *Cham art* seems to make sense to us. However, this understanding would appear to rely largely on the fact that we still continue to conceive of Champa as some sort of whole, while at the same time we are increasingly viewing it as a fragmentation of independent maritime states. It would appear that two histories co-exist in our understanding: Cham history, that is the on-going search for an accurate understanding of the Cham past, and the history of Champa, in other words the

accepted, though probably largely inaccurate, standard narrative. After all, if we are honest, this narrative that Taylor called a “20th century rationalization” provides us with a highly useful working tool (Taylor 1992: 153). How much easier it is to slot artwork into a neat and tidy narrative than into a hazy little understood fragmentation.

However, in fact, with or without the new revisions, the historical narrative has never really mattered that much as far as the artwork is concerned for the art has a history of its own. This Cham art history, based largely on the work of Henri Parmentier, Gilberte de Coral Rémusat, Philippe Stern and Jean Boisselier, who through the course of the 20th century informed Cham art historical understanding, appears to exist independently from Cham history. Indeed when Stern developed his stylistic chronology for Cham architecture he was at pains to outline the process very clearly. He makes it clear that no attention was paid to written evidence, neither inscriptions nor Chinese and Vietnamese sources (Stern 1942: 2). The entire study was based purely on observation of the evolution of sculptural motifs in the architecture, and it was on this alone that Stern based his stylistic chronology. The only reference to historical data was added more or less as an afterthought, “at the moment of going to press”, in the form of an appendix, and then merely to see whether “it [was] possible to find some correlation between the analysis of the evolution of motifs and what might be gleaned from other studies (history and translation of inscriptions)” (Stern 1942: 99). Stern’s seminal work has remained the basis of virtually all subsequent studies of Cham art and architecture, and is the method used for classifying, identifying and labelling Cham art the world over. From Danang to Paris, to Los Angeles, to Toulouse, to Bangkok, Cham art is everywhere, it seems, identified by the

French stylistic dating system.⁷ However, since Stern created his classification without using any historical sources other than the art itself, his art history clearly stands as an independent history. To this extent, it might be argued that the dismantling of the narrative of a unified Champa state into an “archipelagically-defined cultural-political space” does not affect the art. The art history, untouched by the sources which are being revised, remains intact. While historians argue about where Vijaya may or may not have been, who fought who, and who went north or south, meanwhile the *Mỹ Sơn AI* style remains *Mỹ Sơn AI* and Tháp Mẫm continues to be Tháp Mẫm.⁸

While it is true that variations in the style of Cham art are beginning more frequently to be seen as a result of processes of ‘localisation’ or ‘regionalisation’,⁹ this is still problematic since it seems to imply a generic or core art on which the localisation or regionalisation is based. A similar problem exists when Ricklefs and Lockhart, writing about Champa within the context of a general history of Southeast Asian, make the claim that “these kingdoms would have shared a common Indianized culture, though probably with local variety”. We are able, it appears, to recognise a “shared” culture without any true understanding of how the “multiple Cham polities [which] co-exist[ed] through much of their history interacted politically, socially or militarily” (Ricklefs et al 2010: 58). The concept of ‘local variety’ seems to apply variation from a central theme, and yet this central theme largely eludes us.¹⁰

⁷ Cham art is on display in museums in each of these cities.

⁸ See chapter 2 for explanatory note on the stylistic dating system

⁹ See, for example, Schweyer (2011)

¹⁰ See chapter 6 on the question of localization and so-called Indianization

I suggest that several independent histories are at work in our present approach to Champa. Firstly, there is Cham history, that is to say the on-going and constantly evolving search for some sort of accurate account of the Cham past. Secondly, we have the history of Champa, in other words the established, widely disseminated historical narrative. Lastly, there is Cham art history, largely based on the stylistic chronological classification.

The established narrative of Cham history which informed nearly all Cham studies until relatively recently is essentially that proposed by Georges Maspero in 1928. Maspero's history of Champa, which drew on the work of earlier scholars such as Bergaigne, Aymonier, Finot, Huber and others,¹¹ survived more-or-less intact for most of the 20th century, with only a few modifications and a few notable criticisms, in particular Rolf Stein in 1947 in his work on Lin Yi.¹² Thus, Maspero's narrative was essentially the working tool of Cham studies for three-quarters of a century. Only now, in the wake of Taylor's article is serious critical attention starting to be paid to this long-established historical narrative (Maspero 1928; Stein 1947). Michael Vickery in particular, concurring with Taylor and Southworth that a unified Champa probably never existed, has overturned much of Maspero, some of which he considers "pure historical fiction" (Vickery 2005: 18). Vickery strongly emphasises the importance of maritime trade as the determining factor in the rise and decline of different Cham polities, rejecting the old notion of the north and south movement of kings. Amongst other things, he excludes Lin Yi from the Cham equation and rejects Maspero's remarks about the importance of the Areca and Coconut Clans in intra-

¹¹ See below for a comprehensive overview of the literature on Cham studies.

¹² French sinologist Rolf Stein (1911-1999).

Champa relations. He considers that the Chinese and Vietnamese sources are not the best for establishing a history of Champa, and throws out the received notion of the slow southward push by the Vietnamese, identifying the Cham as aggressors in war, rather than perpetual victims (Vickery 2005).

With the standard historical narrative based on Maspero now overturned, the old history of Champa is under attack. Despite promising work on the inscriptions, notably by French epigraphist Anne-Valérie Schweyer, it has recently been emphatically acknowledged that “it is not possible to construct a single coherent narrative for Cham history during the period 800 and 1400” (Ricklefs et al 2010: 28). Cham art history, on the other hand, continues to thrive. How it does this, and just what this Cham art history is, are the topics of this study. This is the story of the 20th century history of ancient Cham art, which has its roots in the late 19th century and lives on into the 21st century. However, more than a simple historiography of Champa, rather the study aims to be a multi-layered, multi-faceted history of the people, the events and the institutions that have contributed to our understanding of ancient Cham art and architecture, in other words the people and things that have created Cham art as we understand it.

Against this complicated, fragmentary background of Cham history I investigate ancient Cham art by looking at the context of display and exhibition and the ways in which this affects meaning and our understanding of Cham art. Each chapter focuses on a particular object, exhibition or museum, looking variously at the artwork, the building, the created narrative and the people behind the preservation, study and display of the art. Throughout the study, I draw on the work of historians, cultural theorists and museologists who help to inform my approach.

1.3 Note on Subjectivity

Since the focus of the study is the recent history of the ancient artefacts, the thesis takes a particular interest in the role that individuals, both amateurs and professional scholars, have played in the shaping of Cham art as we understand it today. Each case study examines the ways the roles of these individuals have or have not been highlighted in Cham art historical studies. More often than not, in the published literature, the people are largely hidden behind a seemingly objective text. A similar process is at work in museums and exhibitions where, other than possibly a brief mention in an introductory wall panel, the curators and their decision-making processes are largely absent from the display. The study therefore aims to bring to the fore the people who wrote the texts, created the drawings, founded the museums and set up the exhibitions. Such an approach inevitably raises issues of objectivity and subjectivity in the way scholars have written about and represented Cham art. The thesis sees subjectivity not as something negative that should be avoided in favour of scientific objectivity, but rather as both an inevitable and important part of Cham art studies. It is the personality, the motivation, the training and the background of the pioneering colonial scholars and amateurs as well as later researchers and collectors in the post-colonial period that have shaped Cham art into what it is today. The study recognises, however that these same questions of subjectivity and objectivity are just as present in the thesis itself as in the work of past scholars.

1.4 Literature Review¹³

Scholarly interest in Champa and the Cham began soon after the start of French colonial rule in Cochinchina (1859).¹⁴ The first studies were primarily linguistic and “epigraphy provided the guiding thread” just as it did for Khmer studies (Groslier 1966: 178). Étienne-François Aymonier (1844-1929), generally regarded as the pioneer of Indochinese epigraphy (Coedès 1929: 546; Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2001: 125)¹⁵, led the field. He began his research in the 1870s and early 1880s among the communities in Cochinchina and Cambodia, where there were no ancient Cham inscriptions, so epigraphical studies did not begin until after the coastal provinces came under French control,¹⁶ at which point Aymonier was able to collect and decipher inscriptions. He published his research in a series of journal articles which appeared from 1881 onwards.¹⁷

Aymonier sent back to Paris copies of each rubbing of inscriptions taken in situ during numerous site visits carried out in the course of the early 1880s. This enabled two Sanskrit scholars, Abel Bergaigne and Marie-Étienne-Auguste Barth, to work on

¹³ All major works cited in this literature review are listed in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. For full listings of publications of authors mentioned up to 1989, see Lafont and Po Dharma’s 1989 bibliography (Lafont and Po Dharma 1989). This was the first and, to-date, the only comprehensive bibliography of publications on Champa. It lists a total of 1055 books, journal articles and academic theses relating to Champa, classified according to academic discipline. The overwhelming majority of the works cited are in Vietnamese or French. For works relating specifically to art, archaeology and history, Baptiste and Zéphir’s catalogue of the Musée Guimet 2005 Cham exhibition (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a), discussed in chapter 6, contains one of the most comprehensive bibliographies since Lafont and Po Dharma.

¹⁴ Lafont puts the start a little earlier than this, suggesting that Crawford’s 1852 Malay dictionary, which contains the very first list of Cham words to be published, marks the actual beginnings of scholarly interest in ancient Champa (Crawford 1852; Lafont 1994; Lafont and Po Dharma 1989).

¹⁵ Lockhart has termed him “the first real *chamisant* among French scholars” (Lockhart 2011: 8)

¹⁶ Annam was taken by the French in 1874 and became part of French Indochina in 1887, when the *Union Indochinoise* was created, comprising Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin (which make up present day Vietnam), as well as Laos and Cambodia.

¹⁷ These appeared in such journals as *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, which has been described as “the official organ of the French colonial administration from 1879 to 1890” (BEFEO 1921: 2), the *Journal Asiatique*, founded in 1822 and still in existence, and the *Bulletin de Géographie Historique et Descriptive*, which was published between 1886 and 1912.

this material without ever setting foot in Indochina (Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2001: 125). Together, by deciphering this first corpus of inscriptions of Cambodia and Champa, they laid the foundations of the historical chronology of these two states. After writing a series of short notes on the inscriptions, Bergaigne was able to publish, in 1888, a preliminary history of Champa as seen through its epigraphy (Bergaigne 1888). A combined study not only of the language and writing of the Sanskrit inscriptions, but also of the geography and the political and religious history of ancient Champa, this essay, which included a catalogue of the inscriptions by reign, laid the groundwork for subsequent histories of Champa.¹⁸ Five years later, Bergaigne and Barth published a collaborative essay on the Sanskrit inscriptions which complemented the information provided in Bergaigne's earlier work (Bergaigne and Barth 1893).

During the same period, a colonial administrator, Charles Lemire, whose work is discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4, wrote a series of articles on ancient Cham monuments, and Camille Paris, a postal worker, began to compile an inventory of Cham vestiges in the province of Quảng Nam. These works, which began with an article by Lemire in 1887 on the Cham towers in the province of Bình Định (Lemire 1887), form the first body of published literature on Cham monuments and thus mark the beginnings of Cham art history as a field of study. The most substantial of these publications was Lemire's 1894 essay 'Aux Monuments Anciens des Kiams (excursion archéologique en Annam)' (Lemire 1894). This was largely a synthesis of his earlier articles and thus provided the first general overview of the monuments. It was also the first publication to contain a sizeable quantity of illustrations of Cham

¹⁸ See Coedès (1929: 543), Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin (2001: 125) and Lockhart (2011: 3-4) on the groundbreaking nature of this essay.

monuments and sculptural art, marking the beginnings of the visual archive of ancient Champa which is the subject of chapter 3.

Between 1891 and 1902, Camille Paris, who was responsible for the discovery of numerous Cham sites in the provinces of Quảng Ngãi, Quảng Nam and Thừa Thiên, including the great sites of Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương, published half a dozen articles on his findings in the journals *Anthropologie* and *Bulletin de Géographie Historique et Descriptive*. This latter journal also published a series of “notes” by Aymonier on Paris’s discoveries. These appeared between 1895 and 1898, the year of the founding of the Mission Archéologique, which would be renamed the École Française d’Extrême Orient two years later, in 1900.¹⁹ The founding of the school saw an acceleration in scholarly research and publications, and while it never actually exerted a monopoly on research, the school would dominate Champa studies for most of the 20th century. One of the early missions carried out by the school would have a profound impact on Cham art studies.

In October 1899, Louis Finot and Etienne Edmond Lunet de Lajonquière travelled up the coast from Saigon studying groups of Cham monuments. By the time they reached Hanoi in January 1900, they were able to compile a handwritten booklet of their findings. This preliminary inventory, which listed a total of 178 monuments, and included a provisional 8-page map and ground plans of the sites of Đồng Dương and Mỹ Sơn (EFEO 1921: 8-9), provided the basis for three important works published the following year. These were Lajonquière’s *Atlas archéologique de l’Indochine – Monuments du Champa et du Cambodge* (Lajonquière 1901) and, above all, two essays by Finot in the first volume of the BEFEO : ‘La religion des Chams d’après les

¹⁹ See chapter 4

monuments’ and ‘Inventaire sommaire des monuments chams de l’Annam’ (Finot 1901a and Finot 1901b). That Finot’s essay on Cham religions was the opening article of the first issue of the BEFEO is a reflection of the importance that the newly founded school accorded to Cham studies. In it he provides an overview of the religious statuary of ancient Champa which was to furnish the foundations for all the studies that would follow. His survey, however, looks only as far as “Indianized” Champa, and he does not speculate on what might have preceded the “Indianized” period. Some of the most far-reaching research on this topic was conducted several decades later by French scholar Paul Mus (1902-1969), and published in a 1934 essay entitled *L’Inde vu de l’Est: Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa* (Mus 1934).²⁰ In his introduction to the essay, Mus acknowledges the immense importance of Finot’s 1901 essay on religions, and the preparatory field research carried out for it, underlining the fact that “by the time he reached Hanoi on 18 January 1900, M. Finot knew that the Indian pantheon was attested in Champa in its entirety” (Mus 1934: 1-5).²¹

Finot’s 1901 inventory provided the first attempt at a systematic and scientific study of Cham monuments and served as the starting point for Henri Parmentier’s far more comprehensive inventory, the first volume of which appeared in 1909, after eight years of extensive research and archaeological excavations, and numerous other published articles on Cham monuments and archaeology. The first of these

²⁰ The essay was originally published as *Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa*, in 1933 (Mus 1933) and was the text of a conference given by Mus at the Musée Louis Finot in Hanoi. It was translated by Mabbett and Chandler in 1975 as one of the Monash Papers on Southeast Asia under the title *India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa* (Mus 1975). Subsequently a Malay translation and a second English translation were published in 1988 and 2001 (Al-Amhadi 1988; Mus, Parmentier and Aymonier 2001). See Susan Bayly (2000) for an insightful discussion on Mus and this essay.

²¹ Eighty years after its publication, this essay was translated into Indonesian (1981) and into Malay (1988), evidence of its continuing international influence (see Lafont and Po Dharma 1989: 26)

publications appeared along with Finot's essays in the first volume of the BEFEO (Parmentier 1901). This essay, on the characteristics of Cham architecture, contains Parmentier's first published architectural line-drawings of Cham monuments, which are the subject of chapter 3, and sets out the guidelines of his approach to the study of Cham art and architecture. Amongst Parmentier's substantial published output over the next two decades, particular mention should be made of his essays on the sanctuary of Po Nagar (Parmentier 1902b; Parmentier 1906), and on the monuments of Mý Son (Parmentier 1904), which reflect the extensive archaeological and restoration work that he carried out at these sites. In 1908 Parmentier wrote a preliminary report on the creation of a Cham museum in Tourane (Parmentier 1908). This marked the start of a decade of negotiations and complications, which are discussed in chapter 4. When the museum finally opened in 1919, Parmentier published a catalogue of the collections which remains to this day the only true catalogue of the museum to have been written (Parmentier 1919). A year earlier, he had published the second volume of his inventory of Cham monuments (Parmentier 1918). Although some of Parmentier's findings, in particular his chronology of architectural styles, have since been overturned by subsequent scholarship,²² the two volumes of his inventory almost certainly remain, in terms of size and scope and the field research they reflect, the single most important work on Cham monuments of the 20th century. Long out of print and never the subject of a re-edition, Parmentier's inventory is an invaluable resource for scholars of ancient Champa, especially as it records, both in text and profuse illustration, much that has since been lost, damaged or destroyed.

After the untimely death of Parmentier's collaborator, Charles Carpeaux, in 1904, Carpeaux's mother published her son's diaries (Carpeaux 1908). This work provides a

²² Principally by Coral Rémusat and Stern in the 1930s – see below

precious record of Parmentier and Carpeaux's travels through the former Cham territories and of the working conditions that prevailed during their extensive excavations at the sites of Mỹ Sơn and Đông Dương. Despite the great insights it gives into the world of colonial Indochinese archaeology, this book has, surprisingly, hardly been cited in the subsequent literature. It also included a number of Carpeaux's photographs. Astonishingly, virtually no further scholarly attention was paid to this invaluable early photographic record for the better part of a century until an important selection of Carpeaux's photographs of Cham monuments and archaeological work was published at the time of the 2005 Cham exhibition at the Musée Guimet at which a small selection of the photographs was on display (Ghesquière 2005).²³ Similar insights into the everyday life and working conditions that Carpeaux and Parmentier experienced in the field were provided by Parmentier, when, towards the end of his life, in 1944 and 1945, he published a series of diary-like essays, which he styled 'Souvenirs d'un Vieil Archéologue Indochinois', in the popular journal *Indochine* (Parmentier 1994a-1945). These highly personalized accounts, which stand in stark contrast to Parmentier's earlier published work, are analyzed in chapter 3.

While Parmentier's extensive published output dominates the early years of the 20th century, it must be recognised that he was by no means the only scholar working on Champa at this time. The first decade and a half of the new century saw a proliferation of articles on Champa and the Cham. These included a series of 'Epigraphical notes' by Finot, published in the BEFEO between 1901 and 1918, and works by Antoine Cabaton, mainly on Cham literature and ethnography. One of the most important of these was a 1901 essay which provides a plethora of ethnographic information on the Cham (Cabaton 1901). Meanwhile, E.M. Durand published a

²³ See chapter 6

series of articles on various aspects of the Cham and Champa, and Edouard Huber wrote a number of notes on Cham epigraphy, nearly all of which appeared in the BEFEO. In 1908, George Coedès published an inventory of Cham inscriptions (Coedès 1908). This was the first of many contributions he would make to the study of Cham epigraphy and history over the following half century.

Despite the fundamental role played by the EFEO, it is important to note that not all the people making an active contribution to Cham studies at this period were members of the school and that many of them were not professional scholars. In the early decades of the 20th century, men from a wide range of different backgrounds, including travellers, missionaries and colonial administrators, began to draw attention to the ancient Cham monuments. One of the most influential of these was the missionary Leopold Cadière who spent more than sixty years in Vietnam, during the course of most of which he was merely a “membre correspondant” of the EFEO.²⁴ Over the years, he contributed numerous articles on Cham sculptures and ruins, and historical, ethnographic and linguistic aspects of Cham culture, which were published in the BEFEO and other journals (see Bui-Quang-Tung 1959; Lafont and Po Dharma 1989).

In 1911, Albert Mayon published an essay entitled ‘L’art cham’, in the journal *L’Art Décoratif*. (Mayon 1911) This short article, which dealt primarily with architecture, the best known aspect of Cham vestiges at the time, gave a succinct, clear and highly

²⁴ Although he collaborated with the school from the moment of its creation, contributing an article to the first volume of the BEFEO, and was named “membre correspondant” in 1906, Cadière only became a full member of the school in 1918, a post which he maintained for a mere two years, since he refused to live in Hanoi (Pignon-Poujol and André-Pallois 2002: 174-175)

readable overview of the major aspects of Cham art, and has been seen by Nora Taylor as one of the first real attempts to study the art of the region as *art* (Taylor 2000b: 149). This same period also saw the appearance of the first comprehensive history of Champa. Between 1910 and 1913, Georges Maspéro published *Le Royaume du Champa* in a series of articles in the journal *T'oung Pao*.²⁵ A single, revised edition of the work was published in 1928 (Maspéro 1928). This major synthesis of Cham history, based in part on inscriptions and archaeological remains, but also drawing extensively on Chinese and Vietnamese sources, has had an enormous influence on Cham art studies. We have already seen, earlier in this chapter, how from the early 1990s onwards a series of scholars, especially Taylor, Southworth and Vickery,²⁶ began to pull Maspéro's thesis apart, nonetheless for most of the 20th century, the major assumption behind his history of Champa, that it was a single unified kingdom,²⁷ was perpetuated in virtually all subsequent scholarship (Lockhart 2011: 9-10). Maspéro's history of Champa effectively "provided the authoritative and unquestioned master narrative" for most of the 20th century (Trần Kỳ Phương and Lockhart 2011: xv).²⁸ The only other Western work to discuss the history of ancient Champa in any detail was George Coedès's classic study of the 'Hinduized States of Southeast Asia', but for the main part, this repeated Maspéro's narrative (Coedès 1948; Lockhart 2011: 9).

²⁵ *T'oung Pao*, founded in 1890, is one of the leading scholarly journals on all aspects of traditional China. The fact that Maspéro was a Sinologist by training, may explain the choice of this journal for his publication of the history of Champa.

²⁶ See Taylor (1992), Southworth (2001) and Vickery (2005)

²⁷ The other major assumptions made by Maspéro were that its history effectively ended in 1471 and that it was predominantly Cham in terms of its ethnicity

²⁸ As recently as 2002, even while the new revisionist historians were beginning to dismiss the old narrative, Maspéro's history was translated into English by Walter E.J. Tips, under the title, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture* (Maspéro 2002).

After the initial burst of scholarly interest in Champa at the start of the 20th century, generated at least in part by the creation of the EFEO, the number of publications on Champa decreased dramatically from around the period 1915-1920. This has been explained by the fact that the pioneers of Cham studies were beginning to die off, and that the generation of researchers who would normally have taken their place was more interested in studying the Khmer world (Lafont 1994: 3).²⁹ The major exception to this was the architect-archaeologist Jean-Yves Claeys, who carried out important archaeological excavations in the 1920s and 1930s, in particular at Trà Kiệu in Quảng Nam and at the site of Tháp Mẫm in the province of Bình Định. Claeys published a number of reports on these excavations in the BEFEO (see, for example: Claeys 1927; Claeys 1928; Claeys 1934b), and also wrote many articles of a more general nature on Champa and Cham archaeology. These appeared in both the BEFEO and other journals such as the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue*, *Sud-Est Asiatique* and *Indochine*, the latter reaching wider less specialised audiences (Claeys 1934a; 1942a; 1951a; 1951b). Claeys also used the medium of film to disseminate knowledge on Indochinese archaeology. This is discussed in chapter 6.

In 1927, at the same time that Claeys was starting his archaeological career in Indochina, an Indian scholar, Majumdar, published a history of ancient Champa (Majumdar 1985).³⁰ Majumdar was one of a handful of Indians who saw Champa as an ancient colony founded by their ancestors (Lockhart 2011: 4). A few years later, Paul Mus, in his afore-mentioned 1934 essay on Cham cults, reversed the idea of viewing Champa through an Indian lens, and looked the other way, from Champa to India. We saw how this essay was the result of extensive research carried out in the

²⁹ The site of Angkor had come under French control with the retrocession of the Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap and Sisophon, following the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 23 March 1907

³⁰ A new edition of Majumdar's history was published in New Delhi in 1985

field and that Mus had spent much of his early life living in Indochina. Unlike Mus, Philippe Stern and Gilberte de Coral Rémusat, who were active in research at the same time, made just one short field trip to Indochina in the 1930s, and instead studied the art of ancient Champa primarily from the photothèque of the Musée Guimet in Paris (Grousset 1951: 425; Stern 1942: 1). Nonetheless, they produced some of the most influential and far-reaching work on Cham art history. In the course of the 1930s, Coral Rémusat, one of the very few women working on ancient Champa in the whole colonial period,³¹ produced several important articles on the chronology of Cham art, largely overthrowing the earlier chronology proposed by Parmentier in his inventory. In particular, she was highly critical of the way Parmentier had based his chronology of Cham art styles not on art historical comparison but rather on the sequence and dating of inscriptions (Coral Rémusat 1932, 1934, 1935). Agreeing with Coral Rémusat's hypotheses, Philippe Stern developed and elaborated on them in his 1942 work, *L'Art du Champa* (Stern 1942). In contrast to the chronology developed by Parmentier, Stern's work is based entirely on the analysis of the evolution of styles without reference to the inscriptions. Nevertheless, Stern recognizes the fundamental importance of Parmentier's work which served as the base of his study, and without which his own research would not have been possible (Stern 1942: 98). Printed hastily, on poor quality paper, in the southern French city of Toulouse, where Stern had fled to from occupied Paris during World War II, this volume is probably the single most influential work on the chronology of Cham monuments. The very fact of its publication at the height of war in such difficult circumstances is a fitting tribute to

³¹ Cham studies was almost exclusively a male domain at the time. The only other notable exception was Parmentier's wife Jeanne Leuba who published two substantial works on the Cham and their art in 1915 and 1923. Both look at the present-day Cham as well as Cham of the past. The fact that they offer somewhat popularised presentations of ethnology, civilization and art, may go some way to explain why they have seldom been cited in the literature (Leuba 1915; 1923).

Stern's dedication and his passion for and commitment to Cham art studies.³² The impact this work has had on all studies since is huge. The style-dating system developed by Stern, based on the model that he had originally formulated for Khmer art, has permeated nearly all the Cham art literature as well as museum displays around the world for the past seventy years (see chapter 2).³³

If women were almost absent from Cham studies during the entire colonial period, so too was the indigenous population. While many of the French researching Champa in the field in Indochina were accompanied and assisted on their expeditions and excavations by Vietnamese workers, almost no trace has been left of these individuals, other than as anonymous faces in photographs. Hardly any are recorded in the literature, and almost none were given the chance to contribute to the primarily French scholarship. One notable exception is Nguyễn Văn Tố, a Vietnamese literary scholar and member of the EFEO, who wrote three notes on the “treasures” of Champa in the mid 1930s (Nguyễn Văn Tố 1933; 1934a; 1934b). He also wrote a response to Jean-Yves Claeys's *Introduction à l'étude de l'Annam et du Champa* (Claeys 1934a) under the pseudonym Ứng Hoè (Ứng Hoè 1934).³⁴ The same period saw the publication of Nguyễn Văn Què's 1932 history of the Indochinese Union which included a succinct overview of the history and civilization of Champa

³² A passion which would later lead him to appeal directly to President Nixon to intervene in order to preserve the Cham monuments at the height of the American war. See chapter 4.

³³ For a comprehensive account of the methodology developed by Stern in his evolution of styles, see Stern (1978) and Naudou (1978).

³⁴ Nguyễn Văn Tố, an “assistant” at the EFEO from 1930-1932, was one of a small number of members of the French educated indigenous intelligentsia employed by the school during the colonial period. Most of these occupied positions such as secretaries and assistants. The appointment of a Vietnamese to a “scientific” post was not possible until the passing of a special decree in 1939. This in great part explains the almost total absence of publications by Vietnamese in the pre-war period (Pignon-Poujol and André-Pallos 2002: 306, 19-20; Cherry 2004: 4).

(Nguyễn Văn Quê 1932). The few articles produced by indigenous writers during this period were for the most part written in French and not Vietnamese.

After Second World War, the number of Europeans working specifically on Champa, and indeed on Vietnam in general, dwindled to a tiny handful, whilst at the same time a body of Vietnamese-language literature on ancient Champa slowly began to emerge. Despite this general trend, just a few years after the end of the war, when almost no one was working on Champa, Sinologist Rolf Stein, published an immensely influential 135-page essay on the history of the ancient polity. This looked at the origins of Champa and what preceded it, as well as the frequent geographical shifting of the different capitals and the ethnicity of the Cham peoples (Stein 1947). Although recent archaeological findings by Japanese archaeologist Mariko Yamagata cast doubt on some of Stein's hypothesis about the location of Linyi (Yamagata 2011),³⁵ his essay was the first real attempt to question our understanding of the history of Champa since Maspéro. No further serious attempt would be made to tackle the question again for four and a half decades, until Taylor (Taylor 1992).

In the 1950s, one of the very few European scholars working on the ancient art of Indochina was Pierre Dupont, who had begun his research on Cham art in the 1930s at the same time as Coral Rémusat and Stern. From the mid 1930s, over a period of a quarter of a century, he produced a series of journal articles, chiefly on Cham statuary, making important contributions to our knowledge of Cham iconography and the Buddhist art of Đông Dương, and in particular the role played by Chinese influences (see, for example, Dupont 1934, 1936, 1949, 1950, 1955). When Dupont died suddenly in 1955, art historian Jean Boisselier, who had published a series of

³⁵ See also, for example, Shiro (2011: 121)

articles on Khmer art while he held the post of *conservateur* at the Phnom Penh museum, took his place at the Institut d'art et d'archéologie of the CNRS in Paris. While teaching at the institute in the second half of the 1950s, he carried out an extensive study of Cham sculpture, revising the tentative chronology that Stern had proposed in an appendix to his 1942 work which was primarily on architecture (Stern 1942: 73-81). Boisselier's research was published by the EFEO in 1963 as *La Statuaire du Champa – Recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie* (Boisselier 1963a). The first and only truly comprehensive work on Cham sculpture, this volume ranks alongside Parmentier's inventory of monuments and Stern's work on architecture as one of the three most influential studies on Cham art of the 20th century. Amongst Boisselier's other contributions to an understanding of Cham art, of particular note are his studies of two statues from Đồng Dương in the collections of the Rietberg Museum in Zurich and of the bronze statue thought to represent Tara in the Danang museum, which is discussed in detail in chapter 4 (Boisselier 1963b and Boisselier 1984).

While Boisselier was one of the only Western scholars working specifically on Cham art at this time, in 1961 Bernard-Philippe Groslier had published *Indochine – Carrefour des Arts* (Groslier 1961). A general overview of the art and archaeology of Indochina, this work drew attention to the neglect of Champa studies in favour of research on the Khmer Empire, and coined the expression “à l'ombre d'Angkor” (in the shadow of Angkor) with reference to Cham studies (Groslier 1961: 132). An expanded version of the book, containing a chapter devoted specifically to the field of studies of each civilization of the region, was published in 1966 in both English and French editions (Groslier 1966a, 1966b).

Despite the prolific output of historical scholarship in the north of the country (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) in this post-colonial period, there was very little interest in Champa within Vietnam until after the reunification of the country in 1975-6. At this time scholars based in Hanoi began to study the history and culture of Champa, examining in particular the role it had played in Vietnam's past. In part, their aim was to correct what they perceived as mistakes and inaccuracies made by colonial scholars and by writers in the south, that is the Republic of Vietnam, during the post colonial period from 1955 to 1975. During this period, as Lockhart has assessed, writers in the south "produced a nationalistic and Southern-centred narrative which went counter to that produced in the North under Party auspices". Champa was not, though, a particularly important subject of study in the south at the time, and most writers who paid any attention to Champa relied primarily on colonial scholarship, thus providing few new insights (Lockhart 2011: 1, 11). For example, southern-based historian Phan Khoang followed French scholarship in treating Champa as a more-or-less single entity, while writing openly about the aggressive expansionist nature of the Vietnamese and their absorption of the Cham (Phan Khoang 1970). Histories written in the north, such as the History of Vietnam published by the Social Sciences Committee in 1971, tended, on the other hand, to emphasize Vietnamese military actions as a response to Cham threats, down-playing the more aggressive side of Vietnamese expansion southward (see, for example, Ủy ban Khoa học Xã hội 1971).³⁶ One notable exception was historian Trần Quốc Vượng, who has been credited with having a "passion for tracking down and teasing out the Cham elements buried within Vietnamese culture"(Trần Kỳ Phương and Lockhart 2011: xix).

³⁶ See Lockhart (2011: 11-22) for a detailed analysis of "Champa seen from Sài Gòn" and "Champa seen from Hà Nội".

He was one of the few Hanoi-based scholars during this period to openly acknowledge the hard historical truths behind Cham-Vietnamese relations, beginning with his co-authored history of Vietnam, published in 1960 (Trần Quốc Vượng and Hà Văn Tấn 1960). He remained active in Cham studies, in particular in the fields of history and folklore, until his death in 2005, and was one of the participants at a 2004 international Cham conference in Singapore, discussed below.

A number of Vietnamese archaeologists and art historians began to take an active interest in Cham art historical studies during the post-reunification period. While French colonial research forms the basis of the work of many of these scholars, valid new contributions to Cham art studies were nonetheless being made, sometimes concurring with the work of overseas scholars and at other times providing complementary or even conflicting views, a topic which is discussed in chapter 4. Amongst the most prominent of these Vietnamese researchers are Trần Kỳ Phương, Ngô Văn Doanh and Hồ Xuân Tịnh. All three have published books and journal articles in both Vietnamese and English and were among a select team of international scholars invited to contribute essays on new research on Cham art and architecture for the catalogue of the 2005 Musée Guimet Cham exhibition (Trần Kỳ Phương 2005; Ngô Văn Doanh 2005b; Hồ Xuân Tịnh 2005).

A former curator of the Danang Museum (see chapter 4), Trần Kỳ Phương began publishing on Cham art and architecture in the late 1970s, in both Vietnamese and English. He has presented papers at a number of international Cham conferences and contributed essays to major exhibition catalogues (see chapters 5 and 6). For many years, his *Cham Ruins: Journey in Search of an ancient civilization*, a succinct overview of the major extant Cham sites, published in the early years of foreign

tourism to the country, was the only guidebook available to tourists and researchers visiting the monuments (Trần Kỳ Phương 1993).³⁷ Art historian Ngô Văn Doanh, who holds a post at the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, has written a number of general works on Cham culture, as well as on specific sites, in particular Mỹ Sơn (Ngô Văn Doanh 2002a, 2005). In 2002, he published *Champa Ancient Towers – Reality and Legend*, which draws on French colonial scholarship, local folklore and tradition and new archaeological research in an attempt to show how fact and fiction intertwine in our understanding of Cham monuments (Ngô Văn Doanh 2002b). With Nguyễn Văn Kự he co-edited *Du khảo Văn Hóa Chăm* (Peregrinations into Cham Culture). A joint collaboration between the Viện Nghiên cứu Đông Nam Á (Vietnam Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) and the EFEO, this tri-lingual (Vietnamese-English-French), lavishly illustrated volume was conceived to introduce diverse aspects of Cham culture, both past and present, to a wide audience (Nguyễn Văn Kự and Ngô Văn Doanh 2005). Hồ Xuân Tịnh, director of the Quảng Nam Museum, was a frequent contributor to the *Lettre de la SACHA*. Founded in 1994 to disseminate knowledge on ancient Champa, the Société des Amis du Champa Ancien (SACHA), published a total of 14 volumes of its journal, the *Lettre de la SACHA*, between 1997 and 2011.³⁸ This served as an important forum for international Champa research, with contributions from scholars in Europe, Asia, Australia and North America.³⁹ After the dissolution of the SACHA, one of its founding members and long-time president and editor, Emmanuel Guillon, published a comprehensive synthesis of Cham art and archaeology. Drawing extensively on the existing literature,

³⁷ *Cham Ruins*, published in English and French editions in 1993, has been the object of several modified re-editions and its title was changed to *Vestiges of Champa Civilization* (Trần Kỳ Phương 2004). See the bibliographies at the end of this study and in Baptiste and Zéphir (2005) for listings of the many publications by Trần Kỳ Phương

³⁸ The association was officially disbanded at the end of 2009.

³⁹ See the bibliography in Baptiste and Zéphir (2005a) for listings of the major articles on Cham art that appeared in the *Lettre de la Sacha* up to 2005

this is a useful reference manual, bringing together in one volume the pre- and proto-historic periods, the historic periods and dynasties, the major archaeological sites, the architecture and the statuary (Guillon 2011).

In 1980, the signing of a bilateral cooperation agreement between the Polish Federation of Historical Heritage Restoration Workshops (PKZ) and Vietnam's Ministry of Culture and Arts, resulted in the establishment of the Vietnam-Poland Joint Sub-Committee for the Conservation of Cham Architectural Heritage. The comprehensive programme of restoration work carried out by this Committee, headed by Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, at the devastated and mine-ridden site of Mỹ Sơn, from 1980-1986, is recorded in two published reports and a number of journal articles (Kwiatkowski 1985; Kwiatkowski 1990; Hoàng Đạo Kính and Kwiatkowski 1985). After the end of this campaign, little was done at the site for a decade, resulting in further drastic deterioration of the monuments. This period coincided with the opening up of the country to foreign tourism and increased international awareness of the ancient sites of the country, which led, in 1997, to the setting up of the Mỹ Sơn Conservation Project to safeguard the site, with a view to its inclusion on the UNESCO list of World Cultural Heritage.⁴⁰ A team of Italian and Vietnamese archaeologists embarked on a vast programme of restoration, excavation and consolidation of the site which is still on-going. This work is recounted in a collection of essays published in 2009 (Hardy, Cucarzi and Zolese 2009). As well as a series of technical papers by the Italian and Vietnamese archaeologists working at the site, this major volume also contains overviews of the early French excavations and the Polish restoration work of the 1980s, as well as essays of a more general nature on Cham history, cosmology, ethnicity, architecture, economy and commerce, written by a

⁴⁰ The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999.

team of international scholars, making it the most comprehensive work on the site to date, and an important contribution to Cham studies at the start of the new millennium.

Archaeological work at the nearby site of Trà Kiệu had begun some years before this renewal of activity at Mỹ Sơn. From 1993 to 2004, an international team of British, Japanese and Vietnamese archaeologists carried out excavations at the site and surrounding area. Unlike Mỹ Sơn, no intact monuments have survived at Trà Kiệu, here, therefore, rather than restoration and consolidation, the work consisted entirely of archaeological excavation in the pit. This work has come up with important findings on the origins of Champa and its links with earlier cultures, in particular Sa Huỳnh (see chapter 5). These findings have been extensively published by Ian Glover, Mariko Yamagata and Nguyễn Kim Dung.⁴¹

At roughly the same time as the rebirth of Cham studies in Vietnam after the reunification of the country at the end of the American war, there was a parallel renewal of scholarly interest overseas, most notably in France, where, from the mid 1970s, a group of scholars centred in Paris began to question the standard view of Champa. This renaissance of Cham studies led to two important international conferences. The first, in 1987, was held at the University of Copenhagen, followed by a second, three years later, at the University of California at Berkeley in 1990. These conferences, the papers of which were the object of publications (CHCPI

⁴¹ Their findings have been presented over the years at a number of international conferences, and are the subject of a series of essays in both English and Vietnamese, written individually or as collaborations. See, for example, Glover (1997), Glover and Yamagata (1998), Glover (2005), Nguyễn Kim Dung (2005), Nguyễn Kim Dung, Glover and Yamagata (2006), Glover and Nguyễn Kim Dung (2011)

1988⁴² and CHCPI 1991), served as springboards for a renewed interest in Cham studies in the last decade of the 20th century, and “laid down an agenda for Cham studies in the European academy” (Trần Kỳ Phương and Lockhart 2011: xv-xvi). Further international symposiums on new scholarship on Champa followed in 2004, 2005 and 2012.⁴³ The first of these resulted in a major volume of essays on the history, society and art of Champa and the Cham (Trần Kỳ Phương and Lockhart 2011). The opening chapter of the collection, ‘Colonial and Post-Colonial Constructions of ‘Champa’” by Bruce Lockhart (Lockhart 2011) provides an overview of the varying ways Champa has been studied and constructed by different groups of scholars since the nineteenth century. This is the first essay of its kind, and provides thoughtful and far-reaching insights into differing and sometimes competing ways Champa has been constructed both within Vietnam and overseas, during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The other essays in the volume cover a wide range of aspects of Cham culture, from archaeological research into the origins of Champa, to Cham linguistics. Three chapters are concerned specifically with art and architecture.

As we have already seen, the 2005 Cham exhibition at the Musée Guimet also brought together a team of international Cham experts who contributed essays on diverse aspects of Cham art, architecture, epigraphy, religion and history for the catalogue, making this volume one of the most important recent scholarly works on Champa. It contains the most comprehensive bibliography of works on Cham art and architecture since Lafont and Po Dharma’s general Cham bibliography in 1989 (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a). The same year, French epigraphist Anne-Valérie

⁴² The papers of this conference were subsequently published in English in 1994 (Proceedings 1994)

⁴³ These, held in Singapore and Paris, were organised by the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore (2004), SACHA (2005) and the EFEO (2011).

Schweyer, who contributed an essay on Cham epigraphy for the exhibition catalogue, published a general early history of Vietnam, *Le Viêtnam Ancien* (Schweyer 2005a). Breaking with tradition, this work parallels the histories of both early Vietnam and Champa, whereas previous works had invariably been devoted to either Vietnam or Champa, rarely both. Schweyer published a second, lavishly illustrated work, on Ancient Vietnam in 2011, which likewise parallels the histories of the two civilizations.⁴⁴ When Schweyer took up an interest in Cham inscriptions in the 1990s, nothing had been published on them since 1928. In 1999, therefore, she published a chronology of the earlier publications to serve as a working tool for Cham researchers (Schweyer 1999). Since this date, she has presented her research at numerous international conferences and written a series of articles on hitherto unpublished inscriptions.⁴⁵

Following in the wake of the renaissance of Cham studies in both Vietnam and overseas from the 1980s onwards, the early 21st century has thus seen a series of important scholarly publications on ancient Champa. A number of them are collective works which bring together experts from different academic fields. These volumes will be invaluable working tools for new generations of Cham researchers, who will no longer have to rely exclusively on the early colonial research.

1.5 Plan of the Thesis and Chapter Summary

This thesis is organized as a series of linked case studies. Although the studies are structured to follow on from each other in a roughly chronological sequence and

⁴⁴ See chapter 6 for a discussion about this extensively researched and lavishly illustrated work, which was published in English, French and Vietnamese language editions

⁴⁵ See, for example, Schweyer (1999b, 2004, 2005b, 2007)

many common themes are interwoven between them, they may be read in any order, and each can be also be seen as an individual study in its own right. Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect of how Cham art has been (re)presented: a sculpture and its label, architectural line-drawings, a Cham museum, a series of international exhibitions on Vietnam, which included Champa as part of the display, and a major exhibition devoted exclusively to the art of Champa. These have been selected because of their particular relevance to Cham art history, and each chapter is intended to be exemplary. The individual objects, sites and concepts discussed in each study are pertinent to the history of Cham art studies in general. The selection criteria for each of these studies are outlined in the chapter summary below. Each study examines a different aspect of Cham museology, looking at the different ways Cham art has been preserved, classified, labelled and displayed from the moment when it first began to be unearthed by French colonial amateurs in the second half of the 19th century. The thesis is organised into seven chapters, each of which begins with an introductory paragraph describing the methodology.

Chapter 1: this introductory chapter explains the rationale for and background to the thesis. It includes an outline of the theoretical concepts underlying the thesis, a discussion of the recent revision of the Cham historical narrative and the implications of this for Cham art, and presents a broad overview of the existing literature.

Chapter 2: The first case study looks at two statues of the elephant-headed god Ganesh. Both are in French museums, one in the Musée Guimet, the national collection of Asian art in the capital Paris, and the other in a little known museum in the Atlantic port town of Rochefort-sur-Mer. The world renown and authority of the one museum and the relative obscurity of the other will necessarily affect our

presuppositions about the artworks they display. However, by examining the 19th and 20th century biographies of these two statues, I aim overthrow such expectations. Using the label of the Guimet Ganesh, I trace its fragmentary biography over the past half century and highlight how the recent history of the sculpture parallels French history, especially the period of decolonisation. Alongside the other Cham pieces in the Guimet collection, the sculpture is small, eroded and inconspicuous. It is somewhat dubiously termed “Cham”, has no known provenance. and even its recent past is highly confused. It has hardly ever been written about. These unusual characteristics, particularly surprising for a piece in such a renowned collection, raise important questions about what exactly Cham art is. The information provided on the statue’s label allows a rich exploration of these questions, which serve to form an introduction to the case studies in the following chapters. It is for these reasons that that the statue has been singled out for study in the thesis. In stark contrast to the Guimet sculpture, the Rochefort Ganesh, which is monumental, well-preserved and imposing, has a well-documented past. It is not Cham, but rather usually identified as Khmer or Pre-Angkorian, however it is most frequently compared with Cham Ganeshas with whom it shares various common traits, making it something of a hybrid piece⁴⁶. Thus the identification of the Guimet and Rochefort Ganeshas, as Cham and non-Cham, introduces further poignant questions about what constitutes Cham art. This chapter draws on archive material held at various museums and letters published in late 19th provincial journals.

⁴⁶ Following Collins’ Dictionary definition of the hybrid as “anything of mixed ancestry” (Collins 1979: 717), I use the term here to refer to the fact that this sculpture seems to display a mix of both Pre-Angkorian and Cham stylistic features. Nevertheless, since the concept of the *hybrid* entered post colonial theory as “a term descriptive of cultural and racial mixing generated by colonialism” (Morton 2000: 13, 201), the now often controversial nature of this term needs to be taken into account. See, for example, Bhabha (1994: 1-18)

Chapter 3: This chapter investigates the largely neglected visual archive of Cham art. It focuses on the architectural line-drawings of Henri Parmentier, which first appeared in 1901, and which have become a standard component of the literature, museum displays and exhibitions on ancient Champa. The analysis of these drawings highlights the powerful role images play in framing the way we visualize the Cham world. I uncover the complex temporality within which these drawings operate and examine how they mediate between the present and multiple pasts. Parmentier's scientific architectural drawings are contrasted with more spontaneous sketches he published later in his life, and with visual representations of Champa produced by other scholars and artists.

Chapter 4: In this chapter, the Cham Sculpture Museum in Danang has been selected for study since it is the only major museum in the world devoted entirely to the art of Champa, and was founded and built by the men who founded Cham art history. I trace the biography of the museum itself, and show how it can be viewed as a museum of multiple histories, not just the history of the Cham art it displays, but also of the histories of 20th century Vietnam, and the *mission civilisatrice* of French colonialism. Using archive material from the EFEO, I look at the architecture, preservation and display through the choices and decisions of the men who have shaped Cham art into what it is today.

Chapter 5: This chapter examines how the setting, the building and the wider context of exhibition display influence the way we approach the artworks. I look at how Cham art was displayed in a series of exhibitions on Vietnam held in the United States, Paris and Brussels. These exhibitions, some housed in conventional museums, others in a department store basement, presented the art in widely varying ways, and

all tried to tackle the complex question of how to locate Champa within Vietnam. The selection criteria for these exhibitions is outlined in an introductory paragraph.

Chapter 6: Continuing with the examination of exhibitions, the last case study looks at the world's first major exhibition of Cham art, which was held at the Musée Guimet in 2005. Picking up on many of the themes of the previous chapters, this study forms a sort of synthesis of the other studies. It traces the biography of this exhibition, from inter-museum rivalries to presidential prestige and national economic interests. International politics, ideology, glory, academic glow and the bringing together of leading scholarly research on Champa underlie this biography. The chapter examines the narrative threads and historical and colonial interconnections at play within the exhibition and the implications of these for our understanding of Cham art.

Chapter 7: This is the concluding chapter which draws together the themes of the previous chapters, providing an overview and a synthesis of the different objects, concepts, people and places discussed in the previous chapters, and evaluates how they have contributed to the 20th century creation of the Field of Ancient Cham Art. It discusses the significance of the findings of the thesis, and suggests what the implications might be for Cham art in the future.

1.6 Conclusion

This introductory chapter has explained the rationale for and background to the thesis. It has discussed the revised historical narrative of Champa which now forms the backdrop for Cham art studies, and has provided an overview of the existing

literature, thus positioning the thesis within the broader field of Champa studies. It has outlined the structure of the thesis and given a summary of each of the chapters.

The thesis begins with an investigation of two very different statues of the same Hindu god in two very different French museums. These contrasting statues raise many questions which are fundamental to Cham art history and the ways we see and understand Cham art today. These questions introduce many of the themes which will be elaborated on in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

A Tale of Two Ganeshas

Labelling Champa

“Need we be surprised if Gaṇeśa, God of success, achieved for himself a truly remarkable career?” Albert Foucher¹

Introduction

This chapter looks at two statues of the elephant-headed god Ganesh. Both are in French museums, one in the Musée Guimet in Paris, the other in the Municipal Museum of Rochefort-sur-Mer. Both are thought to come from what is now Vietnam, and what was, at the time the works arrived in France, part of French Indochina. One is considered a Cham piece, the other not, generally being classified as pre-Angkorian, and occasionally labelled as Khmer. Small and badly eroded, the first

¹ In Getty (1936: xv)

might easily be over-looked by the museum visitor. In contrast, the other is monumental, well-preserved and imposing. Although they represent the same god, are both located in French museums and their original locations are presumed to have been in what is now Vietnam, my focus is on the highly different recent histories of these two objects. One of the Ganeshas is on display in the national collection of Asian art in the capital city, the other in a little-known provincial museum in an Atlantic port town. I read the world renown and specialism of the first museum and the relative obscurity and eclecticism of the second as frames which condition our approach to the works of art on display in them. These locations are an integral part of what Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has termed the “frameworks of intelligibility into which collected objects are placed” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 3). These multiple, varied, often overlapping and constantly changing frameworks of intelligibility include issues such as what is and what is not on show, how objects are displayed and labelled, as well as larger questions of museum prestige and the architecture of the buildings housing the collections. Over half a century ago, André Malraux noted that museums are “so much a part of our lives today that we forget they have imposed on the spectator a wholly new attitude towards the work of art, for they have tended to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions” (Malraux 1978a : 14). By putting the objects in entirely new environments, museums have created new contextual settings for them. This is the background against which I approach the biographies of these two sculptures, which I refer to henceforth as the Guimet and Rochefort Ganeshas respectively.



Fig. 1 The Guimet Ganesh



Fig. 2 The Rochefort Ganesh
(Courtesy of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire)

2.1 The Musée Guimet – Contextualizing the Display of Cham Art

In 2001, the Musée Guimet re-opened after half a decade of closure during the largest internal re-structuring programme in its more than century-long history. The duration of the renovation work and the blanket of almost total secrecy that shrouded it helped to increase the aura surrounding the museum's long-awaited re-launch, which was heralded by the press as a major event in the cultural and social life of the French capital. Despite this major overhaul, the museum's Southeast Asian galleries, which occupy the ground floor and are regarded by many as the jewel in the museum's

crown, essentially differ very little today, in their presentation and layout, from the way they looked before the Second World War. The bulk of the present collection was constituted in the 1930s, when an earlier remodelling of the galleries was undertaken², partly to accommodate twenty-three new Khmer and Cham pieces transferred to the museum collections after being exhibited at the 1931 Exposition Coloniale at Vincennes. At this time, the entire ground floor was turned over to the Indochinese collections and the “novelty of the display consisted in the presentation, in two rooms, of a chronological sequence of Khmer art, while the Cham collection occupied the far end of the Galerie Delaporte”³ (Auboyer 1934: 10). This presentation, rather than an entirely new design, was primarily a development of principles which had been instigated by Joseph Hackin⁴ a decade earlier in 1922. The light, neutral colour of the walls and pedestals, which had previously been dark red, was seen to harmonize the rooms, and was said to be in keeping with contemporary museography (Auboyer 1934: 21 and Bruhl 1932: 302).

It would seem, also, that the minimalist labelling policy which predominates in the museum’s galleries today has changed little from the schema outlined by Pierre Dupont in the 1934 catalogue of the Indochinese collections. Dupont stipulated that labels needed to include the inventory number, a description, the construction material, the dimensions of the object and its provenance (Dupont 1934: 9). A plate in this same catalogue shows an overview of the former *Salle du Bayon* with objects isolated on pedestals or placed against plain walls in a manner almost identical to the

² Closed for just two months during the winter of 1931-1932, the museum nonetheless underwent a total transformation during this renovation work (Bruhl 1932: 301).

³ At the time, some of the major galleries bore the names of influential personalities who had played a role in the history of the art or the museum. The Khmer galleries were named after explorer and artist Louis Delaporte (1842-1925), initiator of the Khmer collections.

⁴ Joseph Hackin (1886-1941) was director of the museum from 1923-1941

layout adopted today, despite the major renovations carried out in the 1990s. Notably, however, this 1934 plate clearly shows photographs displayed on the walls of the gallery⁵, a didactic, informative element which is today noticeably absent (Dupont 1934 : Pl. II). Figures 3 and 4, showing the Musée Guimet's Cham room as it was in 1938 and in 2006, highlight the striking similarity between the display of the Cham collection now and over half a century ago.



Fig.3 The Guimet Cham Room in 1938
(Baptiste 2002:3)

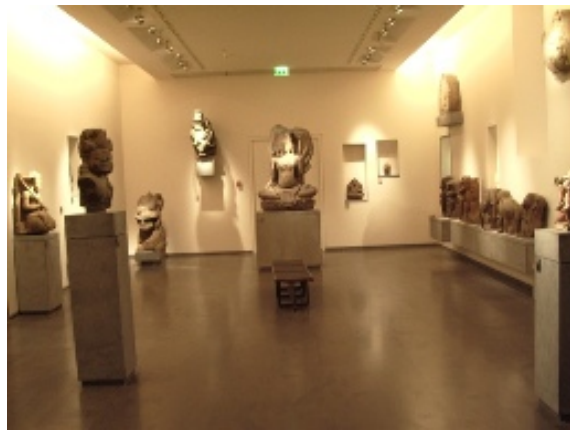


Fig.4 The Guimet Cham room in 2006
(The Ganesh is just visible in a niche at the far end)

Today, the old names of the galleries have gone, Khmer art fills three rooms rather than two, and one gallery of the ground floor is devoted to Indian sculpture, otherwise the general layout remains ostensibly very similar. The Cham room is still relegated to the end of the galleries. It can only be reached by first passing under the monumental Naga balustrade from Angkor's Preah Khan and through the prestigious Khmer galleries. As if echoing the words of Bernard Philippe Groslier, the very layout of the museum seems to put Champa *in the shadow of Angkor* (Groslier 1961: 132). The museum suggests, on its official website, that the open perspectives and

⁵ See Auboyer (1934: 21) on the use of photographs as part of the display policy at the time.

large galleries created after the museum's remodelling at the end of the last century, "enable visitors to better understand the inter-relationships and differences between the various artistic traditions of Asia, and ensure a pleasant visit in calm and open spaces" (Musée Guimet 2012).

For the average visitor who strolls around these calm and open spaces, expected to grasp the inter-relationships of the artistic traditions of Asia, the museum represents the voice of authority, since, inevitably, a degree of trust must exist between the institution and the public. On the whole, visitors tend to trust museums both in terms of what is on display, and how it is presented, and such trust is almost certainly heightened when the museum is a national collection, and thus has the weight of state authority behind it. However, the mechanism that lies behind the displays, that is to say the decision and policy-making of the voices of authority, always takes place behind closed doors, and usually beyond public access. There exists an often uneasy relationship between the display, which is public and accessible, and the mechanics of the museum which are usually hidden. Nonetheless, these hidden and largely unspoken workings of the museum play a fundamental role in determining both what we see and how we see it, thus affecting the meanings of the works on display. Hooper-Greenhill has drawn attention to the fact that "individual objects have shifting and ambiguous relationships to meaning", and that because they are "themselves mute, their significance is open to interpretation". This interpretation is often largely informed by the decision making processes of the museum, from the selection of the objects exhibited to the ways they are displayed and labelled. Hooper-Greenhill has pointed out that "although they all have life-histories, these may be well-known or alternatively, unknown or forgotten" (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 3), and when they are

known, the museum may or may not choose to communicate them to the visitor.⁶ By rummaging around in the out-of-bounds backstage of the museum, this chapter uncovers hidden life-histories, and opens up new avenues of significance.

2.2 The Guimet Ganesh

Tucked away in a niche on the left hand wall of the Guimet Cham room is a small sandstone sculpture of Ganesh. Just 44cm in height, this little god, dwarfed by the larger, more impressive pieces mounted on pedestals close by, is badly eroded. Of all the deities of the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon, Ganesh, with his elephant head and human body, is one of the most instantly and easily recognisable. At least that is, *today*, and for *us*, since we generally have no way of knowing how statues were viewed in their early existence. This is particularly true for ancient Cham art, since, although we know that Ganesh was worshipped because a number of statues of him have survived, we know virtually nothing of the people who created the sacred art nor those who first came into contact with it in its original temple locations. Moreover, with scant inscriptional evidence, we have little way of knowing why Ganesh was popular in Southeast Asia, nor how his images were originally used. Robert Brown has attempted to identify Indian prototypes for Southeast Asian Ganesh images and suggests that his frequent appearance on dedication and territory markers in Cambodia may indicate his function as a remover of obstacles, a popular role of this god in India (Brown 1995: 40). However, while it may, at times be possible to

⁶ For discussions on how museums and exhibitions control and influence the ways visitors view objects see, for example, Alpers (1991) and Baxandall (1991). Alpers has coined the term “museum effect” to refer to the way museums turn all objects into works of art and argues that this is in fact “a way of seeing” which we should work with rather than try to overcome (Alpers 1991: 26-27), and Baxandall emphasizes the active role of the viewer, “moving about in the space between object and label” (Baxandall 1991: 38).

identify the transfer of iconographical forms from India to Southeast Asia, there is no guarantee that meaning was transmitted along with form. The evidence indicating Ganesh's possible role can be no more than speculation for Cambodia, and is lacking altogether for Champa, since none of the images referred to in the few Cham inscriptions can be identified today (Brown 1991: 180).

Nonetheless the easily recognisable iconography and the statue's location in the Guimet Cham room serve as ready-made labels for this sculpture and immediately inform the viewer's contemplation. This little statue of Ganesh differs from most of the others in the room. Its relatively small size, its poor quality (it is the most eroded of all the pieces in the collection) and its physical appearance seem to set it apart. The majority of the other sculptures on display look very "Cham". That is, they bear certain similarities of resemblance, or style, that we recognize as Cham, where, following Meyer Schapiro, "by style is meant the constant form – and sometimes the constant elements, qualities and expression – in the art of an individual or a group" (Schapiro 1953: 287). The Ganesh, however, is clearly problematic. If "style is, above all, a system of forms with a quality and meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of the group are visible" (Schapiro 1953: 287), then this piece, looking different from the others, is not unequivocally Cham. Indeed one might argue that it seems to have something of a Javanese quality to it, though the stone type is not one found in pieces from Java, but similar, rather, to that used in other Cham sculptures. However, Schapiro noted that while technique, subject matter and material may be characteristic of certain groups, they are never as clearly identifiable to a period as formal and qualitative features (Schapiro 1953: 290). During a visit to the Musée Guimet in September 2004, Trần Kỳ Phương, one of

the leading Vietnamese experts on Cham art, suggested that the Ganesh exudes an “atmosphere” of Champa⁷. An “atmosphere” and an indentifiable style are clearly two different things. If, as Shapiro suggested, “style is like a language” (Shapiro 1980: 292), it is far from clear just which language this particular Ganesh speaks.

The Guimet Cham collection is widely regarded as the most important collection of Cham sculpture outside Vietnam and is invariably credited with representing a complete cross-section of the art of Champa. Thus Pierre Baptiste has declared that “the Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet is proud to preserve the most complete collection of cam sculpture outside Vietnam”, and that “it houses masterpieces that illustrate the major historical periods of Champa art although their number is small (about thirty)” (Baptiste 2002: 5). His words echo those of Gilles Béguin writing about the collection a decade earlier: “a rare ensemble of sculptures illustrates the principal phases of the evolution of a unique art” (Béguin 1992: 80). It is far from clear, though, just how the Ganesh fits in with these “masterpieces”, nor how it helps to illustrate the major historical periods of Cham art.

As if attesting to the relative insignificance of the Ganesh within the Guimet Cham collection, there are, to the best of my knowledge, only two published references to the statue in the available literature, even though it has been on display for three decades. Both of these are little more than catalogue descriptions. The first appeared in 1985, in the “Acquisitions” section of the Musée Guimet’s bulletin, *Arts Asiatiques*, recording the entry of the sculpture into the museum’s collection after its transfer from the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens. In a short paragraph, Albert

⁷ Trần Kỳ Phương, personal communication

Le Bonheur,⁸ who was curator of the Guimet Southeast Asian collections at the time, suggests that the piece is important, both because of the rarity of representations of Ganesh in Cham art and, following Boisselier,⁹ because most of the other known extant examples are of earlier date. Le Bonheur recognises, therefore, that there are no direct comparative models, but suggests that “the general appearance of the modelling, the clothing and the jewellery *make one think*¹⁰ of the M̃y Son A1 style, perhaps still in its early phase, and therefore to propose a date around the first half of the 10th century for this free-standing statue ” (Le Bonheur 1985 : 119-120). There are two major points worthy of note in this short text. Firstly, while Le Bonheur cites Cham art expert Boisselier with regard to his generalised remarks on Ganesh images in Cham art, no academic reference is necessary when he suggests a style for the statue. By 1985, the stylistic dating system, which had been developed over the course of the 20th century by Parmentier, Coral Rémusat, Stern and Boisselier, is a given, its authority taken for granted. It has become an established part of the language of Cham art and Le Bonheur is able to give the Ganesh a style label, in this case, “M̃y Son A1”, without any apparent need for qualification or explanation. We shall return to the implications of this presently. Secondly, it is important to recognize the hesitant tone of this passage. The use of expressions such as “makes one think”, or the inclusion of “perhaps”, clearly indicates that this is merely a tentative dating. Le Bonheur is “proposing” a date and a style, he is not certain about it. It should also be noted that Le Bonheur makes no mention of the provenance of the sculpture, whether known or unknown, in his description. This seems surprising since this is the first official

⁸ Born in Saigon, Albert Le Bonheur (1938-1996) trained as a philologist and art historian, and was a curator at the Musée Guimet for over 30 years. A specialist in Southeast Asian art, he spent frequent long periods in the region, working in the places where the art came from, rather than at a distance (Filliozat 1996:139-140)

⁹ See Boisselier (1963a: 47, 57-58 and figs. 14, 23 and 24)

¹⁰ The original French is “invitent à penser au style de Mi-son A1”. The italics are mine.

presentation of a piece which is entering the national collection. Interestingly, while *Le Bonheur* draws attention to the rarity of Cham Ganeshas, both Parmentier and Malleret suggest, on the contrary, that images of Ganesh are common in Champa (Parmentier 1922: 9; Malleret 1956: 222). However, since Parmentier's remark was made in reference to one particular image, it is unclear what it is based on and Malleret was referring jointly to numerous images in Cambodia and Champa. In any case, whether we consider the handful of known Cham Ganeshas¹¹ as many or few is, of course, a matter of conjecture. What remains clear is that the known Cham Ganesh images are all different, exhibiting unique features, hampering any comparison between them.

The second published reference to the Guimet Ganesh appeared twenty years later, in a special edition of the *Lettre de la SACHA*¹² devoted entirely to the Musée Guimet Cham collection. In this volume, Pierre Baptiste gave a brief historical overview of the collection, pointing out that “after the second world war, decolonization was not favourable to any enlargement of the collections”. According to Baptiste “pieces from Trà Kiệu (MAAO 289 to 291) similar to those already on display and a Ganeça from an unknown origin (AF 14666)” entered the Guimet when the Musée des Colonies, “now the Musée des arts africains et océaniens”, closed. He adds that these statues, “for a long time in the storerooms”, have been “on display since 2001” (Baptiste 2002: 20). This is, in fact, a slightly confused and highly simplified account of a much more complex history, in which, amongst other things the Ganesh has in fact been on display at the Guimet since 1983, much longer, therefore, than Baptiste suggests. A simple slip? Or did this little statue go virtually unnoticed in the galleries

¹¹ The Danang and HCMC museums both have several examples of Cham Ganeshas.

for almost twenty years? This same issue of the *Lettre de la SACHA* includes a photograph of the Guimet Ganesh and a brief description of the statue by Marie-Christine Duflos.¹³ In this description, the style and date of the piece are no longer in question. “The jewels, the ears and the way the dhoti is tied place this statue during the beginning of My So’n A1 style”, Duflos emphatically states. Four bibliographic references are included after Duflos’ short text, though all refer to other Ganeshas, none to the Guimet Ganesh itself. Le Bonheur’s 1985 description does not figure among the references (Duflos 2002: 13).

For the uninitiated visitor to the museum, that is the visitor with no particular background knowledge of Asian art, the objects on display have very little intrinsic meaning. The Ganesh will be little more than a stone image with an apparently human body and elephant’s head. Therefore, the ways in which this museum, which describes itself on its official website as “a major centre in the heart of Europe for the appreciation and understanding of Asian civilizations” (Guimet 2012), guides the average visitor in his or her reading of this little object are of particular interest. What exactly, in other words, is the visitor expected to make of this Cham sculpture?

2.3 Viewing Cham Art

(i) The Limitations of an Iconographic Approach

One of the traditional approaches to the study of Southeast Asian art is an iconographic approach, the most common model for which is that posited well over half a century ago by Erwin Panofsky (Panofsky 1939; Panofsky 1955). Panofsky’s

¹² SACHA : Société des Amis du Champa Ancien

model proposes a three-stage approach to the understanding of works of art. He terms the first stage the *pre-iconographic* phase, in which the visually identifiable details of the art work are perceived. In the case of the Guimet Ganesh, this would be the identification of a seated human-like figure with an elephant's head. Without help from the museum, the uninitiated visitor can go no further than this first stage. The statue has no intrinsic meaning beyond these identifiable physical attributes. At least a minimum of background knowledge of Indian or Southeast Asian art or religion is clearly necessary in order to identify this as the God Ganesh. Such recognition constitutes the second phase of Panofsky's model, which he calls the *iconographical* stage. Much of Southeast Asian art history has been involved with identifying images and narratives through their iconography. While, with some images this may involve painstaking cross-referencing of visual imagery with textual sources, and exact identification may well prove impossible, in the case of Ganesh, because of his distinctive and unique features, the identification is easy, immediate and largely unproblematic. However, the final stage of Panofsky's model, which he terms the *iconological*, relates the work of art to larger social and contextual issues, and in the case of the art of Champa, this is the most difficult stage to apply. Since so little is known of the socio-historic context in which the statues were originally conceived, analysis of Cham artworks on an iconological level is for the most part simply not possible. Perhaps largely because of this difficulty, most studies of the art of Champa have tended to prefer a stylistic approach. However, the small, rather eroded Guimet Ganesh does not lend itself well to a stylistic analysis. The first art historian to attempt it, Albert Le Bonheur, was, as we have seen, hesitant, and only tentatively proposed a style. A stylistic approach to the Guimet Ganesh would appear to be problematic.

¹³ Each of the pieces in the collection is accorded a similar brief description

(ii) Connotated Meaning

The first stage of Panofsky's three-step iconological approach to art, the simple identification of the visual and formal elements, can be compared to what French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes has termed the *denotated* meaning (Barthes 1997c). For Barthes, beyond its *denotation* or literal meaning a word or image may have connotations. Barthes formulates this as the *connotated* level of meaning, which has its parallel in Panofsky's iconological phase. However, for Barthes, while the denotated meaning of an image or object may be clear, objects may have multiple connotated meanings. At the level of connotation the meaning may have nothing to do with the object itself or its original function. For example, the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan or the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum almost certainly symbolize for most people things totally unrelated to the original function or context of the objects. They have taken on new connotations, or meanings, because of later events in their histories, and, most importantly, because we are aware of these later events. To avoid objects meaning just anything we wish, Barthes suggests that connotated meaning is usually "fixed", and that this is often done by society. With his concept of the "fixing" of meaning, Barthes is suggesting that certain conditions, certain sets of circumstances, will influence the viewer to understand or read an image in a particular way, rather than interpreting it in just any manner he or she might choose. A particular context will tend to produce a particular meaning. Thus the meaning of the Twin Towers is, in Barthesian terms, "fixed" by the events of 11th September 2001, the Bamiyan Buddhas by the circumstances of their destruction and so forth. For the meaning to be "fixed", that is, for a meaning to become generalized, accepted by the

majority and not just the individual, it clearly has to be known. The fixed meaning is public rather than personal. Once we become aware of the later events in the life of the World Trade Centre or of the Bamiyan images, the connotated meaning produced by these later events becomes fixed.

Connotated meanings of ancient Cham art have rarely been the focus of scholarly attention, which has tended to concentrate solely on iconographic and stylistic analysis. This has meant that art historians have on the whole limited their descriptions of the artwork to its past or original contexts. In other words, Cham art history generally focuses on the art as it was presumed to be in ancient Champa. However, Cham pieces have accumulated multiple meanings over time, some of which are hidden and few of which are sufficiently brought to the fore. The presence of the Guimet Ganesh in the heart of the collections of the national museum of Asian art and the information recorded on its label provide us with a window on to some of the multiple meanings it has accrued in the course of its life.

There are many ways in which meaning may be “fixed” in a museum exhibit. As Paul Valéry once showed, the museum itself may play a major role in influencing the visitor, not only through what is displayed and how, but also through the rules and regulations of the institution:

At the first step that I take towards things of beauty, a hand relieves me of my stick and a notice forbids me to smoke. Chilled at once by this act of authority and by the sense of constraint, I make my way into a room of sculpture where a cold confusion reigns.
(Valéry 1960: 202)

While such things clearly *do* affect the way we see objects in museums, of greater interest are the ways the museum *deliberately* sets out to shape, to frame and to inform our understanding of the artefacts on display. In a museum, very often the information provided on the label, usually by invisible and largely anonymous curators, will serve to fix the general meaning. By providing certain items of information and not others, the museum is framing the way we see and understand objects on display. The label tells us what the object is and, to a certain extent, guides us in how to view it, thus helping the visitor to make sense of Valéry's "cold confusion".¹⁴ In the Cham and Khmer rooms of the Musée Guimet, the majority of objects are displayed singly on pedestals or isolated on blank walls with minimal identifying labels. Sally Price detects a tendency in art museums for "the perceived worth (a combination of artistic fame and financial assessment) to be inversely related to the amount of detail in the accompanying label", and suggests that "the isolation of an object both from other objects and from verbose contextualization carries a definite implication of value" (Price 1989: 84). Following Price, therefore, it could be argued that the majority of Cham and Khmer pieces in the Guimet are displayed as unique objects of great worth. What role, though, does the label play in "fixing" the meaning of these unique objects?

¹⁴ Such questions of interpretation and guided reception have been widely discussed in museum studies. See, for example, Alpers (1991), Baxandall (1991), Duncan (1995a and 1995b), Hooper-Greenhill (1996).

2.4 What's in a Label ? How the Guimet Presents the Cham Ganesh

The role of the museum is, at least in part, an educative one, and this is enshrined in both French Law and by UNESCO's International Council of Museums (ICOM).¹⁵ The onus on the museum is to provide some sort of complementary information to supplement the visitor's knowledge and enhance his or her appreciation of the work on display. In the Musée Guimet the general policy, following a long standing French tradition, is to keep such information to a strict minimum.¹⁶ Writing about French Asian art museums during the colonial period, Gwendolyn Wright has observed that "the minimal labelling system assumed a language of art in which each piece would 'speak for itself' " (Wright 1996: 135). Indeed, without any label, we might well argue that a museum object can only *speak for itself*, although in this case what the object "says" is likely to be somewhat limited, indeed perhaps incomprehensible for the uninitiated. As soon as a label is introduced, however minimal the information provided may be, it will profoundly alter the way the object "speaks", or in other words, the way the viewer perceives it. Clearly, even something as basic as a date will do this. Shanks and Tilley have suggested, though, that in the museum "the artefact is turned into a commodity and in effect removed from history", and that "this confirms the present's relation with the object world", so that "it is the present which is preserved not the past" (Shanks and Tilley 1992: 68). This brings to the fore one of

¹⁵ See French law No. 2005-5 of 5 January 2002 Relative to French Museums (French Law 2002) and ICOM code of ethics for museums, which sets minimum standards of professional practice and performance for museums and their staff (ICOM 2006)

¹⁶ This is the general practice for the permanent collections, but differs dramatically in the case of temporary exhibitions. See chapter 6.

the paradoxes of ancient objects. The past has gone and cannot be retrieved. History is our (re)-writing of events that have happened, or that we believe to have happened. However, when we stand in front of an ancient artwork we somehow seem to have, or at least would like to have, the idea that we are looking at something from the past, and thus looking into the past. The museum often does much to enhance this fantasy, through display, labelling and so forth. In the Musée Guimet, the labelling, albeit minimal, clearly aims to put objects into an historical framework, and in the case of Champa, that of the French stylistic chronology.

The Guimet Ganesh is accompanied by a small label bearing the following information:

Gaṇeśa

- Vietnam
- Provenance exacte inconnue
- Style de Mỹ Sơn A1
- Xe siècle
- Grès
- Musée des Colonies, 1946
- Dépôt du Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens, 1983 – AF 14666

The label follows fairly standard museum practice for the labelling of art objects, that is: identification, provenance, date, style, material, acquisition details. These have changed little since the 1930s when, as we have seen, the bulk of the Cham collection was constituted. In 1931, an instruction booklet for collectors of ethnographic objects suggested that “a poorly identified object has no value from the scientific point of view”, and it therefore proposed a model for card-indexing of objects, whose label

would be an abbreviated version of the card-index. Cards in the index were to contain the following information (Musée d'Ethnographie 1931: 23):

1. Place of origin
2. Identification and name
3. Description
4. Supplementary information
5. Ethnological information
6. By whom and when the object was collected
7. Conditions relative to the object's transfer to museum
8. Iconographic references
9. Bibliography

The Ganesh label, as an “abbreviated version of the card index”, would appear, therefore, to conform fairly closely to this model, which was adopted at the time by ethnographic and art museums alike. Thus, because of its standard format, it arouses little attention. Nevertheless, it is the only guide the museum provides the visitor with, and it is the label which informs the spectator's understanding of the artwork. In a museum whose policy is to provide a minimum of distracting information, greater attention to the labels may elucidate the function and meaning of the art on display, since what is generally taken for granted, even overlooked, may open up new meanings and reveal obscured, or obscure, histories.

The label identifies the image as being a representation of the god Ganesh. However, there is no hint of who Ganesh is, nor what he did, what his functions were. No suggestion here of the fascinating Ganesh of “charm, mystery, popularity, sexual problems, moral ambivalence, political importance” referred to by Wendy O'Flaherty (Courtright 1985: xv). No question it seems of cluttering art with myth and legend. Identification, place and date are all given equal importance on the label; each is

simply one of a list of basic facts concerning the object. In effect, the visitor is provided with no more than a standard catalogue reference for the piece. Interestingly, the place of origin of the sculpture is given as Vietnam and the label makes no mention of Champa. What, therefore, is the visitor supposed to understand by “exact provenance unknown”?

Provenance is now generally considered to be one of the most important requirements in the world of museums, galleries and dealers, and museums will rarely accept works with no known provenance, although this, however, has not always been the case. A lack of provenance not only poses problems for the identification and authentication of an object, but clearly also raises awkward questions about the legitimacy of its presence within a collection. A lack of provenance may also mean no knowledge of how, when and where an object was acquired, something which has marked much of Cham art history. Writing about the official excavations of the EFEO, Gwendolyn Wright has noted, for example, that “nowhere does the École’s literature mention how its staff ‘acquired’ thousands of objects” and that “donations too were accepted without questions” (Wright 1996: 132).

The label of the Guimet Ganesh would appear to imply that the object comes from Vietnam, but that the *exact* provenance within Vietnam is unknown. Strictly speaking, it is an anachronism to speak of a Cham piece coming from Vietnam, since Vietnam is a modern name for the country.¹⁷ When Champa existed Vietnam did not, and by the time what we now call Vietnam came into being, the ancient civilization of Champa had ceased to be. The fact that the sculpture is located in the “Cham” room

¹⁷ The term was first used in 1804 – see chapter 5

of the Guimet would appear to serve to identify it to the visitor as a Cham piece, since labelling in museums exists at multiple levels. The individual objects, the display cases, the rooms, the departments and even the museum itself all play a role in identifying the object, forming, as it were, its larger label. This is further complicated by the fact that the entrance plaque to the Cham gallery announces not Champa, but “Champa (Vietnam)”. The Guimet Ganesh seems to hover uneasily between Vietnam and Champa. Underlying a few deceptively simple lines on the label is a complex conflation of histories and places. The problem of locating Champa within Vietnam will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

In the label of the sculpture, style and date have now become enshrined as hard fact, just as they had in Duflos’ 2002 description. What Le Bonheur tentatively suggested when he had the piece brought to the Guimet three decades ago is no longer questioned. This *is* a Cham sculpture, its style *is* Mỹ Sơn A1 and it *does* date from the 10th century. Clearly, though, for the uninitiated visitor the style appellation is incomprehensible, it is the language of experts and scholarship. Nowhere in the Cham gallery is there an explanation of the styles, neither what constitutes them, nor the history of how they were developed. At best, by searching around, the enterprising visitor might come across mention elsewhere of temple Mỹ Sơn A1 (fig.5), but this is of little help in elucidating the information on the label of the Ganesh. It is probably true to say that even if an overview of the stylistic dating system, for example in the form of a wall panel in the gallery, were provided, it is unlikely that it would really aid the average visitor’s understanding of the object. Knowing that, in the mid 20th century, Guimet curator Philippe Stern, building on earlier work by Henri Parmentier, devised a comprehensive style dating system through the identification of recurring

motifs in temple columns, and that each style was named after the temple which was most representative of that style, would likely be of little use to the average visitor. Similarly, to further know that groups of temples at the major Cham site of Mỹ Sơn were unglamorously identified by letters of the alphabet and that the temples within each group were numbered from the largest down, with A1 being the biggest of all, would also benefit little the visitor's appreciation and understanding of the Ganesh. What is more, there is nothing that leads us to believe that the Guimet Ganesh has any connection at all with this particular temple-tower and the tower itself no longer exists as it was destroyed by bombs during the American war. All this, we might suppose, could well hinder rather than aide understanding of the statue. The French dating system is, in effect, a sort of secret code, intelligible only to the initiated, yet it forms a central part of the sparse information provided to the visitor. This information is provided by the museum, the voice of authority. If the label states that the piece came from Vietnam, then the visitor is unlikely to doubt it. If we read on to the end of the label, we see that the piece was in fact brought from elsewhere, from two different museums, two more voices of authority.

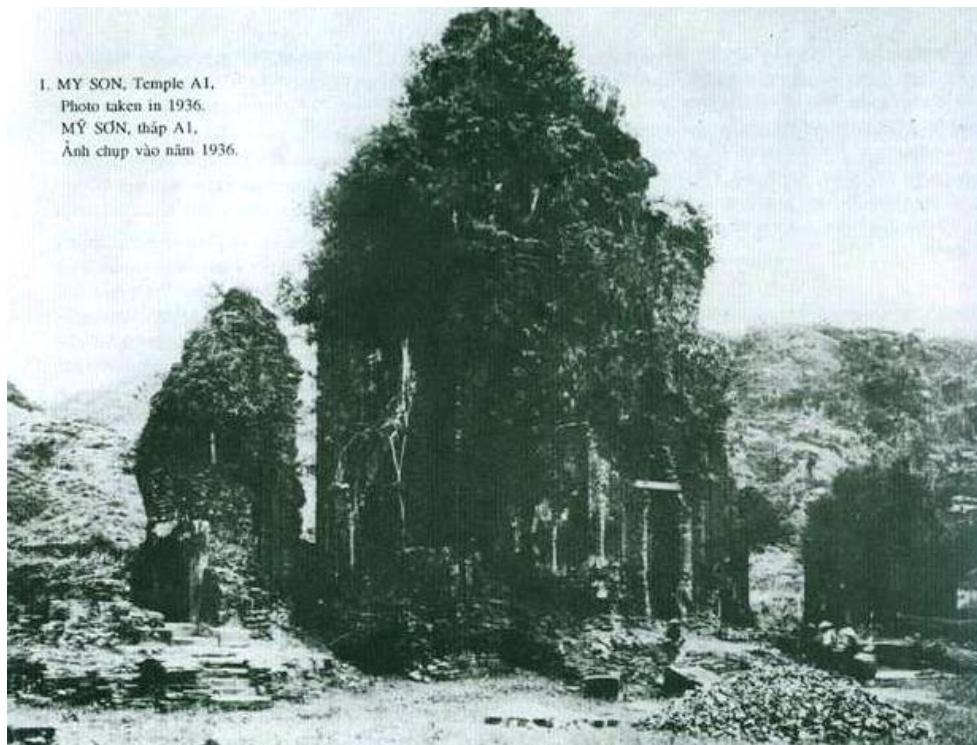


Fig. 5 Temple Mỹ Sơn A1 in 1936

Perhaps the most revealing entry on the label is the penultimate line: “Musée des Colonies, 1946”. The Guimet collections were for the most part formed during the colonial period, and the Southeast Asian collections, often regarded as one of the museum’s highlights, came from the former French possessions in Southeast Asia, which constituted French Indochina. In some ways, the Musée Guimet can be seen as a colonial museum, displaying colonial collections. Indeed, Nélia Dias has even gone as far as suggesting that, in fact, by the means they used for obtaining objects, by the nature of the collections and their geographical provenance and by their criteria for classification, the vast majority of natural history, ethnographic, archaeological and even art museums in France are all, in a sense, ‘colonial museums’ (Dias 2000: 15). This is almost never acknowledged by the museums themselves. The whole colonial period remains a particularly problematic period for French history, and this is reflected in the way colonialism is represented in education and in museums. In 2005,

there was a striking example of this when the French government passed a law requiring history teachers in schools to stress the “positive aspects of French colonialism”.¹⁸ Paradoxically, as Panivong Norindr and others have pointed out, “today, images of Indochina continue to permeate every facet of contemporary French culture” and “because the name Indochine still has the power to elicit strong visual and affective responses, the tourist industry, like its fashion counterpart, has made wide use of its aura to attract new customers” (Norindr 1996: 155).¹⁹ At the Musée Guimet, such an aura seems to be silenced rather than promoted. The inclusion of the word “colonies” on the label of the Cham Ganesh is, therefore, all the more surprising. In effect, this brief line-entry on the label of the statue stands in lieu of provenance, serving to legitimize the object in the museum’s collection. This entry on the label informs the visitor that, in 1946, the sculpture entered the collections of the Musée des Colonies. This is somewhat surprising since, in 1946, the Musée des Colonies in fact no longer existed. Furthermore, in the final line-entry on the label we find that the sculpture was actually transferred to the Musée Guimet in 1983 from a different museum, the MAAO. It would seem that the conundrum for the visitor deepens.

2.5 The Musée Permanent des Colonies

In 1931, France hosted a vast international colonial exhibition on the Eastern side of Paris at the edge of the Bois de Vincennes (figs. 6-10). This was to be the last and

¹⁸ French Law 2005-158 of 23 February 2005, article 4 paragraph 2 (French Law 2005). As the result of widespread public protest, in particular by prominent public figures, article 4 paragraph 2 of this law was subsequently repealed in 2006 – Décret n° 2006-160 du 15 février 2006 (French Law 2006)

¹⁹ See chapter 6 for a discussion of the marketing of *Indochine*

grandest in a series of colonial exhibitions.²⁰ One of the highlights of the exhibition was the famous life-size reconstruction of Angkor Wat, in the interior of which, and thus quite literally *à l'ombre d'Angkor*, visitors were able to admire a display of Cham sculptures. These were the ones subsequently transferred to the Musée Guimet (Bruhl 1932: 301).²¹ Of the hundreds of buildings, pavilions and structures built for the Exposition, including the reconstruction of Angkor Wat, only one, the Musée Permanent des Colonies, was planned as a permanent fixture, one that was destined to live beyond the duration of the Exposition. This museum, whose foundation stone was laid in 1928 by Gaston Doumergue, the President of the French Republic, was to be one of the last European museums created to celebrate the colonial enterprise (Taffin 2002: 180). The building housing it, known as the Palais de la Porte Dorée, was designed by French architect Albert Laprade (1883-1978) in a synthesis of Art Déco, classical and Moroccan architectural styles. The outside was decorated with giant reliefs by Alfred Auguste Janniot (1889-1969) glorifying the colonial enterprise and its economic contribution to France. The Emperor of Annam stood alongside the French President at the inauguration on 6th May 1931, as if to embody the words inscribed above the monumental staircase: “France honours her sons who expanded the Empire's genius and made her name loved across the seas”²² (Hodier 2002: 33-34). The Permanent Museum of the Colonies was destined to have a history in many ways as tumultuous as the colonialism it set out to glorify.

Since many of the objects displayed in the museum during the 1931 Exposition had been on loan only, when the Exposition ended they were returned to their owners,

²⁰ The last universal exhibition in Paris was held in 1937, but it was not specifically colonial.

²¹ See chapter 3 for a note on the displays inside the reconstruction of Angkor Wat

²² “A ses fils qui ont étendu l’Empire de son génie et fait aimer son nom au-delà des mers, la France reconnaissante”

which included both institutions and individuals. At the same time, numerous other artefacts which had been exhibited in the Exposition's myriad pavilions were transferred to the museum, and the great national museums, including the Musée Guimet, arranged for objects, and sometimes entire collections, to be given to it on loan. In order to accommodate these changes, the museum closed for a complete re-organisation of its collections. During this period public views towards colonialism were changing and, by the time the museum completely re-opened in 1935,²³ the decision had been taken to change its name to the "Musée de la France d'Outre-Mer", a name which it would maintain until 1960 (Cornilliet-Watelet 1989: 83).

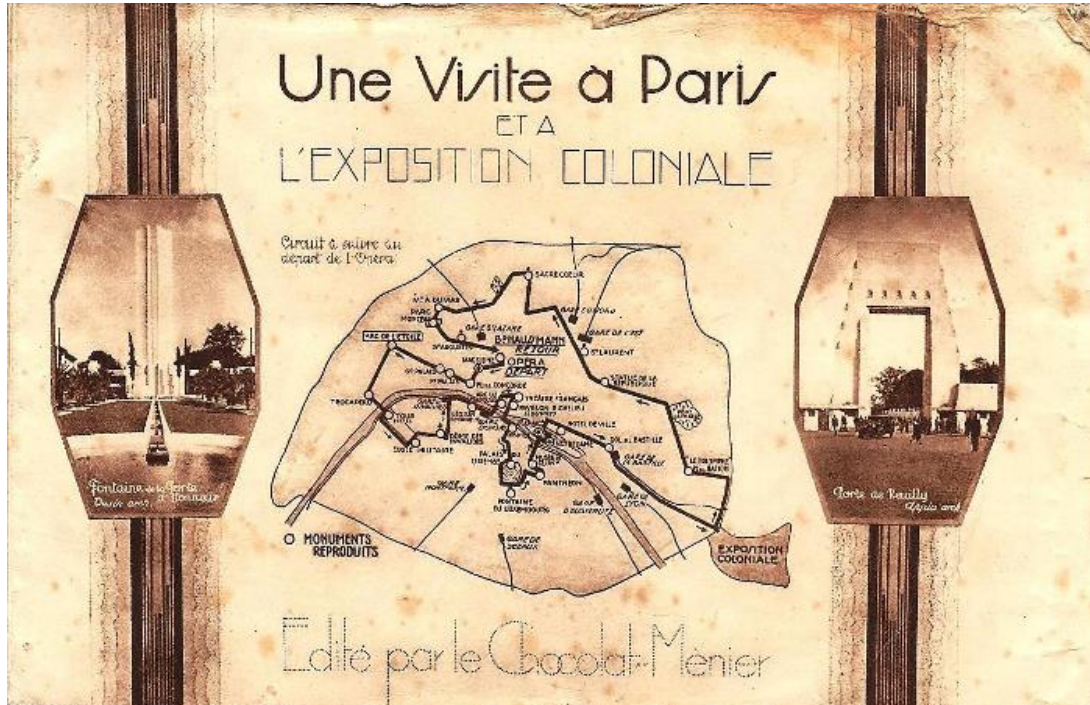


Fig. 6 Guide to the 1931 Exposition Coloniale

²³ It had been partially re-opened earlier than this.

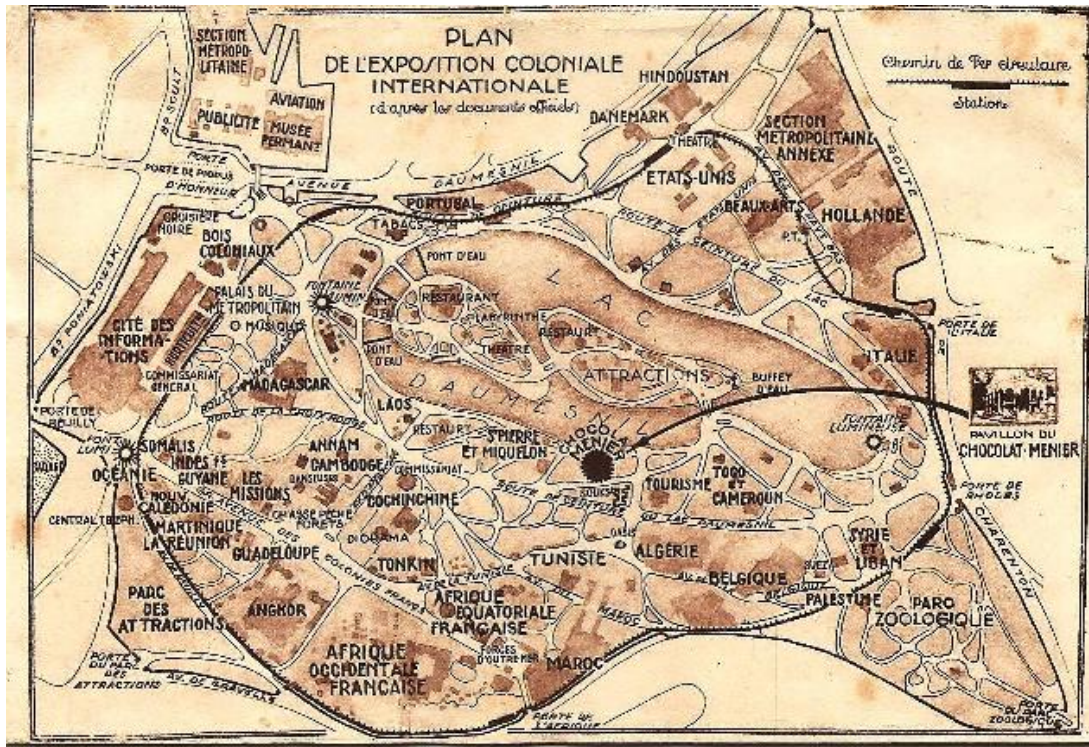


Fig. 7 Map of the Exposition site
(The Musée Permanent is in the top left hand corner)



Fig. 8 The life- size replica of Angkor Wat



Fig. 9 Exhibition room inside the Angkor Wat replica



Fig.10 The Musée Permanent des Colonies in 1931
(source: Expositions Universelles 2012)

After the 1937 Universal Exposition closed more pieces joined the museum, and by 1939 it had amassed a collection of over 40 000 objects, almost half of which had come from the 1931 and 1937 exhibitions and various colonial institutions. From this point onwards, the number of items increased little until 1955 when, following the independence of Vietnam, the museum experienced another massive influx of objects. From the outset, the museum had demonstrated a particular interest in pre-colonial traditions, but with greater emphasis on ethnographic material than fine-art objects. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that only about one third of the museum's Indochinese collections consisted of art-works or archaeological artefacts. The majority of the objects acquired by the museum came from Asia and Africa, but the quantity of the objects, due in part to numerous donations by colonial families, considerably outweighed their quality (Taffin 2002: 186, 188; Cornilliet-Watelet 1989: 85).

Catherine Bouche has suggested that “the Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer was not conceived as a museum of fine-arts, but rather as a living, educational museum”. She describes it as “something along the lines of the museums of young nations in search of an identity or of the museums of socialist states” where the displays, designed to demonstrate the global, followed criteria other than aesthetic ones, thus explaining the mediocrity of certain pieces (Bouche 1987: 49). Conceived as an instrument of power, and assimilated both in theory and practice with the colonial enterprise, the museum fell into decline in an exact parallel with the destiny of the colonies it was designed to represent, and by the late 1950s it was suffering severe financial difficulties (Bouche 1987: 60). With the dissolution of the Ministry of France d’Outre-Mer during the same period, the running of the museum was reassigned to the newly created Ministry

of cultural Affairs on 1st January 1960. By this time, the degradation of the building and of the collections displayed in it had turned the museum into a “quite unwitting metaphor for the disintegration of the French colonial empire” (Taffin 1999: 113). In March of that year, when the director of the Museum requested that the sign “Musée des Colonies” be removed from the façade of the building, he was told to wait until the collections inside duly conformed to a new name, for the collections themselves were undergoing a distinct process of mutation at this time. In 1960, André Malraux demanded that people “stop going on about colonialism”²⁴ (quoted in Taffin 1999 : 113) and, after lengthy debates had been held, in January 1961, he created the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (MAAO) out of the remnants of the Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer, while all around the decolonisation of the remaining colonies was in full swing.

Taffin has pointed out that the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie was born with a double problem of identity. Not only did it inherit a colonial past because it was created out of the Musée des Colonies/Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer, but it also had to justify its existence alongside another, already existing Parisian museum of African and Oceanic art, the Musée de l’Homme. From its inception, the new museum at the Porte de Vincennes lacked true objective and motivation and throughout the 1960s it suffered administrative problems and staff departures. Therefore, little by little over the next two decades, this museum too would gradually fall into decline. Even though the former Musée des Colonies, “an out-of-date, pathetic survivor from a bygone era, the derisory witness of fallen splendour” (Bouche 1987 : 63), had

²⁴ “Qu’on nous laisse tranquille avec le colonialisme”. Novelist and art theoretician André Malraux. (1901-1976) was Minister of Cultural Affairs, 1959-1969, during the Presidency of Charles de Gaulle

seemingly been banished from official memory, it would persist in legend, and both the general public and the press continued to refer to it as the Musée des Colonies (Taffin 1999: 116).

In 1990, in what looked like a final effort to stave off its inevitable death throes, the museum underwent yet another, albeit subtle, name change and became the Musée national des Arts Africains et Océaniens, but the widely used acronym, MAAO, remained unaltered. The MAAO finally closed definitively in 2003 and its collections were moved to form part of the nucleus of the new Musée du Quai Branly which opened its doors in 2006.²⁵ After a period of restructuration the old Musée des Colonies reopened in 2007 as the Cité internationale de l'histoire de l'immigration. It was as if France, still unable to put on display its colonial history, compromised by turning the building which would most have lent itself to a museum of colonialism into a museum of immigration instead. Rather than creating a museum of what France did in its colonies, it chose to put on display what the colonial peoples did when they came to France. Thus, to this day, Paris still lacks a museum of colonialism.

It is against this background that the Guimet Ganesh lives the first part of its life as objet d'art in a Parisian museum. In view of such a turbulent museum history, it is virtually impossible to recover the exact trajectory of this one object, and there is almost no trace of where it remained for the better part of forty years. Entering the holdings of the Musée de la France d'Outre-Mer in 1946, the Guimet Ganesh arrived during a period that saw relatively few new additions to its collections. Any decision to acquire a new object must therefore have been a relatively important event.

However, the circumstances motivating the museum to acquire this piece at this particular moment are lost. The ledgers of entries to the Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer show the arrival of two objects (catalogue numbers AF 14 666 and AF 14 667) from the Galerie Mioche in Paris on 1st April 1946 (Blind and Martin 1997: 34). One of these, number 14 666, is the Guimet Ganesh, the other is a Khmer piece. Both are today in the collections of the Musée Guimet, where they are still identified by these same catalogue numbers. The records of the Musée d’Outre Mer indicate that the two items were purchased and then loaned, which would seem a curious order of events. It is not clear whether this is a mistake, and that in fact they were loan pieces that were subsequently purchased by the museum, or whether they were loaned to some other institution after purchase. A handwritten annotation on a 1983 Ordinance concerning the transfer of various other objects from the MAAO to the Guimet records the purchase of object AF 14666 on 19th April 1946,²⁶ so perhaps the Ganesh was “on loan” from the gallery for 18 days before it was actually purchased. There are no known records of the financial transaction and the Galerie Mioche has long since ceased to exist. Similarly, no trace of where the gallery obtained the items from appears to have survived.²⁷ Interestingly, the MAAO archives classify the objects as “ethnographic”. They list them as being displayed in the Indochina section on the first floor of the museum. No record of either the circumstances or the duration of their display has survived, and neither of the pieces is visible in contemporary photographs of the galleries. For nearly four decades, therefore, the biography of the Guimet Ganesh remains resolutely silent. Was he on display? Or rather was he hidden away in storage? Who was responsible for the decisions to display or not display the image

²⁵ For a detailed critical analysis of the conflicts, tensions and political wrangling that marked the creation and opening of the Musée du Quai Branly, see Price (2007)

²⁶ Musée Guimet archives

²⁷ If any of the gallery’s records have survived their whereabouts is unknown.

and what were the motivations behind such decisions? We can only guess the answers to such questions.²⁸ All that survives of the history of the Ganesh from 1946 is the name of a Paris art gallery, which has long since gone, and the appellation Cham, neither of which appear today on the Guimet label. Instead, according to the label, the piece hails from Vietnam via the Musée des Colonies and the MAAO.

2.6 Confused Archives – Tracing the Recent History of the Guimet Ganesh

Following a long-standing tradition that French Presidents leave a monument to their prosperity, Jacques Chirac announced in the 1990s the creation of a new Parisian art museum. Mirroring the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens that it was destined to replace, this museum underwent a series of name changes. Rapidly considered non-politically correct, the original name, the Musée des Arts Primitifs, was dropped in the face of public and political pressure, and changed to Musée des Arts Premiers. Following renewed criticism of the modified name, it was eventually decided that the new institution would simply be known by the name of its location, the Musée du Quai Branly. A large part of the collections as well the archives of the MAAO would be inherited by this new museum.

The transformation of the Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer into the MAAO had entailed a complete overhaul of the collections. Many items in the former museum collections no longer found their place in the new museum. A flurry of inter-museum correspondence ensued, with the director of the new museum requesting that

²⁸ It should be noted that, perhaps not surprisingly after so many name and role changes, the archives of the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et Océanie were in more-or-less total disarray by the 1990s when the museum slowly began to wind down before its definitive closure.

museums take back artworks and collections that they had loaned to the museum, in many cases decades earlier. The archives of both the Musée Guimet and the MAAO contain a mass of largely unsorted letters and official ordinances recording the transfer of objects between museums during this period. Archives at the Guimet are not in the public domain, rather they form part of the secret back-stage mechanism of the museum administration. Access to them, upon special request, and subject to approval, is dependent on a number of administrative regulations. If employees mentioned in the archives are still living, access is likely to be denied. Further, the archives are not catalogued or fully classified²⁹ and are distributed between various different departments within the museum. The workings of French museum administration thus frustrate attempts to trace the biographies of individual artworks.³⁰

It was the definitive closure of the MAAO and the pending transfer of many of its objects to the future Musée du Quai Branly that inspired the last curator of the collections, Dominique Taffin, to attempt to put some order into them. Painstakingly, with the help of students at the École du Louvre, she began to reconcile the documentation with the actual collection, assessing exactly what the museum did and did not possess before the archives and objects were moved to temporary storage awaiting the opening of the Musée du Quai Branly. When this happened, a new team of staff, housed in temporary office space on the Eastern edge of Paris set to work trying to make sense of half a century of museum history, and turn it into the

²⁹ In late 2004, when the Guimet archives were consulted, the museum was contemplating hiring someone full-time to work on the archive collection, however, access to them remains restricted.

³⁰ It should be noted that problems of museum administration and regulation hindering research into collections and objects is by no means unique to France. Restricted access to archives and documentation and secrecy surrounding collections and acquisition procedures are common to many museums around the world.

administrative data base of a new one. Consequently, access to the archives, never easy at the best of times, became even more problematic: no-one quite knew what they had, nor where it was located.

Scattered between the offices of the Musée Guimet and these storage rooms of the future Musée du Quai Branly, sometimes in duplicate, sometimes not, was a mass of documentation revealing half a century of inter-museum transfers of objects. Correspondence dating back to the 1930s records the depositing of Guimet pieces at the former Musée des Colonies/Musée de la France d'Outre-Mer, while a further batch of letters from the 1960s contains requests that these same loaned works, no longer wanted by the newly created MAAO, be retrieved by their rightful owners. By this stage, however, many of these owners, among them the Musée Guimet, clearly had no desire to have the artworks back. In a series of letters, Jeannine Auboyer, head of the Guimet from 1965 to 1980, rejects offers to retrieve artworks, under the pretext that the Guimet already possessed better, or equivalent, examples of the pieces in question. She even ventures to inquire whether the more mediocre pieces could not be found a home in some provincial museum.³¹ Despite this, the Guimet archives include an ordinance, dated 10 December 1964, officially confirming the transfer of 60 objects from the MAAO collections to the Musée Guimet for a period of three years, renewable by tacit agreement. The list of objects includes a Cham lion (catalogue number 291). This lion remained hidden in storage until it was finally put on display after the Guimet re-opened in 2001.

³¹ It is amusing to speculate that the Rochefort Museum might well have been considered a likely candidate at the time, possessing as it does Asian and African art.

There is no trace in this correspondence, dating from the mid 1960s, of the fate of the Guimet Ganesh. The archives of Albert Le Bonheur, held by the Musée Guimet, are not in the public domain, since the required lapses of time for the documents have not yet all been reached.³² After consultation of the relevant dossiers, museum staff maintain that they contain no information pertinent to the Ganesh.³³ There is, therefore, no record of the whereabouts of the Ganesh during the 1960s, when Asian art was being eradicated from the new museum of Oceanic and African art, nor of the process leading up to its eventual transfer from the MAAO to the Guimet in 1983 by Le Bonheur. Exactly how or why the Cham piece came to the attention of Le Bonheur are, therefore, at least for the time being, unknowns.

Over a decade after the Ganesh had first been put on display at the Guimet by Albert Le Bonheur, in the course of her research into the MAAO archives in 1994, curator Dominique Taffin uncovered anomalies and gaps in the records concerning the transfer of certain objects. Beginning in 1990, a series of ordinances authorized the transfer of dozens of objects from the collections of the MAAO to the Guimet, and, apparently, sometime in early 1993, Taffin initiated a protracted exchange of correspondence with Le Bonheur, and other curators at the Guimet, in an attempt to clarify the situation concerning earlier transfers.³⁴ On 19 August 1994, Taffin wrote to Le Bonheur asking for “more precise details on a Cham statue of Ganesh (AF 14 666 – IA 265) and a Khmer statue (AF 14 667) which were handed over to the Musée Guimet in 1983, at the same time as other works mentioned in an ordinance dated 30 June 1983”. She expresses her concern that these statues may have been confused

³² Archives concerning administrative activities are accessible 30 years after the date of the document; personal archives are accessible 120 years after the birth of the person concerned.

³³ Personal communication from staff of the department of Documentation, Musée Guimet, July 2004

with two others, which bore a similar description in the ordinance, and suggests that if Le Bonheur wished to keep the statues, the situation could be rectified through an official ordinance. In a post-script to a letter dated 6 October 1994, Le Bonheur asked Taffin to send him a photocopy of the 1983 ordinance, thus highlighting the confusion reigning between the two museums. In both Le Bonheur and Taffin's letters the date of the ordinance has been altered by hand from 1985 to 1983, further evidence of the confused situation. The 1983 ordinance officially authorizes the transfer of two sculptures, numbers 289 and 290, a Cham elephant and Cham dancer respectively, between the MAAO and the Guimet. The ordinance stipulated: "possible location in the institution: collection of Cham art". However, like Cham lion number 291, the elephant and dancer would not, in the end, be put on display at the Guimet until 2001.

Meanwhile, there was no record of the official transfer of the Cham Ganesh that had, unlike the other Cham pieces, actually been put on display in 1983. For more than a decade Ganesh had, apparently, therefore, been an unofficial imposter at the Musée Guimet. As a result of the exchange of correspondence between Taffin and Le Bonheur, this state of affairs was rectified by an ordinance dated 28 October 1994, finally the Ganesh had regained legal status.

2.7 The Rochefort Ganesh

The Rochefort Ganesh has become something of an icon for both the museum and the town of Rochefort-sur-Mer. A 2003 general guidebook to the town has a two-page

³⁴ The following details are drawn from correspondence that I was able to consult in the administration offices of the future Quai Branly museum in the summer of 2004. At the time, these documents had not been sorted or classified. Where and how these archives are now stored is unknown.

entry on the collections of the museum, at the head of which figures a photograph of the Ganesh (Dubois 2003: 89-90), and illustrations of it appear on websites for Rochefort and promotional tourist material for the town and region.

Unlike the small, seated Ganesh in the Guimet, the Rochefort figure is standing and large, measuring 1.30 metres in height. Curiously, the descriptive file for this piece in the museum catalogues, terms it “Indochinese/Khmer school”, and lists the place of execution as “Indochine”, while dating it to the 7th-8th century. Maybe this anachronism is in fact a highly fitting appellation for this statue, since Indochina has played a significant role in the biography of the sculpture, which, in stark contrast to the Guimet Ganesh, is well-documented. A series of letters and articles published in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Rochefort* in the 1880s record the exact circumstances surrounding the discovery of this statue and its transportation to Rochefort.

In 1881, a certain Captain Silvestre sent pieces of the balustrade of Angkor Wat to the Rochefort museum aboard the French vessel *La Rance* (Silvestre 1881: 90-91). A native of Rochefort-sur-Mer, Pierre-Jules Silvestre (1841-1918) first arrived in Cochinchina in 1863 as a lieutenant and entered the colonial administration four years later. As administrator of the province of Sa Đéc in the Mekong Delta, a post he occupied for nine years, from 1869-1878, and Inspector of Indigenous Affairs, he was apparently so highly regarded for his sense of fairness and his integrity that locals were said to have erected tablets in pagodas dedicated to “Silvestre the Righteous”.³⁵ Returning to France in 1886, he became a professor at the *École libre de Sciences*

³⁵ “Silvestre le juste”

politiques in Paris, teaching economic and political questions relating to the Far East (Brebion 1935: 351). In a letter addressed to the Société de Géographie de Rochefort, written in Saigon on 3rd April 1881, Silvestre announces that, as a “worthy citizen of Rochefort”, his first thought at Angkor was to obtain a specimen of Khmer art for the expanding museum in his hometown³⁶ (Silvestre 1881: 90). Apparently, this was not difficult, since he proceeds to itemize the contents of two crates dispatched to the museum aboard *La Rance*, due to leave Saigon for France and Rochefort the following day. Among the contents of the crates is a pillar from the balustrade of Angkor Wat. As if justifying the removal of this piece from the great Khmer monument, Silvestre describes the ruinous, mutilated state of the balustrade, but notes, however, that the piece he is sending is “one of the best preserved he was able to find under the weeds” (Silvestre 1881 : 91). In the second case was a Brahma head, which “a monk, who was no doubt a little simple, had, as you can see, taken upon himself to transform into a shaven head like his own”. Silvestre suggests that the interest of this piece lies in the fact that it may be an indication that Angkor was not built as a Buddhist temple, “as Monsieur Bouillevaux³⁷ has written”, but rather that Buddhists took over a temple dedicated to the cult of Brahma. This is a reflection of the changing knowledge and perceptions at the time. Early reports on Angkor, such as that made by Bouillevaux to which Silvestre refers, saw the temple as a purely Buddhist structure, but as exploration and study were slowly intensifying so ideas on the history of Angkor Wat were evolving. That Silvestre should highlight the value of the statue for these reasons is an indication of his keen and active interest in such discussions. He is one of a group of colonial administrators who will not only collect

³⁶ The Rochefort museum opened in 1860 (Dubois 2003: 89)

³⁷ Charles-Émile Bouillevaux (1923-1913). See chapter 3

art in Indochina, but take an active scholarly interest in it, a theme which will be discussed in greater detail in the next two chapters.

In the same crate as the Brahma head was a sacred wheel, recovered by Silvestre at Tháp Mười, in the Mekong Delta, amongst the ruins of a “five-faced tower” during an expedition that, Silvestre notes, “is worthy of being recounted one day”. Whether he later got around to doing this or not is unclear, but it nonetheless demonstrates his desire for bringing awareness to this early exploration work being carried out in Indochina. Silvestre states that the objects from Angkor had mainly been given to him by monks who he admits to having “seduced” with gifts of candles, white paper and pencils. The Brahma head was apparently offered by a Chinese-Annamite Mandarin in the service of the Siamese and who the Governor of Siem Reap had appointed to accompany Silvestre. Silvestre describes him as a total alcoholic and admits, therefore, that the head was almost certainly taken under dubious conditions. He confesses that he accepted it without making any enquiry as to its provenance. He even goes as far as recognizing that he really had no right to it at all, but questions somewhat cynically whether it was for him to behave more morally than the mandarin. He goes on to explain that that his reason for providing such honest details was to avoid any possible reproach at a later stage, since tourists visiting Angkor were being accused of demolishing everything that was still standing and carting it away in pieces. In any case, Silvestre thinks it would take generations of tourists to destroy Angkor Wat, and that, on the contrary, the ficus trees will have done it with their roots within fifty years “if the present lassitude persists”. He proclaims his “admiration for these old stones” and his satisfaction at being “authorized” to take the Angkor Wat balustrade (Silvestre 1881 : 92-93). Silvestre must, therefore, be seen as a man of

varied parts. He eyes the artworks as symbols of prestige and glory for France, and more especially for his home town of Rochefort, while at the same time recognising their importance for adding to understanding of the religion and history of the region. Most importantly perhaps, he demonstrates, what must have been at the time an enlightened conscience about the rights and wrongs of removing the objects, even if he does not always seem to act with absolute scrupulousness. These are themes we will return to in the following chapters.

This, then, is the man responsible for bringing the Ganesh to Rochefort, and the man whose seemingly meticulous attention to detail enables us a century and a quarter later to reconstruct the biography of this ancient image. In a second letter written from Saigon, on 4th June 1882, Silvestre offers the Rochefort museum a “fairly well preserved” and “almost intact” statue of Ganesh, which he describes as “incomparably more beautiful and more interesting” than any of the other objects that he had hitherto sent from Angkor and Tháp Mười. He even furnishes a glimpse of his motivations for sending it when he suggests that it might well turn out be the envy of the Compiègne and Trocadéro museums. The statue was, according to Silvestre, discovered in the mountains between Châu Đốc and Hà Tiên,³⁸ where he speculates it had been buried for years or even centuries (Silvestre 1883a: 75). In other words, though he may not say it directly, the clear implication is that the statue had for long served no purpose, either sacred or otherwise. It had remained of no interest or use to any one over the decades, and we might, therefore, read into this an implicit justification for the French appropriation of it. As we shall see in chapter 4, whether or not a sculpture still had spiritual significance for the local population would become an important factor for

Charles Lemire, and especially Henri Parmentier, when they were setting up what would eventually become the museum of Cham sculpture in the port town of Tourane. An important stipulation was that statues should on no account be moved if they were still used by the local population for religious practices. We might surmise that Silvestre is similarly motivated at this early period in Indochinese archaeology. Silvestre describes the find-site of the Ganesh statue as 250 to 300km south of Angkor “in the heart of the maritime Tchîn-lâ” of the ancient Chinese Annals. He attributes the discovery to “his friend” Monsieur Navelle (Silvestre 1883a: 75-76). This is Eugène-Auguste Navelle who had arrived in Cochinchina in 1873. A “gifted administrator” and a man of “rare intelligence”, Navelle, like Silvestre, was an Administrator of Indigenous Affairs in Cochinchina, but also served time as *Résident*³⁹ at Quy Nhơn, in Bình Định province (Brebion 1935: 270). It was while he was here that he noticed, in 1885, four years after his discovery of the Rochefort Ganesh, an extraordinary Cham Siva statue in the main sanctuary of the Tours d’Argent (Tháp Bánh Ít), which he gave to the Louvre Museum in 1886. From the Louvre it was transferred to the Musée Indochinois at the Trocadéro before finally entering the Guimet collections. It is now the prize piece in the Guimet Cham collection and Navelle’s name has entered Cham art history because of his role in bringing it to France.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note the part played by Navelle in the transfer to France of two monumental statues which would both end up being iconic pieces in their respective museums. Silvestre had clearly been well aware of the effect that the Ganesh might have when it reached Rochefort, speculating in his letter, what the great statue, which he estimated had originally stood about about 2m high and

³⁸ Châu Đốc and Hà Tiên are located in the provinces of An Giang and Kiên Giang, respectively, in the Mekong Delta region, close to the present-day border between Vietnam and Cambodia.

³⁹ *Résident* was a term used in French Indochina to designate a regional colonial administrator.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Baptiste and Zéphir (2005a: 293).

weighed some 220kg before being broken off at the knees, would look like in the town's museum. "I can easily picture", he wrote, "how admirable the son of Shiva and Parvati will look when he stands like a caryatid in the vestibule of the museum". This is perhaps a further clue to the aspirations of prestige motivating Silvestre (Silvestre 1883a: 76).

In August 1882, the Rochefort Museum duly accepted Silvestre's offer of the Ganesh and, with the official authorization of the Governor of Cochinchina, the statue was loaded on to the French cargo ship *L'Annamite*, in the port of Saigon, on the morning of 7th November 1883. The ship set sail for France four days later. On board, also sent by Silvestre, were the head of a wild she-buffalo killed in the forests of Phú Quốc, a domesticated buffalo head, a wooden lion and snake which had once been painted and were found in an old Cambodian temple, and some sculpted stone fragments from the same mountains as the Ganesh (Silvestre 1883b: 242).

Perhaps one of the most interesting revelations of Silvestre's letter of 7th November 1882 is the proposal he made to the King of Cambodia to make him an honorary member of the Société de Géographie de Rochefort. The king seems to have enthusiastically accepted Silvestre's proposal and, in return for this honour, according to Silvestre, several times repeated that "the offices of government of Cambodia are reserved for any of [Silvestre's] colleagues who would like to explore that part of Indo-China" (Silvestre 1883b : 243). It seems that by bestowing prestige on the King of Cambodia, Silvestre and his colleagues from Rochefort are seeking to gain official authorization to explore, and so legitimize the obtaining of more symbols of prestige to adorn their museums. At the same time, making the King of Cambodia

an honorary member of the Geographic Society would bring prestige to the Society, its museum⁴¹ and the town of Rochefort.

Some three years after its arrival in the museum, Joseph-Désiré Bartet, secretary of the Société de Géographie, published an article on the sculpture. By this time, just as Silvestre had envisaged, Ganesh proudly “embellished the entrance to the museum”. Whilst Bartet’s essay contains certain inaccuracies, such as the suggestion that it was probably carved by the constructors of Angkor-Thom or the idea that it was almost 2000 years old, the appearance of this article, coupled with the statue’s location in the entrance to the museum, would seem to attest to the prestige it had already attained within the Rochefort collections (Bartet 1883: 36; Brebion 1935 : 22).

For the next half century or so the Rochefort Ganesh appears to have generated little scholarly interest, until the 1950s when it came to attention of Louis Malleret. Inspecting a site known as Neak Ta Phipheak Kanés in the Mekong Delta, which was half hidden in undergrowth, Malleret and his team, who were unable to carry out full excavations because of the political situation reigning in Indochina since 1945, suspected the existence of a pre-Angkorian construction. The name of the site designates Ganesh as protector (*Phipheak Kanés*) and local inhabitants told Malleret and his team that a very long time before a European had carried off a statue of Ganesh from this site. No one, it seemed, however, knew what had become of it. Malleret made the link with the Rochefort Ganesh and proceeded to publish the first comprehensive art historical study of the statue (Malleret 1956: 211-212).

⁴¹ At this time, the museum was under the control of Société de Géographie.

At the start of the 21st century, a new building was constructed to house the Rochefort collections and, like the Guimet, the Rochefort museum closed for several years. During the construction work the museum's collections went into storage. However, as if true to the memory of Silvestre and his integrity, the Rochefort museum took the unusual step of documenting the entire storage process and making it available to the general public by setting up a special website. This website explained the preservation and storage techniques being used and featured photographs of the storage areas as well as the stored objects. Still the proud possession that Silvestre had envisaged it would be back in 1883, the Ganesh statue was clearly visible on the website (figs. 11 and 12). Secured to a wooden pallet and swathed in protective plastic wrappings, he was pictured lying on the floor of the storage basements. The policy of total transparency adopted by the Rochefort Museum during their rebuilding project stands in direct contrast to the veil of secrecy under which the Guimet carried out its remodelling programme.



Figs. 11 & 12 The Rochefort Ganesh in storage (temporary museum website)



Fig. 13 The Rochefort Ganesh back on display, 2012
(Courtesy of Musée d'Art et d'Histoire)

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the contrasting biographies of two statues of Ganesh brought from Indochina to France during the colonial period. We know nothing of the discovery or the provenance of the Guimet Ganesh, nor how and when it came to France. Indeed, the only real evidence we have that it came from Indochina at all is stylistic. Its designation as a Cham piece from Vietnam stems from the moment, in 1946, when it left the commercial art world and was sold into the world of museums. Whether it had been displayed as an art object at any time prior to this is not known,

but from this moment onwards it becomes a museum piece. For the first time, that we know of at least, it is displayed publicly as a Cham work of art. The Cham identification has remained with it ever since, though its history as a display piece has been more erratic. It seems highly probable that for well over three decades it was in fact not displayed at all, but taken out of circulation and kept in storage, abandoned and forgotten. It appears to have resurfaced not because of its interest as a Cham sculpture, but because of museum politics. It entered back into the official canon of Cham art through the actions of museum curator Albert Le Bonheur who attempted to qualify its Cham identity by tentatively attributing a date and a style to it. What started out as only tentative very quickly became hard fact. After decades of neglect, the little Ganesh was provided with vital statistics and took his place in the Cham canon of the Musée Guimet. He remained though, on the fringes, almost forgotten, it seems, even while he was on display. In 2005, when the Guimet hosted the world's first major exhibition of Cham sculpture, which is discussed in chapter 6, the little eroded Ganesh was not considered worthy of display with the great Cham stars from Danang. While nearly all the other Cham pieces in the Guimet gallery were taken down to the museum's exhibition space in the basement where, dramatically displayed under theatrical lighting, they were admired by thousands of visitors, Ganesh was left almost alone in a deserted gallery, staring out at empty pedestals and packing crates. Enshrined in a few brief lines on the label of the statue is its complex history as display material in a colonial museum, forgotten storage piece in a museum of African art, and second rate sculpture in the world's most important Cham collection outside Vietnam. The twists and turns of its recent history reflect the larger narrative of Cham art history in general: a history of obscure origins, of fluctuating

scholarly and public interest, of labelling, and of enthusiastic individuals who turn the objects into artworks worthy of display.

The story of the Rochefort Ganesh is strikingly different. We know exactly how, when and why the statue was brought to France through the endeavours of two colonial administrators who had taken a keen interest in the art of Indochina. The circumstances of the time created the possibility for these men, who were driven by a range of motivations. These included the desire to preserve and display art which no longer held an interest for the local population, and the desire to present it to a new public. The next chapter expands on these themes of preservation and display, by looking at the visual archive and the role that images have played in both conserving and disseminating the art of ancient Champa.

Chapter 3

The Architectural Line Drawings of Henri Parmentier

Imagining Champa

“The architectural drawing ‘is a marginal case’. But it is precisely in the investigation of the marginal case that the material contents reveal their key position most decisively [...]. As regards the images themselves, one cannot say that they *re*-produce architecture. They *produce* it in the first place, a production that no less benefits architectural planning than it does dreams”.

Walter Benjamin¹

Introduction

This chapter investigates the *visual* archive of Ancient Champa, with particular reference to the architectural line drawings of Henri Parmentier. It is widely accepted that there are three sources for Champa history: the physical remains; the ancient inscriptions; and the Chinese and Vietnamese accounts. To these must be added, of course, over a century of research upon which present-day scholars draw. This latter includes an important corpus of largely neglected visual material. At the heart of this visual archive are Parmentier’s exquisite line drawings.

These drawings first appeared in July 1901, accompanying the text of Parmentier’s first published article on Cham monuments. A century later, they have become a standard component of the literature, museum displays and exhibitions, framing the way we visualize the Cham world, especially since many of the buildings they depict have subsequently been drastically altered or destroyed. Always illustrations to the text, or decorative backgrounds to sculpture displays, but never objects of study in their own right, they are sometimes credited, sometimes not, and only rarely dated. By re-contextualizing these drawings within their Western Beaux-Arts tradition, a lineage that can be traced back through Vasari to Vitruvius, I demonstrate how the drawings operate within a complex temporal matrix, mediating between

¹ Benjamin (1988: 89)

the present and multiple pasts, and examine the implications of the transposition of this Western model for the study of Cham art. The drawings isolate and format the monuments into an art-historical world, paralleling the way sculptures, transported from their original locations to museums, also operate in new contexts. Focusing on this created world, I raise questions of the power of image versus text, of art and science, fact and fiction, archaeology and architecture, preservation and restoration, and look at the role the drawings have played in founding the essential separation between architecture and sculpture that has long dominated the study of Champa and has only recently been called into question.² Examining why the drawings have seemingly taken precedence over photographs in the literature, and drawing on Parmentier's own writings, both as a trained architect at the beginning of his career and as a *vieil archéologue indo-chinois* at the end of his life, I demonstrate how, far more than mere scientific illustrations of Cham monuments, the drawings are insights into, and fundamental building blocks of, the twentieth-century construct of Cham art history. Rather than merely taking for granted Parmentier's drawings, which is, I suggest, what has mainly been done up until now, we might do better to view them as a contested space. It is this contested space which forms the subject matter of this chapter.

3.1 The Visual Archive

I use the expression visual archive in a general sense to encompass all non-verbal *representations* of Ancient Champa, in other words, everything that is not written text. This material therefore includes photographs, drawings, prints, paintings and illuminated

² See, for example, Trần Kỳ Phương (2011) for a recent analysis of the ways in which the methodology used by 20th century French archaeologists and art historians focused specifically on either architecture or sculpture, largely overlooking the integral relationship that actually exists between the two. See chapter 6.

manuscripts, but also such objects as plaster casts, models and rubbings. Most scholarly work on Champa to date has focussed attention on the physical remains and the textual sources. Images have, on the whole, been used only as illustration of text, not as objects of study in their own right. This reflects traditional Western art historical practice, since one of the major paradoxes of art history has been the fact that we describe what is primarily visual through the use of words. Over the decades, however, there have been notable attempts in academia to place greater emphasis on the visual.

At the end of his life, German art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg (1866-1929) was attempting to compile a cultural history comprising images as well as texts, and the Warburg Institute continues to encourage this approach. Frances Yates, whose name is closely linked with the work of the Institute, thus talked of being “initiated into the Warburgian technique of using visual evidence as historical evidence” (Yates 1975: 4; Burke 2001: 11). Around the same time Yates made these comments about Warburg, John Berger famously drew stark attention to the dilemma of word versus image, when three of the seven essays in his best selling and much-quoted work on art, *Ways of Seeing*, consisted entirely of images with no text at all (Berger 1972). At the time, such an attempt to present art history entirely through visual images in a serious work on art was revolutionary. Now, four decades on, in today’s age of multi-media, it is becoming increasingly more common for the visual to take precedence over the textual. Such innovations have barely touched the traditional world of academic Southeast Asian art history, despite the fact that almost two decades have passed since Southeast Asian scholar Stanley O’Connor recognised that “the hegemony of the scholarly disciplines [was] under assault” and that “despite the impact of post-structuralist and post-modern anti-realism on contemporary thought” it was “arguably the case that the

characteristic language of most art history publication continues to be that of disinterested scholarly objectivity” (O’Connor 1995: 147-149). O’Connor was professor of Southeast Asian art history at Cornell University, where his innovative approach to the study of material culture, especially his desire to make art come alive by relating it to the peoples and cultures who made it, had a profound influence on a generation of students. According to Nora Taylor, who studied under O’Connor, “students were encouraged to search in new places for ‘art’”, and she claims that this “emphasis has made the field of Southeast Asian art more diverse and, at the same time, changed it so that it no longer seems frozen or ossified in comparison with other areas of current art historical study” (Taylor 2000a: 12). This led Asian art historian Robert Brown to remark, sardonically, that “we in the field may find it a bit of a shock to realize that what we have been doing is frozen and ossified”. More importantly, he drew attention to the fact that O’Connor’s students have tended to work more on modern material and study things that are part of everyday life. By focusing their study in these areas, they thus have written and oral evidence to treat art as part of people’s lives, and the art can therefore duly be spoken for by the people in fulfilment of O’Connor’s aspirations (Brown 2001: 145). Brown was responding to a collection of essays by former students of O’Connor, published in his honour a few years after he retired from Cornell, and reflecting these new approaches to the study of Southeast art (Taylor 2000a). Taylor, who edited the collection, noted in her introduction that “where previous art historical treatments of Southeast Asia have tended to concentrate on religious monuments and statuary, this volume should stand out for the virtual absence of any reference to stone structures and large temple complexes” (Taylor 2000a: 12). In his review of the volume of essays, Brown reflected on “how admirable the attempt is to find new areas of art historical exploration”, and concluded that O’Connor’s “concern and interest in making the art and cultures of Southeast Asia come alive to students in his classes, both undergraduates and graduates, has clearly worked”

(Brown 2001: 146). While these essays may reflect new and varied approaches to the study of primarily *modern* Southeast Asian art, it seems that little has changed in the approaches still adopted for the study of the *ancient* art of Southeast Asia in general, and Champa in particular. The world of Cham art history, with no written or oral evidence to treat the art as part of people's lives, has been left largely untouched by these new approaches. Taylor herself did briefly carry out research into ancient Cham art at the start of her career, but she quickly abandoned this field to become a specialist on contemporary Vietnamese painters.

One of the essays in the 2000 collection in honour of O'Connor, an analysis by Caverlee Cary of two well-known photographs of the 19th Thai kings Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, prompted Brown to remark that "such studies of photography in Southeast Asia hold considerable promise" (Brown 2001: 146). Photographs have played an extremely important role in Cham art history, with some of the leading art historians, in particular Philippe Stern, working almost entirely from photographic archives rather than in the field. However, until very recently, no studies had focused on the photographs themselves. This is now slowly beginning to change. Over the past decade, the EFEO in Paris has initiated a vast overhaul of their extensive photographic archives. These include large quantities of archaeological photographs of Southeast Asia, and an important collection of images of Cham sites and artefacts.³ The programme, led by Isabelle Poujol, head of the EFEO *photothèque*, includes research, preservation, classification and promotion of the collections, and exhibitions and publications concerning these archives are beginning to appear.⁴ As we shall see in chapter 6, Charles Carpeaux's early 20th century photographs of archaeological missions at Cham sites

³ The EFEO Photothèque possesses around 1500 photographs of Champa, plus a large collection of glass-plates from the Charles Carpeaux collection. Most of these have now been classified and digitalized (EFEO Photothèque 2012)

⁴ For example, in 2010, Poujol curated an exhibition of archaeological photographs of Angkor from the EFEO collections. The exhibition, "Archéologues à Angkor – Archives photographiques de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient", was held at the Musée Cernuschi, Paris, 10th September 2010-2nd January 2011.

featured prominently at the entrance to the Musée Guimet Champa exhibition in 2005, and a book of these photographs was published at the same time (Ghesquière 2005). While primarily a photograph album, this volume nonetheless included some of the first proper analysis of these photographs and the photographic methods employed at the time. It must be hoped that this nascent research on the photographic archives is the beginning of a greater scholarly interest in the visual archive of Champa in general, since, if long overdue attention is at last being paid to the photographic collections, almost none has been devoted to the vast corpus of other visual material at our disposal, and in particular drawings. This is highly regrettable. The role that drawings have played in art history is particularly important, especially in view of the apparent favouring of text over image which seems to have so marked 20th century art historical studies. Architectural historian Dana Arnold, who has a particular interest in drawings and the printed image, has highlighted the imbalance that exists, still largely unaddressed, between the visual and the textual in view of our current “preoccupation with textuality”. She observes, however, that “recently, some attempts have been made to recognize these imbalances and to re-examine our reliance on textual documentation, which is locked into antiquated structures of knowledge which ensure its supremacy” (Arnold 2002b: 450). Arnold further posits that “technological advances in recording the human voice have made spoken history a potent form of cultural investigation by presenting the notion of an eye-witness account which has the aura of authenticity”. She suggests that “printed images can have a similar effect as they both proselytize and democratize their narrative content to give a sense of immediacy and legibility” (Arnold 2002b: 450-451). Questions of immediacy and legibility are particularly pertinent with regard to the visual archive of Cham art.

It is important, though, to keep in mind the fact that the pre-eminence of text over image has not always been so clear-cut. Like everything else it has a history, and Parmentier's drawings are very much the heritage of this history, the legacy of an earlier period when the role of images was very different.

3.2 The Birth of Champa Imagery

The oldest visual representation of Ancient Champa that I know of, and quite possibly the earliest in existence, is an illuminated manuscript dating from the start of the 15th century. Known as the *Livre des Merveilles*, it is housed in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (BNF 2012). The manuscript⁵ is an illustrated edition of the *Itinerarium de mirabilis orientalium Tartarorum* which recounts the travels across Asia of the Franciscan monk Odoric of Pordenone (c.1286-1331). It was commissioned by Jean Sans Peur, Duke of Burgundy, sometime around the early years of the 15th century (c.1410-1412) and is believed to have been executed by the Maître de la Mazarine (BNF 2012). One of the illustrations accompanying Odoric's text shows an exotic vision of Champa (fig. 14). This delightful image depicts not temples and monuments, but a group of lavishly-clad Europeans confronting a shoal of fish. The accompanying text describes a land of "great marvels" where there are so many kinds of fish that "nothing but fish are to be seen in the sea". While we might well choose to read this as an early indicator of the coastal and sea-faring importance of Champa, the fantastical imagery of this illustration is clearly far removed from the serious realism of Parmentier's drawings. While both tell stories and conjure up the world of Champa, they do it in dramatically different ways. Created at a moment when highly skilled

⁵ Catalogue no. BnF, MSS Français 2810.

monks in monasteries across Medieval Europe were producing vast quantities of exquisitely illustrated manuscripts, this 15th century miniature is, of course, a genre of its time. It is important to bear in mind that so too are Parmentier's drawings. As we shall see presently, they are the direct legacy of his French *École des Beaux-Arts* training. At first glance it is perhaps difficult to see quite how the 15th century manuscript image might be used in the scholarly study of Ancient Champa, as opposed to the study of manuscripts, especially since, unlike the text which it accompanies, the image is clearly not a direct account of Odoric's travels. In terms of Cham history it would seem to be more of a curiosity than a source document. Due to the prominence given to the fish, at a stretch, it could perhaps be suggested that the illustration serves to underline Champa's maritime, riverine and trading importance, and as such would constitute an early historical reference to an often overlooked element of Cham history.⁶ On the other hand, this illustration is clearly a source of information on how Europeans saw Champa at the time. The fact that an image can be read in these two main ways, that is, telling us about the subject matter as well as the image-maker, and sometimes more about the latter than the former, is true for all images of Champa, from all periods, including Parmentier's drawings. This is, I believe, something that has largely been overlooked in the case of Parmentier's architectural line-drawings.

⁶ Recently, scholars have begun to pay greater attention to the maritime role of Champa and the exhibition held at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH) and the Asia Society in New York, in 2009-2010, discussed in chapter 5, reflected this in its title "Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea" (Tingley 2009). See, for example, Trần Kỳ Phương (2006) for a discussion of the Cham kingdom as a mandala along river valleys and the coast.



Fig. 14 Fifteenth century illuminated manuscript of Odoric of Pordenone's travels in Champa (courtesy of BNF)

Justifiably famous, the Odoric manuscript has, over the decades, been displayed in a number of exhibitions, and commercial reproductions of the illustrations along with typed editions of the text were available at least as early as 1906 (École des Chartes 1906: 594). However, to the best of my knowledge, the only time it appears to have figured in an exhibition

specifically about Southeast Asia was at the 1931 Exposition Coloniale. At this exhibition it was displayed in the second-floor show-rooms inside the life-size replica of Angkor Wat, where “a small temple” had been created to the memory of the missionaries, soldiers and explorers who had contributed to the French colonial possessions (Boudet and Masson 1931: 5-6, 11-12; Bruhl 1932: 301; Norindr 1996: 25-26).⁷ The manuscript illustration was just one of many elements which helped to create what Patricia Morton has styled “a phantasmagoric microcosm of the French colonial empire”. Morton describes the colonial exhibition as “a *collection* of fragments, taken from their contexts and reassembled into a new whole: an ideal colonial world based on classifications of visible difference” (Morton 2000: 79). The colonial exhibition, she suggests, “made fictions from fragments of ‘authentic’ culture and constructed them in a new context” (Morton 2000: 87). Panivong Norindr similarly views the colonial exhibition as “the paradigmatic site of an elaborate *mise-en-scène* or staging of the ‘idea of Indochina’, where the conquest of the imaginary is inextricably linked to both the act of naming and the act of representation, and where complex mechanisms of cultural production are at work” (Norindr 1996: 15). Likewise, Penny Edwards demonstrates that the idea of “a central stage for the enactment of French fantasies” was in fact at the heart of each of the Colonial Exhibitions, both those in Marseille in 1906 and 1922, as well as in Paris in 1931 (Edwards 2007: 29). There is, I believe, a parallel between the type of creation described by Morton, Norindr and Edwards and the constructive process at work behind Parmentier’s drawings, which I aim to uncover and bring to the fore.

⁷ Charles Blanche, the architect in charge of the model of Angkor Wat, created three floors of exhibition space inside the temple itself. The first floor displayed the economic resources of Indochina; the second level documented the services provided by France to the colony; and the third level, displaying archaeological and ethnographic artefacts, was dedicated to history (Norindr 1991: 25-26). See also chapter 2.

An exhibition of documents relating to the history of Indochina, *L'Indochine dans le Passé*, was held in Hanoi, in 1938, “with the aid of documents that had figured in part in the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris”. While the Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript would have presumably been too precious and fragile to transport to Indochina (there is no record of it having been displayed), the exhibition documentation, apparently conveniently choosing to overlook Marco Polo’s earlier visit to the region, referred to it as a record of the first European exploration of Indochina:

It is to missionaries of the Order of St Francis that we owe the first knowledge of Indochina, albeit still elementary: having crossed Persia, India, Sumatra and Java, Father Odoric de Pordenone arrived at the Kingdom of Champa, that is to say in Southern Annam, and gave a description of the land and the customs of its inhabitants in the *Livre des Merveilles*, a magnificent manuscript of miniatures. (Direction des Archives 1938)

If the Odoric manuscript is indeed the earliest visual image relating to Ancient Champa, albeit indirectly, to have come down to us, the first *realistic* representations of the ancient monuments of the region do not appear until some four and a half centuries later with Henri Mouhot’s 1860 visit to the temples of Angkor. Like those who had visited the site before him, Mouhot wrote about his experiences, but his real innovation was to produce drawings of the temples, and these, when published, were how Europeans were first introduced to the temples of Angkor. As Bruno Dagens has observed:

The armchair tourist around 1860 seeing Angkor through the eyes of Bouillevaux or Chou Ta-kuan⁸ was no better off than the early Portuguese and Spanish compilers. He heard repeatedly of marvels and of strange and grandiose sights, but what precisely was this supposed to conjure up in his imagination? The Pyramids, the temples of India, and Chinese pagodas had all been illustrated. What he lacked was images. It was Henri Mouhot who filled this gap. (Dagens 1995: 36)

⁸ The reference is to Chinese diplomat Chou Ta-kuan (Zhou Daguan) (1266-1346) who wrote *The Customs of Cambodia*, a description of the year he spent at Angkor in 1296-1297, which was first translated into French in 1819 (Zhou Daguan 2011), and French missionary Charles-Émile Bouillevaux (1823-1913) who visited Angkor in 1850. An account of Bouillevaux’s travels in the region, *Voyage en Indochine 1848-1956*, had been published in 1858, two years before Mouhot arrived (Brebion 1935: 43).

It is interesting to note that France's initial encounter with Mouhot's voyage, and thus with Angkor, was primarily visual, that is through images. An initial account of his journey, written by Vice Admiral Bonnard, was published in the *Revue Maritime et Coloniale* in 1863, and later the same year, a partial version of Mouhot's journal, "rehashed by a ghostwriter" and, significantly, illustrated with remarkable engravings, was serialised in *Le Tour du Monde*. A much more detailed text version of his travel notes *did* appear, but a year later, in 1864, and then not in France, but in England, and only in an English edition (Edwards 2007: 20; Dagens 1995: 36).

The power of such images to fire the European imagination is memorably highlighted in Pierre Loti's account of his discovery of Angkor.⁹ His first encounter with the great temple ruins took place, he recounts, long before he ever travelled to Southeast Asia. In *Un pèlerin d'Angkor*, Loti vividly recalls the April evening when, as a small child, he was leafing through the yellowing pages of old colonial magazines amongst his dead brother's possessions in his private "museum" up in the attic of his family home. He stopped, mesmerized, in front of one image: "the great strange towers entwined all over with exotic creepers, the temples of mysterious Angkor." This image, he claimed, determined much of the course of the rest of his life (Loti 1994: 2-3; Edwards 2007: 30). Loti remains silent on whether these were Mouhot's drawings or the hand of some other explorer-artist, but when he finally travelled to Indochina himself he recorded much of what he saw in drawings and paintings as well as in his writings. For example, figure 15 shows an 1883 illustration by Loti of the interior of the Marble Mountains close to Tourane. One can just discern Cham sculptures placed on the pagoda steps inside the cave complex. In terms of a study or record of Cham art, the picture has little value. Nonetheless, produced *in situ*, this charming realistic

⁹ Pierre Loti was the pseudonym of French novelist and naval officer Julien Viaud (1850-1923)

record of Loti's visit, captures, rather like a personalised snapshot, something of the spiritual atmosphere and the mystery of this cave-temple complex and its ancient Cham connections. The image is part a larger artistic output that forms a sort of pictorial diary of Loti's extensive travels. Figure 16 shows a postcard depicting a similar view of the Marble Mountains, dating from some three decades later.

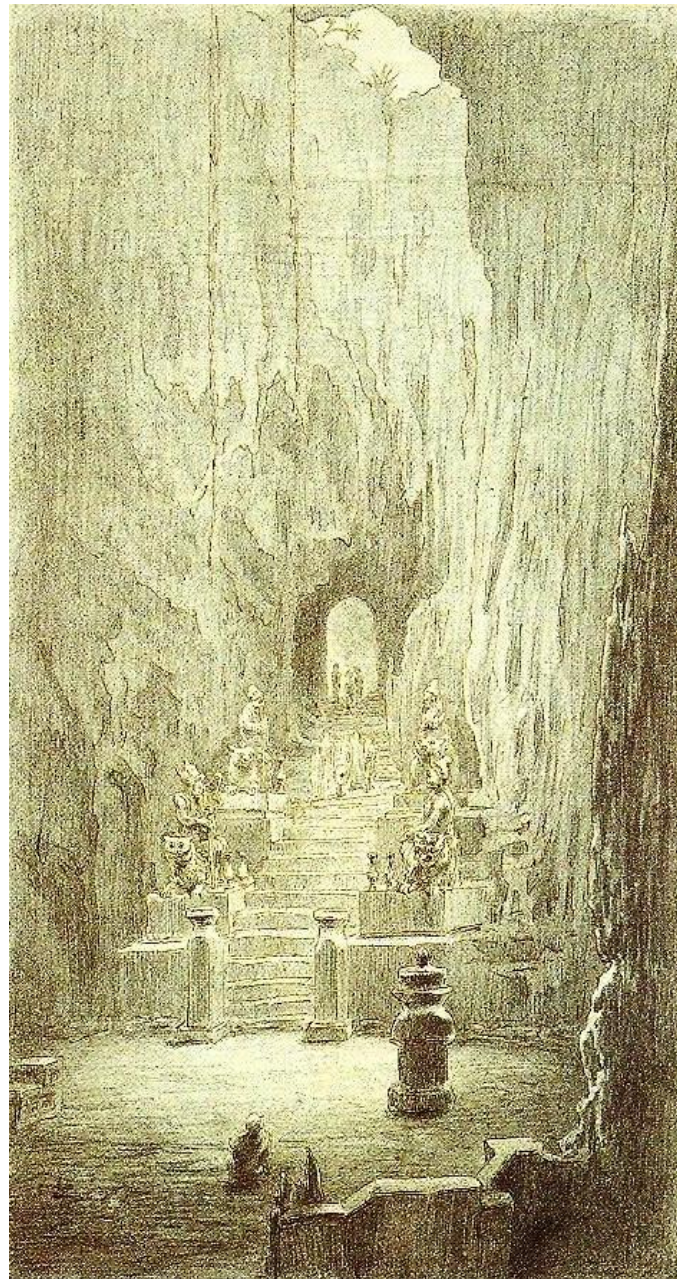


Fig 15 Drawing of Marble Mountains by Pierre Loti, 1883
(Muée de la Vie Romantique 2006 : 133)

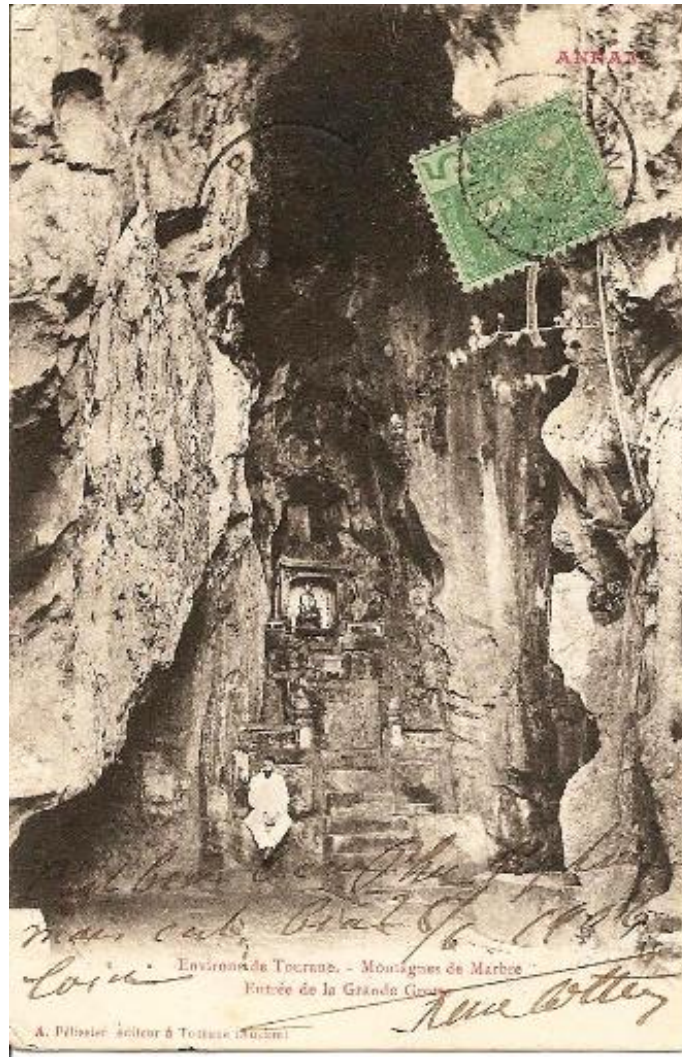


Fig. 16 Postcard of Marble Mountains, c.1910

Both representations, the photographic image on the postcard and Loti's drawing, record the atmosphere of the location and both have played a proselytizing function, the postcard through being mass-produced and mailed overseas, Loti's drawing through exhibitions and publications.¹⁰

¹⁰ The image was most recently shown at the Musée de la Vie Romantique in Paris as part of an exhibition on Pierre Loti, *Pierre Loti- Fantômes d'Orient*, 27 June-3 December 2006, co-curated by Solange Thierry (Musée de la Vie Romantique 2006).

As we shall see, other illustrations of ancient Champa, in particular those of Henri Parmentier, while they also record and publicize, are very different in nature, and consequently operate in much more complex ways.

In the new age of mechanical reproduction, 1860s France saw the appearance of a number of illustrated magazines, with names such as *Le Tour du Monde*, *L'Illustration* and *Le Monde Illustré*. As their titles indicate, like the unnamed one in which Loti first encountered Angkor, and postcards which would later become so popular, they introduced the far-flung parts of the French Empire to people back at home and did this, above all, through the profuse use of illustration. They made possible “armchair travel to [Indochina] from Europe” (Edwards 2007: 30), and thus “brought the vicarious traveller in contact with exotic lands, their strange customs and peoples” (Nordinr 1996:18). In 1894, *Le Tour du Monde* published Charles Lemire’s sixteen-page article on Cham monuments, which, most importantly featured a series of illustrations, all of which are drawings from photographs.¹¹ These are not the first published images of the temples and art of ancient Champa. An earlier article by Lemire, which appeared in 1887, in the *Revue d’Ethnographie*, contained a picture of the Bình Lâm temple and another of two relief sculptures placed one on top of the other (Lemire 1887: 387, 392), and an 1891 report by Camille Paris in *Anthropologie* featured an image of a Cham sculpture (Paris 1891: 286). These illustrations (figs. 17 and 18) are quite possibly the very first published images of ancient Cham vestiges, however, the essays in which they featured were both in learned specialist journals where the text predominated, and which were destined for a specialised public. On the contrary, Lemire’s 1894 essay, ‘Aux Monuments Anciens des Kiams’, appeared in the extremely popular and widely circulated *Le Tour du*

¹¹ Lemire (1894). See chapter 3

Monde, and there were illustrations on all but one of the essay's sixteen pages. Lemire's article is, therefore, clearly the first vehicle by which an array of images of ancient Champa was widely diffused to the general public.

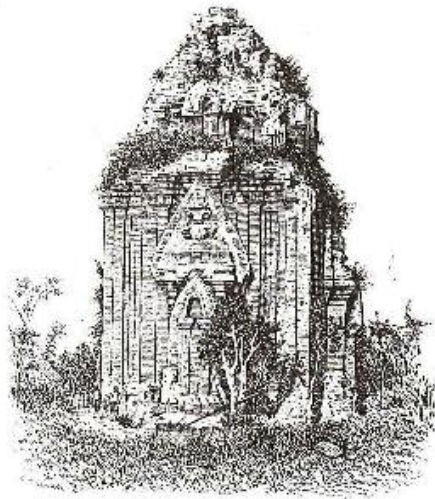


Fig. 63. — La tour de Binh-Lam
(d'après une photographie de M^{lle} Marie Lenoir).

Fig. 17 Drawing of Binh Lâm temple, 1887
(Lemire 1887: 387)



Fig. 18 Drawing of Cham sculpture, 1891
(Paris 1891: 286)

Homage was paid to the historic importance of this article when it was reprinted, though in a heavily edited version, in the *Lettre de la SACHA* between 1998 and 2001.¹² Much of what was omitted consisted of sections which referred disparagingly to the Annamites and their destruction of Cham monuments, and which by the late 20th century were deemed no longer politically correct.¹³ Elsewhere, passages of a different kind that read like a travelogue, reflecting the presence of Lemire at the sites themselves through the inclusion of eye-witness and diary-like details, such as “we went past a pretty house on the right and briefly left the road”, or “troops of buffalo watched us”, were also omitted (Lemire 1894: 403-404). The overall effect was that, in the reprint, much of the writer’s more vivid encounter with the monuments, as he travelled “on horse-back, on foot or in a palanquin” (Lemire 1894: 402), disappeared and we are left with a seemingly purer more academic text. We will see that there is a parallel between this type of editing and Parmentier’s drawings where a very similar process, in which the personal is effaced, is at work.

3.3 Parmentier’s First Drawings

In July 1901, exactly a year after he was appointed to the EFEO to carry out a survey of the archaeological vestiges of ancient Champa, Henri Parmentier’s first article on Cham monuments appeared in the school’s *Bulletin* (Parmentier 1901). The text was accompanied by a series of line drawings. Similar such drawings were to accompany virtually all of his numerous subsequent publications spanning a period of almost 50 years. With a few rare exceptions, these drawings have subsequently been reproduced in virtually all published works on Ancient Champa, both scholarly and popular, European, Asian or American. In

¹² At the same time, an English language translation of Lemire’s article was published, along with four other colonial essays on Indochina, in a volume entitled *Cities of Nineteenth Century Colonial Vietnam* (Lemire 1999)

¹³ See chapter 4 for a discussion of Lemire’s article and its serialisation in the *Lettre de la SACHA*

some publications they are accompanied by photographs, in others they stand alone as the sole illustrations. Their ubiquity throughout the available literature on Champa means that these drawings have come to be one of the major ways we visualize ancient Champa. They are the images through which we *imagine* the world of Ancient Champa.

Figure 19 shows a page from one of the most recent academic books on Champa, Anne-Valérie Schweyer's *Ancient Vietnam: History, Art and Archaeology* (Schweyer 2011: 61). The inclusion of Parmentier's drawings in this book is of particular interest since the work is profusely and lavishly illustrated with over 850 colour illustrations, making it one of the most comprehensive published collections of modern photographs of Ancient Cham sites to date. This volume, published by River Books in Bangkok, is one of a new generation of books which are at once both academic and popular. Written by a leading scholar it offers the most up-to-date research on the history, archaeology and art, but is formatted somewhat like a travel guide, thus targeting a much wider audience than a purely specialised public. Schweyer, who had included many of Parmentier's drawings in her earlier book on Ancient Vietnam¹⁴ (Schweyer 2005), was adamant not to have them in this new book, since she felt they would give it "an old-fashioned look". The publisher, however, insisted on including them "to make the book look more academic."¹⁵ These contrasting views about potential readers' reception of the images, highlight two important characteristics of Parmentier's drawings, their scientific scholarly nature on the one hand, and the fact that they are now period pieces on the other.

¹⁴ Indeed, in this work, *Le Viêt Nam Ancien*, Schweyer relies exclusively on Parmentier's line drawings to illustrate her chapter on Cham architecture, although his name is not attached to them (Schweyer 2006: 227-244).

¹⁵ Personal communication Anne-Valérie Schweyer

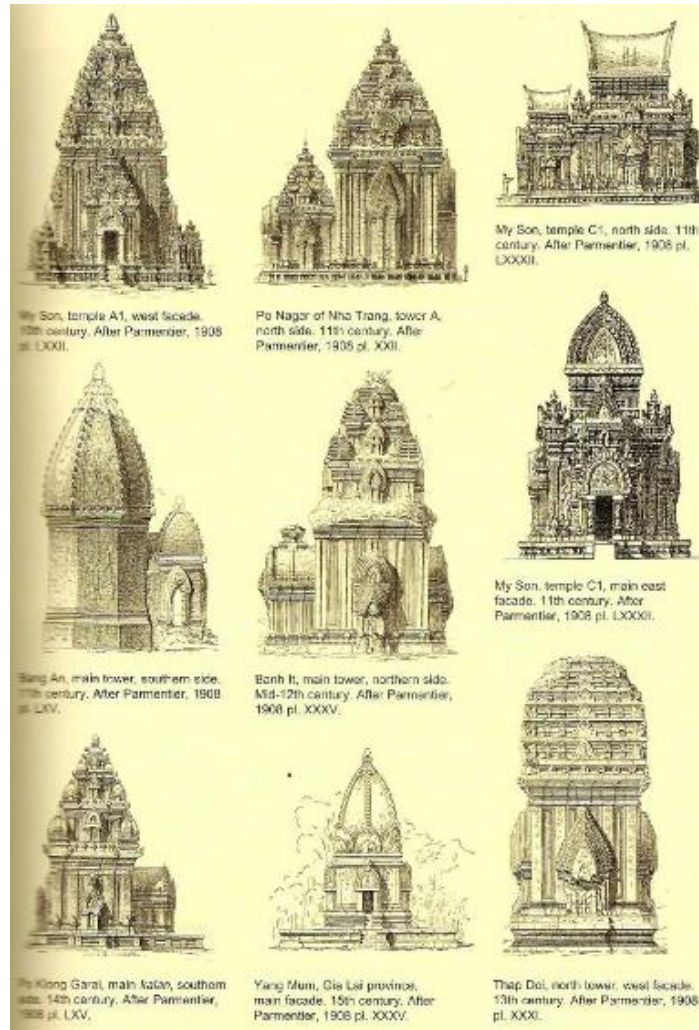


Fig. 19 A page of Parmentier drawings from Anne-Valérie Schweyer’s *Ancient Vietnam* (Schweyer 2011: 61)

The article in which the first drawings appeared was described by Parmentier himself as a sort of “rapid study” intended as a kind of preface to a series of monographs that he said he intended to publish in the BEFEO (Parmentier 1901: 245). Indeed, several of the drawings in this first essay are styled ‘croquis’ (sketch), implying perhaps something executed with less than the scientific precision that will characterise Parmentier’s drawings in subsequent publications. The caption “croquis théorique” (theoretical sketch) given to one of the figures in the article (fig. 20) would seem to be an early pointer to the problem of whether to

illustrate what was actually visible in the physical remains or rather to *theorize* on what may once have existed. Parmentier will later go on to develop techniques to tackle this constant dilemma. Other illustrations bear the label “d’après une photographie” (from a photograph), a procedure that had been frequently employed in the nineteenth century before the technical capacity to print photographs directly, and which persisted in publications into the early years of the twentieth century. We shall examine the implications of this technique presently with regard to Lemire’s 1894 essay in which all the illustrations are drawings from photographs.

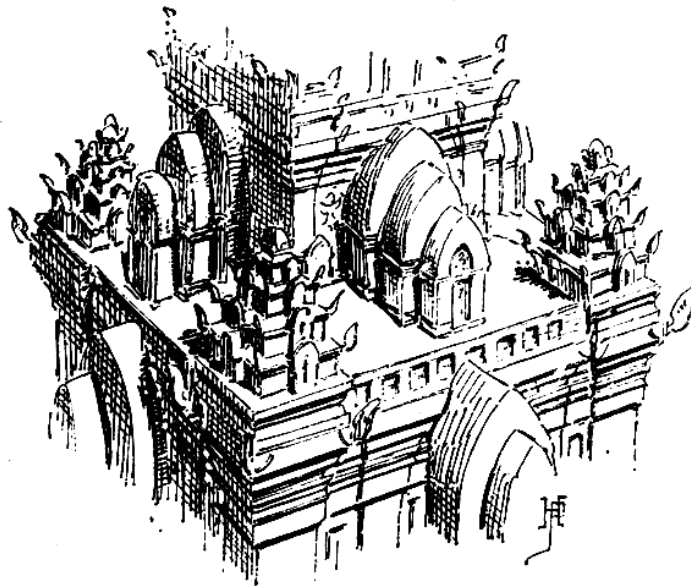


FIG. 39. — ÉTAGE D'UNE TOUR CHAME
(*Croquis théorique*).

Fig. 20 Parmentier: “croquis théorique”
(Parmentier 1901: 248)

In his 1901 article, Parmentier describes research in the field as “so captivating and yet so demanding.” He draws particular attention to the fact that he frequently lacks the necessary terminology to describe what he is analysing. He apologizes, therefore, for the “sometimes

slightly special meaning that [he] give[s] to certain architectural terms”, explaining that “one of the great difficulties of studies of extinct arts for which the terminology has been lost is that it is necessary to borrow words from other civilizations in order to make oneself understood”. He acknowledges that “one is forced to use for highly defined and very special elements approximate terms taken from the vocabulary of existing but very different art forms”. The result, he declares, is a “hotchpotch of words which are both imprecise and insufficient”. Each new term, he explains, is therefore accompanied by a sketch which will help to confirm its new meaning, and in so doing will cause it to lose the true sense that it had in the lexicon of art from which it was borrowed (Parmentier 1901: 246). Thus, the drawings serve to qualify and fix the modified meaning of the vocabulary. What Parmentier does not state, however, is that just as the terminology is borrowed from elsewhere, so too is the architectural drawing.

3.4 An Architect’s Training

Over a hundred years after they first appeared, these drawings are clearly now both works of history and pieces of history, and, as Carr once famously suggested, “when we take up a work of history, our first concern should not be with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it”, since the “facts of history never come to us in a pure state”, but “are always refracted through the mind of the recorder” (Carr 1961: 22). To fully understand the drawings, therefore, a knowledge of the background and training which furnished Parmentier with what has been termed his “precise and faithful sense of observation”, is necessary (BEFEO 1952: 278).

When Parmentier died in 1949, although he had been officially retired for over a decade and a half, he was still *chef honoraire du service archéologique* (honorary head of the archaeological service) of the EFEO, a post he had first been appointed to in 1904, and was considered “one of the pioneers of Indochinese archaeology” (BEFEO 1952: 273). If he died an archaeologist, nonetheless by training he was an architect, and as such was one of the initiators of a tradition of EFEO “architect-archaeologists” who would form the nucleus of French researchers in Indochina (Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2001: 100-101). Swedish-born Olov Janse was the only trained archaeologist to work in French Indochina, the others all came to archaeology from other academic backgrounds.¹⁶ The overlapping roles of architect-archaeologist still haunt EFEO research in Southeast Asia to this day. In a 2009 documentary¹⁷ about the reconstruction of the Baphuon temple at Angkor, under the direction of Pascal Royère, all the researchers involved in the project were styled “architect-archaeologist”. Although these roles seem, therefore, to have been to a certain extent fused throughout the history of the EFEO’s involvement in the region, the archaeologist and the architect do not necessarily always share the same approach. This was clear, for example, when, at the start of UNESCO’s restoration project at Mý Son, the organisation’s Regional Adviser Richard Engelhardt urged Italian archaeologist Patrizia Zolese “to see the site with the eyes of an archaeologist, not those of an architect. ‘See the ruins’, he said, ‘not the monuments’” (Zolese 2009: 33). Pierre Baptiste recognizes that Parmentier arrived in Indochina as an *architect*, but very early, while working at Mý Son with Carpeaux, took on the role of *archaeologist*: “armed with a solid understanding of Cham architecture, acquired through direct contact with some of its masterpieces, the architect now found himself committed to the pursuit of archaeology” (Baptiste 2009: 14-15). Parmentier may well have

¹⁶ See chapter 4

¹⁷ *Angkor, l’Aventure du Baphuon*, directed by Didier Fassio.

been “in the pursuit of archaeology”, but he had been appointed by the École specifically to study architecture and to “prepare a detailed plan for the repair of threatened buildings” (Finot 1901c: 8), and the drawings he left us are undoubtedly the work of an architect. It is noteworthy that in 1936, in an article that was otherwise highly critical of French archaeology in Indochina, Émile Gaspardone claimed that “the most serious work was done by the *architects*¹⁸ who carried out the excavations” (Gaspardone 1936: 624).

Parmentier was born into a family of artists where drawing was a family tradition. His father, Edouard, was a painter and teacher of design at the Lycée de Reims, the school at which Parmentier undertook his own first studies (Singaravélou 1999: 343). Henri entered the department of architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1891, under the guidance of professors Girodet and then Paulin (Pignon-Poujol and André-Pallois 2002: 166; BEFEO 1952: 273), in what Neil Levine has termed the “restricted milieu of 19th century French architectural education.” By this time, drawing had become a pivotal part of the architectural training, and “a student was obliged to send back to Paris each year a series of drawings, based on his study of antique monuments, which would show to the Academy that he was indeed following in the footsteps of the Renaissance masters” (Levine 1977: 358, 366).

The high point of training at the school was the yearly design competition. These competitions had begun modestly in the early 18th century, and “for two and a half centuries were to be the most important part of French architectural education”. The largest number of competitions at the École des Beaux-Arts was in the architecture section. They were divided

¹⁸ My italics

into several kinds: *esquisses*, *projets rendus* and *elements analytiques* (sketches, finished projects and analytical elements). Winners of the end-of-the-year prize had, amongst other things, the right to study at the Academy in Rome at the expense of the state. Thus, gradually, during the 18th century the prize became known as the *Prix de Rome*, and sending back to Paris detailed studies of important antique buildings in Rome for preservation in the Academy's library – the *envois de Rome* – became a regular annual event, like the competition itself. In the 1850s, drawing (*dessin*) was added to the competitions, and in 1883, it was the turn of the history of architecture, which had already long been the subject of lectures at the school. The history of architecture, which, interestingly, was “known by students as archaeology”, required the production of a drawing or two of a building or part of a building (Drexler 1977: 64-67, 83-84). In their fourth year, students were required to present a complete restoration of an antique building. This included presenting “flat projections of an antique Italian monument [...] sketched and rendered from the monument as it presently stands”, and also drawings of its restoration as the student conceived it, accompanied by “a *précis historique* of its antiquity and construction” (Levine 1977: 358). This is precisely what Henri Parmentier will produce for the monuments of Champa.

Parmentier's career at the École had followed this basic pattern, with the exception that his débuts in field work were carried out in Tunis rather than Rome. Attached to the archaeological service of Tunis, he received a *mention honorable* at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1896 for his *relevé* and *restitution* of the Temple of Saturne-Baal at Dougga (Pignon-Poujol and André-Pallos 2002: 166-167; Delobel 2004: 1). In 1904, returning to France from Indochina, he obtained a Government diploma in architecture (*diplôme d'architecture*) with the presentation of a study on housing adapted to the climatic conditions of Tonkin, in what was said to be one of the first attempts by a professional architect to

combine Western and Asian architecture¹⁹(Le Failler 2000: 29; Parmentier 1944a: 14; Le Brusq 1999:223). This was the same year he was appointed *Chef du service archéologique* of the EFEO, thus he was officially recognized as both architect and archaeologist at exactly the same moment in his career. It is his traditional training in Beaux-Arts architectural drawing which will allow Parmentier to combine these two roles in the field, by documenting archaeological research through highly technical architectural illustration.

3.5 The Absent Author

In the introduction to a volume on Hindu architecture published at the very end of his life, Parmentier draws attention to “an all too often overlooked fact”, that “architectural archaeology is by its nature deceptive”. He reminds us that “one can only study what one sees which is by a long way the least part” and that “we only know an art-form through its traces”. He explains that in this book, where the monuments mentioned are amply illustrated by photographs elsewhere, he has “multiplied the use of ink drawings which allow for a better restitution of perspectives through angles that the photographer could not reach”, thus evoking the problems encountered when working in the field (Parmentier 1948: 9-11). Problems such as these and the real life in the terrain were the subject of a series of articles he had published a couple of years earlier, entitled ‘Souvenirs d’un vieil archéologue indochinois’ (memoirs of an old Indochinese archaeologist).

¹⁹ The house combined a Vietnamese tiled roof and veranda with the layout of a European home (Le Brusq 1999:223)

Writing posthumously about Parmentier, René Grousset declared that “for half a century his career had fused with that of the École” and that “at the end, the grand old man, endowed with remarkable durability and still young in spirit, seemed inseparable from the Cham undergrowth and the Cambodian jungle with which he seemed to so identify” (Grousset 1951: 416-417). This somewhat romantic image fails to convey the always arduous and often dangerous nature of Parmentier’s encounter with the natural surroundings in which he worked. As Pierre Baptiste has rhetorically asked, “who in Europe concerned themselves with the degraded remains of dislocated bricks worn down by an abundance of suffocating vegetation, situated in an unhealthy environment at the other end of world?” The fact was, of course, that “only a handful of passionate and devoted archaeologists, veritable missionaries of heritage conservation, could work in these conditions, conditions that today,” Baptiste surmises, “we can scarcely imagine”. Thus what Baptiste terms “the scientific team in charge” of the archaeological mission at Mỹ Sơn “consisted of no more than two people”, Parmentier and Carpeaux (Baptiste 2009: 15).

Parmentier’s early articles and the *Inventaire*, despite isolated references, particularly in the introduction, to the difficulties of the terrain and the arduousness of the task, are largely scientific in nature (Parmentier 1909: ix-xx). It is only at the end of his life that he gives us a truly humane account of his encounter, both physical and emotional, with the civilization he was studying almost a half a century earlier. In his published drawings both the physical and emotional encounter between the archaeologist and the objects are *visually* absent. A few,

such as figure 21, show tiny stick-like figures for purposes of indicating scale, and some show the dense vegetation that covered the monuments when Parmentier and Carpeaux first explored them (fig. 22) but most illustrate only the monument itself or its component parts, taken apart like a jigsaw puzzle for us to reassemble in our imagination.

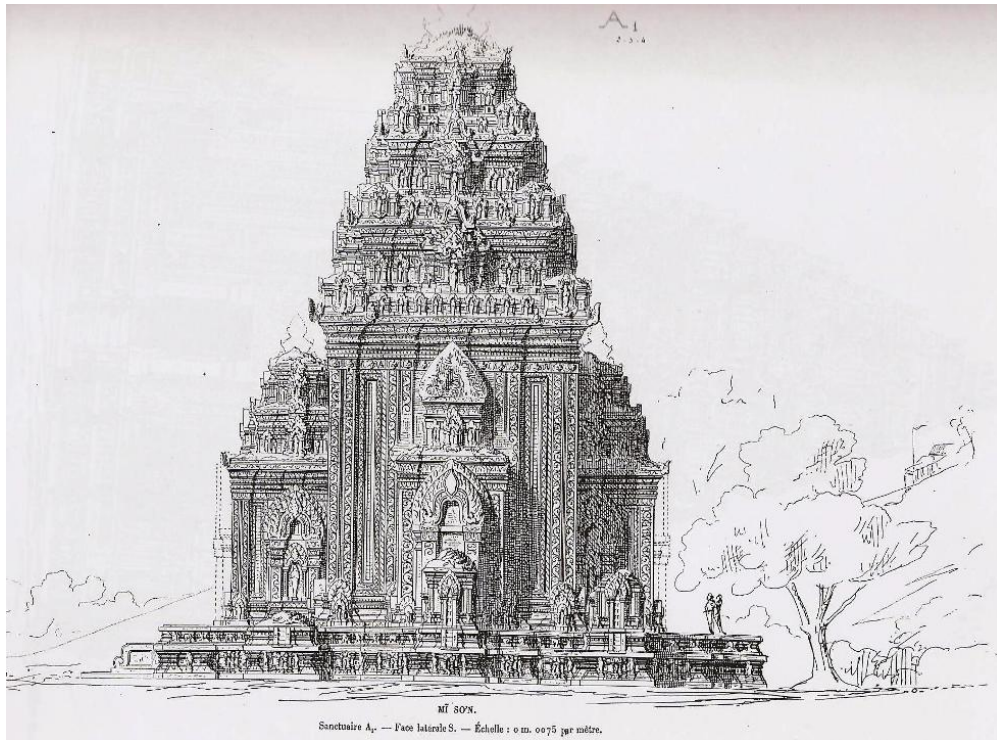


Fig. 21 Parmentier: Mý Son A1 with tree and people for scale
(Parmentier 1909)



Fig. 22 Parmentier: Thù Thiện covered with vegetation
(Parmentier 1909)

If we want to see this encounter between man and the environment we need to turn to Carpeaux's photographs. However, while many of these, unlike the drawings, record graphically the intense toil of the indigenous workforce, the technical equipment used or the French at rest (figs. 23-25), these are not the photographs that figure in Parmentier's published work. In the inventory and the numerous articles in the *BEFEO*, the photographs used are of the monuments and sculptures. Some of them show more of the surroundings – vegetation and terrain – than the drawings, but none show the archaeological process itself. Both the workers and the work they carried out are absent.



Fig. 23 Clearance work at **Đông Dương**, 1902, Charles Carpeaux
(Ghesquière 2005: 121)



Fig. 24 Carpeaux surveying work at **Đông Dương**, 1902
(Ghesquière 2005: 133)



Fig. 25 Carpeaux, Parmentier, Finot and Pelliot at Mý Son, 1903
(from left to right, front to back)
(Ghesquière 2005: 89)

To understand the implications of the absence of the author in Parmentier's drawings as well as in his published photographs, it is helpful to examine this within the framework of French critical theory's 'death' of the author. For Michel Foucault, writing is a question of "creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (Foucault 1979: 71). While, similarly, Roland Barthes recognised of historical discourse that "what really happens is that the author discards the human persona but replaces it by an 'objective' one; the authorial subject is as evident as ever, but it has become an objective subject". Barthes suggests that, "at the level of discourse, objectivity, or the absence of any clues to the narrator, turns out to be a particular form of fiction, where the historian tries to give the impression that the referent is speaking for itself" (quoted in Arnold 2002a: 2). If we now apply these theories to Parmentier's drawings, it can be seen that a similar process is at work. There is, I believe, a tendency not to see them as Parmentier's subjective versions of the monuments, but rather as objective representations independent of their creator. That is, they have come to stand in for

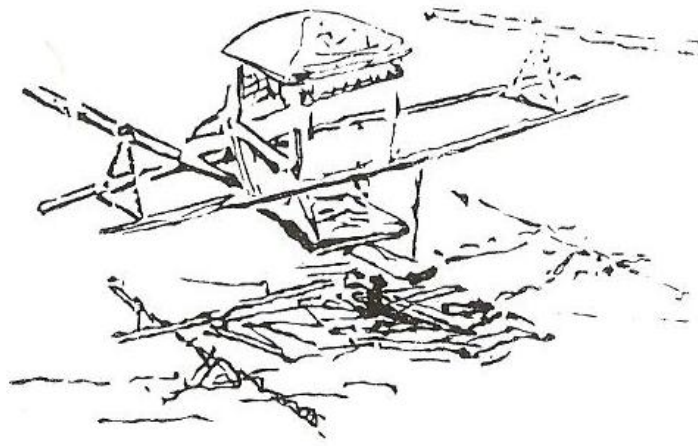
the Cham originals themselves. We treat them, it would seem, rather as we treat photographs, as some accurate representation of the original model, especially in the absence of the real temple, destroyed or greatly altered since Parmentier's day. But, if we read these drawings as texts, then following Barthes "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash". In other words, "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1977b: 146). Parmentier's architectural drawings form just such a tissue or fabric of quotations.

3.6 Putting the Archaeologist Back in the Picture

At the end of his life it could be said that Parmentier replaces the author into his work. The series of articles published between 1944 and 1945 in the colonial review *Indochine* stand in stark contrast to his early scientific work. These "memories of an old Indochinese archaeologist" open with his arrival in Indochina in the autumn of 1900, when he had recently been named architect-in-residence to the EFEO, the school created, as he points out, along the lines of the Schools of Athens and Rome, "but with a more scientific and utilitarian side". These memoirs are peppered with local colour and vivid detail, and in this are strongly reminiscent of Lemire's 1894 essay. They blend details of hardships, such as the lack of roads, sleeping on camp beds and waiting for rivers to subside, with poetic descriptions of sunsets over Cham towers and charming landscapes. Parmentier mentions in them specific inventions or episodes not referred to elsewhere in his writings, such as a mobile cardboard frame that held paper fast for note-taking in gusts of wind, or teaching their two transport

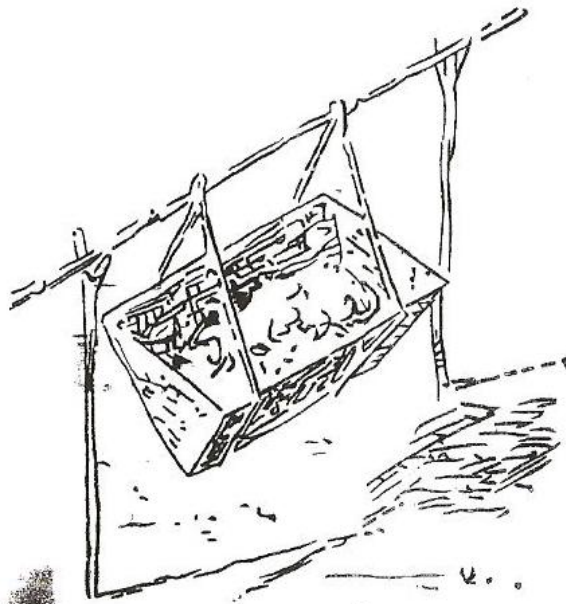
“boys” how to make bread “since they could not survive on rice as some Frenchmen, particularly the missionaries(!) did”. He recalls that “each of his boys had his own system for making the bread oven – one put it in termite mounds!” and reminisces about a petrol lamp which was effective against ants and tigers. On one occasion, he recounts, they refused worms offered to them, not realizing they were a mandarin delicacy. Interspersed with these anecdotes, are references to the problems of photography and developing on site, and the great risks involved in sending to the EFEO the negatives of places they might never return to. He writes that, at the sites, “their laboratory was usually the inside of a temple tower” (Parmentier 1944a: 14-17; Parmentier 1944b: 12-14).

These articles offer an immensely personal and humane account of Parmentier’s years in Indochina. At times the memories are comic, when for example at Mỹ Sơn their interpreter felt the need to marry a third wife to help pass the time (Parmentier 1944d: 20), at others informative, such as a long description of the excavations at Đông Dương (Parmentier 1944f: 19-22). Elsewhere we read of fear as a tiger breaks into the camp in the small hours of the morning (Parmentier 1944g: 4). With the exception of the first, each of these articles is illustrated with drawings by Parmentier. However, they are no longer his scientific architectural drawings, rather these are rapid sketches. Somehow they seem more human, much more personal, seemingly more in keeping with the overall tone of the writing. They include a depiction of a home-made sedan chair for travelling and one of the hanging crates, known as “decavilles”, devised for transporting debris at the excavation sites. There are also rapid sketches of sculptures and artefacts.



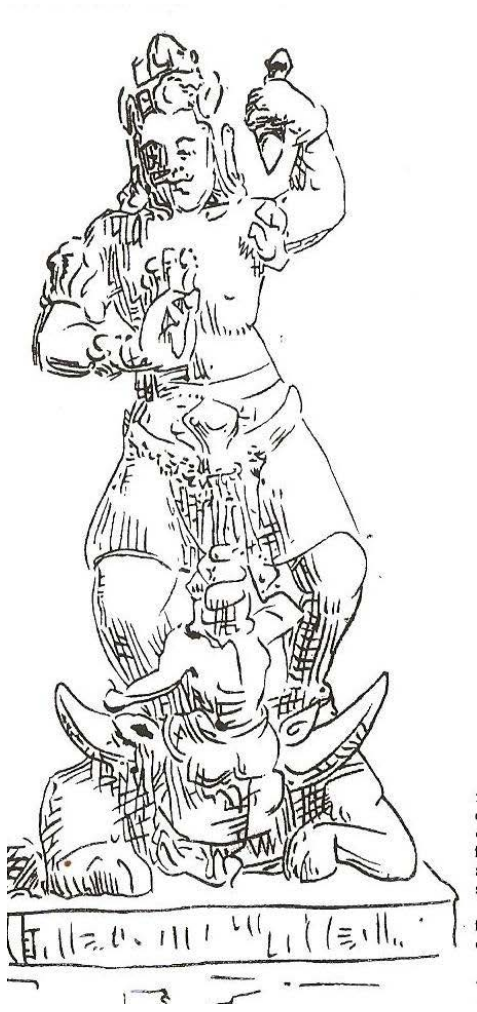
Chaise de route.

Fig. 26 Parmentier: drawing of a “chaise de route”
(Parmentier 1944b : 12)



Decauville à pattes en chargement.

Fig. 27 Parmentier: drawing of a “decauville”
(Parmentier 1944f: 20)



Figs. 28 & 29 Parmentier drawings of Đồng Dương Dvarapala and Tháp Mẫm Gajasimha
(Parmentier 1944f: 21; Parmentier 1945: 58)

In stark contrast to the *Inventaire* and the essays in the BEFEO, the eight instalments of these “memories” unveil, both through the text and the imagery, a very different world. This is the world which is absent in the architectural drawings, at least on the surface of the paper. However, while invisible in the drawings themselves, this world is nonetheless an integral part of them. These behind-the-scenes glimpses that the ageing Parmentier gives us at the end of his life pull sharply into focus the notion of objective, authorless drawings. Attention has recently been drawn to the “need to engage with the problematic surrounding the image’s mediating function as a bearer of archaeological evidence” (Smiles and Moser 2005: 2). With

regard to Parmentier's drawings we might do well to ask just which archaeological evidence they transmit. When we view a photograph we are viewing the image in it from the same viewpoint as the photographer. The image we see is the one seen through the camera lens. We should keep in mind that when we view Parmentier's images we are similarly viewing the monuments depicted in them from the same viewpoint as Parmentier's. This also means that, just as when we view an old photograph, we are seeing from Parmentier's viewpoint at Parmentier's time. This is important, since the drawings have taken on a timeless quality. As we have seen, they have been published constantly for more than a century in nearly all the books on Ancient Champa. The story told in the texts of these books, written over the decades, has changed over time as Cham history and research has evolved. Similarly, the monuments have changed over time, sometimes to the point of obliteration. The drawings, on the other hand, have remained static, unchanged, as if frozen in time. Just which particular time they are frozen in, however, is a complex matter.

3.7 The Scientific Nature of the Drawings

Parmentier's work will differ from the pioneering work of his predecessors, such as Camille Paris and Charles Lemire, in its emphasis on "scientific" method. As early as 1902, in a "note on the execution of archaeological digs", which for Southeast Asian archaeologist Charles Higham "remains a model of common sense and in many ways ahead of its time even in European contexts" (Higham 2002: 21), Parmentier is keen to stress that "a dig is not an amusement", but rather "a very delicate scientific pursuit". He warns that if the task is "badly executed, it will bring about the disappearance of the historic record itself" (Parmentier 1902a: 104). It is therefore a tragic irony that, despite all of Parmentier's efforts, this is exactly what happened at sites such as Mỹ Sơn and Đông Dương where the massive

clearance of vegetation carried out during Parmentier and Carpeaux's missions undoubtedly led to the subsequent continued degradation of the monuments, which, without their covering of vegetation, were no longer protected from the elements and the effects of erosion. The way Parmentier *does*, however, succeed in preserving the historic document is, above all, through his drawings.

Drawings have long played a fundamental role in architectural history. As Stuart Cohen has pointed out, "before the photograph made it possible for each of us to 'possess' fragments of the world, architects knew buildings through drawings". He suggests that "to study history was to study drawings, for this was the way in which architecture was recorded". Although the "'Grand Tour' provided experience of the monuments of architectural history, it was published compendiums of measured drawings [...] that provided a working knowledge of buildings" (Cohen 1978: 2). Historians of architecture distinguish between different types of architectural drawings and the consequently differing influence they have on the way we understand the architecture they represent. Cohen maintains that "we must acknowledge the ways in which different styles and methods of drawing subjectively present their content". He suggests, for example, that "one need only compare Pugin's drawings of Gothic architecture with those of Choisy²⁰ to see the same forms presented as picturesque by one man and as rationally deterministic by the other". For Cohen, "these drawings represent very different architectural sensibilities", for "not only is the style of these drawings related to an attitude toward architecture but so is the type of drawing used and the kind of information conveyed" (Cohen 1978: 2). Similarly, in the study of the monuments of ancient Southeast Asia, we find a variety of different methods of depiction. Parmentier's line drawings belong quite clearly to

²⁰ Augustus Charles Pugin (1762–1832) was an Anglo-French artist, architectural draughtsman, and writer on medieval architecture; Auguste Choisy (1841-1909) was a French architectural historian of ancient civilizations and an engineer.

the highly technical world of Beaux-Arts architectural design, and would seem to form a specific body of illustration that we might term *scientific*. In other words, technically constructed drawings, where fantasy and imagination would appear to be absent, with just the factual being portrayed. But is this really the case?

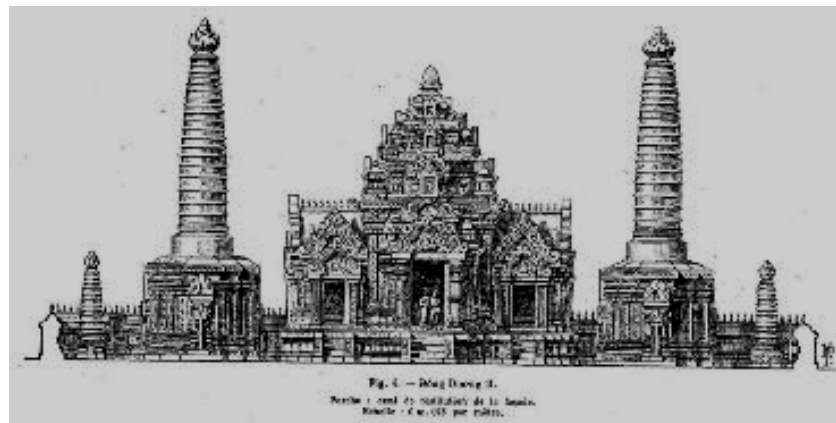


Fig. 30 Parmentier: Đông Dương (Parmentier 1918)

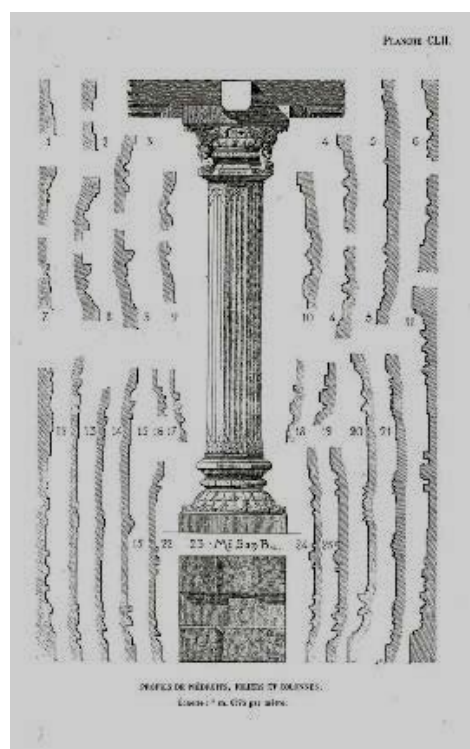


Fig. 31 Parmentier: pilaster fragments
(Parmentier 1918)



Fig. 32 Parmentier: Mý Son A1
(Parmentier 1909)

The different types of drawings executed by Parmentier, which include plans, elevations, cross-sections and details of ornament (figs. 30-32) lead to different types of understanding of the building represented. Each is nonetheless flat and two-dimensional, whereas in reality architecture is, of course a lived and experienced medium, its spatial aspect being fundamental to its existence. When reduced to a drawing, however skilfully depth and perspective are rendered by the draughtsman, the lived experience of the building is inevitably absent. Michael Graves has described the plan as “a conceptual tool, a two-dimensional diagram or notational device, with limited capacity to express the perceptual elements which exist in three-dimensional space”. He suggests that “it is only by a synthesis of the conceptual plan with the perceptual elements of architecture that the value of the three-

dimensional experience of a building is understood”, since “plans are two-dimensional diagrams and consequently they are conceptually and graphically incapable of fully expressing the perceptual elements of the vertical dimension” (Graves 1975: 12-13). Following Graves, Cohen distinguishes between plan and elevation drawings, the plan being “conceptual”, a notation, and the elevation “perceptual”, a representation of something we actually see. He further draws attention to the difference between the drawing and the photograph, suggesting that “as documentation of architecture, the photograph and the drawing serve very different roles”. He makes the important distinction that “the architectural photograph, because it so convincingly pretends to document, becomes a kind of historical evidence, whereas drawings, because they subjectively communicate the architect’s intentions, can become a part of the history of ideas” (Cohen 1978: 3). Bearing in mind that Cohen is writing about architects’ drawings of their own designs and that Parmentier is producing architectural reconstructions of someone else’s designs, and that consequently the architect’s intentions do not come into the equation, it would seem, nonetheless, that the distinction Cohen draws between architectural photograph and architectural drawing is to a certain extent conflated in the case of Parmentier’s drawings, which seem to faithfully imitate the original, in a similar way to photographs. To see whether they actually do this, let us return to the illustrations of Cham monuments in Charles Lemire’s 1894 article. These illustrations, we will recall, are drawings done from photographs.

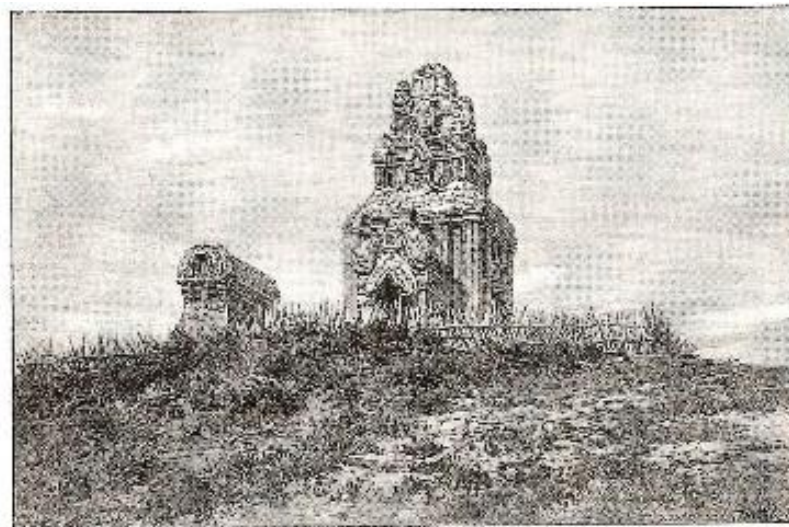
3.8 Drawings from Photographs

Figures 33 and 34 show two of the illustrations from Lemire’s 1894 article. If we compare them with Parmentier’s drawings (figures 19-20, 30-32) we can see that they would appear to be different kinds of illustration. The images in Lemire’s essay are drawings made directly

from photographs in order to overcome the inadequate printing capabilities of the time. It was not until 1896, in the review *L'Illustration*, that photographs were printed directly for the first time. Before this date only engravings could be readily printed, so the illustrated magazines called upon the services of professional engravers whose aim was to produce an image identical to the original photograph. It is known, though, that alterations were frequently made, sometimes to facilitate page layout or to resize the scene around a central subject or, most often, in order for the engravers to add their own “trade mark” to the image (Papin 1999: 17). Although the fate of the original photographs from which the drawings and engravings in Lemire’s article were made is unknown, making it impossible to determine exactly how faithful the reproductions are, there seems no reason to suppose that they are essentially different, other than in minor details, from the photographs they are based on. Therefore, if we accept that the photograph accurately captured the image of the monument, by extension the drawings do the same, in other words, *visually* they are faithful renderings of the building. Now, it seems that one of the reasons that Parmentier’s drawings have been so extensively used, for over a century, to illustrate Cham monuments in both scholarly and popular literature is that they are taken to be accurate or faithful representations of reality. This would seem to imply, therefore, that they serve essentially the same role as Lemire’s illustrations. What then makes these two types of illustration so different? Why should one be deemed acceptable in the scholarly literature, and the other apparently not worthy of reproduction? An obituary to Parmentier, which appeared in the BEFEO some three years after his death, suggested that, even though “some have seen fit on rare occasions to question their exactitude”, the drawings “are often of much greater value than photographs, and bear witness to a precise and faithful sense of observation” (BEFEO 1952: 278). The writer²¹ of

²¹ The writer of the obituary is not named.

the obituary failed to explain why he or she sometimes considered the drawings to be of greater value than photographs. Moreover, since many of the monuments drawn by Parmentier have since been drastically altered, if indeed they actually survive at all, it is often difficult, and at times impossible, to determine with any precision the accuracy of Parmentier's drawings. May be the question of the drawings accuracy is in fact not the right one to be asking.



Monuments khmers de Binh Dinh - Dessin de Taylor d'après une photographie.



Monuments khmers de Binh Dinh - Dessin de Taylor d'après une photographie.

Figs. 33 & 34 Drawings from photographs by Taylor in Lemire - Bình Định (Lemire 1894)

The philosopher Nelson Goodman has suggested that “correctness of representation like correctness of description varies with system or framework”, and that “although representations and descriptions differ in important ways, in neither case can correctness be a matter of truth”. For Goodman, “a statement is true, and a description or representation right, for a world it fits” and that “rather than attempting to subsume descriptive and representational rightness under truth, we sh[ould] do better”, he proposes, “to subsume truth along with these under the general notion of rightness of fit” (Goodman 1978: 130-132, 138).

Following Goodman, it might be argued that Parmentier’s drawings display “rightness of fit” to the particular Western Beaux-Arts tradition of architectural representation to which they belong. This is the world they fit, and by the time Parmentier’s drawings appear, this world of architectural representation has been totally subsumed into Western culture. According to Dana Arnold, by the 18th century “the printed image became an essential component of the international currency of intellectual ideas that transcended spoken language boundaries”. Arnold suggests that “these images facilitated the transference of ideas about architecture, antiquity and aesthetics in the pan-European arena of artistic and scholarly exchange”, and she points out that “there is no doubt that prints were essential to the formulation of a visual repertoire of studies of antique art, architecture and artefacts” (Arnold 2002b: 450). Parmentier’s drawings are part of this established and accepted “visual repertoire”. However, as well as being representations of works of art, they are also works of art in their own right. The fact that Parmentier’s first attempts at reproducing a Cham temple (Po Nagar) on paper won him 3rd medal at the *Salon des Artistes français* in Paris in 1902²² (Parmentier 1944a:

²² He was to continue to win both artistic and scientific awards throughout his career. For example, his inventory of Cham monuments won him the Prix d’Archéologie Coloniale in 1920 (Singaravélou 1999: 343-344; Pignon-Poujol and André-Pallois 2002: 166-167).

14; Delobel 2004: 38), seems to be clear evidence that, at the time, his drawings were not only considered to be works of art, but, what is more, works of art of some considerable merit. Furthermore, since the vast majority of the Parisian public at the time can have had little or no concept of what Ancient Champa was, we can assume that the drawings were judged on their artistic merit alone and not on any criteria of archaeological accuracy, that is of faithfulness to an original model. Their aesthetic quality certainly seems to be one of the factors that have led to the drawings' enduring success, though their perceived accuracy has also certainly been influential. While the drawings are clearly works of art, they at the same time highly scientific studies. They are records of an elaborate process of examination, measurement and calculation, a process Parmentier himself was at pains to explain.

3.9 Parmentier's Instructions for drawings

In his introduction to the first volume of the *Inventaire Descriptif des Monuments Čams de l'Annam*, Parmentier declares that “in order to obtain an exact understanding of the vestiges of Cham art, even the most complete and the most detailed text would be insufficient if it were not elucidated by ample illustration”. In the following pages he proceeds to give a detailed explanation of the choices concerning what type of illustration to use and the creative process behind them. Since photographs of sculptures mainly show “the brute mass and exaggerate details in those areas which are illuminated”, Parmentier explains that he “prefer[s] drawing, which, when executed by conscientious and dedicated artists, offers the same guarantees of accuracy, adding its own qualities of clarity and precision”. As far as the monuments are concerned, he considers that “no serious information on their floor-plans and

interiors can be given by photography”, and that the proportions of their facades are “distorted by the view point [of the camera], especially in a land where the abundance of vegetation makes it impossible to stand far enough back”. He was obliged, therefore, to use geometric drawing to represent the buildings. Importantly he opts for a single scale, 3/4cm per metre, however this resulted, he explained, in many of the plates being larger than the publication. Therefore, to overcome the problem of the study turning into what he calls “a veritable *album*”, with “the reader condemned to constant page-flippings”, the plates were confined to a separate *Atlas des edifices çams*. He points out that the inclusion of photographic illustrations in the main text of the inventory make it “sufficiently comprehensible without its annex”, therefore allowing it to stand alone (Parmentier 1909: xiv-xvi).

Parmentier is very precise about the difficulties of creating these drawings in view of the ruinous state of many of the monuments. “It is rare,” he declares, “that a part of a building be sufficiently well preserved to be readable without comparison with others, more ruinous still, but sometimes bearing elements that have been lost in the first”. He points out that “to do a precise drawing of three identical façades where each is in a different state of ruin, would entail needless repetition”. On the other hand, “to provide only the least degraded would have been to run the risk of losing the benefit of indications gathered elsewhere”. His solution, therefore, was “to complete the selected façade with the best preserved fragments from the other façades” and, in cases where the façade was symmetrical, “to complete parts on the left with parts conserved on the right”. Nevertheless, he chose to “never represent a single element which no longer figures in this position anywhere on the building”. While there are exceptions to these rules he sets himself, for the most part this procedure, he claims, gives him “the ability to render precise floor-plans and frequently give the impression of the

façades of the building before their ruin, without any detail being hypothetical”. He suggests that “the sincerity of the application of his system is guaranteed by the series of photographs in the first volume”, and that the photographic illustration will “be a means of control” (Parmentier 1909: xvi).

Where the lower parts of a monument were in an almost total state of ruin, plumb-line measurements of the preserved high vertical parts and close study of the remaining parts of the base “always permitted [him] to establish the traces with great exactitude”, in order to produce accurate floor-plans. It was the cross-sections that posed the greatest difficulties because of the sometimes enormous height of the interiors and the obscurity of the vaults. Whenever it was not possible to reach parts of a building with ladders or poles, the sides were calculated approximately from the number of rows of bricks. When they were unable to reach the top of temples, making exact measurements impossible, perspective restitution was adopted. “Complete series of photographs of each building and each face, wherever that was possible, were converted to geometric form”, with the aid of “a meticulous study of the floor plan”. The erection of scaffolding at Po Nagar for the purposes of consolidation work permitted the verification of these measuring methods. The resulting difference between the geometric calculations and reality was, according to Parmentier, only 0.28m for a height of 22.48m, that is a drawing error, on his scale, of less than a millimetre for 10m of actual height (Parmentier 1909: xvii).

In 1925, Parmentier recommended that the inspectors of the EFEO’s archaeological service adopt a similar approach for their inventory of Khmer monuments to the one he had used for the monuments of Champa (Parmentier 1925). Thirteen pages of highly detailed instructions on methods for recording and preserving the monuments form a precious insight into the methods he adopted when working on the Cham inventory, complementing and elaborating

on his earlier commentary. Revealingly, in these instructions, he emphasizes that, as architects in the service of the EFEO, they are trained in the school's "methods of scientific observation" and that they have "special expertise for graphic documentation". He advises, therefore, that their "documentation should comprise a detailed written description and a complete representation through drawing and photography". Nonetheless, he stipulates that the written notes must be sufficient in themselves, so that the sketches, architectural drawings and photographs are never more than a supplement, and that their omission would not leave the written description lacking. This, Parmentier recognizes, though, is "a tedious and arduous rule", since it is easier to make a sketch (*croquis*) than a long and detailed description. However, the latter compensates for the failings of the drawing, which is "always seen from one view-point" or the photograph with "its disappointments and the all too frequent opacity of its shadows". He suggests that a *croquis* in the margin, can help to clarify the written description. "Use the services of native draughtsmen as little as possible", Parmentier warns, since "they are always mediocre as far as architectural drawings are concerned". This, he explains, is not through lack of care, but rather because more often than not "they fail to understand where the difficulty lies", and end up producing great quantities of useless detailed measurements "while missing the very one which may be the most important". He adds that, "what is more, they always do documents on site, and come up with drawings which are just as insufficiently informative as they are exaggeratedly touched up" (Parmentier 1925: 575-576; Delobel 2004: 16-18)

Constantly concerned with the physical preservation of the remains as well as the accurate recording of them, Parmentier suggests leaving on site only those elements of ornamentation that cannot be carried off by the curious. "It would be wise", he advises, "to put the other pieces in a secure place, even at the risk of cluttering our museums with doubles, since they

can easily be disposed of through exchange, or even through regular sale". Though, since documenting is ever paramount, he instructs that "of course one must note all such removals and any useful identifying marks to retain a trace of the origin of the object". He advises that great pains should be taken to have the name of the building written down by a local in order to be transcribed by philologists at the École. But "beware of corrections made by locals employed at the site", he warns, "especially the interpreters, even monks", because, "with their customary pretension", they all too easily think that they can "re-establish the learned form of the name", but "usually end up with some remarkable nonsense which writers then perpetuate with touching naivety". It is important, Parmentier instructs, to "collect with the greatest of care all the local traditions and legends, however puerile they may seem, about the monument or the divinities that it houses" (Parmentier 1925: 578)

Parmentier suggests that the inaccessible parts of the monuments are "the most interesting since they are the least known", and that they should therefore be examined with the greatest of attention. He advises that work should always be carried out in pairs, so that one person can observe and describe while the other takes notes, for "it is important to be able to not take your eyes off the thing being described, and looking at the paper in order to write troubles the normal rhythm of description". This, he says, was the method that he adopted and the one that worked best for the study of the Cham monuments. He advocates two main methods for the accurate recording of proportions: the use of 5mm squared paper, or recourse to photographic geometry (*géometral photographique*). This is a process which involves photographing different parts of the building with the camera strictly in line with the element being photographed, "the various frontal planes are then in absolute geometry on a scale which is inversely proportional to the distance from each plane," and mathematical

calculation can be used to rectify deformations caused by perspective (Parmentier 1925: 575-576; Delobel 2004: 18).

3.10 The Subject Matter of the Drawings

It is important to bear in mind, and perhaps all too easy to overlook, the fact that Parmentier's drawings are nearly all of ruins. Ruins that for the most part were, when Parmentier first encountered them, in appalling states of decay and which had to be cleared of undergrowth and jungle. This is important since it is almost never the *ruin* that is highlighted in the drawings, rather the focus of the drawings is the *architecture*. The drawings are above all a pointer to how the building once was. In Parmentier's *Inventaire* and his other published articles, the buildings are dated. This date is always, and only, the century of the temple's construction, whether known or only assumed. Now, if a drawing is labelled, for example, as an 11th century structure this is a reference to the moment of creation of the building, not to any later period in the building's existence. However, the Cham temples were functional and not merely decorative and many of them had probably been in use over long periods, centuries even. This raises several important questions. In choosing to highlight the moment of origin, Parmentier is of course merely following standard art historical practice. Standard practice at his time, and still standard practice today in most Southeast Asian ancient art historical studies. We have seen, though, that Parmentier is not just recording what he sees, but adopts a process of reconstitution of part or all of the building. In other words, he records the ruined state of the construction as faithfully as he can, but adds to it parts that no longer exist, thereby trying to create something that is closer to the original state than what he actually sees. Nevertheless, in the main, the drawing remains essentially a representation of the structure as it was in Parmentier's time. That is, a condition which, for us, is now over a

century old. Time is conflated. When Carpeaux's photographs were displayed at the Guimet exhibition, they were clearly scenes from the early 1900s, and labelled as such. Now, these photographs represent the monuments at exactly the same moment in time as Parmentier's drawings. The images in Carpeaux's photographs represent the moment in time when the photograph was taken, for as Susan Sontag has pointed out, "a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask" (Sontag 1979: 154). Labelling Carpeaux's photographs with the date of their production fixes this understanding for the viewer. As we have noted, Parmentier's drawings are not dated. If they were, then the simple inclusion of the date of production alongside the drawing would clearly change what they represent temporally for the viewer. The date of production of the drawing, whether mentioned or not in the caption, is nonetheless inherent in the drawing itself. Furthermore, also inherent in the drawings and their unwritten labels is the whole body of information carried in Parmentier's texts. That is, the technicalities of the production of the drawings as described in the introduction to the *Inventaire*, as well as the body of less formal information surrounding the circumstances of their creation, as told in the "Souvenirs". There is, though, a distancing process at work that serves to eclipse the process of production. Since these drawings are part of a recognised language of architectural representation, and one which has a long tradition, we tend, I believe, to accept them as realistic renderings of the monuments. Thus we focus almost entirely on *what* they represent rather than *how* they represent it, and at the same time we are distanced from their author who becomes absent. These drawings are, nonetheless, entirely different from photographs, in which, notwithstanding the fact that the photograph is always subjective, the mechanical processes of photography and development have reproduced on the printed surface the image seen through the viewfinder. Parmentier's drawings, on the other hand, are entirely constructed, albeit using highly mathematical and

scientific methods. In this, they differ too from the illustrations in Charles Lemire's 1894 article, which were drawings from photographs. To put it another way, while the drawings in Charles Lemire's 1894 article were copied directly from photographs, in other words it is primarily the photograph which mediates between the monument and its representation on the printed page, Henri Parmentier's drawings are constructed through the use, amongst other things, of observation, measurement, calculation, photography and squared-paper. All these, therefore, mediate between the monument and its representation. In both cases, the drawings are done by human hand, and hence subject to interpretation, error, or other intervention on the part of the draughtsman.

Like Carpeaux's photographs, the drawings in Lemire's article, since they are copied from photographs, represent the monuments they depict at the time of the *photograph*, which we can reasonably assume is contemporary with the drawing, and not at any other time. There is no ambiguity about this. On the other hand, in the case of Parmentier's drawings, the situation is not so clear. As we have seen, Parmentier himself has explained in detail his method of adding to the drawings elements that no longer exist in the original monument. For the most part, he does this, he tells us, when he can be sure what these missing elements were. Even so, as soon as Parmentier includes missing elements in his drawing, clearly the drawing no longer truly represents the building as it was in Parmentier's time. Nor does it represent the building at the time of its creation since, on the whole, Parmentier does not replace everything that is missing. In effect, Parmentier has invented a moment which never actually existed, therefore a moment which is outside of history. His drawing effectively places the monument in an invented time. For the sake of convenience let us call this an art-historical time.

As soon as Parmentier's drawings are reproduced in later works, what we have termed this art-historical time disappears as far as the reader is concerned, since the accompanying explanations that allow the reader to understand how the image has been created do not get reproduced, only the drawing does. This means that in all later works the drawings now represent Cham monuments in ruined states in which they never actually existed at any given moment in time, but the reader is unaware of it. Since the drawings are themselves almost never dated, they also become timeless. Only the caption, "after Parmentier" (*d'après Parmentier*), a sort of copyright waiver which sometimes, but by no means always accompanies them, serves to give them a very rough date by situating them within Parmentier's lifetime. As far as the viewer is concerned, the only date applied to the drawings is invariably the century of the monument's construction. Since these drawings are so ubiquitous in the available literature, this effectively means that almost the whole ensemble of Cham art historical studies is illustrated by what amounts to an historical fiction.

3.11 Archaeological Imagination: Jean-Yves Claeys and Nguyễn Xuân Đồng

Henri Parmentier's ink drawings may be amongst the earliest, the most prolific and certainly the best known renderings of ancient Cham monuments, but, as we have seen, they are part of a much larger archive of non-photographic representations of Champa. To better understand the specificity of Parmentier's diagrams, it might be helpful to contrast them with some of the other ways ancient Champa has been illustrated by both expert architects and archaeologists like Parmentier, as well as by professional artists.

Jean-Yves Claeys, like Parmentier, was a talented artist as well as a trained architect. Figure 35 shows a design he submitted for a museum in Saigon in the mid 1920s, which was never built (Le Brusq 1999: 78-79) and figure 36 shows one of his designs for the extension to the Danang museum which was completed in 1936.



Fig. 35 Claeys: pavilion design for colonial exposition in Saigon, 1920s (Le Brusq 1999:79)

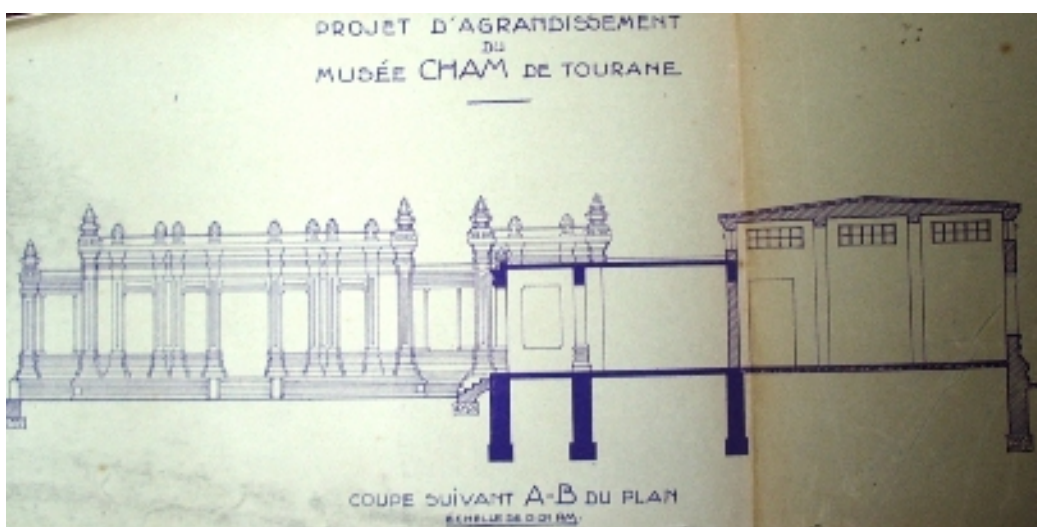


Fig. 36 Claeys: design for Tourane museum extension, 1930s (EFEO Archives: X)

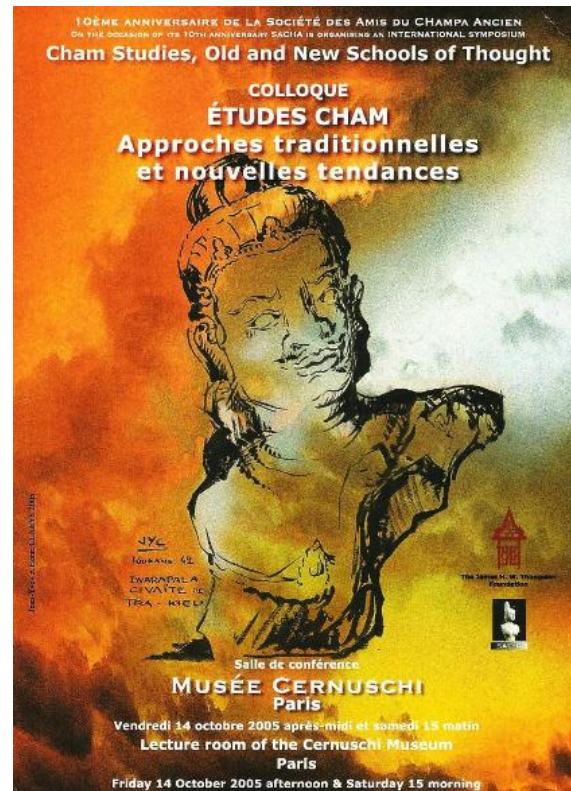
Despite his architectural training and his ability to execute architectural drawings such as these, Claeys did not produce architectural Beaux-Arts inspired reconstructions of Cham monuments as Parmentier did. Possibly there was no need, since, by the time Claeys arrived in Indochina, Parmentier had already published both volumes of his Inventory, with plans and elevations of all the known Cham edifices. With the on-going deterioration of most Cham sites, any later drawings would inevitably depict buildings in a lesser state of preservation. Parmentier's drawings were already serving the role of 'preserving' the Cham monuments in an earlier, and, sometimes, as we have seen, partly fictitious, state. Instead, all Claeys's published illustrations are in a very different, less scientific and much more personalised style. Many of his drawings illustrate the covers or frontispieces of publications such as the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué*. Figure 37, for example, shows the cover of the 1934 January-February issue of the journal. The building depicted is clearly identifiable as a Cham temple with its distinctive tiered roof and stepped door arches, yet the image displays none of the detail and architectural precision of Parmentier's drawings. The temple, surrounded by vegetation is reflected in a body of water across which a large junk sails. Stylised clouds fill the sky. The Cham temple has been placed in a lush exotic setting where the junk seems to give it an aura of an age of exploration and adventure. This is an image of pure fantasy.

Jean-Yves Claeys also illustrated many articles in the colonial review *Indochine*. One of the drawings published in this review shows the head of a Dvarapala from Trà Kiệu, executed in 1942 at the museum. Sixty years later, in 2005, Claeys's son Henri, also an architect, reworked this image in colour for a flyer and poster advertising a colloquy on Cham studies organised by the Société des Amis du Champa Ancien to coincide with the sculpture exhibition at the Musée Guimet (figs. 38 and 39). Elsewhere, cartoon-like drawings illustrate

an essay on the Tourane museum. There is a spontaneity and playfulness to these images in which Claeys the person seems to shine through, in stark contrast to the technical precision of Parmentier's scientific drawings where the author appears to be absent.



Fig. 37 Claeys: drawing from cover page of Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue, 1934
(Claeys 1934)



Figs. 38 & 39 Jean-Yves Claeys 1942 drawing of head of a Dvarapala from Trà Kiệu (Claeys 1942b) and flyer for a 2005 SACHA colloquy with Jean-Yves's drawing reworked in colour by his son Henri

Line drawings of ancient Cham remains are not the sole domain of French researchers. Nguyễn Xuân Đồng (1907-1986), curator of the Danang museum from 1938 to 1973, was another talented draughtsman who also produced elegant drawings of Cham sculptures and motifs (Trần Kỳ Phương 2006: 21). A handful of these were published in Carl Heffley's 1972 catalogue of the museum collections, which will be discussed in chapter four. These images, two of which are reproduced in figures 40 and 41, appeared at the beginning and the end of the book and bore no captions, although Nguyễn Xuân Đồng is credited in the text of the catalogue. Rather than illustrations of the text, they seem, like Claeys's illustrations, to serve a purely decorative function on the page. Interestingly, Heffley remarked that Nguyễn Xuân

Đông's drawings "clearly reflect not only a beautiful talent in graphic art, but his obvious knowledge and love of things Cham" (Heffley 1972: 3). This personal element makes these drawings, like those by Claeys, markedly different from Parmentier's. They are renderings of the sculptures devoid of any other elements and have none of the invention and fantasy of Claeys's drawings, yet nor are they technical precise renditions of the artwork. They seem to hover somewhere in between the fantastical and the scientific. The simple line constructions succeed in giving a realistic rendering of the artworks, yet they are quite clearly by the hand of their author.



Fig. 40 Nguyễn Xuân Đông line drawing of the Tháp Mãm Gajasimha
(Heffley 1972:52)



Fig. 41 Nguyễn Xuân Đồng line drawing Ganesha (Heffley 1972: 132)

3.12 An Artist's Fantasy: André Maire

The images we have looked at so far were produced by scholars deeply immersed in Cham archaeology and the study of Cham art. Parmentier, Claeys and Nguyễn Xuân Đồng were all directly involved in the process that saw the excavation of artefacts from the ground and their subsequent transferral to museums where they were displayed in entirely new settings. In these new museological contexts the artworks were isolated from the environments in which they once operated. Many of the drawings, and in particular those by Parmentier, isolated the artworks on the page in similar ways. Placing the objects in the museum and reproducing

them as line drawings on the page both served to locate the art in a new art-historical world where objects interconnect with each other independently of the lived world they once belonged to. The realisation of this led French artist André Maire to imagine and illustrate ancient Cham artworks in an entirely different way.

André Maire spent a total of thirteen years living in Indochina at two different moments of his life and of the history of the region. He first travelled to Southeast Asia at the age of 20, at the very start of his career, arriving in Saigon in July 1919. On this first trip, he was to stay for two and a half years, only returning to France in 1921. Over a quarter of a century later, he returned to the region, in middle age, during the twilight years of French colonial rule and lived there for a decade, between 1948 and 1958. Early in the first trip he came across both Khmer and Cham art, but was to experience these in very different contexts. He visited the ruins of Angkor, seeing them still very much in the state in which Henri Mouhot had “discovered” them in 1860, in the heart of the forest (Thierry 2000: 162; Harscoët-Maire 2000b: 9). By the time Maire returned three decades later, however, the EFEO had carried out considerable work to save the temples, and it has been said that “he re-learned Angkor thanks to Henri Marchal”.²³ Maire’s daughter, Lorédana Harscoët-Maire has suggested that while, “in 1919, André Maire had found the ‘ruins’ in the state that Mouhot had discovered them in 1860”, during his second stay, “Marchal initiated Maire to the mysteries of his ‘ruins’; he communicated his knowledge and his enthusiasm to him, which, like an informed poet, the painter reconstituted in a collection of large drawings for the initiated and connoisseurs”. This

²³ Henri Marchal (1874-1970) was an architect and civil servant who, from 1916 onwards devoted much of his life to the study of Khmer art and archaeology and the conservation and restoration of its monuments. In 1919 he was appointed permanent member of the EFEO and “Curator of Angkor”. He spent much of the rest of his life living and working in Cambodia and died, in retirement, in Siem Reap.

part of his artistic output, which is in a largely scientific and archaeological style, includes, for example, architectural drawings of the temples (Harscoët-Maire 2000: 27). Solange Thierry has drawn attention to the fact that “the study of the civilization of Angkor was completely different from a bookish examination of documents”. She points out that “the successive conservators lived an exotic, perilous and difficult adventure amongst the stones and the forest”, adding that “at the Conservation of Angkor there was a murder, a suicide, frequent fever” (Thierry 2000: 162). In this passage, we might very easily substitute Champa for Angkor, since Thierry seems to describe a situation very similar to the toil, danger and excitement of work amongst the ruins of Champa that Parmentier describes at the end of his life in his memoirs of an “old Indochinese archaeologist”. As we have seen, though, this aspect of Parmentier’s work in the field is largely absent from his technical drawings. Thierry speculates that André Maire, when he came to Indochina, was well aware of the arduous work undertaken by the EFEO at the time, and which was “regrettably little known to the general public”, and suggests that “his pictorial art reflects the emotion of such an encounter” (Thierry 2000: 164). Thierry writes that:

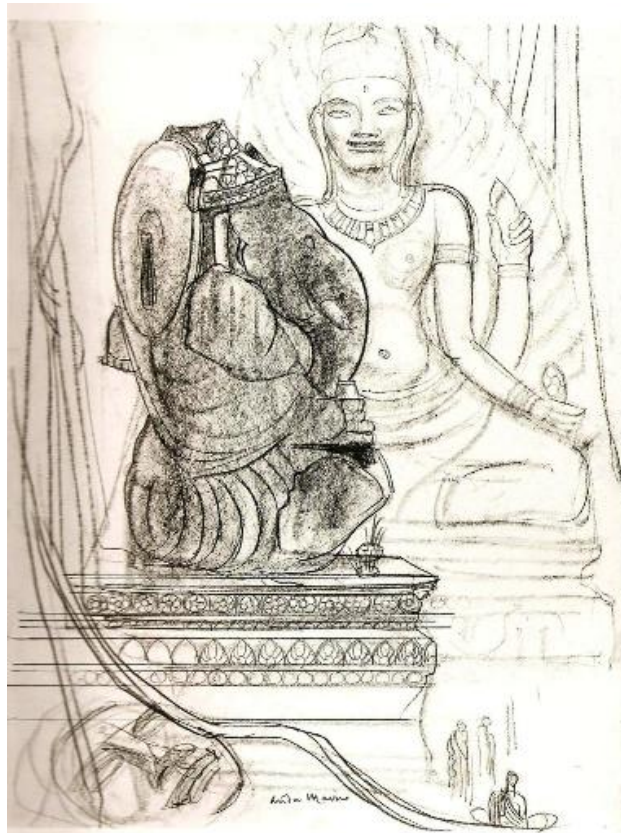
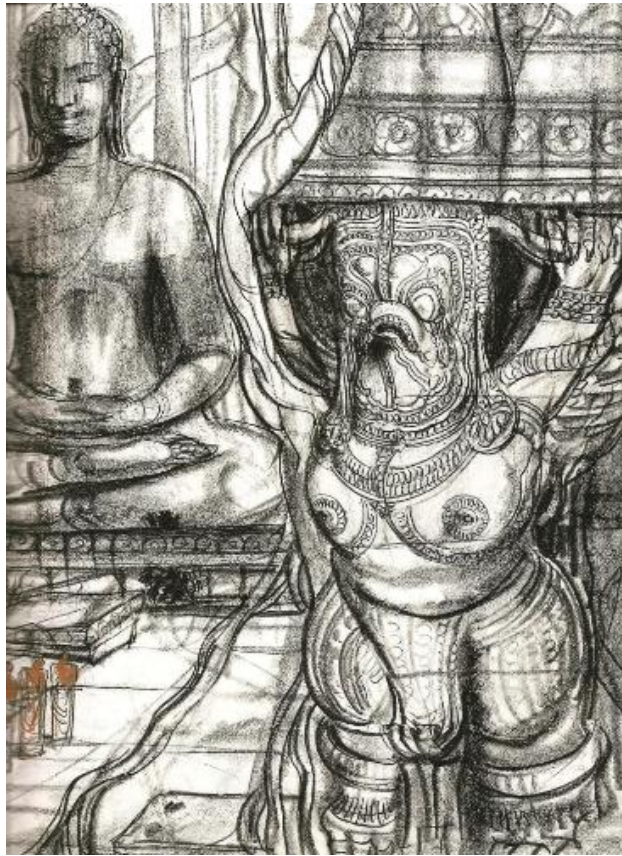
It sometimes happens that a work of art gives greater presence and feeling to the manifestations of a civilization than a strictly scientific document does; while the latter may be indispensable for historic knowledge, architectural analysis, the deciphering of texts, and the interpretation of symbols, the painter’s talent reveals a non-measurable dimension and intentions which are not verifiable, but nonetheless just as true. This is the case for André Maire, particularly in his works on the monuments and sculptures of Cambodia. It is true, also, for the art and landscape of Laos and Vietnam and in a general manner for the whole of the Indochinese Peninsula. (Thierry 2000: 162)

There seems to be no record in André Maire’s pictorial output of visits to any of the ancient Cham sites. Rather he discovered Cham art in the museums of Indochina, particularly in Saigon and Hue. During the colonial period, French artists were particularly drawn to Angkor and there are numerous paintings, pastels and drawings of the Khmer monuments, but Maire



Fig. 42 André Maire in 1950 (Harscoët-Maire 2005:10)

is one of the only professional artists to depict Cham art during this period. All the other illustrations that have come down to us were produced, as we have seen, by archaeologists and researchers working directly with the ancient art and artefacts. This has led Harscoët-Maire to remark, “a great observer, he will be the only one to understand and discover the art of Champa thanks to his visits to the museums of Saigon and Hue” (Harscoët-Maire 2000: 27).



Figs. 43 & 44 André Maire : “Garuda Cham ” and “Ganeça et statue chame”, 1950s
(Harscoët-Maire 2005 : 59, 199)

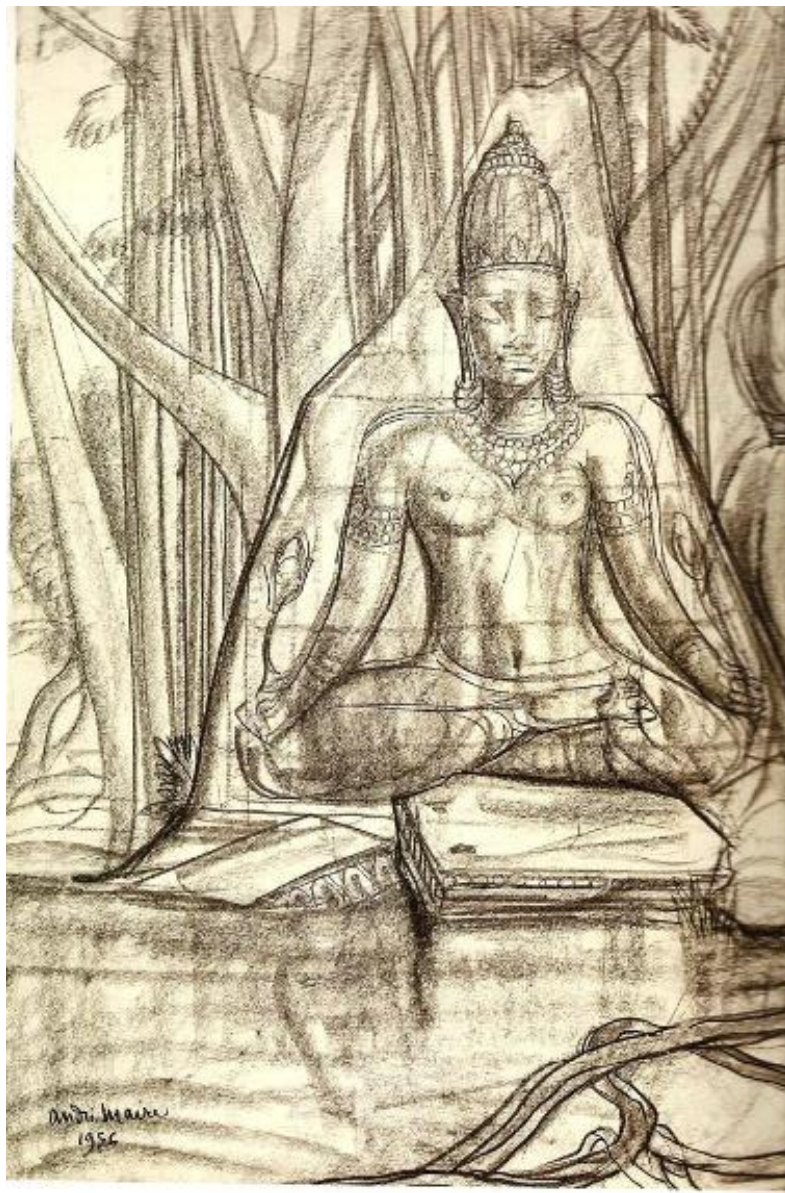


Fig. 45 André Maire : “ Statue chame”, 1956
(Harscoët-Maire 2002a : 228)

All of Maire’s depictions of Cham art are of the statuary, not of the monuments. His paintings and drawings illustrate Cham sculptures that he observed only in their museum contexts. However, Maire seems to draw on his experience at Angkor, and rather than illustrating the sculpture isolated from its earlier settings, as it is in the museum display or in the drawings of Parmentier, he places the pieces in jungle environments. Often, several sculptures are juxtaposed against backgrounds of vegetation or buildings entangled in roots.

In a sort of reversal of the archaeological process which sees the artefacts dug up out of the ground or disentangled from suffocating undergrowth and taken to museums to be isolated on pedestals or in glass cases, André Maire removes the artworks from museological isolation and puts them back into jungle settings. As Harscoët-Maire has observed, there are two aspects to his work, “one poetical and dream-like, the other scientific, studying the architecture and statuary”. Maire “dreams the temples” and through his imagination, he puts the statues he studied in museums back amongst the temple ruins so that they “re-inhabit the sacred places which they should never have left” (Harscoët-Maire 2005: 36, 50). His drawings are, nonetheless, always timeless, “no allusion to modernism permits them to be dated: cars, modern buildings and Europeans are all excluded” (Harscoët-Maire 2000: 224).

We know that Maire drew on a combination of different sources when creating his artistic compositions. As well as his experience at the jungle sites of Angkor and his encounters with Khmer and Cham art in museums such as those in Phnom Penh and Saigon, from the early days of his first trip to Indochina he also came into contact with photographs brought back from the worksites by architects and archaeologists and which showed the successive phases of the restoration of temples. As a result, Maire began to develop a keen interest in the work of the EFEO architects and archaeologists and this would become an important source of inspiration for his art. This interest intensified during his second stay in Indochina. In 1948, he was appointed professor at the *École d’architecture d’Indochine*, where he stayed for ten years and was to be the last French member of the school to leave Indochina in 1958. Through contacts while at the school, in 1950 he was able to obtain a special *laisser-passer* in order to return to Cambodia, where he began to develop a close working friendship with Henri Marchal. Marchal shared with him his knowledge and enthusiasm for the ancient

Khmer ruins and Maire's already longstanding interest in the archaeological and restoration work being carried out by the members of the EFEO increased as a result. During this period, both men amassed a large quantity of notes, sketches and studies, which Maire worked on later in his studio in order to produce his compositions (Harscoët-Maire 2005: 32, 36; Thierry 2000: 164-166).

The extent to which Maire took an interest in and gained a knowledge of the work of the EFEO has led Solange Thierry to go as far as claiming that Maire "understood better than anyone the work of these *conservateurs* who were, as well as being scholars and technicians, new builders," and that consequently, "artists of the stature of André Maire are just as much part of the lineage of discoverers and re-creators as the pioneers of archaeology" (Thierry 2000: 166). Thierry suggests that Maire "gives us more than just images which mix document and dream: he makes us enter into a meditation on the creative thought of the builders of Angkor". For Thierry, "the intensity of the sacred, as much as the monumental and sculptural beauty, has profoundly marked his work" (Harscoët-Maire 2005: 36; Thierry 2000: 164-166).

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined a variety of different artistic representations of the ancient art of Southeast Asian, and, in particular Champa. These illustrations were produced, in the case of Parmentier, Claeys and Nguyễn Xuân Đồng, by three of the men who were most intimately, and for the longest periods, involved in the excavation, preservation, study and display of Cham art in Vietnam over the course of the 20th century. These three men were first and foremost architect-archaeologists and art-historians. The artistic images they have left us are, above all, illustrations of their work in these fields. The compositions produced by

André Maire, on the other hand, are the work of a professional artist depicting the artwork as influenced by the work of the archaeologists. Despite this different perspective, Maire, like the archaeologists, was not only extremely knowledgeable about the art but also had an evident passion for it. The artwork of these four men is a fusion of their erudition and their passion. Each is able to render the artworks with great accuracy and precision, yet each, in widely different ways, mixes scientific realism with illusion and sometimes fantasy. In the case of André Maire and Jean-Yves Claeys this combination is immediately visible. For the viewer contemplating the Cham temple reflected in water while a junk sails majestically by or a Ganesh mysteriously entwined in creepers, it is clear that these easily identifiable ancient artworks are in settings of the artist's imagination. The artist's presence is readily felt in such images. By contrast, although the artist seems to be absent in the seemingly scientific world of Parmentier's architectural line-drawings, we have seen how here too, the artist is also present, though in a more subtle way than he would be in the illustrations created at the end of his life. It is this presence of the artists and the profoundly personal nature of these images that makes them such a valuable historical record. They are at once records of the art and also of the men who found it, studied it, preserved it and made it known, with such dedication, patience, passion and skill. Their talent as artists enabled them to create and leave to us readable records of the artworks, which are often all the more valuable since in some cases the originals no longer exist. But it is above all because of their use of imagination, whether to imagine a building as it once was or to place an artwork in an imagined setting, that we are able, through these illustrations, to enter into a world, the world of ancient Cham art. This is a world of which these men themselves are an integral and vital part.

Chapter 4

Voices of the Danang Museum

Preserving Champa

“If there is a counterpart to the confusion of a library, it is the order of its catalogue”
Walter Benjamin¹

Introduction

With the exception of a handful of small site museums,² the Danang Museum of Cham Sculpture is the world’s only museum devoted exclusively to the art of ancient Champa. With some 450 objects on display,³ the majority of which are sandstone sculptures, it houses by far the largest collection in Vietnam, out-numbering the collections housed and displayed in the Hanoi and Ho Ch Minh City Historical Museums, the next most important Cham collections in the country. It is some fifteen times the size of the Guimet collection in Paris, which is generally accepted to be the largest single collection of Cham art outside Vietnam.⁴ The Danang museum is clearly, therefore, the greatest single place to study Cham art in depth, its art archive covering a greater spectrum of artworks, stylistically, geographically and chronologically, than any other institution in the world. However, this collection, like all museum collections, is contrived, the result of a combination of choice, design,

¹ Benjamin (1968: 60)

² Such as those at those at Mỹ Sơn and Chiên Đàn, for example.

³ Most writers quote a figure of 300 sculptures (see, for example, Schweyer 2011: 388; Guillon c.2001: 12). However, this fails to take into account the 2002 opening of a large new wing allowing considerably more works to be displayed (see *Lettre de la SACHA* 11, 2004-2005: 12-13). 450 is the figure quoted by museum director Hà Phước Mai as the total number of objects on display for the year 2005. The displayed collections have not changed substantially since then. Information is not available on the exact number of works kept in storage (Hà Phước Mai 2005: xxvi).

⁴ See chapter 2

selection and, sometimes, pure chance. This chapter examines key aspects of the century-long history of the museum, from its creation in early colonial times to its importance today as a major tourist attraction. More than merely the sum of its collection, this museum reflects the history of its life, and its life embodies the twists, turns and vicissitudes of the 20th century history of Vietnam. Drawing on unpublished documents in the archives of the EFEO and the existing literature, I uncover little known episodes of this history and question commonly held views and assumptions, in order to demonstrate how multiple narratives are at work within the museum. In particular, I look in detail at two of the founding figures of the museum, Charles Lemire and Henri Parmentier, investigating the motivations that drove them and the worlds they were part of, in order to discover exactly how and why the museum came into being. I also examine the museum building and the different catalogues that have been made of the collections. Finally, I analyse the story of one of the museum's masterpieces that entered the collections just three decades ago, raising questions about the problems of international scholarship and about the ownership of culture. I look especially at the question of preservation throughout the course of the museum's history.

4.1 The Museum History on Record - The Standard Historical Narrative

Today museums are so prolific and vary so enormously in their form, their content and their mission, that any definition seems hard to pin down. Most museums comprise some form of collection, which is usually, though by no means always, of objects, and define themselves as places of preservation and display and, by extension, places of learning and research. According to the International Council for



Fig. 46 The Danang Museum in 1936 (courtesy of the museum)

Museums (ICOM)⁵, “a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”.⁶ ICOM recognises that “the definition of a museum has evolved, in line with developments in society”. Consequently, since its creation in 1946, ICOM has updated this definition “in accordance with the realities of the global museum community” (ICOM 2012) since, as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has pointed out, “the realities of museums have changed many times”. At the start of the 1990s, Hooper-

⁵ Created in 1946, ICOM is a non-governmental organisation maintaining formal relations with UNESCO and having a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council

⁶ According to the ICOM statutes adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007

Greenhill identified two main types of history of the museum, the “chronological, incremental descriptions of the development of ‘museums’”, and “narratives concerning either single individuals as collectors or focusing on the history of single institutions”. She posits that “these are all written from within ‘traditional’ history and retain its dependence on absolutes and its belief in the transcendental creative subject” (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 1, 19-20). This chapter takes as its starting point the handful of brief histories of the creation and development of the Danang museum, and seeks to demonstrate how these descriptions, by taking a few key figures and events, create a fixed narrative which belies a much more complex web of multiple trajectories.

Over the decades, a handful of historical sketches of the museum have been published, starting with a detailed account of the genesis of the museum by Henri Parmentier in a ten-page introduction to the catalogue which he produced for the museum’s opening in 1919 (Parmentier 1919). This was followed a decade later by a review of the creation of the EFEO’s museums in a 1931 report on archaeology in Indochina by the school’s director Louis Finot (Finot 1931). In 1942, Jean-Yves Claeys, who, despite the prolific work he carried out on Cham archaeology and the Cham museum, published comparatively little on his work (Glover 1997: 173), wrote a more popular article on the museum for the review *Indochine* (Claeys 1942b). Then in the 1970s and 80s Carl Heffley and Trần Kỳ Phương produced concise guidebooks for the museum containing brief overviews of its history (Heffley 1972; Trần Kỳ Phương 1987). With increased attention now being paid to ancient Champa, a number of essays on the history of the museum have been published since the mid 1990s, mostly for museum and exhibition catalogues and in a publication to mark the

centenary of the EFEO.⁷ The most comprehensive of these, dealing with the origins of the Danang museum, was written by Pierre Baptiste for the catalogue of the Musée Guimet 2005 Champa exhibition (Baptiste 2005b). These historical outlines vary in length and differ in details, but provide roughly the same standard narrative, which goes more or less as follows.

Sometime around 1892,⁸ colonial administrator Charles Lemire, one of a group of what Pierre Baptiste has termed “amateurs de vieilles pierres”,⁹ took some fifty Cham sculptures to Tourane and organised them into a public garden, forming the “embryo” of the future museum collection (Baptiste 2005b: 3). Before long the number had nearly doubled. Later,¹⁰ a former postal worker, Camille Paris, collected further artworks and brought them to the garden to join the others. After a failed attempt by the French authorities to transfer the works to Hanoi in 1902, Henri Parmentier wrote a report (1908)¹¹ criticising the neglect of the artworks and proposing a museum to protect them. Constructed in 1915 by French architects Delaval and Auclair, based on original plans by Parmentier, the new museum opened in 1919. Having initially failed to get the museum extended in 1927, archaeologist Jean-Yves Claeys subsequently designed a new wing which finally opened in 1936, and the resulting newly expanded museum was renamed after Henri Parmentier. In 1946 locals looted the museum and its library, but the majority of the pillaged works were recovered two years later. In 1954, during the war which would end French rule in Indochina, the museum was

⁷ See, for example, Beurdeley (1995), Trần Thị Thúy Điểm (1997), Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin (2001), Delobel (2004 and 2005), Hà Phước Mai (2005).

⁸ The date is variously cited as “around” 1891 or 1892, while Heffley gives a precise date of *December* 1891 (Heffley 1977: 70)

⁹ The meaning is roughly “amateur enthusiasts of old stones”, the French word “amateur” meaning both amateur and fan.

¹⁰ A certain confusion surrounds the exact dates and quantities of Paris’s additions to the collection

¹¹ Type-written letter to the Director of the *EFEO*, dated 6th May 1908 – EFEO Archives: X-3.21

used as a refugee shelter. A decade later the establishment was renamed again, becoming, in 1963, the Danang Museum of Cham Sculpture.¹² At the height of the American war, Musée Guimet curator and Cham expert, Philippe Stern appealed to President Nixon to prevent the destruction of Cham heritage, as a result of which an American, Carl Heffley, was been put in charge of the safeguard of the museum collections and miraculously they survived more or less unscathed. When tourism started in Vietnam from the very end of the 1980s and especially the early 1990s, the museum quickly became a prime attraction.

4.2 The Pioneering Role of Charles Lemire

(i) Lemire the Amateur

All the authors of the historical summaries of the museum acknowledge the founding role played by Charles Lemire. Most of them highlight his role as an amateur, and he is, at times, cast in a somewhat unscholarly light. Pierre Baptiste, for instance, draws attention to the “great disorder” of the sculptures displayed in the shady alleyways of the garden, which were there, he suggests, in order to satisfy the “curiosity of some idle stroller”. It was, above all, a “romantic garden”, Baptiste posits, “perfectly in keeping with that nostalgia for ruins inherited from the Renaissance”, and its trace is preserved in contemporary engravings and photographs (fig. 47) (Baptiste 2005b: 3). This raises important questions about how and why artworks are displayed and what visitors want, or are expected, to get out of these displays. After all, as we have seen,

¹² The control of what was then still the “Henri Parmentier Museum“ was transferred by the city of Danang to the South Vietnamese Central Government on 13th October 1963 (Heffley 1972: 13)

one of ICOM's criteria for a museum is for the purposes of "enjoyment". Indeed, we might well argue that satisfying the curiosity of idler strollers and nostalgia for ruins are by no means negative qualities for a museum, and, as Jean-Yves Claeys pointed out many years later, "the sculptures were no more than ornamentation and sometimes not well respected, but what was once the accessory would one day become the main attraction" (Claeys 1942b). Be that as it may, Baptiste also recognizes Lemire's active contribution to the first studies of Cham art and accepts that his writings "often reflect a great sensitivity and deep insight which were remarkable in this age of pioneers", and which helped to lay the foundations for subsequent generations of scholars (Baptiste 2005b: 3). There is clearly, then, something ambiguous about the ways scholarship views Lemire's role in contributing to both what would become Cham art studies and what would become the Cham sculpture museum.



Fig. 47 Charles Lemire in the Jardin de Tourane (early 1890s)
(Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin: 2001: 217)

The profound importance of Lemire's role in Cham art studies was most notably recognised in a 1936 biographical tribute by Louis Malleret which ran to almost a hundred pages and was based, in part, on Lemire's letters and note-books (Malleret 1936).¹³ While Malleret, like Baptiste, is indebted to the work of Lemire, at the same time he too guards against what he sees as his amateur approach. He stresses the interest to be found in consulting the accounts left by Lemire and the other "pioneer-discoverers" of these "exotic lands", while noting that such narratives are often strewn with "signs of carelessness, superficiality, mediocrity, or plain ignorance". The implication here would seem to be that this is something of the past and that work by later scholars, in other words members of the EFEO since it was this institution which would largely monopolise Cham art studies from 1900 onwards, does not contain such errors. It could be said, therefore, that Malleret was in effect setting up a contrast between the pre-EFEO and post-EFEO history of the museum. Nonetheless, Malleret recognises that there was a "freshness" about the impressions that these pioneer writers conveyed, which is often no longer to be found in later work. As we shall see, such a "freshness" does in fact appear in the work of later scholars, but all too often it emerges in the margins, outside their more scientific output.¹⁴ In the early accounts, one finds, Malleret suggests, echoes of a "perception of colonial life which is no longer ours". Interestingly, though, Malleret asks, on the other hand, whether it is "too late to hope to discover among the families of former colonisers, direct memories of that heroic age", clearly affirming his conviction in the need to preserve the memory of the pioneering days of Cham art studies (Malleret 1936:5-6). Already

¹³ Malleret had access to 43 letters written by Lemire. These had been copied by Lemire's sister, Antoinette, and given to Malleret by Lemire's daughter, Fanny, who had published an account of her 1888 journey with her father through Cham country (Lemire, F: 1894; Malleret 1936 : 6). Malleret was also able to draw on two of Lemire's notebooks. The current whereabouts of these letters and notebooks is unknown.

¹⁴ See, in particular, chapter 3 on the visual archive of Champa.

then, even in Malleret's time, there exists an ambiguity between criticism of the early pioneer period and the need to acknowledge and preserve the vital role it played. The contrast between amateur and professional, between a non-technical personal approach resulting in "freshness" on the one hand and a technical professionalism resulting in seemingly objective science on the other, will mark much of the course of 20th century Cham art studies.

(ii) Lemire the Collector

Lemire made his first trip to Cochinchine in 1861-62, for the newly created Telegraph Administration, and his letters reveal that it was not without a certain amount of trepidation. During this expedition he had apparently already begun collecting artefacts, for he set aside some "heavy and cumbersome" objects, destined for the museum in his home town of Abbeville in Northern France. His letters give no indication as to what these objects were, but the collections he subsequently amassed, some of which did enter the Abbeville museum were considerable. A catalogue of the "Indochinese Collection of Ch. Lemire" lists 592 items, amongst them various Cham pieces, along with the annotation "to visit the collections contact Mr Ernest Lemire, 80 q. de Pointe, Abbeville, Somme". The catalogue is not dated, but the mention on its cover of gold and silver medals won in Hanoi and Paris between 1887 and 1889, and an exhibition in Abbeville in 1890, would seem to date it to around roughly the same time that Lemire was placing the Cham sculptures in the Tourane garden (Lemire Catalogue c.1890). Shortly after this, Lemire sold 204 objects from Annam,

Tonkin and China through a gallery in Paris¹⁵ (Lemire Collection 1895). By the time Malleret was writing in 1936, it had already become impossible to trace many of the pieces that Lemire sent back to France, though the whereabouts of a few key objects is still known today. It was, for example, through Lemire, who was a personal friend of Émile Guimet, that the first three Cham pieces entered the collections of the Musée Guimet, still a museum of comparative religions at the time. All three were from Lemire's own collections. Two, a seated brahmanical worshipper (MG 17830) and a crouching man (MG 18063) arrived in 1895, and a third, with no acquisition date, may well have entered the museum around the same time (Baptiste 2002: 3-4; Guillon 2001a: 15).

Lemire's relationship with collecting seems, therefore, to have been a complex one, involving personal possession, the desire for public display and commercial sale. His obvious propensity for acquiring objects and removing them to new locations coupled with a desire that they should go on public display are two of the major factors that will lead to the creation of the Tourane sculpture garden, the embryo of the future museum.

(iii) Lemire the Exhibitor

For Lemire, the public display of art was paramount. From as early as 1893, he had proposed the creation of “an archaeological *dépôt* or a provisional museum in Tourane”, whilst at the same time advocating a new museum of Indochinese art in Paris. The following year, he displayed his own collection at the Exposition

¹⁵ The sale took place at the Galerie Durand-Ruel, 11 rue le Peletier, Paris, on Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd June 1895

Universelle in Lyon (Malleret 1936: 79). Furthermore, Lemire also seems keen that this early history of the beginnings of the display and study of Cham art should be adequately recorded. In a remark to Malleret, he expressed his hope that private letters in family archives written by military officers and civil servants of the time, who were actors in the events or witnesses to them, might turn up and add to the information that he was providing. This led Malleret to suggest, therefore, that his publication of Lemire's letters corresponded perfectly to Lemire's own desires. On more than one occasion, Lemire declared that he was delighted to learn that his sister Antoinette had carried out the laborious task of copying all of his letters that came into her possession, thus ensuring their preservation¹⁶ (Malleret 1936: 23, 32).

(iv) Lemire the Preserver

A few documents make it possible to reconstruct Lemire's early career in Cochinchina. In 1865, we know that he accompanied Doudart de Lagrée¹⁷ during a visit to the King of Cambodia, and Malleret speculates that he may have served as interpreter, as he had taken lessons in both "Cochinchinois" and Cambodian while in the Mekong Delta (Malleret 32-34). Here, then, is a very well placed Frenchman, high up in the hierarchy of the pioneers in what will become French Indochina, mixing with high society, but also determined to understand the local culture and languages. On his return to France after his first visit, writing of the French taking possession of Cochinchina in 1859, he said that, more than just a "march of triumph", it was the taking of "a land rich in resources of all kinds". He saw this founding of a maritime

¹⁶ The inference presumably being that with both an original and a copy at least one was likely to survive.

¹⁷ Ernest Marc Louis de Gonzague Doudart de Lagrée (1823-1868) was the leader of the French Mekong Expedition of 1866-1868

and commercial establishment on the route to China and Japan as “perhaps one of the greatest acts of modern times”, and asked “is this not, for the Glory of France, revenge for our disasters in the 18th Century?” (Lemire 1869: 1-2, 8). This provides us with an insight into how he viewed both the motivations and the justification for the pending French colonisation of the region, and perhaps serves to explain the title of Malleret’s biography of him, “la foi coloniale” (colonial faith). After voyages to New Caledonia and periods in France, Lemire returned to Indochina where he was appointed *Résident*¹⁸ in the coastal town of Qui Nhon. Later he was to become *Résident-Maire* of Tourane, and it seems that it is during this last period of his administrative career that he becomes most interested in the Cham monuments of Annam (Malleret 1936:77). He had, though, always displayed a strong attachment to the ancient civilizations of Indochina, and from his first stay had started to amass the elements of a large collection. In a lecture given to the *Société française des Ingénieurs Coloniaux*, in 1900, Lemire claimed that he had drawn attention to the interest in researching Cham civilization as early as the start of 1868. He called the Cham monuments “remarkable constructions”, worthy of description, and said that making the most beautiful specimens of Cham art known in France was of “no small interest”, since the “the last vestiges of it will have soon disappeared” (Lemire 1901: 1). Lemire’s concern with regard to the perilous state of preservation of so much of the surviving Cham art and architecture was not necessarily coupled, therefore, with a desire that this art stay put in Indochina. In the same conference, Lemire provides a clue as to why. He laments the dilapidated state of monuments whose construction should have assured them a long life had not “the Annamite conquerors rushed to dismantle and carry off the sculpted blocks to be used as column bases for their rice

¹⁸ *Résident* was the term used to denote the French local governors posted in all provincial centres during colonial rule in Indochina. Some were also mayors (*Résident-Maire*)

stores and citadels”. He states, furthermore, that “they sliced off the noses, ears, stomachs and, most frequently, the heads of the statues, and mutilated the bas-reliefs”, and that nature then finished off the work of “these ignorant and jealous Barbarians” (Lemire 1901: 9). Lemire quite clearly had absolutely no confidence in any local ability or willingness to preserve these monuments. He points out that the learned Societies of France had repeatedly requested that measures be taken to preserve “these vestiges of a great historic past”, and that studying in situ the art, history and religions of the peoples to whom, he believed, the French were the successors, is “a task which France has always held in great esteem” (Lemire 1901: 9-10).

(v) Lemire and the Jardin de Tourane

Charles Lemire was a man of his times and his many writings¹⁹ are littered with colonial ideology, glorifying the greatness of France in the noble pursuit of her *mission civilisatrice* and dismissing the local population as mere savages. Such overtly colonial ideas now seem unacceptable, and there has been a clear tendency in Cham studies to literally censor them out. For example, between 1998 and 2001, one of the earliest documents concerning the monuments of Ancient Champa, Lemire’s 1894 essay ‘Aux Monuments Anciens des Kiams (excursion archéologique en Annam)’, was reproduced in the *Lettre de la SACHA*.²⁰ Rather than reprinting the article in its entirety, the editors chose to publish it in a series of installments spread over five separate issues, thus mimicking the sort of serialization common in popular periodicals in the nineteenth century. The text of this reprinted version was heavily

¹⁹ A prolific writer, Lemire left behind well over 100 texts, on subjects as varied as New Caledonia and Joan of Arc. The great majority of these texts have been published, and around a quarter of them relate directly or indirectly to Champa and its art and architecture

²⁰ *Lettre de la SACHA*, nos. 4 (1998) to 8 (2001). See Lemire (1894) for the original version of the essay.

edited, missing out, the editors explained, “simplicities and errors, which were quite excusable for the time, in order to preserve only that which dealt directly with Champa strictly speaking” (SACHA 1998: 12). In fact, the real reason for the severe editing was to remove the overly “colonial” tone of the piece,²¹ which had, for instance, among other things, declared that “it falls to the French, the new masters of this region, to stop this mutilation and destruction and to preserve the debris of the Cham monuments”, for we are “conquerors, but not destroyers or oppressors” (Lemire 1894: 416). While the text was severely edited, most of the eighteen drawings of the original text were reproduced as part of this serialization. Amongst those omitted, possibly for technical reasons or space constrictions, is a full-page montage (fig. 48) which includes various views of the Tourane sculpture garden and which seems to vividly capture the nostalgic atmosphere of the “exotic garden” evoked by Pierre Baptiste (Lemire 1894: 405).²²

The views of the Tourane sculpture garden featured in Lemire’s article are among the earliest surviving visual records of what would later become the museum, although the exact dates of the photographs on which they are based are not known.²³ A photograph of Lemire standing along an alleyway of sculptures is conserved in the photograph library of the EFEO in Paris (fig. 47). It was reproduced in *Un siècle pour l’Asie*, a history of the EFEO, published for the school’s century celebrations, though its date must be later than the 1890 one attributed to it, since, while Lemire may have been collecting the pieces from the mid 1880s onwards, it seems to be generally

²¹ Personal communication Emmanuel Guillon

²² See chapter 3 for an analysis of the illustrations in this essay and the implications of the omission of certain passages in the reprinted version.

²³ All the illustrations are engravings or drawings from photographs – see chapter 3.

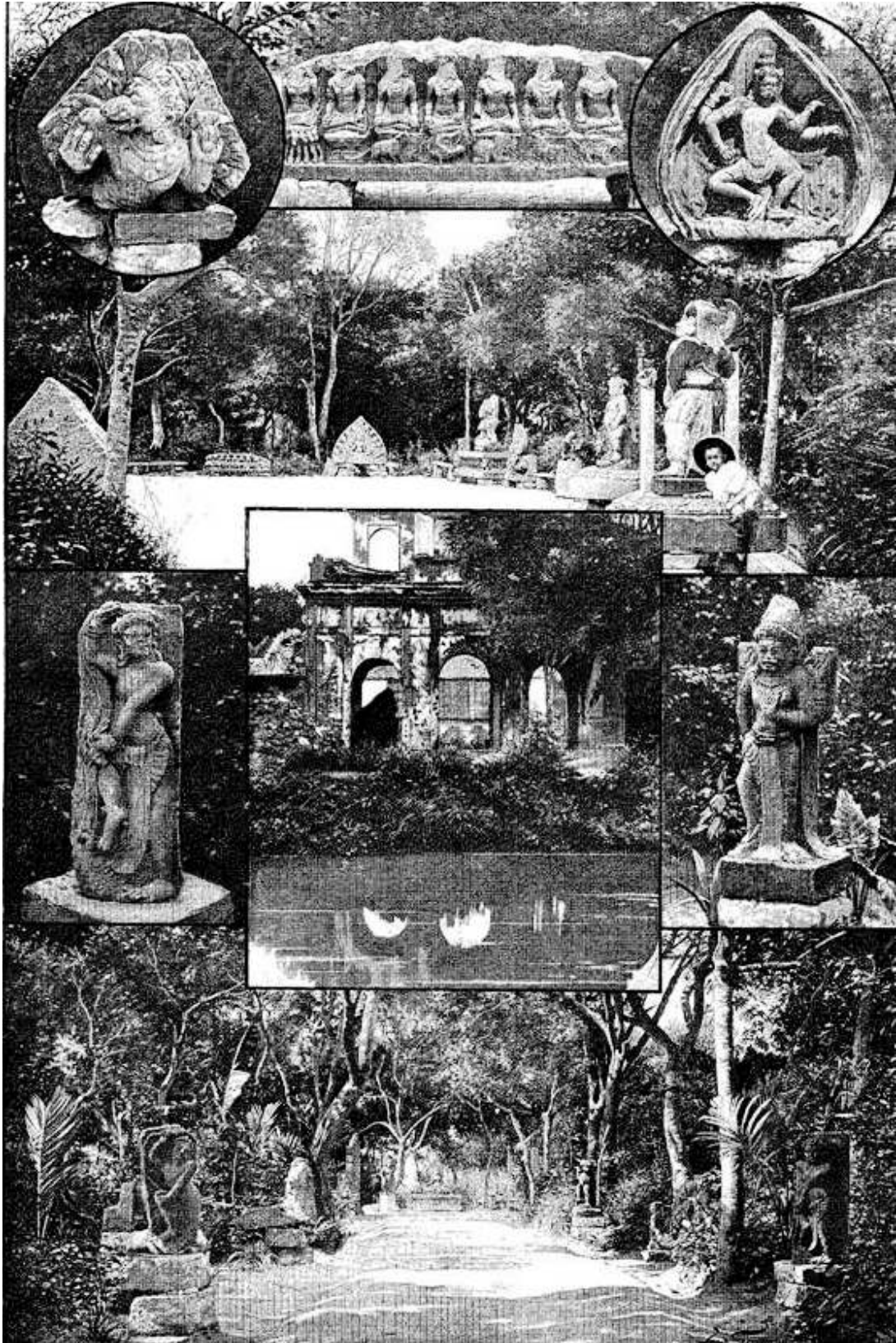


Fig. 48 Photo-montage from Lemire's 1894 essay on Cham monuments
(Lemire 1894:405)

accepted that the collection was not assembled in the garden at Tourane until around the end of 1891 at the earliest (Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin: 2001: 217). The montage in Lemire's article also features, superimposed over the pictures of the garden, images of various recognisable Cham sculptures, some of which are still on display today. These include a tympana fragment featuring Garuda and a four-armed dancing Shiva still in the Danang collection, and the Nine Divinities and a Dancer with Scarf, both now in the Ho Chi Minh City Historical Museum.²⁴ The Garuda tympana and the Dancer with Scarf were among the pieces brought from Danang to Paris for the 2005 Guimet exhibition,²⁵ so it would appear that Lemire's selected highlights are still stars worthy of selection today, perhaps a testimony to the great sensitivity he showed towards Cham art. Reflecting the eclectic and crowded layout fashionable in 19th century museum collections, the photo-montage in Lemire's article can be read as a museological reflection of the layout of the garden itself, where pleasing aesthetics may well have taken precedence over any attention to artistic, historical or chronological concerns, as Baptiste has surmised.

The quantity of references in Lemire's article to the way the "Annamites at times systematically destroyed the vestiges of the conquered people", or "at others used the materials for other constructions", would seem to confirm that one of his major concerns was the conservation of the art. He claims that the Annamites disposed of broken fragments of inscription "fearing that people might use these ancient inscriptions, which they were incapable of deciphering, to dispute the possession of the lands conquered by their ancestors from the Chams". Although Lemire does not

²⁴ See Vandermeersch and Ducrest (1997), Trịnh Thị Hòa and Đặng Văn Thắng (1994) and Baptiste and Zéphir (2005a)

²⁵ A footnote in the catalogue of the exhibition alludes to the confusion surrounding many of these pieces and their provenance when Lemire placed them in the Tourane garden (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 252)

specify his sources for such remarks, whether they are based on what he was told by the local population or are merely his own speculations, they show that he considered that not only did the Annamites have no interest in the old Cham relics, but also that they could be an active destructive force against them. These are considerations that would certainly influence his desire to preserve the monuments and sculptures (Lemire 1894: 401, 407). Here then is a man fascinated by the Cham past and deeply shocked, it would seem, at what he perceived to be the Annamite destruction of the traces of Cham civilization. It is the combination of these two things that will drive his mission to preserve the artworks.

Just as wrenching the sculptures out of their original architectural contexts and placing them in museums changes our perception and understanding of them, so the editing of “colonial” articles will affect our approach to the information contained within them. The colonial context within which Charles Lemire created the embryo museum is indispensable to any attempt at understanding this formative period in the genesis of the collection. Both the creation of the museum and the creation of Cham art studies in general have their roots firmly in the colonial enterprise. There has been a tendency over the decades to ignore the implications of this.

4.3 The Role of Amateurs and Lemire’s Role in the Founding of the EFEO

Much has been made, as we have seen, of the amateur status of Lemire and the other “pioneers”, but it is important to realise that amateurs would continue to play a considerable role throughout France’s presence in Indochina even after the

establishment of the EFEO in 1900. Indeed, the school relied on amateur collaborators from the outset. In a letter to Louis Finot on the founding of the École, Auguste Barth, a member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres,²⁶ emphasized that the work being done was not just due to members of the school, but also to others, such as doctors and missionaries, “auxiliaries whose only tie to the school is their good will”. For Barth, this outside collaboration was of “capital importance” and he went as far as declaring that “the future of the school quite definitely lies in it” (Barth 1901: 2-3). In its very first year, the EFEO had issued a handbook of instructions for its collaborators, containing information on the practicalities of archaeological, linguistic and ethnographical research, as well as vocabulary lists. This seems to be clear evidence that it was expected from the start that untrained amateurs would play a vital role in the work of the school (EFEO 1900; Cherry 2009: 88-89). Barth was equally optimistic about the founding of the school’s museum, which gave him grounds to believe that “we will no longer see fragments being dispersed around the *résidences*²⁷ or sent to the Musée Guimet, rendered worthless through their removal: Indochina will keep its riches”. Therefore, while acknowledging that the removal of artworks to museums changes them fundamentally, Barth seems to be making a clear distinction between placing objects in a local museum and taking them overseas. In a local context, even in a museum environment, objects will, for Barth, have more value than if they are shipped off to France. He further speculated that the school’s “collections will receive only that which otherwise would have been destined to perish”, and that the works “will not be obtained through pillage and the destruction of monuments”, since, he believed, “not only will you not demolish, but you will preserve and

²⁶ The Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres (one of the academies of the Institut de France in Paris, dedicated to the study of European and Oriental antiquity and classical civilization) was responsible for the scholarship of the Mission archéologique d’Indochine, founded in Saigon in 1898, and which changed its name to the École Française d’Extrême Orient in 1900 (Cherry 2009: 87-89).

²⁷ The *résidences* were the official homes of the *résidents* or colonial administrators.

conserve”. He also advised that “you will not restore, which of all the forms of vandalism is invariably the worst” (Barth 1901: 2). Within a relatively short time, the sculpture garden at Tourane will be witness to the fact that the school was not able to live up to all of Barth’s aspirations.

In this same letter, Barth praises the early work done by army and navy officers, and by colonial administrators and missionaries, but points out that although they were well educated professionals in their own fields, they arrived without specific training in history, philology and archaeology and therefore lacked knowledge of methods and results in these disciplines as well as the specialised instruments required for them. Barth includes amongst these early pioneers a handful of locals: “de très rares indigènes”. It is noteworthy that Barth should make mention of the indigenous contribution to the study of Indochina in the opening pages of the very first volume of the BEFEO, since subsequently the role that the Vietnamese played has been largely eclipsed in the published literature. Both this and the tendency to treat the work done by the École as scientific and professional, in contrast to the amateur work of the earlier pioneers, gives a distorted view of the real picture. Haydon Cherry has pointed out, for example, that a foreigner, the Swedish archaeologist, Olov Janse, was the only trained archaeologist to work in Vietnam during the entire colonial period. All the other primarily French “archaeologists” working in Indochina had received their academic training, if any, in other disciplines. The two major archaeologists working on Cham sites in the first half of the 20th century, Henri Parmentier and Jean-Yves Claeys, were both qualified architects, neither had received any training in archaeology before coming to Indochina.²⁸ Similarly, the three major prehistoric finds

²⁸ See chapter 3 on the tradition of architect-archaeologists at the EFEO

of the 1920s, at Bắc Sơn, Hòa Bình and Đông Sơn in Northern Vietnam, considered so important that the sites gave their names to prehistoric periods, were all made by amateurs with no archaeological background.²⁹ Therefore, perhaps because of the lack of formal training in methods of archaeological excavation which had marked the first decades of the 20th century, in 1934, Olov Janse was appointed by George Coedès to head the excavations at Đông Sơn. During the first of three excavations that Janse carried out at the site between 1934 and 1939, he was assisted by Nguyễn Xuân Đồng, an employee of the EFEO, and by a young man named Soan, an inhabitant of a local village who had previously worked with customs official Louis Pajot at the same site in the 1920s (Janse 1958: 19; Cherry 2009: 95). That Janse should mention Soan by name in his published report is an all too rare instance of a local worker receiving recognition. Generally we know little or nothing of the vast numbers of Vietnamese locals who assisted the members of the École and their collaborators. We have no way of knowing how many of them took an active interest in and gained a love and expertise for the work they were doing and the artefacts and sites they were investigating. Most of the Vietnamese seen working closely with the French in photographs remain resolutely anonymous. What is clear is that, without their help, whether as manual labourers clearing the sites, or more able workers assisting the Europeans with skilled tasks, most of the vast amount of archaeological work carried out over this period would quite simply not have been possible (figs. 49 and 50). All we know of Soan is a passing mention by Janse. Nguyễn Xuân Đồng (fig. 51), on the other hand, was later to become well-known as the curator of the Danang Museum

²⁹ Henri Mansuy who unearthed stone artefacts at Bắc Sơn was largely self-taught and Madeleine Colani who excavated stone material at Hòa Bình was a teacher before obtaining a doctorate in botany. Both were members of the Geological Service in Indochina. Louis Pajot who first excavated the bronze material at Đông Sơn had been a sailor and a circus artist before becoming a customs official (Janse 1958: 13; Cherry 2009: 91-95).

for nearly 40 years, from 1938 to 1973,³⁰ and would be mentor to one of today's leading Vietnamese Champa specialists, Trần Kỳ Phương. Nguyễn Xuân Đồng is, therefore, one of only a handful of Vietnamese scholars who gained respect and recognition during the colonial period, and whose name has entered the published literature.



Fig. 49 The 1902 excavations at Đồng Dương photographed by Charles Carpeaux (Ghesquière 2005: 138)

³⁰ See chapter 3.



Fig. 50 The 1902 excavations at *Đông Dương* photographed by Charles Carpeaux
(Ghesquière 2005: 154)



Fig. 51 Nguyễn Xuân Đông at the Danang Museum, c. early 1980s
(Courtesy of Danang Museum)

While it is true that the study of art and archaeology in French Indochina was never the sole reserve of the French, and that throughout the colonial period indigenous workers and scholars collaborated with French researchers, it is important to recognise that it was, however, the colonisers who initiated the study and preservation of the ancient civilizations. At the time when French amateurs began to take an interest in the ancient artefacts and civilizations of Indochina, with some exceptions, many of the monuments and sculptures had fallen into disuse and disrepair or ruin, for the most part largely ignored, if not wantonly destroyed, by the local population, as Lemire lamented. Since the Renaissance and especially since the 18th century, Europe had become fascinated with the material vestiges of its own history, and the nineteenth century had seen the setting up of institutions and academic disciplines to study and classify the world and the past. The discipline of art history was largely dominated by the Greco-Roman tradition which saw art as a linear progression, with an early formative period, a middle classical period and a late period of decline and fall. Europeans necessarily brought this conceptual model with them when they came to Indochina and proceeded to apply it to the artwork they unearthed there. This would also be the case for the art of Ancient Champa.

The task of rediscovering Indochina's forgotten glorious past was one of the things that underpinned the French *mission civilisatrice*. As we have seen, Lemire's writings plainly illustrate just such an ideology. If we are to understand the motivations and the reasoning of the early pioneers in the field we must, therefore, bring this context to the fore. Malleret was fully aware of this and, writing about Lemire, claimed that "to understand the motivations which drove this soul, it is necessary to turn to the ideas which dominated a certain section of the French elite around 1880". At this time,

following the humiliation of the defeat of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, French desire for colonial expansion was very strong. Lemire took an active part in this movement and Malleret suggests that he was neither a great explorer nor a great colonial writer, but rather that “he was one of the best protagonists of foreign action and had a passion for national grandeur”. He considers that “we would have only a partial view of his work if we did not take into consideration that this work was a manifestation of the ideas that drove France around the year 1880” (Malleret 1936: 82-83). It is difficult to overstate the pivotal role played by Lemire in the study of Cham art in particular, and Indochinese studies in general, and Malleret even goes as far as suggesting that he was “one of the *inventors* of Cham art”³¹ (Malleret 1936: 83).

Lemire was also instrumental in bringing about the creation of the EFEO. In 1897, at the International Congress of Orientalists, he was one of the co-presenters of a motion which proposed the setting up of a committee of specialists, the initiating of the comparative study of monuments in French Indochina, and the preservation of the buildings and ruins. The motion was unanimously accepted and was quickly drawn to the attention of Paul Doumer, newly appointed Governor General of Indochina. As a result, the following year Doumer founded the Mission Archéologique, which would be renamed the Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient in 1900 (Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2001: 16-19; Guillon 2001a: 15-16). The amateur Charles Lemire thus lay behind the creation of both the EFEO and the Tourane museum, two of the major institutions which would shape Cham art history throughout the course of the 20th century. Whilst the Mission Archéologique was founded just a year after Lemire

³¹ My italics. The French word *inventeur* conveys both the idea of inventor and discoverer.

proposed the motion, nearly three decades would separate the moment Lemire first created the Tourane sculpture garden and the opening of the museum.

4.4 Troubled Beginnings and the Birth of the Museum

In 1919, the year the museum opened, Henri Parmentier published a catalogue of the collection, with a ten-page introduction. In this introduction, Parmentier recounts the genesis of the museum, which he describes as one of the series of “dépôts-musées” that the EFEO had proposed to set up in the different regions of Indochina to “collect the archaeological artefacts whose preservation could not be adequately guaranteed in situ” (Parmentier 1919: 1). A decade later, in 1931, the year of the Exposition Internationale Coloniale in Paris, a lengthy report by Louis Finot on archaeology in Indochina over the period 1917-1930 was published in the BCAI. In this report Finot gave a brief sketch of the history of Indochinese museums, including the Cham museum in Tourane (Finot 1931: 62-63). The accounts related by Parmentier and Finot vary slightly in details but both reveal that the birth of the Cham museum was immensely lengthy and highly complicated.

Soon after the founding of the EFEO in 1900, a project for a single central museum in Saigon was launched, and a few pieces, from all the civilizations of Indochina, began to be assembled in the city. Soon, though, the refusal of funds for a central museum in Saigon³², coupled with the transfer of the EFEO to Hanoi in 1902, led instead to the idea of a series of museums: one in Hanoi, for Chinese and Annamese objects, one in Tourane for Cham sculpture, one in Phnom Penh for Khmer art, one in Vientiane for

³² Finot cites a first refusal in 1901 and Parmentier refers to a further refusal of funds in 1905 (Finot 1931: 62; Parmentier 1919: 1)

Laotian art and a depository in Saigon for any pieces found in Cochinchina.³³ These are the regional “dépôts-musées referred to by Parmentier. While the idea was readily accepted by the Protectorat du Cambodge, it met with vehement opposition on the part of the local administration in Annam. Their objection was financial, since they would be the ones responsible for funding the project of a museum in their city. As a result of this opposition, the idea of locating one of the regional museums in Tourane was dropped and the decision was taken to transfer the Cham sculptures to Hanoi. Nevertheless, as soon as this new plan was mooted, the city of Tourane immediately protested again, realising that they were in fact going to lose an important “attraction”, one that the very controversy had abruptly made them aware of, it seems (Finot 1931: 62-63). Consequently, the decision was once again postponed until, with the support of Governor General Albert Sarraut, the new Cham museum building was finally completed in Tourane in May 1916.³⁴ At this point, Parmentier suggests that “fate was still against this unfortunate museum”. Called away on “more urgent work”, he was unable to begin the process of collecting the objects, which had been dispersed around various administrators’ *résidences* or abandoned at not easily accessible excavation sites, until early 1918. Even then, transportation of the sculptures was further hampered by the lack of ships, an indirect consequence of the Great War. When, finally, work on assembling the artworks was at last progressing, Parmentier was summoned to Hanoi as interim director of the EFEO. It took, therefore, until early 1919 for all the objects to be transported and properly installed in the museum (Parmentier 1919: 3). This meant that the museum project had been some seventeen years in the making, though Finot points out that it still remained “incomplete”, as insufficient funds had forced the architects to limit the size of the building “so that it

³³ Finot’s article mentions only the museums in Phnom Penh, Tourane and Hanoi

³⁴ See Parmentier’s introduction for the number of requests and unfulfilled promises of financing during the intervening years (Parmentier 1919: 1-2)

soon proved to be inadequate”. Whilst waiting for a definitive extension project, in 1929 a “hangar” was constructed opposite the museum on land conceded by the city, to house the pieces which could not be displayed in the museum itself. Finot, writing just two years later, already complained that this was not enough and that there was still an urgent need for more space, since pieces of great value had been left in the garden where they were deteriorating rapidly, and the various Cham sites, in particular, Đồng Dương and Mỹ Sơn, “had been abandoned to their fate”, leaving their sculptures and inscriptions in dire need of better protection (Finot 1931 : 63-63). Ten years after the creation of the museum to house and protect the artworks, the preservation of objects in the collection, and elsewhere, had become a pressing issue. This was, though, by no means the first time that attention had been drawn to the shocking state of the sculptures in the garden.

In 1908, Henri Parmentier drew up a report on the creation of a Cham museum.³⁵ Deploring the dispersal and state of abandon of Cham sculptures and inscriptions, Parmentier calls on the need for a “*dépôt unique* which could be turned into a small museum at no great cost” (Parmentier 1908: 1). Picking up on this, Simon Delobel has suggested that Parmentier’s first projects for a museum, which date from 1902 onwards, were, therefore, not for “a museum strictly speaking” but rather for “a *dépôt*, a building destined to protect the vestiges” (Delobel 2005: 10). This raises the question of what exactly constitutes a museum and at which point the Cham sculptures at Tourane became one. A 1914 guidebook to Annam includes the following entry:

³⁵ This survives in the form of a type-written letter in the EFEO Archives (X-3-21), and as a published report in the *BCAI* (Parmentier 1908)

The Jardin de Tourane, situated at the extremity of the town, near to the tennis courts of the customs services, and unofficially known as the *Cham museum*, contains a few beautiful pieces from the ruins of Trà Kiệu and Mỹ Sơn. However, since it is neither enclosed nor guarded, and has been, on a number of occasions, the object of vandalism which no-one seems able to prevent or reprimand, this *dépôt* is becoming less and less interesting. (Eberhardt 1914: 44)³⁶

It would seem, therefore, that even before any building was constructed on the site, the garden was already being seen as a “museum”, at least in popular imagination. This would appear to be a unique case, since although the garden in Tourane was not the only place where Cham sculptures had been brought together to form a collection, it seems to be the only one that was actually referred to as a museum. Several such collections had been created, for instance, in different *résidences*. Recounting the transfer of Cham sculptures to these different residences in the years before the creation of the EFEO, Parmentier considers that the “intentions were excellent, though unfortunate”. He states that, “since they were not well acquainted with the Annamites, there was a concern that they would plunder the monuments”. Parmentier observed that “on the contrary, a respectful fear surrounded these old stones, which in some cases even became the village palladium”. He realised that re-using or breaking the stones was, therefore, of little benefit to the Annamites and it was really “only precious metal objects that posed a great risk” (Parmentier 1908: 1). This great respect for and understanding of the local population marks all of Parmentier’s work in Indochina.

³⁶ The italics are mine. In a review of this guidebook Parmentier praises Eberhardt for his “correct and sober” judgements, but criticises his over abbreviated history of Champa: “half a page for ten centuries of existence is really very little” (Parmentier 1915: 2).



Fig. 52 Henri Parmentier
(Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin 2007: 103)

Some of the most interesting sculptures which had originally been deposited by Lemire in Tourane had subsequently been transported to Saigon, along with a number of other statues and inscriptions which had been lying abandoned amid the ruined monuments of sites such as Mỹ Sơn, Đồng Dương and Chiên Đàn, when the EFEO set up its first museum there (Parmentier 1908: 1; Maitre 1908: 4; Baptiste 2005: 4). When the school was transferred to Hanoi in 1902, and installed in cramped and inadequate premises, it was obliged to leave behind the bulkier Cham and Khmer

pieces. Meanwhile, the EFEO set up a museum in Hanoi for Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Siamese and Annamese collections, and another was being planned for Phnom Penh which would be destined for Khmer art. “That just leaves”, noted Parmentier in 1908, “the Cham remains left in storage in Saigon and invisible to the public”. For Parmentier, the desire for the public display of the objects went hand in hand with a concern for their preservation, just as it had done for Lemire. “It is of the greatest interest that these pieces be put on display”, he wrote “and preferably at a location within ancient Champa”. Like Barth before him, therefore, Parmentier strongly believes that the artworks, even in a museum display, will benefit from being close to their original locations. The anachronistic concept of placing a museum “within ancient Champa” in the early 1900s, finds its parallel today when modern scholarship and museology attempts to locate Champa within Vietnam, a topic which is discussed in chapter 5. An emphasis on context seems to have been a major concern for Parmentier, since his vision was that each capital should have a museum devoted to its own regional art. He promoted the idea of “an advantageous and clearly-defined project consisting in collecting and displaying in each capital the artistic treasures of the corresponding country”. Saigon alone would not fit into such a scheme, since “no particular civilization developed there”. For Saigon, therefore, Parmentier envisaged a museum of *moulages* (plaster casts), “similar to those at the Trocadéro in Paris, so that the traveller, who in all Indochina visited only Saigon, could gain an idea of the different arts of the country” (Parmentier 1908: 1-2). Seemingly, tourist concerns also motivated Parmentier’s thinking.

Nonetheless, Cham sculptures had already begun to be widely dispersed, with varied consequences. In Saigon, for instance, an ensemble of sculptures and inscriptions had

been deposited at the *Gendarmerie*. For the most part these were under cover, though not accessible to the public. It had been necessary, though, to leave some of the largest and heaviest in the courtyard, where they were exposed to the elements. Meanwhile, this was the fate of virtually all the sculptures in the Jardin de Tourane, which, with the exception of a few that were kept in the nearby *résidence*, had no shelter to protect them. Furthermore, since Lemire's time there, with every change of *résident*, they had suffered the "ups and downs of up-keep and abandon". Parmentier believed that many of the sculptures, in leaving their places of origin, had ceased to be objects of veneration for the Annamites and that consequently "local children, who in the past would have been unable to pass near them without trembling, now throw stones at them". Elsewhere, Parmentier recounts that drunken soldiers tested their strength by trying to topple over the larger sculptures, while the fate of the pieces located in the *résidences* depended on the archaeological penchant of the particular administrator at any given moment, and that many of these sculptures suffered as a result. There were instances, for example, of inscription stones being used by gardeners to sharpen their tools. On the other hand, sculptures still in situ were often unknown to the general public because of the problems of accessibility to the distant sites or because the pieces of greatest interest, especially transportable ones, had had to be locked away to protect them from unscrupulous visitors who were, Parmentier considered, "all more-or-less collectors of a sort". In some places sculptures ran the risk of being used in road-building or as ballast by European construction workers, while others, still venerated by the local population, had been completely transformed through restoration and embellishment (Parmentier 1908: 2-3, 5-6). Parmentier's grave concern for the fate of all these pieces was part of the driving force behind his desire to create a proper museum to house them.

Parmentier set about the task of compiling comprehensive lists of objects destined to enter the future museum, and in order to do this he established a set of detailed principles for the selection of objects. Three major concerns dictated his guidelines: preservation, display and context. All sculptures which were no longer in their original locations were to be transported to the museum “as a matter of course”, whereas any pieces which were still part of recognizable edifices, and as such contributed to the understanding of the building should remain in place, provided that their conservation could be assured on site. Isolated sculptures of sufficient archaeological interest should be transferred to the museum, as long as they were not in use as objects of worship by local villagers, in which case their preservation was to be ensured in situ. Villagers should be allowed to keep such pieces, on condition that they build a small pagoda to protect them, All inscriptions, on the other hand, “since they are unreadable to most people”, should be taken to a central depository to facilitate their study, though inscriptions forming part of a still-standing building would be an exception to this rule.

In view of these various criteria, Parmentier noted that he was unable to give a precise figure to the number of objects which would be brought together in the museum, but he estimated the number at around 300 sculptures and 70 inscriptions. As for the location of the proposed museum, “incontestably”, he wrote, “the Cham centre par excellence is Quảng Nam, which the Annamese still call the ‘Cham Province’”. Parmentier felt that Tourane, a port town, already possessing some 100 pieces, and close to the great “archaeological mines” of Đồng Dương and Mỹ Sơn, was a better

choice than Hue, where, because of all its Annamese relics a Cham museum, he felt, would be out of place (Parmentier 1908: 3-6; Trần Thị Thúy Điểm 1997: 10)

Both Parmentier and Lemire were driven by a desire to both preserve the sculptures and to put them on public display. Both men chose Tourane as the place to do this, with Parmentier's choice being partly determined by the presence of Lemire's sculptures in the garden there. However, as we have already seen, Lemire was also interested in personal ownership and commercial sale, two aspects that did not motivate Parmentier. As part of his lengthy campaign for the establishing of a museum in Tourane, Parmentier compiled meticulous lists and guidelines about how it should be done. Lemire's display of the sculptures in the garden at Tourane, on the other hand, had come about as a result of chance and civil disobedience.

In 1885, while he was in service in Bình Định, Lemire was asked by the Minister of War to the General Commander of occupying forces to collect archaeological specimens of Indochina to send back to museums in France.³⁷ Lemire seems to have ignored these instructions since they were re-iterated the following year by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. Finally, in December 1891 and January 1892 he transported around fifty sculptures from Trà Kiệu to Tourane. He appears to have obtained these sculptures from the villagers with little problem, but the administration raised "certain difficulties" about their removal to Tourane, which Lemire later attributed to a "certain rivalry" between the towns of Hue and Tourane. In any case, Brière, the *Résident Supérieur* in Annam, requested that an inventory of the pieces be written up, and the decision was then taken that they should all be sent

³⁷ This account of the collecting of the sculptures in Tourane by Lemire is based on telegrams and letters in the EFEO Archives (carton X) and Parmentier (1919).

to France. Yet again, Lemire seems to have simply ignored these orders and subsequently, Parmentier tells us, quite simply “they were forgotten”. The number of sculptures soon rose to about ninety, with the arrival of “a new batch about which”, Parmentier writes, “we know nothing, but which in all likelihood can also be attributed to M. Lemire” (Parmentier 1919: 4-5). Shortly afterwards, Camille Paris’s property was sold first to a Frenchman, then to a Chinese owner. When the latter was asked if he would sell the sculptures that Paris had assembled on his property, he graciously donated the entire collection to join those at Tourane.³⁸ At the start of the following decade, Parmentier set about the task of compiling an inventory of all the sculptures in the Tourane garden. Despite his efforts, tracing the provenance of all of them proved impossible. He refers to a “precious dossier” which Lemire had entrusted to him shortly before his death in 1912, and which contained a detailed inventory of the initial fifty Cham sculptures which had been assembled in the garden in 1892. According to Lemire’s list they all came from Trà Kiệu and Khương Mỹ, but a note concerning their transportation to Tourane showed that two had come in fact came Phú Hưng, though Parmentier was unable to determine which two these were. For other pieces he consulted Camille Paris’s handwritten notes, various letters and Lemire’s published articles (Parmentier 1919: 4-5). A map of the garden, sketched by Parmentier and dated 1st January 1901, is preserved in the EFEO archives in Paris. It indicates the location of all the sculptures in the garden, the first museum floor-plan, as it were. Accompanying the map is a list drawn up by Parmentier indicating the condition of each of the sculptures, presumably compiled, therefore, without the aid of Lemire’s “precious list”, which Lemire only gave him shortly before his death in 1912. This map, produced by Parmentier, at the very start his career in Indochina is

³⁸ Most of these sculptures had come from the ruins of a Cham monument on Paris’s concession. He had used bricks from the same monument in the building of his house (Parmentier 1919: 5).

in a hastily drawn, distinctly amateur style, in stark contrast to his later published maps and drawings. It is a rare example of Parmentier's preparatory work, none of which has survived for his later architectural line drawings. This is a working tool created on site, and in it we can sense the young Parmentier walking around the garden observing the sculptures and jotting them down on the paper. It has, we might say, something of the "freshness" of the work of the pioneers that Malleret referred to. The spontaneity of this document in which the presence of Parmentier the man is strongly felt, is something that will be almost entirely absent in his later published illustrations, as we saw in the previous chapter. It is, therefore, a precious record of Parmentier's earliest work in Indochina. An amusing handwritten annotation, scrawled at the top of the list of sculptures, reads "at this period I thought a garuda was a standing lion". Presumably added later, it is another glimpse of the human side of the scientist, and an indication that Parmentier the architect had to learn the trade of archaeologist and art historian as he went along.³⁹

4.5 Abandon and Neglect - A Bank Manager Protests the State of the Garden

Over a decade after Parmentier first drew his plan of the sculptures in the garden and some four years after he compiled his report on the creation of a Cham museum in which he expressed his grave concern as far as the preservation of the sculptures was concerned, the situation had not advanced much. The administrative obstacles continued and the degradation of the sculptures was worsening. Members of the

³⁹ EFEO Archives: X

public as well as the EFEO were, it seems, becoming increasingly alarmed at the state of the Cham sculptures.

In 1913, Charles Gravelle, whilst on a visit to his plantation nearby, went to see the sculptures in the Jardin de Tourane. An eight-page handwritten letter to Claude Eugène Maitre, director of the EFEO, expressing his indignation at the state in which he discovered the garden and the sculptures has survived in the archives of the EFEO and provides us with a highly personal, vivid description of the garden, which, we should recall was popularly known at the time as a museum. A wealthy plantation owner, Charles Gravelle (1864-1929) was director of the Banque d'Indochine and was very involved in colonial life in Vietnam and especially in Cambodia. An indefatigable admirer and photographer of Angkor, and close friend of the King of Cambodia, he founded an association for the protection of children and was *President d'Angkor*, a society dedicated to the study and preservation of the site of Angkor (Association Charles Gravelle 2012). A letter written by a well-known, wealthy and cultured man so highly placed in colonial society, would no doubt, therefore, have carried some considerable weight. In his letter, Gravelle expresses his belief that Maitre might be able to appeal to the *higher* administration, and he clarifies that he does mean *higher*, since he claims that he has “ample proof that no reasonable satisfaction can be obtained from the local authorities or even the municipal commission”. He finds himself “faced with total indifference”, and remarks that the question of a museum to house the sculptures “seems to have been on hold for a considerable length of time”. This, he writes, is a most regrettable state of affairs, especially in view of his recent observations.

Gravelle recounts that he found the sculptures in a state of “total disorder” and prey to theft and appalling degradations, to the extent that the garden now “quite simply has the honour of serving as a place of faecal relief for the neighbouring indigenous population”. Little wonder, therefore, that Eberhardt’s guide did not rate it highly as a tourist attraction. Many of the sculptures had been laid flat, “as a measure of precaution, by Mr Parmentier”, he thought, and some had even been partially buried. This made them difficult see, he claimed, although “they were in the middle of so much refuse that approaching them was impossible without risk to health”. He even saw some of the sculptures being used as artillery targets, and asks “is this what we want the foreigners, who we hope will visit Tourane in greater numbers, to see and hear?” He particularly draws Maître’s attention to the fact that a life-size statue of Nandin, separated from its base and placed in a neighbouring field since 1904, had been the target of damage by youths, who had broken and removed its horns (fig. 56).⁴⁰ Gravelle suggests that it would only take a dozen coolies ten minutes to put it somewhere where it would be less vulnerable. He further points out that six or seven years earlier he had drawn attention to a banyan tree growing out of the female statue at the top of the mound in the centre of the collection. The tree, he claimed, was still thriving, so much so that it was now smothering the statue and threatening its destruction. He proposes, though, that the immediate solution to this situation is not a museum, since he speculates that in the time it would take to establish a museum the ruins might well have perished altogether or lost all their charm. Rather, he proposes that the site needs to be put in order, catalogued, provided with a paid guard and surrounded by a “walled enclosure, which is nonetheless still accessible to tourists”. He specifies that he means tourists and “not the inhabitants of Tourane, who fail to

⁴⁰ This may well be the Nandin that had been photographed by Charles Carpeaux a decade earlier, and that will end up travelling to Paris almost a century later to be exhibited in the Musée Guimet 2005 exhibition.- see chapter 6.

look at such things and abandon them to indigenous pollution.” He points out that a suitable site already existed in the form of “the buildings reserved for the king when he visits Tourane”, which are rarely used. This would, though, he says, merely be a temporary solution. A more definitive one would be take everything to Hue and install the collection in the section of the gardens of the *Résidence Supérieure* which is always accessible to the public, alongside the river. He asks Maitre to accept his letter as a plea from the Président d’Angkor.⁴¹

There is no trace in the archives of Maitre’s reply to Gravelle, so we can only speculate on the effects this strong appeal from such a highly placed colonial may have had. Nor can we know how many other such outraged complaints may have been launched during the same period. Nevertheless, Gravelle’s letter survives as a witness to the appalling degradation of the sculpture garden just two decades after its creation, and the apparent indifference of both the local population and the colonial administration. It was not for another two years after Gravelle’s outburst, after years of indefatigable campaigning, that Parmentier finally succeeded in obtaining the museum that both he and Lemire had longed for. Fortunately, despite Gravelle’s dire predictions, the ruins had not perished, nor it seems, had they lost any of their charm.

⁴¹ EFEO Archives: X-3-21



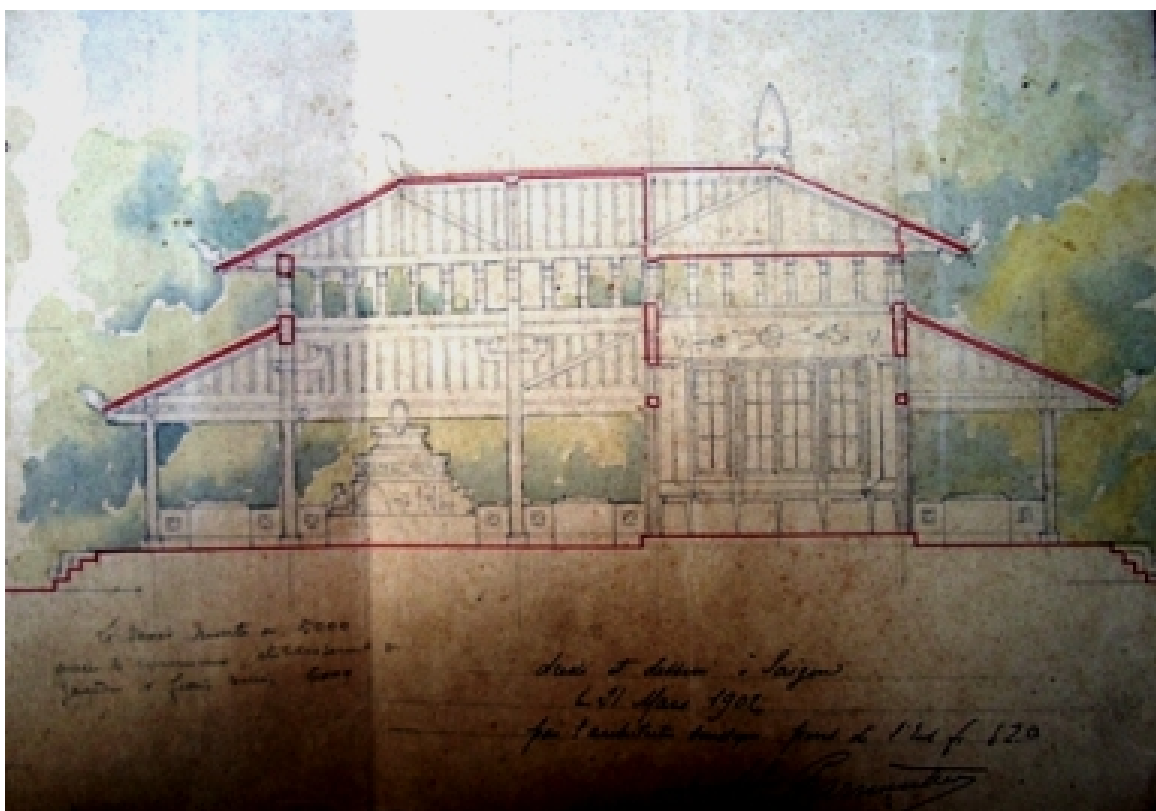
Fig. 56 Postcard of Jardin de Tourane sculpture garden with Nandin, 1906⁴²

4.6 A Hybrid Building⁴³

Henri Parmentier's designs for a museum building date back to soon after his arrival in Indochina. As early as 1902, while he was living in Saigon, he drew up plans for what he termed a "projet de dépôt" for Cham sculptures. His original designs (figs. 57 and 58) have been preserved in the EFEO archives. They show a wooden structure with a Vietnamese-style tiered roof supported on slender columns. The sides of the structure are open, with steps leading up to a platform.

⁴² Note that the sculptures are incorrectly labelled as Khmer, a common error at the time. See Lemire (1894: 408)

⁴³ See footnote 46, chapter 1, on the controversial nature of the concept of *hybridity*



Figs. 57 & 58 Parmentier: 1902 design for a sculpture “dépôt” in Tourane (EFEO Archives: X)

As we have already seen, the open sides of the structure and the fact that Parmentier referred to the project as a *dépôt*, have lead Simon Delobel to suggest that this first plan cannot be termed “a museum properly speaking”, but rather that Parmentier’s plans are for a sculpture depository, that is a mere protective edifice (Delobel 2005: 10). Similarly, Pierre Baptiste has referred to Parmentier’s plans for a veritable “*dépôt lapidaire*, for lack of a museum”. (Baptiste 2005b: 4). However, since the finished museum project, although made of stone and very different from Parmentier’s first plans, had similarly open sides, and given that any sculptures *deposited* under the wooden shelter would have been visible, and thus on display, it is not clear how helpful it is to make such a distinction. Indeed, Baptiste himself recognizes, in Parmentier’s 1901 project the “essential elements which will constitute the museum inaugurated seventeen years later.” Moreover, as we have seen, the garden had already become a museum in popular imagination before any edifice was constructed on the site.

A series of projects for a more substantial museum building have also survived in the archives of the EFEO and date from around the year 1909 onwards. Plans drawn up in 1911 by French architect Auguste Delaval (fig. 59) show a monumental edifice with open sides, somewhat reminiscent of Parmentier’s earlier designs for the *dépôt*. The Cham motifs, which are much in evidence on Delaval’s design, will remain, though considerably tempered down in the finished building. A second architect, Auclair, simplified Delaval’s design, and received advice from Parmentier on the Cham motifs which had not been well integrated into the structure of the building (fig. 60). By this point in his career Parmentier the architect has been immersed in Cham archaeology

for over a decade, and Baptiste has suggested that “only an archaeologist” could invest the building with its true spirit (Baptiste 2005a: 7).

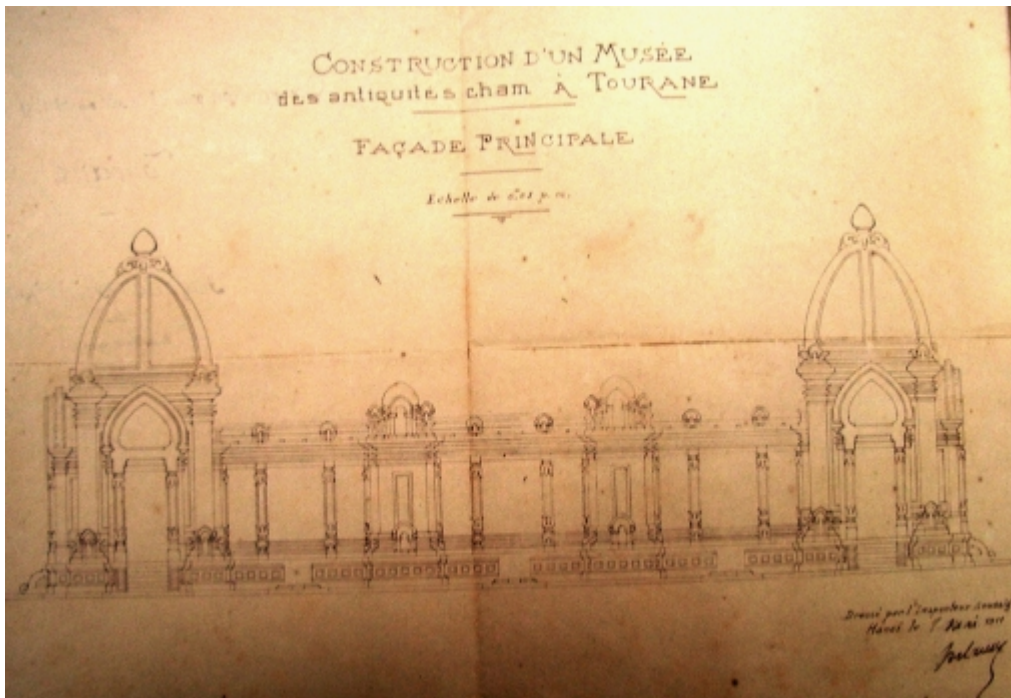


Fig. 59 Delaval: plan of main façade of Tourane museum, 8 May 1911 (EFEO Archives: X)



Fig. 60 Auclair: plan of lateral façade of Tourane museum, 1915 (EFEO Archives: X)

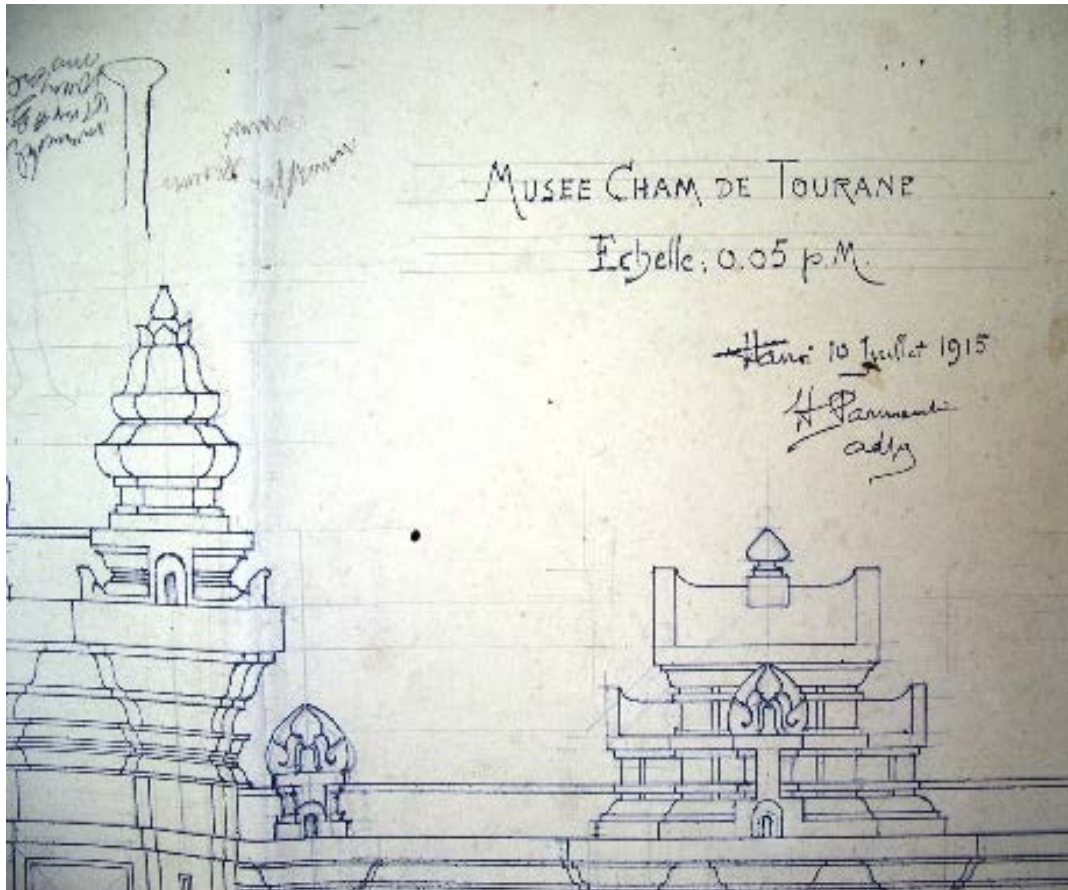


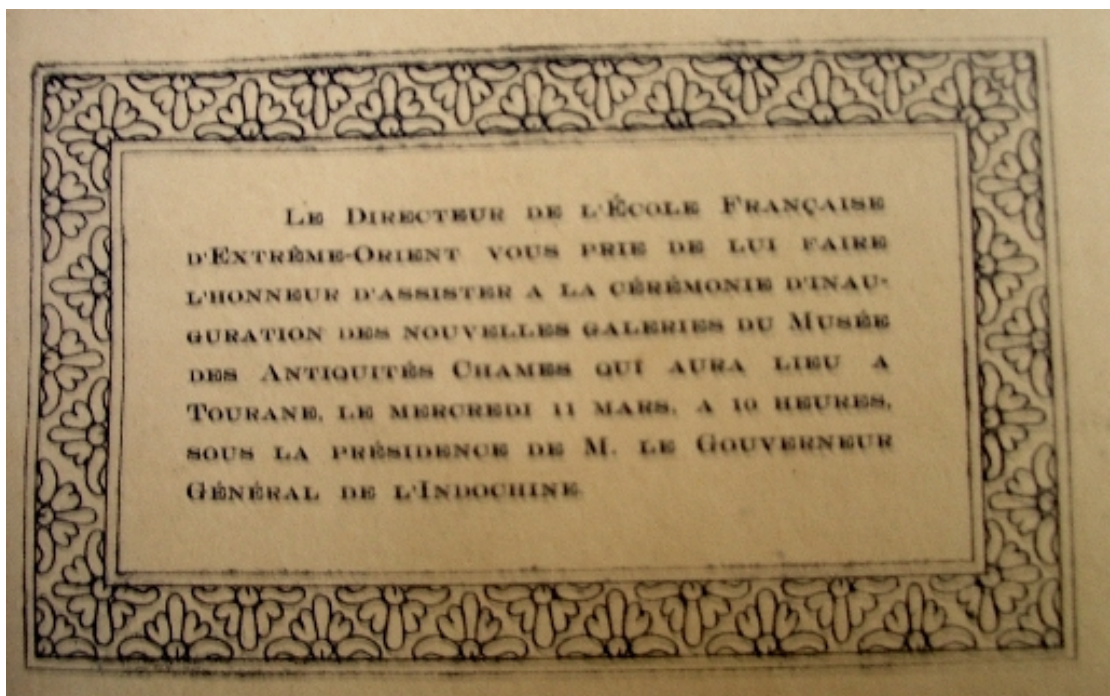
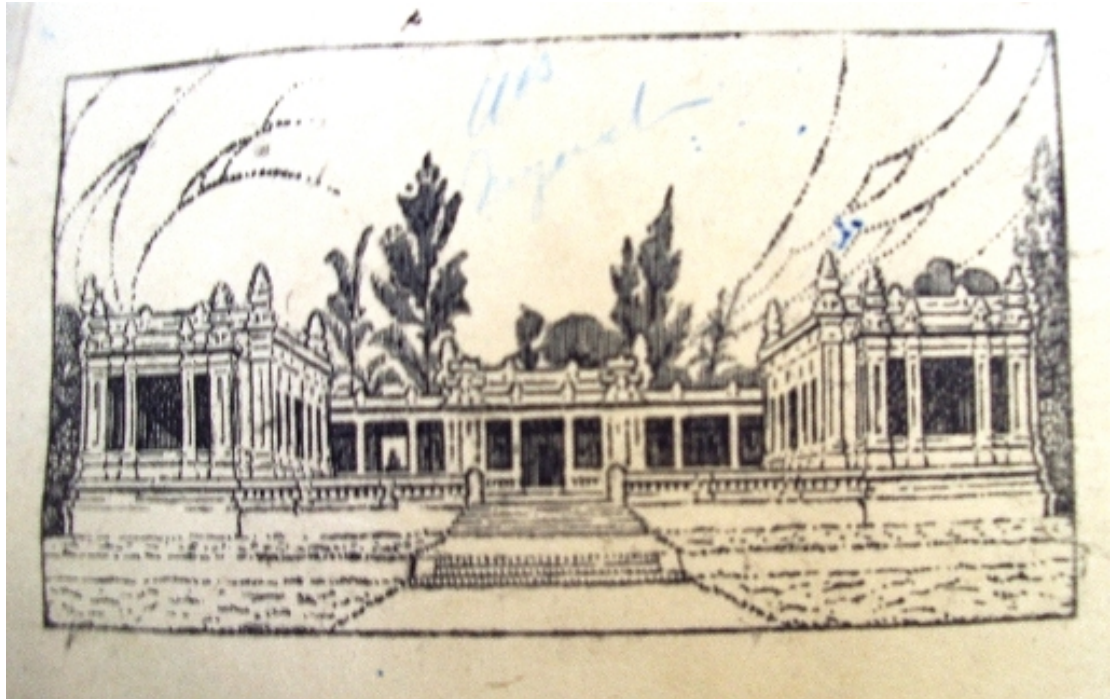
Fig. 61 Parmentier: details of Cham motifs for museum façade, 1915
(EFEO Archives: X)

The Governor General of Indochina accepted the financing of the project in 1914, and Parmentier was appointed director of the construction work. After so many years in the making, the building was constructed extremely rapidly between the end of 1915 and mid 1916, and the museum finally opened in April 1919, but with no official opening ceremony. The museum would not receive its official inauguration until two decades later, after the completion of two new wings designed by Jean-Yves Claeys (figs. 62-65). This extension was created largely to accommodate the huge quantity of sculptures unearthed by Claeys at Tháp Mẫm in 1934, which are discussed in chapter 6. The designs for the museum extension were not Claeys's first architectural project

in Indochina. Claeys, like Parmentier, an architect by training, had submitted projects for a colonial exhibition planned for Saigon in the mid 1920s.



Figs. 62 and 63 Claeys: 1927 plan for museum extension and 1936 plan for façade of extension (EFEO Archives: X)



Figs. 64 & 65 Invitation to official inauguration of museum, 1936
(EFEO Archives: X)

In 1924, following the great success of the 1922 colonial exhibition in Marseille, Ernest Hébrard, Head of the Central Service of Architecture and Urbanism in Indochina, was put in charge of a project for an “intercolonial” exhibition in Saigon. Architectural plans were submitted by both Delaval and Claeys. Hébrard called for the creation of an architectural style which would take into account the context in which it was to be inserted both on the technical and aesthetic level (Le Brusq 1999: 77-79). The Tourane museum, constructed a decade earlier would seem to fit perfectly Hébrard’s requirements, but it would be one of a kind in Tourane.

At the end of the 19th century, Tourane, rich in coal, was a promising site, destined to become the major commercial centre of Annam. However, after an initial phase of speculation marked by the construction of the Bank of Indochina in 1891, a central market in 1893, and a post office and treasury in 1894, the town did not meet up to its economic expectations and was destined to remain only a second rank port. In 1904, at around the same time Parmentier was drawing up plans for a museum and campaigning for funds, other urban projects were being turned down by the administration (Le Brusq 1999: 116-119). The museum, therefore, when it was finally built, would be the last major urban institution created in a city which had received little attention from urban planners. The initial grid-pattern layout of the town had simply expanded piece-meal as and when new land was required, with no real urban plan (Le Brusq 1999: 116-119). It is therefore perhaps all the more remarkable that the museum building was constructed at all.

French architectural historian Arnauld Le Brusq sees the “colonial museum” as a fundamental element in any attempt to establish an “archaeology of colonial France”.

He suggests that, “after the impact of conquest, the ‘colonial moment’ finds expression in the founding of a city, the creation of a garden and the organisation of an academy”. That is, “a city for the living, and soon the dead, a botanical and zoological garden for the classification and exploitation of local natural riches, and an academy of ethnological and archaeological objects in order to understand and control indigenous societies”. In an attempt to define the colonial museum, Le Brusq suggests that it “lies at the intersection of the materiality of the collections constituted for the ordering of knowledge, and the political dynamic of expansionism” (Le Brusq 2005: 107, 112). Le Brusq has shown how the museums created in Indochina slowly progressed towards an “Indochinese style”, most manifest in the 1931 Musée Louis Finot in Hanoi, designed by Ernest Hébrard. Le Brusq suggests that “this ‘neo-Indochinese’ architecture, which united through style territories as diverse as Cambodia and Tonkin, can be separated into the ‘neo-Khmer’ style of the museum of Phnom Penh or the ‘neo-Cham’ of the Tourane museum”. There are, he claims, as many ‘neo’ styles as there were French colonies (Le Brusq 2005: 112). One of a kind, a hybrid of architecture and archaeology, of East and West, of new and ancient, to this day Parmentier’s Cham museum remains the one major attraction of the city of Danang, notable for both its collection and its unique architectural style.

4.7 Cataloguing the Museum Collections

As we have seen, the last comprehensive catalogue of the Danang museum collection was the one produced by Parmentier for the museum’s opening in 1919 (Parmentier 1919). In September 1937, soon after the completion of Jean-Yves Claeys’ extension

and the first proper inauguration of the museum, Pierre Dupont and Jean Manikus travelled to Tourane with the aim of compiling a new catalogue. However, the Second World War intervened, and this never materialised (Trần Thị Túy Điểm 1997: 34). The next publication that resembled anything close to a catalogue was produced by Carl Heffley during the American conflict. Heffley, an employee of the United States Agency for International Development, served in Vietnam as an urban development advisor from 1970 to 1974. For the first two years, he was senior advisor to the Mayor of Danang. Since he had studied Asian history and was also a keen amateur photographer, Heffley ended up spending much of his free time at the Cham museum. Concerned for the safety of the museum and its collections, he produced a photographic essay on the museum which was widely circulated among the American community in Vietnam. Tuyet Nguyet recounts how this paper came to the attention of Grace Morley, head of ICOM, during a trip to Vietnam. This prompted Morley to urge the Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Information agency in Saigon to publish a catalogue of Heffley's work. In the preface, Heffley took pains to point out that his "effort [was] neither a scholarly account of Cham art nor the product of a professional photographer." He explains that "it was not intended so nor could it have been, since the author is neither historian nor photographer, but rather an interested and deeply concerned observer of the preservation of the Cham museum and its contents." The aim of his efforts was to "direct [...] attention towards the historical value of the museum whose contents represent an irreplaceable record of the Cham people and a valuable link to the past" (Heffley 1972: 3). An initial print of 400 copies of *The Arts of Champa* appeared in September 1972, timed to coincide with a lecture on Cham art

given by Heffley at an exhibition of his photographs in Saigon.⁴⁴ Since most of the copies of the catalogue seem to have been distributed at this exhibition, the USIA ordered a reprint of 5000 copies to meet demand. Tuyet Nguyet has noted that “although never intended for sale by the USIA, copies eventually became a marketable item sold by Vietnamese vendors in street corner book stalls throughout Saigon”. Writing in 1977, Nguyet believed that copies of the catalogue were no longer available and that “the limited number printed were distributed entirely within Vietnam as a cultural exchange project of the USIA”. Today, however, Xeroxed copies of this publication are still available in Vietnam, at museums and street bookstalls.⁴⁵ It is not known whether the original printing plates were preserved, nor what became of the negatives.

Heffley’s book is actually more of a photograph album than a true catalogue. Its 132 pages comprise a seven-page introduction in which Heffley summarises the histories of the “The Kingdom of Champa” and “The Cham Museum”, followed by 142 photographs of sculptures taken between 1971 and 1972. The catalogue concludes with a map showing the location of the major Cham sites, a floor plan of the museum, a brief reading list and a glossary of terms.⁴⁶ Several line-drawings of Cham sculptures by Nguyễn Xuân Đồng, the curator of the museum at the time, illustrate the catalogue, following in a long tradition of line drawings which was discussed in the previous chapter.

⁴⁴ This was held at the Vietnamese-American Cultural Center, which was under the sponsorship of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA)

⁴⁵ It also turns up from time to time on internet book sites.

⁴⁶ Heffley cites Georges Maspéro’s *Le Royaume du Champa* as “probably the best source of information on the Kingdom of Champa for the serious student”, and gives a list of “introductory readings on Champa that served as a source for [his] paper”. They are primarily general English language works on the history of the region (Heffley 1972: 130)

Heffley's photographs, showing either entire sculptures or details of sculptures, are accompanied by a simple one word or one line label, such as "Garuda", "Frieze", "Relief on pedestal", "Unknown god", and the size of the object, given as height in inches. There is no attempt to number or date any of the pieces. The photographs are divided according to site, either a Cham monument site or a province, and the time periods of these different sites are given at the beginning of each section.⁴⁷ The geographical divisions of the catalogue follow the order of the galleries in the museum as shown on Heffley's floor plan at the end of the catalogue (Heffley 1972: 129).

We can surmise that this catalogue was born out of a joint passion for photography, which Heffley already had when he came to Vietnam, and for Cham art which he acquired during his time in Danang. It was also motivated, it would seem, by concern for the fate of the museum and its collections. By creating a photographic record of the museum collection, Heffley is ensuring the preservation of the art, in image form, should it be lost or damaged as a result of conflict, and by promoting his work, through publication and lectures, he is drawing wide attention to the art with an aim to ensure its preservation.⁴⁸

Following the classical Western art historical beginning, decline and fall model, Heffley classified Cham art into three major periods. He termed these the "primary art period" of the 7th to 8th centuries, the "mixture period" of the 9th to 10th centuries and the "secondary art period" between the 11th and 12th centuries. He also considered that

⁴⁷ These sections are: Mỹ Sơn 7th-8th century; Quảng Trị 8th-10th century; Quảng Ngãi 11th-12th century; Kon Tum 16th century; Quảng Nam 7th-10th century; Trà Kiêu 7th-8th century; Đồng Dương 8th-10th century; Quảng Bình 7th-8th century; Bình Định 11th-12th century; Tháp Mẫm 13th-14th century.

⁴⁸ It should be noted that this is a common dual purpose of display, not confined to the Danang museum, nor to Vietnam.

the 13th and 14th centuries were in the “secondary art periods but representing a time that clearly reflects the declining or decadent period of Cham art”. For Heffley, the Trà Kiệu, Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương periods, from the 7th to 10th centuries were the “highlight of Cham art”, and he suggests that “speculation will always prevail about the potential of the Chams had they not been forced to abandon their northern provinces at the height of their civilization” (Heffley 1972: 9).

Heffley concluded his short introduction on the history of Champa with the following scathing comments:

The great Hinduized civilization that once flourished on the Indochinese peninsula has been all but forgotten by their conquerors. The only tribute paid the Chams in South Vietnam has been the Cham Museum in Danang, and it exists only as a result of the colonial government. It serves as a monument not only to a most persistent race of people, the Chams, but also to a small group of Frenchmen whose patience, perseverance, and dedication to the construction of a Cham Museum in Danang would surely have pleased the early Chams. (Heffley 1972: 10)

He follows this with an overview of the history of the museum, from Lemire’s initial collection to present times. A paragraph about the World War II period makes it clear that the artefacts were deliberately removed from the museum through fear of bombardments. According to Heffley, pieces were “distributed throughout the City to minimize the possibility of total loss”, with some being “buried and others simply stored in what was presumed to be a safer location than the museum site”. Then, in 1947, Heffley writes, “the pieces were relocated in the museum but not without some loss and damage as a result of the war.” There is, however, a certain confusion surrounding these events. For example, Trần Thị Túy Điểm has suggested that, rather than being deliberately moved for protection, the Cham sculptures were looted. She reports that, on 19th December 1946, at the start of the Guerre d’Indochine, a skirmish

broke out at the museum, and that local inhabitants took advantage of the ensuing unguarded state of the museum to pillage whatever they could. She places the return of the pieces to the museum in 1948 rather than 1947, suggesting that they were recovered from private homes, an officers' mess, the aviation ground, and even from Laos, where EFEO employee Jean Manikus had been sent on a special four-month mission to retrieve them (Trần Thị Túy Điểm 1997: 34). Correspondence in the EFEO archives shows that the actual situation was probably a combination of these two accounts and that many of the Cham sculptures were indeed deliberately buried to protect them, and most were not returned to the museum until mid 1948. It would seem that some objects were buried in the grounds of the museum itself and were overlooked during this retrieval process, since in 1996 museum staff unearthed some 157 fragments in the grounds of the museum, among them several pieces that had long been published (Guillon c.2001: 12)

Further such loss and damage occurred in the middle of the next decade when, in 1954, over 300 refugees, who had fled from the North following the Geneva Convention which partitioned the country, were housed in the museum (Heffley 1972: 13). When Heffley was writing the catalogue introduction, the country was, of course, in the throes of another devastating conflict, and the museum had suffered again in 1968 when Vietnamese troops were hurriedly assembled and billeted in the building because of the Viet Cong Tet offensive. The following year a Viet Cong rocket had exploded in the front garden of the museum, and in June 1971, another had gone off less than 80 yards south of the building. This led Heffley to declare that “the war obviously presents a clear and ever present danger to the museum and its contents”. He emphasized that the risk was “not only from rockets, but also from governmental

disinterest as a result of more urgent war time priorities”, and pointed out that attention had notably been drawn to this danger when Philippe Stern wrote his urgent plea to President Nixon. This letter had resulted in the president announcing, to the attention of all U.S. Commanders, that “the White House desires that to the extent possible measures be taken to insure damage to monuments is not caused by military operation” (Heffley 1972: 13).⁴⁹

Heffley’s introduction to his catalogue ends with the following poignant commentary:

The museum has stood placidly amid the turmoil that has surrounded it for the past 55 years and has undoubtedly given many people great moments of pleasure, escape and enrichment. It is unique in its content and possibly the largest single collection of Cham art. As an irreplaceable record of the Cham people and their Kingdom, the museum deserves better, but it will only be with luck that it survives the continual dangers of war, the neglect of governments, and possibly its worst threat, man’s indifference. (Heffley 1972: 13)

Fifteen years after Heffley’s catalogue was published, the Quảng Nam-Đà Nẵng Culture and Information Service produced a new guide to the museum. With only 49 pages this was considerably slimmer than Heffley’s publication, but was very similar in style. A 14-page introduction, by museum curator Trần Kỳ Phương, introduced the broad outlines of Cham history and art and included a brief history of the museum. Trần Kỳ Phương’s introduction also presented the major styles of Cham art invented by the French, whereas Heffley’s guide had made no reference to the stylistic dating system. After the introductory essay, the catalogue lists “a number of exhibits displayed at the museum”. A total of 49 sculptures are listed, with the name of the piece, the style, century, material, height and provenance. The catalogue contains 50

⁴⁹ The White House message was sent in January 1970 (Heffley 1972: 13). See also Trần Kỳ Phương (2006: 21).

black-and-white photographs by Vietnamese photographers Ong Van Sinh and Nguyen Van Que. All of the sculptures in the catalogue are made of sandstone and each is illustrated by one photograph. There is just one exception, sculpture number 23 is made of bronze and merits two photographs instead of one. It is labelled Laksmindra-Lokesvara. We shall return to this piece presently.

None of the major bibliographies of Cham art make any mention of this book, which because of its simplicity, is of relatively little use for research purposes. Nonetheless, published in 1987, a year after the launching of *Đổi Mới*,⁵⁰ it is of historic importance as it marks the first Vietnamese-produced catalogue of the collections, with both text and photographs by Vietnamese researchers, and it highlights the links between Vietnamese and French research on Cham art by its inclusion of the French style-dating system. It is also interesting to note that, as early as 1987, when Vietnam was only just opening up to foreign tourists, and Champa was only just entering into Vietnamese national histories,⁵¹ Cham art was already being promoted as an attraction, since the guide was produced in English, French and Vietnamese. This is all the more surprising since the museum is thought to have only received “a few thousand” visitors during the whole of the 1980s (Hà Phước Mai 2005: xxvi).⁵²

By 1992, five years after the introduction of *Đổi Mới*, the situation in Vietnam had changed considerably and the number of foreign tourists visiting the country was

⁵⁰ *Đổi Mới*, often rendered in English as Renovation Policy, was the the name given to the economic reforms initiated in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a socialist-oriented market economy.

⁵¹ For a detailed analysis of the problematic place of Champa in Vietnamese scholarship see Lockhart (2011)

⁵² By comparison, in 1956, 9000 visitors were recorded, the highest number since the museum had opened. (Nguyễn Xuân Đồng, handwritten report dated 11 January 1957 – EFEO Archives: X-4)

rising rapidly.⁵³ In Paris, members of the AFAO⁵⁴ initiated a project for a new catalogue of the museum's collections, based on the two-fold need "to provide this beautiful museum with an exhaustive inventory, since none had been done since 1919", but also "to present it in a highly documented and well illustrated way". To do this, they proposed "a book which would be both a reference work for researchers and an attractive tool of discovery and understanding for the ever increasing numbers of visitors coming to Danang to discover this *haut lieu* of Cham art" (Vandermeersch and Ducrest 1997: 7). This resulted in the publication, five years later, of *Le Musée de Sculpture Cam de Đà Nẵng*. This volume presented one hundred "major works" from the museum's collections. Each work, labelled with name, style, date, material and height, is illustrated by one or several black-and-white photographs, and accompanied by a descriptive paragraph. The descriptions include, where known, details on how the piece entered the collection. When a sculpture has been published in the existing literature, this is indicated in a bibliography after the description.

True to the original intentions of the project, the book begins with sixteen full-page lavish colour plates, featuring some of the iconic works of the collection, dramatically lit on black backgrounds. The first of these, serving as a sort of frontispiece to the book, is of a fine bronze Tārā. With her encrusted eyes, finely chiselled features, well-rounded sensuous breasts, and empty outstretched hands, this is a unique and remarkable example of the great originality and high quality of Cham art, but beyond her plastic beauty, this deity has another story to tell.

⁵³ By 1995, the number of people visiting the museum in a year had reached 40 000, and by 2005, this had increased to 100 000 (Hà Phước Mai 2005: xxvi)

⁵⁴ Association Française des Amis de l'Orient.

4.8 An Empty-Handed Masterpiece – The 1978 Discovery of a Large Cham Bronze and its Entry into the Museum

In August 1978, close to the ruins of Đổng Dương, a large extremely fine bronze statue of a female figure was unearthed (fig. 66). The find was of immense importance because of the very fine workmanship of the statue, its extremely good state of preservation and the fact that very few large-scale Cham bronzes exist.⁵⁵ Within a few months, Trần Kỳ Phương, former curator of the Danang museum, published a report on the discovery in *Khảo Cổ Học*.⁵⁶ In this article he speculated that the statue may have been the principal cult image of the monastery and proposed that it might represent Lakṣmīndralokeśvara, mentioned in the monastery's main dedication inscription (Trần Kỳ Phương 1979: 61-63; Schweyer 1999: 329). A second study of the sculpture, written by Ngô Văn Doanh, was published shortly afterwards. By measuring the base of the statue and its tenon, Ngô Văn Doanh proposed that the image would have fitted exactly into the indentation in the main altar of the temple (Ngô Văn Doanh 1980: 195-196). Both these reports were written in Vietnamese and published only in Vietnam. Such published reports on the discovery of statues were, at the time, the exception rather than the rule.

⁵⁵ Standing at 115cm it is the largest Cham bronze found to date, just slightly shorter than the famous bronze Buddha statue (119cm) found in the early years of the 20th century, also at Đổng Dương, but generally considered to be a Sri Lankan import. See, for example, Boisselier (1963a: 108) and Baptiste and Zéphir (2005a: 207-209)

⁵⁶ The Journal of Archaeology, *Tạp chí Khảo Cổ Học*, has been published since 1969 by the *Viện Khảo Cổ Học* (Institute of Archaeology), which was established the previous year. It is one of a series of Vietnamese periodicals in which numerous articles on Cham art and archaeology have been published, all in Vietnamese. Very few of these articles have been cited in Western studies of Champa. For example, of the approximately 550 works cited in the bibliography of the 2005 Guimet exhibition catalogue, no more than 50 are by Vietnamese authors, and of these fewer than half are written in Vietnamese. See, for example, Cherry (2004) for an overview of these periodicals and post-independence archaeology in Vietnam.



Fig. 66 The Đông Dương bronze female deity



Fig. 67 The Đông Dương bronze female deity as displayed at the 2005 Guimet exhibition

The first published report of the statue in Europe was by Jean Boisselier and appeared in the BEFEO in 1984. In this study, in which he tentatively identifies the statue as Tārā, Boisselier made no reference to Trần Kỳ Phương and Ngô Văn Doanh's earlier articles, and their interpretations, which presumably had not come to his notice, since several times in the essay he regrets the lack of any information concerning the discovery of the sculpture. It was very difficult to obtain detailed information in the West about art and archaeology in Vietnam during this post-war period, and articles published in Vietnamese were either unknown or inaccessible because of the language. For example, in 1977, a year before the discovery of the Đồng Dương bronze, Tuyet Nguyet, a Vietnamese journalist living in exile, wrote, "it is impossible for me to revisit my country and as there is almost no news yet on how the museums have fared, I feel it my duty to publish whatever becomes available on them" (Nguyet Tuyet 1977: 68). Nonetheless, it is also important to recognize that throughout the course of Cham art history, it has been invariably, and regrettably, the case that scholars in the West have drawn almost exclusively on the work of other Western researchers, in languages readily accessible to them, failing to take adequately into account the work of Vietnamese writers.⁵⁷ Thus, subsequent studies of the bronze statue drew almost exclusively on Boisselier's 1984 interpretation. For example, the AFAO 1997 catalogue of the Danang museum quite simply labels the statute as Tārā, the identification, apparently, no longer being called into question.⁵⁸ This would appear to be another example, similar to the one we saw in the case of the Guimet

⁵⁷ On the other hand, the handful of Vietnamese researchers working on Cham art over the decades have based most of their work on the studies done by French scholars. This has meant that most Vietnamese language works on Cham art published in the 20th century have followed traditional French art history and adopted the French stylistic dating system. For the purposes of the focus of this thesis, therefore, their contribution to the creation of Cham art history is, to all intents and purposes, very similar to that of the French scholars.

⁵⁸ In 1997, at the time the AFAO catalogue was published, the Tārā was not on display, but in storage at the Regional Museum. Whether for questions of security or some other reason is unknown (Vandermeersch and Ducrest 1997: 116). In 2002, it went on display in the galleries of a new wing inaugurated at the back of the old building (see see *Lettre de la SACHA* 11, 2004-2005: 12-13).

Ganesh in chapter two, of a tentative interpretation by one researcher soon becoming documented and unquestioned fact. Ironically, at around the same date, Albert Le Bonheur, the researcher who had been responsible for the *tentative* identification of the Guimet Ganesh which was then adopted as certain by later writers, did the very same thing, when, in an essay on Cham art, he labelled the Đòng Dương bronze statue as “Tārā” without any hint that the identification might be questionable (Le Bonheur 1998: 268 and 297). Writing in 2011 about the Đòng Dương gallery at the Danang museum, Anne-Valérie Schweyer draws attention to the fact that “according to the foundation stele dated 875, the large pedestal of the main tower would have housed, in the small upper part, a bronze statue of Lokeshvara, called Lakshmindra-Lokeshvara.” This, she states succinctly, “has never been found”, while, “on the other hand, [...] a magnificent bronze statue of a female deity [...] found in a field near the sanctuary” in 1978 represents either Tārā or Prajnaparamita.⁵⁹ Frustratingly, she offers no further explanation, and the accompanying photograph is simply labelled “Bronze Tara” (Schweyer 2011: 399).

Over two decades after the discovery of the bronze, Trian Nguyen set about investigating the exact circumstances of the find. He managed to find out the identity of the original discoverers and tracked down one of them. Most importantly, he was able to locate the statue’s missing attributes. Up until this point, it had not been known what the attributes were, since when the statue was moved to the Danang museum its hands were empty. As Nguyen points out neither Trần Kỳ Phương, Ngô Văn Doanh or Boisselier “knew about the existence of the two attributes originally held in the deity’s hands” and this consequently influenced their interpretations

⁵⁹ Nandana Chutiwongs has also proposed that the statue represents Prajnaparamita (Chutiwongs 2005: 80)

(Nguyen Trian 2005: 6). He presented the findings of his research at conferences in Vietnam and the United States in 2003 and 2004⁶⁰, and then in a published essay in *Artibus Asiae* in 2005 (Nguyen Trian 2005).

Nguyen names the three local men who found the statue as Trà Gặp, Đoàn Liễu and Trà Hiệp. In December 2002, he was able to track down and interview Trà Gặp, who recounted the details of the find.⁶¹ News of the discovery, made while the men were digging up bricks, soon reached the People's Committee of the Bình Định commune, whereupon police were sent to guard the object at the find site. By this time, according to Trà Gặp, the discoverers, believing the statue to be gold, had made keepsakes of the two small objects that the figure held in her hands, a lotus flower and a conch shell. Upon questioning by the police, these objects were subsequently confiscated from them. Trà Gặp told Nguyen how, a few days later, an envoy sent by the district authority to take the statue to the Danang museum, failed to stop at the People's Committee office where a reception had been prepared, but instead went directly to the site and took the piece straight back to Danang. The local authorities took offence at this and at the fact that the envoy acknowledged neither the part played by the three local men who had made the find nor the local authority's own role in safeguarding it. As a result, the local authorities of Bình Định commune decided not to tell anyone at the museum about the lotus flower and conch shell and to keep them as "their community's cultural relics". Thus the Danang museum, and the scholarly world, remained unaware of the existence of the attributes, and the people's committee became the owners of a Cham treasure. In 1978, the committee even went

⁶⁰ "New Archaeological Discoveries", at the Institute of Vietnamese Social Sciences, Hanoi, October 2003; and "American Council for Southern Asian Art (ACSAA), Symposium XI", Salem, Massachusetts, May 2004.

⁶¹ Đoàn Liễu had died in 1997 and Trà Hiệp had been only a boy at the time of the discovery (Nguyen Trian 2005: 5-6)

as far as voting a special clause stipulating that any elected president should safeguard the two attributes. Since then, seven successive presidents have duly looked after them⁶² (Nguyen Trian 2005: 5-7).

In his essay, in light of the newly discovered attributes, drawing on the early reports by Trần Kỳ Phương and Ngô Văn Doanh, and epigraphical evidence from the inscriptions, Nguyen argues persuasively for the identification of the statue as Lakṣmīndralokeśvara. Further, on the basis of Vietnamese historical sources, Arab records and Parmentier's archaeological findings,⁶³ he posits the attack on Champa by the Đại Việt in 982 as the probable moment when the bronze sculpture was removed from the temple complex and carefully buried close by (Nguyen Trian 2005: 7-9). This amounts, of course, to speculation rather than hard fact, and cannot be proved. Other writers have tended to be less bold, preferring to err on the side of caution. Thus, Pierre Baptiste leaves the issue vague, merely suggesting that the statue was “no doubt” buried by monks “in former times” to protect it from pillaging (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 210). While Nguyen's speculation cannot be verified, it might be argued that it contributes to a more rounded appreciation of the statue's history than other less precise explanations. This raises the question of the legitimacy of imagination in art history. To what extent should we stick only to the hard facts and what do we do when the facts are unobtainable?

⁶² Perhaps conscious of the anger of the People's Committee when the Danang envoy failed to acknowledge them in 1978, Trian Nguyen lists all seven presidents (Nguyen Trian 2005: 7)

⁶³ Namely evidence that the monastery had been looted before being destroyed by fire, and subsequently probably not restored (Parmentier 1909: 446)

Nguyen's essay provides an all too rare example of due credit being given to the role played by locals, even identifying them as descendants of the ancient Cham people.⁶⁴ Not only does he name those present at the 1978 discovery, but also includes a photograph of Trà Gặp at the original find site in 2002 (Nguyen Trian 2005: 20). Nguyen also includes a photograph of Trần Kỳ Phương proudly holding the newly rediscovered attributes, which were shown to them by the president of the People's Committee⁶⁵ (figs. 68 and 69) (Nguyen Trian 2005: 26).



Fig. 68 Nguyen Trian (left) with Trà Gặp (centre) at the find site of the statue
(Nguyen Trian 2005: 20)

⁶⁴ Trian Nguyen suggests that the majority of people in the area are Cham descendants and that 85% of them have the surname Trà (Nguyen Trian 2005: 7).

⁶⁵ Since it was not possible to unite the attributes with the statue, Trian Nguyen produced a computerised image to show the statue as it would have looked at the time of its discovery (Nguyen Trian 2005: 27)



Fig. 69 Trần Kỳ Phương holding the statue's attributes
(Nguyen Trian 2005: 26)

The statue was one of the pieces brought from Danang for the 2005 Guimet exhibition. Following Boisselier's 1984 interpretation, it was labelled in the exhibition as "Tārā (?)".⁶⁶ In the exhibition catalogue, Pierre Baptiste, beginning with a description of the 1978 "fortuitous" discovery by a "peasant" looking for bricks among the ruins, summarises the various interpretations of the statue. He acknowledges that the statue "would give rise to diverse iconographic interpretations, both in Vietnam and Europe", and he cites studies done by Ngô Văn Doanh and Boisselier, though not the very first by Trần Kỳ Phương. Neither Trần Kỳ Phương nor Ngô Văn Doanh's 1979 essays appear in the catalogue bibliography, which is one of the most comprehensive bibliographies of Cham art history to date. Baptiste recognizes that, "as yet, the question of the iconography of the sculpture is far from

⁶⁶ Two years earlier, in 2003, the statue had already been loaned for the Vietnam exhibition in Brussels, where she was quite simply labelled "Tara" (Lambrecht and Schicklgruber 2003: 150).

resolved”, and underlines that Boisselier, whose interpretation he largely seems to accept, was, “regrettably”, unaware of the statue’s attributes. He writes:

However, in Vietnam, certain people knew about the existence of the attributes, which had been found with the piece and kept, since the departure of the bronze to the Danang Cham Museum, at the office of the People’s Committee on which the site of .Đông Dương depended, and where they still are now. (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 211)

He fails, though, to offer any explanation for the presence of the attributes in the People’s Committee office, possibly because he was unaware of the details uncovered by Trian Nguyen,⁶⁷ or maybe because the politics involved might have been considered inappropriate to include in the catalogue of a joint collaboration between Vietnam and France, all the more so since, as we shall see in chapter 6, the origins of the exhibition were themselves highly politically charged. Baptiste points out that while the lotus flower attribute helps to confirm Boisselier’s identification of the statue with Tārā, on the other hand, the “completely unexpected” conch shell, one of the distinctive attributes of Vishnu, quickly led Vietnamese researchers to identify the sculpture with Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, and by extension with Lakṣmīndralokeśvara, who, as we have seen, was venerated at Đông Dương. Baptiste rejects this interpretation in favour of Boisselier’s, since, although “this hypothesis seems to be generally accepted in Vietnam”, he finds it difficult to imagine that any feminine version of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara would have existed in 9th century Champa, that is before the feminisation process of the deity had got under way in China.⁶⁸ In answer to the question “who, therefore, is this goddess?”, Baptiste prefers

⁶⁷ Trian Nguyen’s article had not yet appeared when the exhibition catalogue was being written. Both works were published in 2005.

⁶⁸ The feminine version of Avalokiteśvara has been known in Vietnam for many centuries in the Sincized form of Bồ Tát Quan Thế Âm. See Guy (1994)

Boisselier's interpretation of the statue as "some form of Tārā [...], despite the conch shell which still remains unexplained". He considers that Boisselier's suggestion that the statue may represent Śyāmā Tārā, whose "youth brings out the weight of her breasts", is "by far the most convincing" (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 211; Boisselier 1984: 335).

This episode highlights the complex nature of academic research, where lack of access to the work of others, sometimes exacerbated by problems of language or the historical and political circumstances, will affect how artworks are interpreted and labelled. It also draws attention to the element of chance behind Cham art history. The discovery of the bronze sculpture was a chance find. Interestingly, it seems, it was the continued use of Cham sites as quarries for building material, in this case bricks, something that has long been lamented, that led to the discovery. Above all, the episode highlights the often arbitrary nature of interpretation and identification. Baptiste seems even to suggest a national divide concerning the interpretation of this Đông Dương bronze, with Vietnamese researchers favouring an identification of the sculpture with Lakṣmīndralokeśvara, and foreign scholars opting for other interpretations, with the majority accepting Boisselier's Tārā hypothesis.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter examined the complicated history of the Danang Museum. It raised questions of preservation and neglect, of collecting and displaying, of Vietnamese and Western approaches. It highlighted the colonial origins of the museum and its collections, looking at the key roles played by a handful of extraordinarily dedicated

individuals, notably Lemire, Parmentier and Claeys, demonstrating the influence they had on the collections, the museum building and on Cham art history in general. The chapter looked at the uniqueness of the Danang museum as the world's only major museum devoted entirely to the art of Ancient Champa and located geographically in what was once Cham territory. This puts the Danang Museum in stark contrast to most other collections of Cham art where the art is invariably displayed not in isolation but alongside other art and in locations far removed from the soil of Ancient Champa. In such instances other narratives are often at work.

This chapter has looked at the history of one institution, focusing in particular on the people who were the driving forces behind it. The study has examined questions of collecting, preserving and exhibiting, and how these have been affected by social, political and economic issues. Close attention has been paid to the role played by amateurs, as well as to the colonial context in which many pioneers of Cham art history were operating.

In the following chapters I turn away from the permanent museum collection to examine ephemeral exhibitions. Chapter 5 is an analysis of a series of exhibitions on Vietnam, which each had Champa as one of its constituent parts. Since Champa no longer exists, we are frequently forced to have recourse to explanations such as “it was a civilization in what is now present-day Vietnam”, but such locating of Champa within Vietnam is far from straightforward. How exactly does Champa relate to Vietnam? The next chapter examines how this question was addressed in a series of exhibitions on Vietnam held over the past half century in Europe and North America.

Chapter 5

Down in the Basement

Locating Champa

“A puckish seated figure from the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture could be laughing at our inability to write a coherent history of their culture”, Souren Melikian¹

Introduction

In this chapter I examine a series of exhibitions held over the past five decades in Washington, Paris, Brussels and New York. They all included important displays of Cham artworks that had been brought together from different locations, although in them Champa was located within widely varying frameworks. Each of the exhibitions included Vietnam in its title, indeed, *Vietnam*, and not Champa, was the theme of all the exhibitions. They all approached Vietnam, and more importantly, the place of Champa within Vietnam, differently. Champa was seen as just one of many diverse cultural elements in the complex history of what is now Vietnam. It is important, though, to bear in mind that the very use of the label Vietnam is in itself highly complex. The name Vietnam did come into use until 1804, but it is frequently used to designate the geographical area on which the entire history of the Viet and Cham peoples unfolded. In a recent book on the history of the Viet and Cham, Anne-Valérie Schweyer draws attention to the frequent anachronistic use of the name

¹ Melikian (2010)

Vietnam, preferring, therefore, for the sake of accuracy, to avoid it in favour of terms designating land areas and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the fact that her book is entitled “Le Viêtnam ancien” serves, aptly, to highlight the problematic and seemingly inevitable recourse to the use of the name as a convenient label (Schweyer 2005: 5).

As we saw in chapter two, when Champa is displayed or written about, it is frequently included under the blanket term Vietnam. This was the case at all the exhibitions discussed in this chapter. These are “Art and Archaeology of Vietnam: Asian Crossroad of Cultures”, which was held at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC in 1961 ; “Le Vietnam des Royaumes” and “L’Âme du Vietnam”, both staged at the Bon Marché department store in Paris, in 1995 and 1996 ; “Vietnam: Art et Cultures de la Préhistoire à Nos Jours,” mounted by the Musées royaux d’Art et d’Histoire du Cinquenaire, in Brussels during the winter of 2003-2004; and “Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea” staged in Houston and New York in 2009-2010.

The selection criteria for the exhibitions discussed in this chapter was two-fold: they were chosen for both their historical importance and for the very varying ways in which they placed Champa within Vietnam. The 1995 Bon Marché exhibition in Paris was the first exhibition on Vietnam held in France since the Exposition Coloniale of 1931, yet nothing had been written about. It was also unique in terms of its highly unconventional location in a department store basement, its conception and implementation by someone from outside the official museum world, and its mixing of commerce and art and Western and Eastern artisanship and design. The exhibition

held in Washington in 1961 was remarkable because of its timing, coming at the beginnings of escalation towards war in Vietnam, and because of the unique and controversial way it placed Champa at the centre of an archaeological chronology of the country. The Brussels 2003 exhibition was the first international exhibition to benefit from a modification in Vietnamese law permitting the loan of cultural artefacts abroad, which meant that Cham pieces on display there had left Vietnam for the very first time. The exhibition held in Houston and New York is included in this analysis as it had been planned as early as the late 1980s, making it the first international project for an exhibition on Vietnamese art since the end of the American war, even though the slow process of normalization between the United States and Vietnam meant that it would be twenty years before the exhibition could finally materialize, after the other exhibitions analyzed here had already taken place.

There has been only one major exhibition devoted exclusively to the art of Champa, it was held at the Musée Guimet in Paris during the winter of 2005-2006, and is the subject of the following chapter. Although it was solely about Cham sculpture, it too chose to include Vietnam in its title: “Trésors d’art du Vietnam: la sculpture du Champa – Ve-XVe siècles”.

The 1995 exhibition “Le Vietnam des Royaumes” was held in the basement of the Bon Marché department store in Paris. Part of the exhibition was devoted to Cham sculpture. This was the first major exhibition on Vietnam to be held in France since the 1931 Exposition Colonial at Vincennes (Duc and Hubert 1995: 5). Taking as its starting point the seeming incongruity of Cham art in a department store basement, I

trace the history of this exhibition and its implications for Vietnamese art in general and Cham art in particular. My interest here is not to investigate the reasons why Vietnam was not the subject of any major exhibition in France for six decades, a period during the course of which, among other things, the French colonial enterprise in Vietnam came to an end and the beginning of a particularly devastating period in the history of Vietnam began. Such an inquiry, highly interesting though it might prove, lies beyond the scope of the present study. Rather, this chapter investigates why exactly the 1995 Bon Marché exhibition came about, what its significance was and the effect it had with regard to the Cham pieces on display. My aim here is to bring to the fore the context of the exhibition.

At a 1988 conference on exhibitions, *The Poetics and Politics of Representation*, held at the International Center of the Smithsonian Institution, participants “tended to think of exhibitions as conforming to one of two models: either a vehicle for the display of objects or a space for telling a story”. Though, at the same time, “many participants recognized that it is not possible to have an exhibition that does not have traces of both models in it” (Karp and Lavine 1991: 12-13). Underlying most, if not all, exhibitions is a further story, and one which is only seldom told in the exhibition itself, that of the creation of the exhibition, and, by extension, its creators. It is this hidden story of the Bon Marché 1995 Vietnam show which I wish to uncover here, for, as Ivan Karp observes, “from one point of view the most powerful agents in the construction of identity appear to be neither the producers of the objects nor the audience but the exhibition makers themselves, who have the power to mediate between parties who will not come into face-to-face contact” (Karp and Lavine 1991: 15). Put slightly differently, “the curator’s name rarely even appears in the

information available in an exhibition (except as the author of the catalogue), and the public is given the false impression of having come into contact with ‘Goya’, ‘Warhol’, or ‘African Art’” (Vogel 1991: 191).

How exactly, therefore, did Cham art end up underground in the bowels of the Bon Marché in early 1995, since, on the face of it, a department store basement does seem an unlikely place for the first exhibition on Vietnam in the French capital in sixty years?

5.1 Genesis of an Exhibition -The Story of an Exiled Vietnamese Designer

Starting, then, from this double premise that curators of exhibitions are largely invisible and unknown to the exhibition-going public, but are at the same time the principal manipulators of that public’s experience, I choose to bring to the fore one of the main figures behind the 1995 Bon Marché Vietnam exhibition, and thereby show how personal histories may underlie our viewing and understanding of otherwise seemingly neutral displays of artwork. Thus, in March 2005, I met with French designer and collector Christian Duc, in his Vietnamese art-filled Paris apartment.²

Born in Vietnam, Duc left the country with his family at the age of seven, bound for the United States. They settled in Philadelphia where he became “the perfect American teenager”. His family, however, were profoundly “français”. His Vietnamese-born father had French nationality and had left Vietnam in order not to

² I met with Duc in his Parisian apartment in the 9eme Arrondissement on 14th March 2005. What follows is based on notes taken during my interview with him. He preferred not to be recorded. Despite several requests, I was unable to access the exhibition archives. In this, the Bon Marché exhibition, organised by someone not from the museum world, nonetheless mirrored the opacity surrounding many museum exhibitions and archives. See footnote 30, chapter 2.

lose it. Duc, born in Cholon, the Chinese quarter of Saigon, of Vietnamese parents with French nationality, was thus born French.³ Both dead now, his mother and father had lived “like any good self-respecting Frenchmen.” Following the Franco-Vietnamese tradition of the time they decided to send their children to France to be educated. Later, Duc lived in Berlin where he studied with disciples of Bauhaus and became, as he put it, “completely Germanised”, assimilating the aesthetic tradition of “less is more”. Having lived also, for a time, in Australia, he describes himself as “something of a rolling stone”, a globe-trotting cosmopolitan, fluent in English, French and German, and hardly ever speaking Vietnamese, especially after the death of his parents. In short, the portrait Christian Duc was painting of himself was of an educated, well-travelled, cultured citizen of the world, but not at all Vietnamese. Like so many overseas Vietnamese, he had assimilated the culture and norms of his Western countries of adoption, and shed all trace of “Vietnamese-ness”. Against this background, he began the second chapter of his story.

In 1993, a friend, the daughter of a rich Japanese businessman who was looking into the possibility of opening a chain of luxury hotels in Vietnam, invited Duc to accompany her on an inspection tour of Vietnam on her father’s behalf. They travelled to Vietnam in February and March 1993. It quickly became clear that it was too early to consider constructing luxury hotels, and the Japanese businessman subsequently abandoned the project. However, the trip, which lasted about two months, taking Duc to the South, the Centre and the North of the country, had a profound effect on him. During the trip he relived many childhood memories and re-

³ Cochinchina, now southern Vietnam, comprising Saigon and the Mekong Delta region, was the only part of Indochina which had the status of colony, its residents were therefore French citizens. The other areas that comprised the Indochinese Union, Annam, Tonkin, Laos and Cambodia, were all Protectorates.

discovered the country's architecture, its houses and mansions, its markets and pagodas. He came across Cham art for the first time at the Danang museum, though initially, he claims, he viewed it as "a degenerate form of Khmer art". Duc, an interior designer with a well-established career in Europe, travelled through Vietnam with a Western-trained designer's eye. He was astonished to discover that after a quarter of a century of isolation, the country appeared to have kept intact the technical *savoir faire* of Vietnamese design, even though, as Duc put it, the "frame had become ugly", because the materials being used were no longer the same, nor of the same quality. Duc quickly began to consider the possibilities of adapting local traditions and materials to Western forms. Such a synthesis would, he speculated, "inject new life into the country's artisans". What, for example, if the ancient technique of egg-shell design were used in a Western format, or adapted to a fibre-glass support? He was fascinated to rediscover the traditional Vietnamese lacquer ware and the possibilities it offered. Similarly, visiting villages, he was intrigued at the techniques of mixing paper and mother of pearl to create decorative panels.

When Duc returned to France after the trip, he suggested to friends that they form a team to set up an exhibition on Vietnam. His determination was strengthened when he discovered that there had really been nothing of the kind since the 1931 Exposition Coloniale. Thus began the third chapter of his story.

Duc's objective was to "to look afresh at Vietnamese craftsmanship". His impression during his trip to Vietnam was that Vietnamese crafts "had remained in isolation, as if preserved in formaldehyde, for twenty-five years, and even longer in the North of the country". It was, Duc suggested, as if they had been "anaesthetized". While this is

clearly a highly personal, subjective view, and could be seen as patronizing, it would have a profound effect on the way Duc conceived the Bon Marché exhibition. Duc's aim was to introduce Vietnamese art to the Parisian public. Such a desire to introduce works to a wide public is frequently evoked for exhibitions, and was, as we have seen in chapter 4, one of the driving forces behind Charles Lemire and Henri Parmentier's ambitions for the creation of a Cham museum in Tourane. They, like Duc and the Vietnamese artisanship he wanted to rejuvenate, had brought Cham art back to consciousness after centuries of neglect and abandonment. Duc's desire for presenting the art to a large audience was rooted in his personal history and the re-discovering of his Vietnamese roots.

Exhibitions and display, and in particular Asian exhibitions, were by no means an alien world to Duc. From the late 1970s, he had travelled frequently to Thailand, though never to Vietnam, and had been responsible for redoing the lighting for a dilapidated Jim Thompson House in Bangkok and helping to turn its garden into an extension of the house collection. In order to set up a Parisian exhibition, he contacted gallery owner Jean-Michel Beurdeley, who, like his father before him, specialised in Asian art and was one of the first post-decolonisation Parisian dealers to introduce Cham pieces to France. Beurdeley helped set up an artistic commission for the exhibition project. Very early on, Duc had also conceived the original idea of asking other Paris-based Vietnamese designers and artists to collaborate by creating products which fused Vietnamese and Western styles and techniques, and which would go on sale during the exhibition. The team he assembled included artist Pierre Le Tan, jeweller Jean Dinh Van, and designers Tan Giudicelli, Emmanuelle Khanh and Qasar Khanh. They worked with traditional methods and materials, such as Vietnamese silk,

gold, silver and bamboo. Duc hailed the inspired creations that each of them came up with as “Vietnamese art revisited”.

These modern design creations were not intended as part of the exhibition display, rather they were commercial pieces to be sold in conjunction with the exhibition. On display in the exhibition itself was a diverse array of objects including Vietnamese ceramics, imperial artefacts, ritual objects, pagoda sculptures, old photographs and Cham sculptures. All were placed in glass cases, theatrically lit by carefully positioned spotlights. Far removed from their original palace or temple settings, isolated in their showcases, they were turned into aesthetic pieces worthy of admiration. Susan Vogel has observed that “Western Culture has appropriated African Art and attributed to it meanings that are overwhelmingly Western” (Vogel 1991: 192), and writing about Indian art, Tapati Guha-Thakurta has talked about “the cultural osmosis of the religious idol into a work of art”. She suggests that “the Western art museum today functions as a complex site for the production of new orders of ‘religious’ value around Indian sculpted objects” (Guha-Thakurta 2007: 628). The same may be said of Southeast Asian art, and may be especially so in the case of Champa. We know more-or-less nothing of how and by whom the stone sculptures were worshipped in their original temple locations. The insides of the brick Cham temple-towers would almost certainly have been dark, maybe dimly lit by candles and lamps. Rays of sunlight coming through light shafts might at times have illuminated the faces of the statues, but on the whole, we can surmise that they would not have been clearly visible. Worshippers may well have dressed them in fine clothing and jewellery, or poured libations of them, running their hands across the surface of the statues as they did so. Perhaps people felt their way around the

sculptures in the dimly lit spaces. They may have done this while hearing chanting or music,⁴ and breathing in air dense with the smell of incense. We do not, and cannot know, however, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that a thousand years ago when the statues were created, people who came into contact with them had a sensual experience, but one where, quite possibly, the sense of sight was the least emphasized. The statues were not there to be looked at but rather to be interacted with. Today, when we study the statues or view them in museums, the opposite is true and the sense of sight takes precedence to the virtual exclusion of all the other senses. What were once sacred ritual objects are no longer objects of use, but have become objects of contemplation. This invariably remains unquestioned, unexamined and unchallenged, yet this Eurocentric-view of art is ingrained in virtually all museum practice, both in the West, where the museum originated, and in other parts of the globe where the museum has been exported. Recently, this practice has begun to come under criticism. As Guha-Thakurta has noted, “[b]oth authorities and viewers are increasingly sensitive to the epistemic violence that non-Western sacred objects have suffered in Western museum spaces”, and some of these museums “today are at the centre of reversing this process by trying to recover the original, authentic and traditional context from which objects came ‘before they became art’ ” (Guha-Thakurta 2007: 630-613). Interestingly, Christian Duc explores and challenges this concept when he juxtaposes Western design tradition with Vietnamese artisanship at the Bon Marché exhibition. In this way, two different worlds were physically brought together in the created artefacts, which embodied Vietnamese tradition and Western aesthetic practice. This merging of two worlds remains essentially unacknowledged in the case of the exhibits in the showcases. There is, however, a parallel between the

⁴ There is ample of evidence of music and dance in the sculptural reliefs

Cham sculpture which, dug up out of the ground and out of the past, is uprooted geographically and temporally and displayed in a modern glass case lit by a spot light, and the ancient crafts, wrenched out of their village tradition and reworked by Duc's contemporary designers into modern pieces.

One of the first problems Duc encountered as he set about planning an exhibition was that no French museum he contacted, in particular the two Asian art museums in Paris, the Guimet and the Cernuschi, was prepared to host an exhibition on Vietnam, nor even loan pieces for an exhibition. This reluctance on the part of French museums to mount a show devoted to Vietnam might seem strange⁵ in view of the enormous renewal of interest in Indochina that was witnessed in France in the early 1990s, in part due to the box-office success of films such as Regis Wargnier's epic *Indochine* (1992), Jean-Jacques Annaud's *L'Amant* (The Lover) (1992) and Trần Anh Hùng's *Mùi đu đủ xanh* (The Scent of the Green Papaya) (1993). As John Rockwell of the New York Times had been prompted to say, in 1992:

This year the French are looking back to their colonial past. They are doing so in fiction films and documentary films, in theatres and on television, in museums and magazines and newspapers. Sometimes they do it nostalgically, sometimes sexily, sometimes with painstaking seriousness. But no matter how they do it, they seem to obsess on their lost colonial role at a time when their place in the new Europe is being debated (Rockwell 1992).

The French colonial past, especially Indochina, was therefore clearly well and truly on the French cultural agenda at the time of Duc's first return visit to Vietnam and his subsequent planning for an exhibition. Faced, though, with a total lack of interest on the part of French museums, the solution, it turned out, was to borrow pieces from

⁵ The reluctance of French museums to have any involvement in the exhibition may well simply have been due to the fact that Duc had no real track record in curating exhibitions, coupled with the commercial location of the exhibition and the highly unusual concept of selling commercial goods as part of the exhibition.

museums in Belgium and Holland. To these objects, Duc and Beurdeley then added pieces from their own private collections, and friends and colleagues followed suit. So, in the end, the most beautiful Cham pieces came from foreign rather than French museums, or were loaned by private collectors or dealers. Once the exhibition project was under way, Duc did, however, succeed in obtaining the support of several museums in Paris and the Ile de France. Experts from the Musée Albert Khan in Boulogne Billancourt and the Musée de l'Homme in Paris sat on the scientific committee of the exhibition and wrote essays for the catalogue, and both these museums loaned objects.⁶ The Musée Guimet is credited in the catalogue, though their input seems to have been minimal and no pieces from the museum's collections were included in the exhibition.

Duc's original plan had been to hold the exhibition in a museum, but since all the museums he approached responded negatively, he turned to the Parisian department stores, many of which had traditions of holding exhibitions of various kinds, including country-themed displays and events. Both the Printemps and Galeries Lafayette stores declined the project. Duc sensed that the reason for the Printemps refusal was quite simply that his concept was too novel for them. Their policy was to send buyers to purchase objects in the relevant country and then sell them in the store rather like a bazaar. This was not what Duc envisaged, his idea was to create merchandise especially for the exhibition. Such an idea was relatively new for the department stores, and would have been totally alien for the museums. The Galeries Lafayette declined because they had recently held exhibitions on both China and India and felt

⁶ The Musée de l'Homme provided examples of ethnic minority textiles and jewellery from their renowned collections, with an essay on them in the catalogue by curator Catherine Hemmet. The Musée Albert Khan loaned early 20th century colour photographs taken by Léon Busy (1874-1951) from their extensive holdings, with a catalogue chapter by the museum's director, Jeanne Beausoleil (Hemmet 1995; Beausoleil 1995).

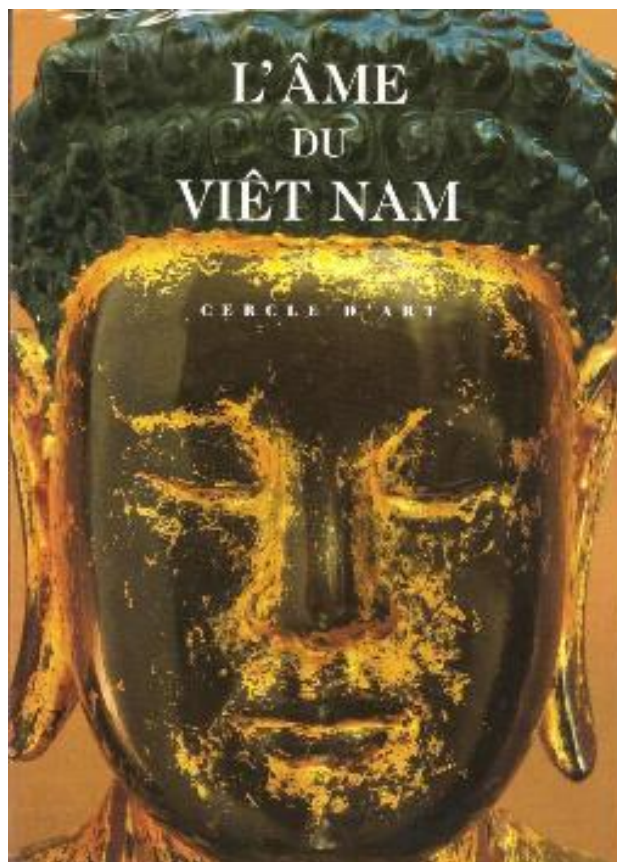
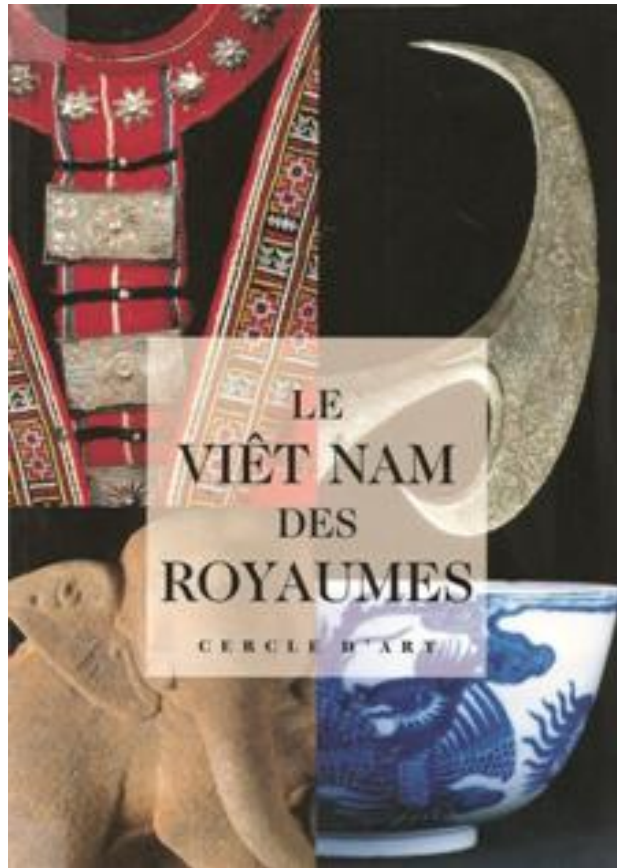
another Asian-themed exhibition would be too repetitive and not commercially viable. Meanwhile, the Bon Marché, the only major department store on the Left Bank of Paris, immediately expressed an interest in the project, and Duc quickly came to a working agreement with the store's Director, Philippe de Beauvoir. It was agreed that Duc would provide all the display objects on condition that the store would finance the publication of a catalogue, which was to be "a reference work on Vietnamese art" (Duc and Hubert 1995).

The exhibition was a resounding success. All the items created for sale were sold in under three weeks, while the exhibition lasted two months. During this period the Bon Marché registered record attendance. This success led to the organisation of a second show the following year. It was the only occasion that the store had held an exhibition on the same theme in two consecutive years. A second catalogue was produced for this new exhibition (Duc and Hubert 1996). Neither of the catalogues of the two exhibitions are, truly speaking, catalogues as such. Rather, each features a series of articles on different aspects of Vietnamese art and history. Both are quite clearly meant to be stand-alone tomes, since they make no reference to the exhibition itself, nor is any mention made of the contemporary creators and designers associated with the exhibition. The 1995 catalogue contained two essays devoted to Champa. One was a brief overview of the Danang museum by Jean-Michel Beurdeley. In this presentation, he also gave a summary of the major academic works on Cham art (Beurdeley 1995). The second was a lengthy essay on Champa and its art, written by Jean Boisselier. This was Boisselier's last published work on Champa before his death in February 1996, and was re-published posthumously, in slightly modified form, in 1997, in the AFAO catalogue of the Danang Museum (Boisselier 1997).

This 28-page essay was illustrated by a series of mainly black-and-white photographs of Cham sculptures. Only a couple of these were objects that had actually been on display in the exhibition, the others being statues from the Danang Museum, or from private collections. In the case of most of the pieces from private collections, the owner was not named.⁷ In this, the catalogue reflected the exhibition itself, where most of the labels of objects that were not from museums simply stated “private collection”. While the private owners who loaned pieces from their own collections may well have had personal reasons, such as fiscal questions or security issues, for wishing not to be named, such labelling is always highly problematic since it raises issues of provenance. Because of the fragmentary nature of Cham art, its wide dispersal and the lack of any kind of exhaustive *catalogue raisonné*, questions of authenticity inevitably arise whenever the origin of a piece is in question. The inclusion of privately owned Cham pieces from the inception of the exhibition project may, at least partly, explain the reticence of some museums to be associated with the exhibition, notably the Guimet, the only French museum to possess a sizeable collection of Cham art.

The problem of Cham pieces dispersed in private collections came to prominence in 2005 with the publication of *Art of Champa* (Huber 2005b). Written by Jean-François Hubert, commissioner of both the Bon Marché exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues, this book presents 222 Cham artefacts, most of which are sandstone sculptures, though it also includes a small selection of precious metal

⁷ Only one of the photographs of the pieces from private collections specified the owner: a 12th century Tháp Mẫm style Dragon makara from the “collection Beurdeley” (Boisselier 1995: 48)



Figs. 70 & 71 The catalogues of the 1995 and 1996 Bon Marché Vietnam exhibitions

objects and jewellery. Most of the pieces featured in the book were previously unknown and all are now in private collections. The origin and ownership of the vast majority of the pieces is not specified. This book may well have contributed to the value of these works since they are now all “published” pieces, however, without any detail on the pieces’ present or past whereabouts, and with nothing but a photograph of each, the book contributes little to the advancement of our knowledge of Cham art. At best it can be said to increase the known, and published, canon of Cham art, albeit through artefacts whose authenticity is clearly unverifiable. A small number of objects (thirteen pieces and seven fragments) described in the book are an exception to this. They come from the collection of Doctor Claude-Albert Morice (1845-1877). Lost at sea when the ship bringing them back from Indochina to France in the 1870s was wrecked off the coast of Somalia, these sculptures were recovered from the seabed in 1995 by a team of submarine archaeologists led by Robert Sténuit. After this brief reappearance, the collection was once again lost as the pieces were subsequently separated in a sale at Christie’s in Amsterdam⁸ (Hubert 2005b: 13-14; Sténuit 2005: 34-35).

Both the Bon Marché exhibitions displayed a wide variety of objects from Vietnam, but differed in content and approach. Notably, photographs and ceramics, which constituted an important part of the first exhibition, were absent in second. Cham art, which Duc felt had been “given short rift” in the first exhibition with only a few pieces presented, was given much more space in the second, along with Vietnamese painting and Buddhist art. While more space was devoted to Cham art in the second exhibition, the accompanying catalogue contained only one article on Champa, an

⁸ For the full story of the collecting, loss and re-discovery of these pieces see Beurdeley (1997) and Sténuit (2005)

essay by Pierre-Bernard Lafont on Cham “mythology”, essentially a review of some of the major Hindu gods represented in Cham art (Lafont 1996).



Fig. 72 The Bon Marché department store

From the inception of the project, it was clear for Duc that an exhibition on Vietnam had to include Cham sculptures, but in both the Bon Marché exhibitions Cham art was displayed as one art amongst the diverse arts of Vietnam in general. This is something which occurs frequently, both in museum displays and in temporary exhibitions. Patricia Pelley has observed, for example, that in Hanoi’s Museum of Fine Arts, Cham artefacts “have been unobtrusively subsumed in the visual narrative of the Vietnamese national past”. She notes that “rather than relegate Cham artifacts to the display of ‘ethnic’ art, and conversely, rather than devote an entire section to the Cham which would call attention to their conquest and decimation, the narrative includes them in the sections on the Lý and the Trần dynasties”. She considers that “this arrangement is particularly awkward because it was during these two dynastic

reigns that the Vietnamese most definitively eroded the territorial and material basis of Cham civilization”, and she draws attention to the fact that “the textual glosses make no mention of the process by which the Cham were conquered and their territories annexed” (Pelley 2002: 110-111). In the Bon Marché exhibitions there was no primarily chronological historical narrative. No attempt was made to place Cham art in relation to other Vietnamese art forms, or to insert it into a Vietnamese timeline. Rather, a cross-section of various art forms from the past was displayed within the context of the present, and visitors were immersed in a general Vietnam world. Ancient Champa was quite clearly an integral part of this world.

5.2 Unlikely Location – a Parisian Department Store Basement (1995 and 1996)

It is interesting to observe that the only exhibitions in Paris devoted to Cham art in recent decades, either exclusively, as in the case of the Musée Guimet exhibition in 2005-2006, or partially, as at the Bon Marché in 1995 and 1996, were held in basements. Traditionally, basements are places of storage and of hiding, and, therefore, by extension, of (re-)discovery. We use underground as a metaphor for something secret or hidden. Similarly that related underground place, the crypt, has its etymological roots in secrecy. Like attics, basements are places where the past accumulates, ready for retrieval. As we enter a basement, therefore, we embark, as it were, on a journey of discovery. The place where art is displayed and the way we enter that space will frame our experience of the display, since, as David Carrier has noted, “just as the acknowledgments and introduction of a book set the tone, so a museum entrance prepares you to view the collection” (Carrier 2003: 63). Lynne Munson suggests that early American museum founders “chose classical architecture

to convey their country's and their collections' tie to the heritage of Western civilisation". However, "the classical appearance was," she claims, "more than symbolic", since "the façade was meant to facilitate the transition from the orientation of everyday activity to that of artistic contemplation". Moreover, museums often "required their visitors to climb a grand staircase [...] as a crucial element of this transition", and the "physical work of climbing was a metaphor for the effort required to reach a state of knowledge". Many museums, though, now no longer have visitors ascending grand staircases, rather, Munson points out, entrances have been relocated to side or back doors, so that "visitors now enter museums no differently than they might a mall or a grocery store" (Munson 1997: 63).

In the case of the Bon Marché, the museum and the store fuse together, and descent into the shop's basement is, like the traditional ascent of the grand staircase, a transition, albeit reversed. While, symbolically, the staircase used to lead up into temple-like heights, so going down into a basement is a symbolic descent into mysterious depths. If we think of a journey into the past spatially, we will be going back or down, never forward or up. Furthermore, descent into the basement aptly mirrors the archaeologist's descent into the pit in which the artefacts are discovered (see, for example, Carrier 2003: 62-63). Cham pieces, unearthed from the past and from the soil in their recent histories, once again went below ground, just as some do when they are kept in storage.⁹

According to Carol Duncan, "museums do not simply resemble temples architecturally", but also "*work* like temples, shrines and other such monuments",

⁹ See Chapter 2

and, in them, “museum goers [...] bring with them the willingness and ability to shift into a certain state of receptivity”. She suggests that “like traditional ritual sites, museum space is carefully marked off and culturally designated as special, reserved for a particular kind of contemplation and learning experience” (Duncan 1991: 91). A similar process is at work in the department store, with the added objective that the act of contemplation will result in an act of purchase. While the museum or exhibition often guides the viewer along a carefully planned path, so that he or she physically walks through the story being narrated by the display, in the department store signs and indicators seem often to be reduced to a minimum, so that the potential purchaser is forced to travel from floor to floor, section to section, coming into contact with the greatest variety of articles possible, increasing the likelihood of purchase. At the Bon Marché Vietnamese exhibitions these two exhibitionary models, that of museum on the one hand and department store on the other, became fused: Vietnamese and Cham art was displayed in conjunction with artworks for sale.

5.3 Cathedrals of Commerce

When I presented an early version of this chapter at the SOAS/TUFS Postgraduate Symposium in 2006 (Watkins and Arai 2006: 70), European and Japanese participants reacted in markedly different ways. The Europeans were evidently intrigued at the notion of art treasures down in the basement of a department store, while for the Japanese this was perfectly normal, since art displays are very often a permanent feature of Japanese department stores, although usually on an *upper* floor. Even in Europe there is nothing new, in reality, about the combining of the display of art and the sale of merchandise. Such coupling has been at the very heart of department stores

since their inception in the 19th century. Recent scholarly attention to department stores has highlighted their exhibitionary roles and likened them to both temple and stage. Masao Yamaguchi has observed that “the rise of the great department stores in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the store become an exhibition space for commercial goods”, while Béatrice Andia has referred to them as both “theatres” and “cathedrals of commerce” . Furthermore, Yamaguchi recognises that a similar process is at work in Japanese culture where “the shop window becomes a theatre for merchandising in much the same way as a circus parade displays a portion of the main show in order to provoke onlookers into attending the entire performance being put on inside the circus tent” (Andia and François 2006: 10, 15; Yamaguchi 1991: 57-58). Walter Benjamin has similarly talked about the “circus-like and theatrical element of commerce” (Benjamin 2002: 43).

For Susan Vogel, “the radical dislocation of most objects in museums has become a firmly established tradition in the West”, to such an extent that “the fact that museums recontextualize and interpret objects is a given, requiring no apologies”. However, Vogel believes that museums “should inform the public that what it sees is not material that ‘speaks for itself’ but material filtered through the tastes, interests, politics, and state of knowledge of particular presenters at a particular moment in time” (Vogel 1991: 200-201). Christian Duc’s story would seem to neatly illustrate each of these elements. It should be noted, though, that this personal story of how the exhibition came about was not in any way made available to the viewer, it was neither part of the exhibition nor the catalogue. Vogel’s point seems so obvious as to be hardly worth making, yet, all too often it is left totally unaddressed. Duc addressed these issues indirectly at the Bon Marché since his innovative involvement of modern

designers and the unusual location of the exhibitions in a department store basement both afforded the visitor a glimpse into the questions addressed by Vogel. The fact that the first exhibition, “Le Vietnam des Royaumes”, took place only a year and a half after Duc’s return from Vietnam is proof of his personal dedication.

By coincidence, discussions between the Musées royaux d’Art et d’Histoire du Cinquantième in Brussels and the authorities in Vietnam for the setting up of a large-scale exhibition on Vietnam began the same year the first Bon Marché Vietnam exhibition was held. These discussions were in fact to last the better part of a decade, and the exhibition, “Vietnam: Art et Cultures de la préhistoire à nos jours”, did not come to fruition until 2003. This was in large part due to the difficulty of obtaining authorisation from the Vietnamese government for art works to be loaned from Vietnamese museums and sent abroad. Indeed, in 1954, at the end of French rule, a law had been passed expressly prohibiting the loan of Vietnamese art works to other countries. In the decade following the introduction of *Đổi Mới*,¹⁰ the possibility of a change in the law became the object of long discussions. During this period, in 1988, American art historian Nancy Tingley, who was at the time a curator at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, travelled to Vietnam for talks with museums about borrowing ancient artworks for the first major United States exhibition. As Holland Cotter has said, “it was a bold idea”, since at the time, “to most Americans, Vietnam still meant little more than the memory of a nightmare war”, and how many of them “knew it had a great art tradition, never mind museums that preserved it?” (Cotter 2010). While the 1954 law had been fully enforced in what was to become the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, that is North Vietnam, the procedure was much

¹⁰ See footnote 50, chapter 4

more lax in the South. This had made possible the loan of objects to the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, for a touring exhibition in 1961 (Smithsonian 1961: 4). Tingley's 1988 trip was the earliest post-war attempt to bring things out of the country for an exhibition in the West. The discussions, though, came to nothing and it was over two decades before Tingley's exhibition finally materialised, in 2010, by which time important Cham art objects had already left Vietnam for exhibitions in both Brussels and Paris. A modification in the Vietnamese law had finally been ratified in 2002, and this enabled the loan of a total of 416 objects from 13 different Vietnamese museums to Brussels for the 2003 exhibition. This was the first loan of Vietnamese art overseas since the end of the American conflict and one of the most important since the end of colonial period (Lambrecht and Schicklgruber 2003: 7 and 12).

5.4 Champa as a Pivotal Place in Washington DC (1961)

Forty years earlier, the 1961 Smithsonian Institute exhibition in Washington,¹¹ "Art and Archaeology of Vietnam: Asian Crossroad of Cultures", was hailed by the Ambassador of what was then Southern Vietnam as "the first major archaeological exhibit my Government has ever organized abroad in cooperation with a foreign museum" (Smithsonian 1961 : 3). It was also was quite probably the first temporary exhibition displaying Cham art objects to be held anywhere in the world since the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris. Works were shipped from the national museums in Saigon and Hue especially for the exhibition. Other pieces were loaned by the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire du Cinquantenaire* in Brussels, or came from private

¹¹ This was a "travelling exhibition" under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. The collection was shown in its entirety in Washington, but, "for the convenience of circulation to other museums" was divided, for the touring part, into two sections: art and archaeology, and folk art and contemporary crafts (Smithsonian 1961: 16).

collections in Washington and from the Peabody Collections at Yale University, which had received much of the material collected in Vietnam by Olav Janse,¹² who was the archaeological consultant to the exhibition. This was a general exhibition on Vietnamese art and archaeology, but Champa was given particular and unique prominence in the way the exhibitionary space was organised. The exhibition was divided into three sections: 1) “Pre-Cham Cultures” (200 BC – AD 500); 2) “Cham Period” (ca. 500-1500 AD); 3) “Post-Cham” (1500-1900 AD). Thus Champa became a pivot around which the other cultures of what is now Vietnam revolved. Of the forty-six numbered Cham exhibits¹³ comprising this pivotal section, over half (25 objects) came from Saigon. Brussels provided 14, another half dozen were part of the Peabody collections, and one was on loan from a private collection.

Including Champa within a narrative of the history of Vietnam was, in 1961, something of an innovation.¹⁴ Champa, defeated and destroyed by the Dai Viet, habitually received only passing mentions in standard Vietnamese histories, if it was mentioned at all. As Hue-Tam Ho Tai has noted, “the historiographical tradition conveniently ignores the many episodes in which the Vietnamese have acquired territory by annihilating, displacing, or assimilating whole populations such as the people of Champa” (Tai 2001b: 172).¹⁵ Three decades after the Washington exhibition, Keith Taylor noted that “there is in fact much evidence from Champa that

¹² See chapter 4

¹³ Some catalogue numbers of smaller objects, such as jewellery, comprised several pieces, so the number of individual artefacts was actually higher.

¹⁴ Two works, both published in the 1960s did, nonetheless, include frank discussions of Vietnamese expansion and their assimilation of the Cham. These were Phan Khoang’s history of southern Vietnam (1965), and a history of the Cham people by Dohamide and Dorohiem (1965). In general, though, because of successive military conflicts, scholarly interest in Champa within Vietnam was not revived until the 1980s”. See, for instance, Trần Kỳ Phương and Lockhart (2011: xv), and the literature review in chapter 1.

¹⁵ On the question of internal colonialism in Vietnam, see, for example, Evans (1992) and Lockhart (2011: 11)

has yet to be studied”, and that “what is meant by Champa appears to be on the threshold of a major revision.” He suggested that “the construction of Cham history will have a significant impact upon the development of Vietnamese historiography, which is at present in a preliminary phase of making space for Cham voices to be heard in the earlier history of the terrain now part of Vietnam” (Taylor 1992: 157). The Smithsonian exhibition created a Vietnamese narrative in which Champa was at the centre of the story, effectively giving spectacular importance to a civilization which was virtually absent from the accepted national narrative at the time. The official Vietnamese narrative of the period is reflected in the Foreword to the catalogue, written by Trần Văn Chương, Ambassador of South Vietnam to the United States. In this foreword, he announces that “some of the art treasures on display are specifically Vietnamese; others belong to ancient civilizations which flourished on what is now Vietnamese soil”. These other ancient civilizations remain, though, nameless. He further declares that the objects “will illustrate the originality of the *Vietnamese* culture” and “testify to the continuity and richness of the *Vietnamese*¹⁶ artistic tradition”¹⁷ (Smithsonian 1961: 3). Further on, the main text of the catalogue declared that, in the exhibition, “Vietnamese archaeology is divided into three periods centred about the Cham civilization” (Smithsonian 1961: 16). In a seeming paradox, therefore, the Foreword presents a purely Vietnamese story with Champa unnamed, while the exhibition itself put Champa at the very centre of the archaeological narrative. One of the leading 20th century French specialists of Vietnamese art, Louis Bezacier questioned “the new conception of the archaeology of Vietnam” presented in the exhibition in “a form which was”, he suggested, “unexpected to say the least”.

¹⁶ My italics

¹⁷ Further on in the catalogue, we discover that the Ambassador’s connection with the exhibition went beyond his mere diplomatic role, since “hundreds of objects were excavated at Oc-éo by professor Louis Malleret [...] on the estate of His Excellency the Ambassador of Viet Nam and Mme. Tran Van Chuong” (Smithsonian 1961: 19)

Indeed, he declared himself no less than “stupefied” by the brief introductory notices preceding each section of the exhibition in the catalogue proper. “If Champa is hardly even alluded to in the introduction”, he remarks, “here, on the contrary, it is Cham civilization which takes pride of place”. He regards the division of the exhibition into Pre-Champa, Champa and Post-Champa as “a curious conception of the division of Vietnamese archaeology”, and asks “why make the latter pivot around the Cham civilization, when it is well known that Cham and Vietnamese civilization are very different, and totally independent of each other?” Bezacier further queries the use of the term “Pre-Cham” which implies knowledge of the earliest artistic manifestations which developed on the territory which would later become Champa. He points out that no such knowledge existed, and that, in fact, nothing earlier than the 6th century was known at the time. He further objected strongly to the presence of sixteen Vietnamese objects on display in the Cham section of the exhibition although they had no link to Cham art. He would, he said, have preferred a more “classic” exhibition with, for example, a simple division into two categories of Cham archaeology and Vietnamese archaeology, which “would have avoided eclipsing the Vietnamese civilization in favour of Cham civilization, and this without any valid reason”. In this way, Bezacier suggests, “the American visitor would not have been led, as no doubt happened, to consider Vietnamese civilization as a branch of the Cham civilization” (Bezacier 1962: 229-231). Observing a similar construction in Khmer art studies, Bruno Dagens has drawn attention to the deep-seated illusion that Angkor is not Cambodia, as demonstrated by the “classic tripartite history, and in particular the history of art, which places an “Angkorian” period between those termed “pre” and “post” Angkorian” (Dagens 2001: 13).

So Washington's, it seems, was a misleading, and, following Bezacier, factually inaccurate narrative, but one that, probably for the first time in a modern Western exhibition, put Champa dramatically under the spot-light. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Thomas Beggs, director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, claimed that "this circulating collection of antiquities, folk art, and craftwork from Viet Nam invites Americans to more intimate acquaintance with that vital part of Southeast Asia hitherto included in what has loosely been known as Indo-China". He declared that the "curtain is now parted by this exhibition to evoke curiosity and excite wonder" (Smithsonian 1961: 9, 14). Elsewhere in the catalogue, reference is made to "much that is pleasantly exotic in Vietnamese handicraft today", while the population of this "enchanted land" is described as "a gracious and friendly people". It is unlikely that many contemporary catalogues of American or European art would refer to their own people in the same terms. Decidedly colonial in tone, the vocabulary echoes that found in the literature produced for the Paris Colonial Exposition thirty years earlier at the height of the French colonial enterprise.

Moreover, while colonial in tone, the catalogue notes were also overtly political in places, such as the comment that "steps are being taken by the Government of Viet Nam to preserve examples of the culture of minority groups in the same way that American Indian culture is preserved in the United States". Clearly reflecting America's ties with the Republic of Vietnam, the catalogue suggested that "the history of Vietnam is replete with periods of subjugation followed by periods of the resurgence of its indigenous creative genius", and that "the recent establishment of a republican form of government under President Ngo-Dinh-Diem again releases the

creative urge of the Vietnamese and indicates the revitalization of traditional arts and the flowering of new forms of expression” (Smithsonian 1961: 13-14).

5.5 Somewhere Between the War and a Shop – Brussels (2003)

With hindsight, the timing of the Washington exhibition seems particularly poignant, coming just a short time before “Vietnam” would become a household word in the United States, though a word designating something very different from the world of art displayed at the Smithsonian’s touring exhibition. Even in 2003, the Brussels exhibition seemed to recognise the fact that for many people Vietnam is still largely synonymous with war, since the introductory room through which visitors entered the exhibition was entirely devoted to armed conflict. The visitor, therefore, physically entered into the space of the Vietnam exhibition via war. The exhibition space properly speaking was a large square hall divided into sixty-one numbered display sections¹⁸ lining the four outer walls and continuing in a central display area in the middle of the pavilion hall. As we have seen, this exhibition brought together 450 works from over a dozen different museums, and was the fruit of almost a decade of negotiations with Vietnam (Lambrecht and Schicklgruber 2003: 7).

Serving as a transition between the world outside the museum and the world of Vietnam inside the exhibition, the war-themed entrance gallery seemed to suppose that for the average visitor it was largely through war that Vietnam was known or

¹⁸ The numbering system began *after* the visitor had passed through the war-themed introductory room.

perceived. At the exhibition, it was as if the visitor physically walked through war to discover beyond what Vietnam really was. Once inside the main exhibition space, the sequenced numbering system implied an intended trajectory around the exhibition. This route led the visitor in a clockwise direction around the outer edge of the main room past displays of different archaeological, artistic and dynastic periods. These were in roughly chronological order regardless of where they had been located on Vietnamese soil. The first three sections were devoted to the prehistoric Đông Sơn culture, which flourished in the North of the country in the first millennium BCE, and produced “the famous drums which have become icons of Vietnamese civilisation” (Lockart 2008: 8). Next came a section displaying artefacts from Óc Eo, a port in the Mekong Delta in the far south, probably active by the first century CE, and which gives its name to the contemporary material culture of the region.¹⁹ This was followed by Sa Huỳnh, a cultural complex, whose sites are spread along the coast of central Vietnam over roughly the same expanse of territory as the polities of ancient Champa, and to which “archaeologists and other scholars have been virtually unanimous in linking the ancestors of the Cham” (Lockhart 2011: 26).²⁰ These totally varied cultures followed one after the other as if they formed a simple time-line of Vietnamese history, with no regard to geographical location, though labels and maps did clearly indicate to the visitor where exactly these different cultures had been located. The Sa Huỳnh culture extended from around 1000 BCE to the first centuries of the common era, thus its origins preceded by a millennium those of the unrelated Oc-Eo in the south. Adding further confusion to the apparent chronological sequence in the exhibition display, Sa Huỳnh was followed not by Champa, which would have

¹⁹ For a summary of Oc-Eo and the network of canals of which it was part see, for example Higham (2002: 236-239)

²⁰ Although there is no real consensus, Lockhart claims that “most writers see Champa as the heir to the Sa Huỳnh cultural legacy” (Lockhart 2011: 26). See also (Higham 2002: 236-239)

had a certain coherence both chronologically and geographically, but by two sections entitled “The Struggle for Independence: 3rd Century AD – 939 AD”. So, while time seemed to very clearly take precedence over geography, periods defined by material culture were interspersed with others reflecting military and political history.

Four sections were devoted to the art of Ancient Champa. These followed on directly from the struggle for independence, that is, *Vietnamese* independence. Again, this was confusing for despite the constant wars between the Viet and the Cham, the struggle was, of course, for independence from the *Chinese* and not from the Cham, whose territories the Viet were in fact conquering. Then immediately after the Cham sections came the Vietnamese Lý Dynasty (1009-1225 CE)²¹ and a long series of displays devoted to the succeeding dynasties in chronological order. The displays devoted to the different Vietnamese dynasties continued up to the nineteenth century, interspersed towards the end with sections divided according to construction material. Thus, there were displays of ceramics, woodcarving and lacquer ware, but also a section devoted to imperial regalia, one of Buddha statues, and a display of manuscripts and writing.

After leaving the outer walkway, the visitor entered the square central display area in the middle of the main hall, via entrances in each of its four sides. Divided into five parts, four L-shaped display areas in the outer corners and a square display area in the centre, this area of the exhibition comprised material related to arts and crafts, folklore and ethnic minorities. This latter included the present-day Cham, though

²¹ It was during this period that the Vietnamese, or Dai Viet, started what has been known as their long march to the south (*Nam Tiến*) and began to slowly obliterate the Cham. Recent scholarship, however, has shown that rather than a simple push southwards by the Viet, this period was much more complex, and was in fact marked by a series of incursions by both the Cham and Viet in both directions. See, for example Vũ Hồng Liên (2008) and Schweyer (2011)

there was no attempt to link them with the ancient stone sculptures of their ancestors on display close-by. Unlike the outer displays, where the objects were spot-lit on individual pedestals or presented in glass show cases, in classic art museum layouts, this inner exhibition space displayed everyday objects contextualized in reconstructions of home interiors. Mannequins posed, frozen in daily tasks, dressed in their traditional ethnic clothing, following the traditions of classic old-fashioned ethnographic montage. Video screens allowed visitors to watch scenes of everyday life of the different minority groups, in village markets, inside homes and in the fields.

The Brussels exhibition was thus presented as a partial chronological timeline, at least in the outer ring of displays devoted to what we might term fine arts and archaeology. This served, above all, to highlight the inherent problems in such a choice of display. The diversity of the different, and frequently unrelated, cultures which existed in territories often geographically very distant from each other, in what is now Vietnam, but for much of its history consisted of separate civilizations, clearly does not lend itself well to a simple historical timeline. Champa found itself sandwiched in between Vietnam, implying some sort of continuity. The Champa display panel, which treated Champa as a single entity, announced that “the Kingdom of Champa was the direct neighbour of the Viets and they were frequently in conflict with each other”. While it could be argued that the display in a way reflected this since Vietnamese displays directly neighboured Cham ones, the exhibition made no real attempt to establish links between the Cham sections and the displays that came immediately before and after them. Visitors exited the main exhibition through a room featuring a full-scale reconstruction of a temple and a village store piled high with modern everyday objects, most of them made from brightly coloured plastic. The exhibition, therefore,

began with war and ended with cheap plastic kitsch, but the closing panel hoped that the visitor had “been able to appreciate the richness and diversity of the colours of Vietnam and also to better understand an appealing²² people and their three thousand years of history”. Once again, one cannot help wondering whether a display about a European country and its art would have referred to the population as “appealing”, with echoes of a condescending colonial era tone. Be that as it may, fitting Champa into this richness and diversity was clearly problematic.

5.6 Champa Returns to America – New York and Houston (2009-2010)

A half a century after the Smithsonian exhibition, Cham art featured once again in a major American exhibition, in 2010, when a show entitled “Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea” was staged in Houston and at the Asia Society in New York.²³ Curated by Nancy Tingley, this was the exhibition that, as we have seen, she had first started planning at the end of the 1980s. It had been, therefore, some twenty years in the making.²⁴ The exhibition was innovative in bringing to the fore the important riverine aspect of cultures such as Champa. In this it reflected the new revisionist histories where the acceptance of the existence of a network of independent polities as opposed to a single kingdom is often backed up by the fact that the terrain of valleys and rivers hardly lends itself to unified territories. The exhibition brought together over a hundred objects from a total of ten different

²² “Attachant” in the original French

²³ The exhibition was premiered at the MFAH in Houston, 13th September 2009–3rd January 2010, and then shown at the Asia Society in New York from 1st February -2nd May 2010

²⁴ Although planning had started early, the exhibition only became possible after relations between Vietnam and the United States were normalized in 1995. A series of public lecture programmes looking at Vietnamese arts, culture and contemporary society, organized in conjunction with the exhibition, also examined “the complicated history and current relationship between the United States and Viet Nam”, which were “being marked during 2010 on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the normalization of relations between the two countries and the 35th anniversary of the fall of Saigon (Asia Society 2010).

Vietnamese museums. It was the first time the vast majority of these pieces had been on display in the United States, and, in most cases the first time they had left Vietnam. Many of them had only been excavated over the past few decades (Tingley 2010; Asia Society 2010). Hailed as “the first U.S. exhibition to address the historical, geographic and cultural contexts of pre-colonial Vietnamese art in depth”, this “unprecedented” exhibition claimed to introduce “new scholarship on the history of Vietnamese art,” as well as on its history, culture and trade (Asia Society 2010).

The exhibition, comprised of metal, ceramic and stone artefacts, was divided into four “roughly chronological” sections. The first section was devoted to “Early Cultures: Đông Sơn and Sa Huỳnh (1st millennium BCE–2nd century CE)”. The next looked at the trading cities of “Fu Nan²⁵ in the Mekong River Delta (1st–5th century CE)”. After this came “Champa Ports of Call (5th–15th century)”, while the final section dealt with “Trade and Exchange in Hoi An (16th–18th century)”. The twenty-one objects on display in the Cham section of the exhibition were all on loan from Vietnamese museums.²⁶ Ten of these pieces had previously been loaned for the 2005 Guimet exhibition, and a couple had been on display in Brussels two years before that. Decidedly, since the changing of Vietnamese law on the loaning of artworks, some Cham sculptures have become global stars.

A New York Times review of the exhibition, “Listing Hazy Veils from Centuries of Vietnamese Art” by Souren Melikian, offered a much more insightful reflection on the complexities of displaying art from the cultures that emerged on the territory of what is now Vietnam than reviews of the Musée Guimet exhibition had five years

²⁵ “Fu Nan” refers to a first-millennium civilization which comprised several major cities connected by an advanced network of canals across southern Viet Nam and into Cambodia. See, for example Higham (2002: 235-237)

²⁶ The pieces came from Danang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hue.

earlier. These latter were largely descriptive, filled with praise and devoid of analysis.²⁷ For Melikian, “art brings out unresolved enigmas with a directness that no historian can hope to match”, and the objects on show, for many of which “the precise meaning eludes us”, were “made more intriguing by the display conceived by Adriana Proser, curator of the traditional arts of Asia at Asia Society”. Melikian observed that “every major work stands out on its own, inviting questions to which there are no easy answers”. Throughout the review, the uncertainty and doubts concerning our understanding of the early cultures of the region, including the “vagueness surrounding much of Cham culture” are brought to the fore by Melikian. He writes that “a marked trend toward the grimacing rendition of the human face in Hindu and Buddhist statuary alike, occasionally leading to cartoon-like characters, characterizes the highly distinctive art of the Chams”, and muses that “a puckish seated figure from the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture could be laughing at our inability to write a coherent history of their culture”. Melikian concludes the review by looking to the future:

Bedeviled by the destruction of entire cultures, but fraught with marvelous creativity, the Indochinese peninsula has yielded few of its cultural secrets. The day competent archaeological work is carried out on a systematic scale, a hugely complex picture will emerge, with many more gems than we know. (Melikian 2010)

Like the Bon Marché exhibitions a decade and a half earlier, the MFAH/Asia Society exhibition was also, to a large extent, the result of a personal encounter with Vietnam. Curator Nancy Tingley “first traveled to Viet Nam in the 1980s with the intention of organizing an exhibition”, and when she realized that an exhibition was impossible at the time, quite simply “Tingley kept at her research” (Asia Society 2010).

²⁷ See chapter 6

5.7 Conclusion

In all but one of the Vietnam exhibitions discussed, Champa, rather than being given any particular prominence, was merely viewed as just one of many component parts in the history of what would become modern-day Vietnam. Only the 1961 Smithsonian Institute touring exhibition, staged at a crucial political moment as America built up its military presence in Southern Vietnam, singled Champa out for a special role by placing it in a pivotal position, sandwiched in between post and pre Champa periods. The second American exhibition in New York and Houston paid most attention to modern trends in Champa history, by focusing on “Champa Ports of Call” and riverine polities, seemingly distancing itself from the old idea of a unified kingdom. The other exhibitions still tended to treat Champa as a single homogenous entity. Vietnam was displayed as a rich and elaborate tapestry of diverse cultures, but within these Champa seemed always to form a distinct single entity. Beyond the exhibition catalogues, scholarship has paid little or no attention to these exhibitions. It is as if they are simple entertainments to be enjoyed once, and then we move on. However, these exhibitions should be read as important reflections on how we make history. The territories occupied by Ancient Champa are on what is now Vietnam so, inevitably, if an exhibition deals with the history of Vietnam, it will include Champa. Just how this is done is, as we have seen, highly problematic. In all of these exhibitions a section, or several sections, were devoted to Champa, separating the artefacts and sculpture from the cultural material of Vietnamese historical periods. Books tend to do the same thing, where Champa is a separate paragraph or chapter. There are books about Vietnamese history and books about Champa. Vietnam and Champa are treated differently, while in the exhibition they are both separate and

fused together. Recently, Anne-Valérie Schweyer has tried to rectify this failing through the publication of two books which attempt to integrate Cham and Viet narratives by inter-twining the histories of the two peoples (Schweyer 2005 and Schweyer 2011). As far as exhibitions are concerned, one easy way of avoiding these problems of how to integrate Champa into Vietnam, was to simply remove Champa from Vietnam and display it alone in its own right. This is what the Musée Guimet in Paris did, in 2005-2006, and is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Stars Take to the Stage

Exposing Champa

Of course today's museum is limited to this kind of collecting if only for reasons of space. But that does not alter the fact that because of it we get only a very imperfect conception of the culture of the past. We see it dressed up in its Sunday best, and only very rarely in its most shabby workaday clothes. Eduard Fuchs¹

Introduction

The 2005 Guimet Cham exhibition was a true première: the world's first international exhibition devoted *exclusively* to the art of ancient Champa. Champa's coming-out party, as it were. And what a coming-out! Ninety-six Cham sculptures were displayed down in the museum's basement, a cramped, awkwardly-shaped space that has the air of being an unfortunate afterthought. But, as we have seen, basements, like attics, are places of storage and mystery, and entering this one, in October 2005, was like stumbling upon a real *Ali Baba's Cave*. For once, perhaps, that tired old cliché "treasures" was justified. Visually, the show was a triumph. The sculptures were spectacularly lit against plain white and black backgrounds, creating the dramatic effect of a theatre set, where long-acclaimed Cham stars paraded together on stage for

¹ In Walter Benjamin, 'Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian' (Benjamin 1979: 381). Eduard Fuchs (1870-1940) was a German Marxist scholar of culture and history, and an art collector.

the first time. Here was the entire cast, it seemed. Three-quarters of them had travelled especially from Vietnam for the occasion, and for most it was their maiden voyage.²



Fig. 73 Queuing up for the inauguration of the Guimet Cham exhibition
11th October 2005

New exhibitions at Paris museums are important events in the Parisian social calendar and consequently they attract crowds. Tuesday 11th October 2005 was a glorious autumn day. Under a brilliant blue, cloudless sky, large numbers of well-dressed,

² An abbreviated version of this chapter was published in the *Lettre de la Sacha* in 2007 (Brown 2007: 4-6).

invitation-clutching Parisians queued up for the inauguration of a new exhibition at the Musée Guimet, “Trésors d’art du Vietnam: la sculpture du Champa - Ve-XVe siècles” (fig.73). Eavesdropping on their conversations, it was clear that many of them had little idea about the art they were waiting to see, despite the fact that the Guimet owns the largest collection of Cham art outside Vietnam.³ When, during a round-table broadcast⁴ on the exhibition a fortnight later, radio presenter Marie-Hélène Fraïssé declared that the exhibition was, for her, “a true revelation”, it is not unreasonable to suppose that she was almost certainly speaking for the majority of visitors.⁵ It is worthwhile noting that in the earlier planning stages the intended title of the exhibition had been “Vietnam - Royaumes Oubliés du Champa” (Vietnam – *Forgotten* Kingdoms of Champa) (Farçat and Lefebvre 2003: 22). Although this title was later rejected, the idea of a “forgotten” or unknown art was nonetheless reflected in much of the literature surrounding the exhibition. Thus, for example, the French Ambassador to Vietnam described Champa as “a major, though little known aspect of the artistic heritage of Vietnam” (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: xvii). La Croix newspaper, one of the exhibition partners, even went as far as asking, “indeed, who knows of this civilisation which reigned in Vietnam from the 4th to the 15th centuries?” (Gignoux 2005: 24), and the Guimet itself recognised that “the art of Champa remains one of the least known aspects of the art of Vietnam” (Musée Guimet 2005b: 2).⁶ Numerous entries in the Visitors’ Book placed at the exit of the exhibition reflected this same lack of familiarity with the art on display. A century

³ See chapter 2

⁴ France Culture, “Tout un Monde” - 24th October 2005

⁵ Indeed, in a revealing slip of the tongue, she changed what was clearly going to be a generalisation into a personal statement at the last moment.

⁶ It is interesting to speculate just what other “aspects of Vietnamese art” the museum had in mind, since the art of Vietnam in general remains largely unknown in France. On the contrary, one might well surmise that, for the average tourist who has travelled through Vietnam and made the more-or-less obligatory cultural stop at the Danang Cham museum, it is in fact above all the Cham sculptures which most capture the imagination and remain most vividly in the memory of the trip.

ago, Henri Parmentier remarked that “it is true to say that only a few years ago [Cham Art] was more-or-less unknown in France; even today we find scarcely any trace in our museums” (Parmentier 1909: xii). It would seem that the situation has hardly changed in a hundred years. The earlier proposed title of the show, “Vietnam - Royaumes Oubliés du Champa”, would have captured this, but perhaps more importantly might have better reflected the idea of the plurality of independent Cham polities, as opposed to the single unified state implied by the final chosen name of the exhibition. The reasons behind the change of title are not known. Possibly one factor may have been that “royaumes oubliés” was deemed too similar to “Vietnam des Royaumes”, the title of the 1995 Bon Marché exhibition that the Guimet had not wanted to host, and which was discussed in the last chapter. In the end, the distinct aura of adventure and nostalgia encapsulated in the idea of lost or forgotten kingdoms found its echo in “treasures”. It is interesting to note, here, the use of the term “treasures”. Lynne Munson has suggested that “the titles given to exhibits of non-Western art feature laudatory rhetoric rarely applied to displays of Western objects”, including such terms as “splendours” and “treasures” (Munson 1997: 60).

This presumed lack of familiarity with Champa on the part of the public may, at least partially, explain the museum’s decision for the somewhat anachronistic inclusion of “Vietnam” in the title of the exhibition. We should recall that all the exhibitions discussed in Chapter 5 were concerned with Vietnam as a whole, that is the many different cultures that flourished on the soil of present-day Vietnam, while the Guimet exhibition was the only one devoted solely to Champa. Although some two thirds of the exhibits did indeed come from museums in what is now Vietnam, none of the art on display was actually Vietnamese as such. To call the objects “treasures of

Vietnam”, is, therefore, both misleading and anachronistic. Since the French preposition “du” encapsulates the English meanings of both “of” and “from”, it could be argued semantically that those sculptures that were on loan from Vietnamese museums are both treasures *of* and treasures *from* Vietnam, and stretching a point, one might just be able to claim this for the pieces from the Guimet and other collections outside Vietnam, in the sense that they belong to Vietnamese culture and did once come from Vietnam. However, this implies the appropriation of ancient Champa into Vietnamese culture and civilization. Such a process is a largely post-reunification development in Vietnamese national discourse for, as Lockhart has noted, “Champa as a kingdom did not loom large in twentieth century SRV scholarship, any more than it did for DRV writers before 1975”⁷ (Lockhart 2001: 22). At the same time, there is, of course, another much simpler explanation for the use of the word Vietnam, quite simply the fact that it is known and understandable to the French and international museum-going public, whereas the name Champa alone almost certainly would not have been. Since one of the aims of any exhibition is to attract visitors, questions of publicity would also have influenced the choice of title. Vietnam was the jewel in France’s colonial crown, and consequently could be expected to be more of a crowd-puller than “Treasures of Champa”. Indeed, as a crowd-drawing device, the name “Indochina”, laden, in public imagination, with romantic and exotic overtones, and still so extensively used to promote the region in travel brochures, posters and advertising⁸ might have worked even better, and would have resonated well with various key narratives that, as we shall see, were at work in the exhibition. Be that as it may, in the end politics may have been one of the key determining factors for the

⁷ SRV: Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the current name of the country. DRV: Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the official name of North Vietnam from 1954 until reunification with the south on 2nd July 1976.

⁸ See, for example, Norindr (1996) for a full analysis of the modern marketing of *Indochine*.

exhibition title. Since the exhibition was a joint-venture between France and Vietnam, there would have undoubtedly been Vietnamese pressure for the inclusion of Vietnam in the name of the show. We cannot know, since, once again, as we shall see, behind the scenes museum politics are rarely on display to the general public.

6.1 The Temporary Nature of Exhibitions - Preserving Lost Ephemera

The last decade and a half have seen a proliferation in the number of museum exhibitions devoted to the art and culture of Vietnam and including the display of Cham artefacts, in Europe, Asia and North America. Before the turn of the last century, there had been very few. As we saw in chapter 5, at other relatively recent exhibitions, such as those held at the Bon Marché in 1995 and 1996, and in Brussels in 2003-2004, Cham art was just one element of the show, displayed alongside other arts from Vietnam. The Guimet exhibition was devoted entirely to the Art of Ancient Champa, making it the first major international exhibition of its kind. Furthermore, seventy of the ninety-six pieces in the exhibition had been loaned by Vietnamese museums, the first time that such an important quantity of Cham art had been allowed out of Vietnam for display abroad.⁹ This was an important milestone in Cham studies, but from the outset, like all temporary exhibitions, it was condemned to perish leaving behind nothing but traces, thus echoing the fate of the very civilization that it displayed. Temporary exhibitions come and go, usually leaving no more than a catalogue and maybe a poster or two as the physical record of their having existed. But, like the publication of a new book on Champa, the Guimet exhibition was an

⁹ A number of Cham pieces were sent from Vietnam for the 2003 Brussels exhibit, and earlier, in Washington in 1963 a few Cham pieces had been brought over from what was then Southern Vietnam (Lambrecht and Schicklgruber 2003; Smithsonian 1961), as was discussed in Chapter 5. Also, see chapter 5 on the legal situation concerning the loan of objects from Vietnamese museums.

important Cham moment. Unlike the book, though, which endures through time and can be endlessly consulted and quoted and thus enter into the web of scholarly discourse, the exhibition is lost as soon as it closes. It was an ephemeral event, but one that has, nonetheless, a lasting effect, not only through the non-ephemeral aspects of the exhibition, notably the catalogue, but also through the restoration, research, debate, exchange and so forth that surrounds a major international exhibition of this kind, as well as the major role it played in drawing public awareness to Champa.

The catalogue survives to record the exhibits, with photographs and extensive articles on the ninety-six objects that were on display, but what it does not preserve is a record of the actual working of the exhibition. For anyone who did not visit the exhibition, therefore, there is almost no way of retrieving this pivotal moment in Cham art history, and for those who had the privilege of attending it survives only as a memory. The Musée Guimet did make an extensive photographic record of the various phases of the exhibition: the restoring, packaging, transporting, setting up of the exhibits, the exhibition itself, and the dismantling and return of the sculptures to their museums of origin. This had, in fact, been stipulated in the convention signed between the French and Vietnamese (Convention 2004). These were part of the private, non-public, events, common to all public exhibitions, for exhibitions are like theatres and much goes on invisibly behind the scenes. For the time being at least, this photographic record is not in the public domain.¹⁰

The exhibition drew together more than just artworks. Like many such major exhibitions, it generated a whole mass of academic and technical activity:

¹⁰ At the time of writing, the museum would not grant a request to view these photographs. A certain secrecy seems to have surrounded this part of the Guimet exhibition because of the “sensitive” relations between the French and Vietnamese teams (personal communication Pierre Baptiste).

international scholars contributed chapters to the catalogue, top restorers worked on the pieces before they were displayed, archives were scoured, documents and photographs examined, drawings, plans and casts brought to light, dusted off and presented, all contributing to make the exhibition one of the most important moments in recent Cham art historical and historical studies. The exhibition was an ‘event’. Not just an event in the Paris social and cultural calendar, but a pivotal moment in Cham art history. “Make no mistake”, intoned Jean-François Hubert, “the exhibition being held at the Musée Guimet from October 2005 to January 2006 is of major importance to anyone interested in the art of South-East Asia, and Vietnam in particular” (Hubert 2005: 63). The exhibition, couched in a spirit of international cooperation, set out to introduce the largely unknown *world of Champa* to the general museum-going public.

I analyse how and why the world of Champa was (re-)created in the Guimet basement¹¹ and examine the exhibition’s impact on Cham art history, investigating the wider context of the exhibition and its genesis. By doing this I also attempt to preserve the trace of this important but ephemeral moment. My interest lies not in what the average visitor, even if we could know what sort of a person that might be, actually got out of the exhibition, although I do draw on anecdotal evidence shared with me by visitors, either directly, or via the Visitors’ Book. Such a study is best left to those involved in museum user surveys and questionnaires.¹² Rather, I am concerned with the processes at work within the exhibition and in its planning stages, processes which may or may not be visible to the average visitor, but which certainly

¹¹ It is interesting to speculate that some of the things on display in the exhibition, such as the old photographs or the discarded plaster casts may well have been stored, forgotten about and later re-discovered in this very basement, since the exhibition space was created in the museum’s cellars during the total overhaul that the museum underwent at the end of the last century

¹² As far as I know, no such survey was carried out on visitors to the Cham exhibition.

affect the way he or she experiences and assimilates its messages. By extension, I investigate the repercussions of these processes on Cham art studies in general.



Figs. 74 & 75 General views of the exhibition (Classicism and Mý Son sections)

6.2 Lost without a Trace? The Exhibition and its Catalogue

The convention signed between Vietnam and France concerning the organisation of the exhibition required that the Musée Guimet would undertake to publish and finance a “scientific catalogue” of the exhibition¹³(Convention 2004: 6). This catalogue contains a visual and a textual record of the ninety-six pieces on display in the exhibition, but it does not preserve any trace of the actual exhibition itself. The layout, the narratives it told, the wall panels and labels, maps and diagrams are all totally absent from the catalogue. Nor does it make any mention of the exhibits displayed at the entrance and exit to the exhibition, which included a series of early 20th century photographs taken by Charles Carpeaux, several plaster casts dating from 1931 and a film made by Jean-Yves Claeys. While these objects, which will be discussed presently, formed an integral, albeit peripheral, part of the actual exhibition, it is as if they were not worthy of being enshrined in the published record. In fact, rather than a record of the exhibition, the catalogue, as is often the case with major art exhibitions, is a scholarly manual produced to accompany and complement the exhibition and not at all guide to the exhibition itself. The nearest thing to a visitor guide was the *Petit Journal*, which collected together the information provided in the wall panels. This was a very useful, compact synthesis, but again was not a description of the exhibition (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005b). So, rather than seeing the catalogue as an explanation, analysis or record of the exhibition, we might do better to look at it the other way around. It was more the exhibition that served to illustrate the scholarly work of the catalogue, after all, it is the catalogue that lives on long after the exhibition has vanished. The exhibition, however, operates in an entirely different way from the

¹³ The convention stipulated, amongst other things, that the catalogue was to include contributions from Vietnamese specialists, “paid at the current rate of the RMN” (Réunion des Musées Nationaux, a public institution that runs over 30 French museums) (Convention 2004: 6).

printed text. Both tell narratives about Cham art, but they do not necessarily tell the same narratives and, more importantly, they tell them in totally different ways. Most obviously, in the printed text words, illustrated by images, predominate, while in the exhibition it is the other way around, the visual, that is the artworks, is complemented by the written word.

The ninety-six pieces on display in the exhibition are all listed and numbered in the catalogue. Each is represented by at least one large, colour photograph, for the most part taking up an entire page. Most are accompanied by one full page of text, occasionally two. Textual and visual representation is therefore accorded roughly equal importance in the part of the catalogue listing the exhibits. When we take into consideration the essays which form the first part of the catalogue, then clearly the written word is of far greater weight than the visual, the opposite of the exhibition itself which is primarily visual. This, of course, is the norm for virtually all large-scale exhibitions of fine art.

In his introduction to the catalogue, Guimet director Jean-François Jarrige pays homage to the Guimet Cham collection, but also to those who contributed to its creation, which included, Philippe Stern:

The Musée Guimet is privileged to possess an extremely representative collection of the arts of Ancient Champa. The chef-d'oeuvres which comprise the collection can be seen as signs marking the great stylistic periods. The judicious choice of these pieces reflects the scientific work carried out by French Orientalists, notably under the auspices of the École Française d'Extrême Orient, as much in the domain of restoration of the monumental Cham heritage as in the knowledge of an art about which everything had been forgotten, one hundred and fifty years ago. (Jarrige 2005: xxi)

Jarrige goes on to quote remarks made by Philippe Stern in the Museum's *Activity Report* for the year 1937. In this report, Stern stipulates that, "in order to keep the artistic heritage of the colony intact, no unique piece will leave Indochina". Instead, he maintains, only "a limited selection of typical examples taken, above all, from the reserve collections among the pieces which are too numerous to be exhibited", will be sent to the Guimet. The reasons for doing this are "to complete the collections which have already been assembled and to constitute a sort of anthology of Khmer and Cham art" (Jarrige 2005: xxi). Here we come across a seeming paradox: "an extremely representative collection" illustrating the major styles, yet at the same time a collection that has, apparently, been built up with standard secondary pieces from reserve collections. By supplementing this "extremely representative collection" with fifty chef-d'oeuvres from Vietnamese museums, the exhibition displayed, in Jarrige's words, "the most remarkable ensemble of Cham art ever brought together" (Jarrige 2005: xxv).

Jarrige refers to the "gift" of stereoscopic views on glass plates from the Charles Carpeaux collection, received by the Guimet in the very first years of the 20th century, though no reference is made to the circumstances surrounding this gift (Jarrige 2005: xxiii). Carpeaux's mother is rumoured to have had a falling out with the EFEO and given part of her late son's photographic collection to the Guimet in revenge. Such an act would seem to point to a certain rivalry, or at least distance, between the two institutions at the time.¹⁴

¹⁴ Pierre Baptiste personal communication

For Jarrige, these photographs “illustrate exceptionally well the first archaeological work directed by Henri Parmentier, notably at Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương”. Some of these are the photographs exhibited in the gallery leading up to the exhibition entrance. The museum’s photographic archives, “enriched between the wars with the arrival of duplicates of the EFEO photographs”, are “old and well-documented collections”, which are “an essential element for understanding the architectural heritage of Champa” (Jarrige 2005: xxiii). Writing in 1948, Stern claimed that the museum’s photograph archives contained “an almost complete collection of archaeological photographs of Indo-China”, and he further added that “these photographic records constitute a collection which we believe is unequalled” (Stern 1948: 104). Since Stern underlines the almost complete nature of the Indochinese archaeological photographs, and since he was so interested in Cham art, he must surely have known about Carpeaux’s photographs. Curious, then, that in the half century that separates Stern’s remarks and those of Jarrige, the collection of photographs of Champa taken by Charles Carpeaux should be lost and forgotten, or in the words of Pierre Baptiste, lie “long in slumber” (Ghesquière 2005: 13), presumably somewhere in the storage rooms of the museum itself, only to be re-discovered like lost treasure and put on display at the exhibition. Thus this precious photographic archive fell into oblivion, echoing the dwindling interest in Cham studies and the removal from circulation of pieces on display in museums such as the former Musée des Colonies.¹⁵

¹⁵ See chapter 2

6.3 The Troubled Genesis of the Exhibition

(i) A Long Time in the Making

Formal contacts between the major Vietnamese Museums and the Guimet had been re-established in 2001 after the museum's reopening, according to the museum's Activity Report for that year. These contacts included an "exchange of publications" with the Hanoi history museum, "assistance in setting up a restoration atelier" at the Danang Cham Museum, and "cooperation in publishing a guide book" with the Ho Chi Minh City museum (Farçat and Lefèvre 2001: 34). In December 2001, Jarrige and Baptiste went on a mission to Vietnam which "allowed them to better assess the expectations and needs of the Danang Museum and the Museum of Vietnamese History in HCMC". This, apparently, was the moment when the Guimet first declared their desire to host an exhibition of Cham sculptures "restored along the lines which had been put in place in Phnom Penh, at the time of the Khmer exhibition, 'Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia – Millenium of Glory'".¹⁶ The restoration work began in 2002, with a team comprising Vietnamese, Cambodian and French restorers, under the direction of Bertrand Porte. An official visit to France by the President of Vietnam at the end of the same year, and French President Jacques Chirac's visit to Vietnam in 2004 enabled the conclusion of agreements between the two countries concerning the exhibition (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: xxiv-xxv).

¹⁶ See Jessup and Zéphir (1997).

The different missions to Vietnam and the various stages in the preparation of the exhibition are described in some considerable detail by Jarrige in his preface to the catalogue. He dates discussions between the Guimet and Vietnamese museums to the time of the Francophonie summit in Hanoi, in 1996, when “informal contacts” were made between representatives of the Guimet and staff at the Danang Museum. Coincidentally, this was the same time that the Vietnam exhibitions were being mounted at the Bon Marché.¹⁷ He claims that in June 2001, during a visit to Paris, Hà Phước Mai, director of the Danang Museum, first officially expressed his desire to see France work on the restoration of the degraded sculptures in the Danang Museum (Jarrige 2005: xxiii).¹⁸ Two years later, a series of further missions were undertaken by Baptiste and Jarrige. These began, in October 2003, with a “Mission d’expertise muséographique”, led by Baptiste, to set up a project financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entitled “Révalorisation du patrimoine muséographique vietnamien”.¹⁹ The main aim was to assist with the renovation of the Danang Cham Sculpture Museum and the Ho Chi Minh City Historical Museum. This first mission was immediately followed by a second, just over a week later, during which Jarrige met with the French Ambassador to Vietnam and Phạm Quang Nghị, the Vietnamese Minister of Culture and Information, in order to prepare the exhibition “Vietnam - Royaumes oubliés du Champa”²⁰ (Farçat and Lefèvre 2003: 22).

¹⁷ See chapter 5

¹⁸ In 1918 and 1935, broken sculptures had been repaired by inserting metal tenons into the stone and fixing them with cement. Others were simply cemented back together, or stuck directly on to walls and bases using the same techniques. At that period, “these were the universally adopted procedures for the display of stone sculpture”. However, with time, these techniques suffer because of the humid climate and the open walls of the museum (Jarrige 2005: xxiii).

¹⁹ A follow-up museographic mission took place the following year, 6th-16th March 2004. (Farçat and Lefèvre 2004: 23)

²⁰ See above for exhibition name change. The exact dates of the two missions were 25th October- 1st November and 9th-14th November.

Now, one might well wonder why it was considered necessary, in the exhibition catalogue, to go into so much detail about these clearly lengthy negotiations. The precise dating of each and every mission and the naming of those involved seems curious. It is worth noting that no such detailed chronology of events is included in the preface to the catalogue of the 1997 Khmer exhibition, also written by Jean-François Jarrige (Jessup and Zéphir 1997: xvi-xvii). Might the reason be an attempt to cover the traces of another story of similar missions with an identical purpose? For underlying the success and fanfare of the Guimet Cham exhibition, the first international Cham exhibition of its kind to be held, is a bitter story of inter-museum rivalry.

(ii) Mission Vietnam: A Tale of Two Museums

In chapter 5, we explored the reasons behind the creation of the exhibitions at the Bon Marché department store. A 1998 symposium between academic art historians and museum curators, entitled ‘Why Exhibitions?’, examined this question and highlighted the differences between these two groups of people who participate in exhibitions.²¹ Referring to a “caricatured polarity” between the two groups, the editors of Burlington magazine report that “art historians were presented as *bien pensant* theoreticians, rejecting the art object as ideologically unsound, more concerned with professional self-esteem than with the needs or desires of the museum-going public”, and that “museum curators were perceived as intellectually neanderthal creatures, troglodytically inhabiting basements filled with unvisitable objects, using conceptually vacuous exhibitions to lure in an uninterested public” . It

²¹ This question was the theme of a conference at the Clark Institute, Massachusetts in 1999: “The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University”. See Haxthausen (1999) for a full discussion of the topic.

is perhaps none too surprising, therefore, to learn that in such a climate “the primary question ‘Why Exhibitions’ remained unanswered”. Many reasons were, though, put forward during the discussions, including “to make accessible the rarely seen, to alter or enhance perception of the already known”, and “to unite comparable works”. The Burlington editors suggest that these are among “the accepted reasons”. But there are others, such as “to raise money, to celebrate meaningless anniversaries, to cement diplomatic alliances”, or “to promote the careers of museum directors”, which provoked the editors to ponder: “How often are these the real motives?” (Burlington 1988: 3). International and cultural exchange, diplomatic and commercial incentives, the desire to introduce foreign or little known cultures to wider international audiences, and the bringing together of comparable objects or collections from different parts of the globe may also provide the motivation for holding an exhibition. Curator Pierre Baptiste summed up the official motivations behind the Guimet exhibition when he told the *Vietnam News* that “we are holding the display to strengthen cultural co-operation between the two countries,” and because “we want to introduce Cham sculpture not only to Paris, but to the world.” While what exactly it is that motivates the French national Asian art museum to introduce Cham sculpture to the world remains unspoken, these objectives were shared by the Vietnamese. Phan Văn Cảnh, deputy director of the Danang museum, recognised that “as Paris is an international city, this is a great chance to introduce Vietnamese culture to the world” (Vietnam News 2005).

In a live radio programme broadcast during the exhibition, Baptiste made reference to the difficulty and length of the preparation that was necessary to bring the exhibition to fruition, a project that had spanned some “five or six years”. The story, it would seem, however, goes further back in time than that. As we have seen in chapter 5,

French museums, whether municipal or national, appear to have wanted no, or little, part in the Bon Marché exhibitions in 1995 and 1996. It has been surmised that Asian museums like the Guimet and Cernuschi were reluctant to be involved because many of the pieces being loaned were from private collections and had no adequate provenance.²² The museum curators were perhaps fearful about questions of authenticity and damaging their own and their museums' reputations. If this were so, did their reluctance to be involved spark off the idea that some time in the future they would hold an exhibition of their own on Vietnam, or, more specifically, on Champa? If this was indeed the case, it would be, nonetheless, a decade before the idea was realised. During this decade, the two Asian art museums of Paris, the Guimet, a national museum, and the Musée Cernuschi, a city museum, underwent extensive renovation programmes. Both museums were entirely closed during these overhauls: the Guimet for a period of five years and the Cernuschi for four. The reopening of a museum is an event in the calendar of any major city, as well as in the museum world, and both openings were long awaited and highly publicised. The Cernuschi, it seems, had in mind a unique exhibition to coincide with their re-opening: an exhibition of Cham art. Since the Cernuschi's own collections do not include any Cham pieces, it was to be a loan exhibition, and the loaned pieces were to come from Vietnam. At the time, Vietnam had not loaned any ancient Cham artworks to a foreign nation since before the American conflict, and even then the loans were mainly of small easily transportable pieces.²³

In July 2001, that is half a year before, according to their own account, the Guimet first broached the idea of a Cham exhibition with Vietnamese museums, Gilles

²² Christian Duc (personal communication)

²³ See chapter 5 and above

Béguin, director of the Musée Cernuschi, accompanied by Emmanuel Guillon, President of the Société des Amis du Champa Ancien (SACHA), went on a mission to Vietnam to meet with Vietnamese museums in order to begin negotiations for the loaning of Cham pieces for an exhibition at the re-opening of the Musée Cernuschi. Béguin's report of the mission concluded that such an exhibition could comprise some 40 pieces, coming from the Danang Museum of Cham Sculpture (25 stone sculptures and 1 bronze), the Ho Chi Minh City History Museum (4 stone sculptures and 3 bronzes) and Museum of Fine Arts (3 stone sculptures), the Chiên Đàn site museum (1 stone sculpture) and the Hanoi Historical Museum (4 stone sculptures).²⁴

In the report Béguin draws attention to the heightened foreign interest in borrowing Cham sculptures since the recent passing of the new Vietnamese heritage law permitting the temporary loan of Vietnam's cultural treasures outside the country. He makes reference to Australian and Japanese projects, notes the presence of American museum delegations in Vietnam, and states that the most advanced project is a joint one between Brussels and Vienna for a vast exhibition on Vietnamese history from Prehistoric times to the present day, and to include some 20 Cham pieces. Quite clearly foreign interest in borrowing the cultural treasures of Vietnam was high. Faced with fierce international competition, the race for an exhibition contract was on, and in the light of these "rival projects", the report states the need to sign a contract with the Vietnamese authorities as quickly as possible. The report refers to the technical problems involved in removing sculptures from their masonry bases for the purposes of their transportation, and the need to re-install them afterwards. Béguin mentions a

²⁴ Gilles Béguin : 'Note à l'attention de Madame Carole Prat, Chargé de Mission auprès du directeur des Affaires Culturelles de la Ville de Paris', dated 7th August 2001 - Musée Cernuschi correspondence. All the correspondence quoted in this chapter was loaned for viewing by the Musée Cernuschi in November 2005,

study that will be carried out by Bertrand Porte of the EFEO, who had been working for several years at the Phnom Penh museum, during his next visit to Vietnam. The report also states the urgent need for an official City of Paris mission to Vietnam before the end of the year, since the Cernuschi is a city museum.

This official mission duly took place in the first week of November 2001, and the subsequent report refers to the proposed exhibition as “prestigious and of great scientific interest”. As if to emphasize the game of rivalry at play, the report states that since the State had organized the retrospective of Khmer art at the Grand Palais in 1997, it would seem “logical” for the City of Paris to organize an exhibition on the art of the Cham, “notorious rivals of the Khmer”, since, “just as for Khmer art, the discovery and study of Cham art, and the setting up of the principal institutions of Vietnamese heritage were the work of French specialists”.²⁵ This seems to be claiming a sort of stake in the “ownership” of Cham heritage and Cham cultural studies.

The mission report claims that the direction of the Musée Cernuschi had been making contacts with these aims for three years. As early as the Autumn of 1998, Béguin had written to the City of Paris, expressing his wish to host an exhibition on Cham art at the Cernuschi.²⁶ Correspondence between the director of the Musées de Paris and the Cultural Affairs department of the city, show that by 2001 contract proposals for the exhibition were being drafted.²⁷

²⁵ Rapport de la Mission au Vietnam effectuée du 31 octobre au 7 novembre 2001’, Direction des Affaires Culturelles, Mairie de Paris, dated 13 November 2001 (Cernuschi correspondence).

²⁶ Gilles Béguin: ‘Note à l’attention de Madame Carole Prat’, dated 15 October 1998 (Cernuschi correspondence).

²⁷ Aimée Fontaine, Paris Musées: letter to Carole Prat, dated 12 October 2001 (Cernuschi correspondence).

In 2002, a further mission was undertaken. A letter from the Mayor of Paris to the French Ambassador in Hanoi, dated 2nd June 2002, informs the latter of the arrival of a second delegation, “at the request of the authorities in Danang”. During this second mission, Gilles Béguin was accompanied by Carole Prat, International Relations delegate for the Mairie de Paris. No longer just the personal project of the curator of the museum and the president of SACHA, by this stage the future exhibition carried the full official weight of the City of Paris. In fact, this project had the backing not only of the Ville de Paris, under whose jurisdiction the Musée Cernuschi falls, but also of the French President, Jacques Chirac. At the end of 2001, President Chirac had written a letter to Béguin giving his “full support” for the “magnificent idea” of a Cham sculpture exhibition to coincide with the re-opening of the Cernuschi in 2004. Chirac wrote that he was particularly supportive of the project, since, “to the best of my knowledge, no international exhibition has ever been dedicated to the subject”.²⁸ In this letter, the President further offers to give Béguin any help he might require for his negotiations in Vietnam, and confirms that he will transmit the relevant file to the French Ambassador in Hanoi. Clearly the project is far more than just a mere idea by this stage.

For over 60 years (1931-1995), no one in France seems to have shown any interest in mounting an exhibition around the culture of Champa, then suddenly at the dawn of the twenty first century museums around the world appear to be jostling for the chance to borrow Cham objects from Vietnam. The desire to display the rare and unknown, the wish to get in first, the change in Vietnamese art export laws, newly

²⁸ Jacques Chirac: letter to Gilles Béguin, dated 5 December 2001 (Cernuschi correspondence).

bestowed UNESCO World Heritage status at Mỹ Sơn,²⁹ the re-opening of completely refurbished museums in Paris, international competition and prestige, and inter-museum rivalry all play a part in this heightened interest in the artefacts of ancient Champa. While it might be difficult to pinpoint any one specific reason, one thing is clear: Cham art is coming out of the shadows and into the limelight. International interest must surely be a good thing when a threatened art and architecture is at stake, since as the editors of the UNESCO review *Museum* have suggested, we should probably accept that “in spite of the dangers of travel for a work of art, [...] exhibitions are a privileged way of displaying a national or international heritage or specialized information”. For UNESCO, “it is clear that the international exchange of special exhibitions has contributed to increasing mutual understanding among peoples and will continue to do so” (Museum 1986: 194).³⁰

Jacques Chirac will indeed end up personally playing a major role in negotiations with the Vietnamese over a Champa exhibition in Paris, not, though, on behalf of the Musée Cernuschi, but rather for the Musée Guimet. Exactly when and how the project shifted from city museum to national one is unclear, but it resulted in virulent exchanges of correspondence between the museums and the French Ministry of Culture. This almost certainly explains why the exhibition curators will stress the length of negotiations, and why, in the catalogue, the museum’s director should enter into such details about the planning stages, seemingly justifying every move, every mission. The Guimet had to claim the exhibition as well and truly theirs. The Guimet Cham exhibition was born out of troubled politics, but such things were far from alien to French museums. At precisely the same period, the creation of the new Musée du

²⁹ The site of Mỹ Sơn was accorded World Heritage status by UNESCO in 1999

³⁰ *Museum* (or *Museum International*), published by UNESCO since 1948, is a major forum for the exchange of scientific and technical information concerning museums and cultural heritage.

Quai Branly, in which Jacques Chirac was intimately involved, was fraught with international tension and controversy. Writing about the deeply troubled genesis of the Quai Branly museum, anthropologist Sally Price has described France as “a society in which politics, intellectual life and the art world flow seamlessly together, in which the State maintains tight control over things cultural, and in which museums are key instruments in the power plays of creative and ambitious men” (Price 2007: viii). While the bitter wrangling at the Quai Branly repeatedly made front-page news, the press totally ignored the Cernuschi-Guimet fight over the claim to ancient Champa.³¹

The Musée Guimet may have won the struggle of who would host a Cham exhibition, but identifying the true motivations is complex. In 1901, at the same time that Henri Parmentier was starting out on his career as an archaeologist in Indochina, Charles Lemire suggested in a lecture given to the French Society of Colonial Engineers that “it is not without interest to make known in France the most beautiful specimens of this art, the last vestiges of which will soon have disappeared”. These words might easily have been uttered by the curators of the Guimet exhibition. Lemire made them over three decades after he had first visited Saigon (1868) and when, he claims, he had first drawn attention to the interest in studying ancient Champa (Lemire 1901: 1). He highlights the need to preserve and study the Cham past, especially since Angkor did not, at the time, fall within the French protectorate : “our protectorate does not, at the present time, extend as far as the monuments of Angkor [...], but our enlightened role of protection should at least be effective for these grandiose works of art” (Lemire 1901: 10).

³¹ For a full, fascinating and frank account of the troubled genesis of the Musée Branly and of late 20th and early 21st century French museum politics in general, see Price (2007). See also chapter 2.

Lemire, as we have seen,³² played a pivotal role in the preservation and display of ancient Cham art. By the time he was addressing the Society of Engineers, the role played by Lemire and other early colonial “amateurs” was gradually being taken over by the scientific authority of the EFEO. It is perhaps worth bearing in mind remarks made by Claude-Eugène Maître, the third director of the École, in his 1908 report to the Governor General of Indochina on the work of the school in its early years. He states that “the moment had come when one found oneself obliged to turn to foreigners in order to find out things about Indochina”. Quoting Louis Finot, he remarked that it was worth recalling that the first translation of a Cambodian inscription had been carried out by a Dutch scholar and that the first study of comparative grammar of the Cham language was the work of a German linguist. It was, he claimed, “to remedy this humiliating state of affairs that the EFEO had been created” (Maître 1908: 9). So, the EFEO took over the monopoly of the study of Ancient Champa, and the Guimet exhibition chose to tie this into their narrative of Cham art history. If the EFEO was founded, at least partly, as Maître claims, for reasons of national pride, one cannot but speculate whether national pride also played a part in the setting up of Guimet exhibition. It seems that during the protracted negotiations between the two countries over the exhibition, many of the Vietnamese partners, especially at the local level, were totally against the idea of the sculptures leaving Vietnamese soil.³³ The two things which appear to have made the exhibition possible were the changing of Vietnamese law, and, perhaps most importantly, the state visit of the President of Vietnam to France. It was during this visit, and after talks between the Presidents of the two countries, that the go ahead was given. A

³² See chapter 4

³³ EFEO Vietnam (confidential communication)

press release issued by the French Ambassador to Vietnam seems to confirm this high-level negotiation : “the state visit of President Trần Đức Lương³⁴ to France in October 2002, allowed the two heads of state to agree on the principle of an exhibition entitled “Trésors d’art du Vietnam: la sculpture du Champa” in Autumn 2005. A go-ahead given at the presidential level, it seems, silenced all local protest. Possibly, without this presidential visit the exhibition would not have taken place at all. The meeting of the two presidents conferred, as it were, a dual national pride on the exhibition. It was as if each country were claiming their own modern stake on Champa. In this way the exhibition can be read as an example of modern colonial activity, where both Vietnam and France are controlling Champa through the exhibition, just as both countries once controlled it in the past, Vietnam through domination and colonial France through the appropriation of the ancient Cham sites and artefacts.

6.4 Mapping the Exhibition³⁵

David Carrier recently claimed that “everyone who visits museums is aware of how they are organised”. However, this has not yet been “formally analyzed”, therefore “spelling it out is important”, since, “as yet there exists neither a systematic collection of museum floor plans nor a general history of museum hangings” (Carrier 2006: 102). As is the case with so many temporary exhibitions, the Guimet Cham exhibition did not have a floor-plan. That is, no piece of paper which the visitor could hold in

³⁴ Trần Đức Lương was President of Vietnam from 1997-2006.

³⁵ Much of the analysis of the exhibition in the following pages is based on my own viewer participation and observation at the exhibition over numerous visits both during and after visitor hours over the duration of the show.

hand as a guide while walking around the display exhibits. No map was necessary, since the layout of the rooms dictated a one-way exhibition. In any case, most exhibitions tend to follow one-way systems, probably for two major reasons: aiding crowd control and flow, and ensuring that the visitor will follow the exhibition in the “right” order.

The museum exhibition space comprises two long rectangular rooms, which form two sides of a triangle around the auditorium and converge on the base of the museum’s round entrance pavilion, and the narrow curved corridor that links them, skirting this same round pavilion. With the air of being something of an unfortunate afterthought, the basement is a relatively cramped and awkwardly-shaped space for any exhibition designer to work with and clearly dictates a single more-or-less one-way path to any exhibition displayed there. The two rectangular exhibition spaces were each divided into sections by partitions placed at intervals across the gallery space. These partitions did not stretch from wall to wall, making it possible to pass on either side of them. Visitors were thus faced with a choice on which way to go, and to this extent had a degree of flexibility in how to proceed through the exhibition. Backtracking between these spaces, and between the rooms was certainly possible, at least at times when the exhibition was not too crowded, and there was no apparent order in which the pieces in each room were to be viewed. Despite this limited flexibility, the main one-way route clearly followed a strict layout: the visitor proceeded from one room to the next. The rooms and sections of the exhibition were not numbered or named. For the purposes of this discussion, and for convenience and clarity sake, I have numbered each room and given them names, corresponding roughly to the wall panels in each of these rooms or sections:

Space I:

1. Early Art and Writing room (6th-7th century)
2. Mỹ Sơn room – Sivaism (7th-8th century)
3. Đồng Dương room – Buddhism (9th century)

Space II (curved corridor) :

4. Classical room (10th century)

Space III:

5. Trà Kiệu room (10th century)
6. 11th Century room
7. Tháp Mẫm room (12th – 13th century)
8. Decline and Fall room (14th – 15th century)

The layout outlined above concerns what one might term the exhibition proper, the space where the 96 exhibits, the “Treasures”, were displayed. This space contained very little extraneous material, that is very little that detracted from the artworks themselves. An important entrance corridor preceded this series of rooms, and when visitors descended the left-hand staircase from the museum’s entrance rotunda, they entered directly into this space. Although this entrance corridor was where the exhibition started, to enter the exhibition proper required the purchase of a separate ticket and this ticket was checked by a guardian at the doorway leading from the far end of this entrance corridor to Space I. This is the set-up for all the shows held in the museum’s basement exhibition rooms, and is probably for logistical reasons since this entrance corridor is in constant use by staff as it is also the way into non-public parts of the museum. Clearly, therefore, having the ticket check at the start of this entrance space would be complicated. It is important to point this out since, whatever the reasons, the result is a pre-exhibition space that is physically separated from the exhibition itself. Exiting the exhibition, the visitor arrived directly opposite the entrance to the auditorium. A little to the left was a screen on which a film on Champa

archaeology was continuously projected. This was, similarly, a sort of post-exhibition space, outside the exhibition proper. These pre and post-exhibition spaces will have relevance in terms of what was exhibited inside and outside the main part of the exhibition.

The objects on display in the different spaces of the exhibition comprised:

- 96 art-works (the exhibition “Treasures”)
- 17 wall panels of text (no images)³⁶
- 2 maps
- 3 reproductions of drawings by Parmentier (elevation of temple A1 at Mỹ Sơn; map of Mỹ Sơn; ground plan of the sanctuary at Đồng Dương)
- 22 photographs (18 photographs; 2 stereoscopic views on glass plates; 2 hanging blown-up photographs)
- 3 plaster casts (Mỹ Sơn E1 pedestal; Trà Kiệu dancers pedestal; pilaster fragment from Mỹ Sơn A1)

Jean-François Blarel, French Ambassador to Vietnam, claimed that “uniting for the first time the sculptural masterpieces of Ancient Champa”, the exhibition “affords a fascinating journey to the time of splendour of this kingdom” (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: xvi). It is, of course, common to liken exhibitions and museum displays to journeys in or through time, and indeed many are conceived in this way, but in order for this to happen a certain suspension of reality is clearly necessary. David Carrier has speculated that, when watching a film, “if instead of being engrossed in the story of a Roman emperor, you see only actors on a set, then you cannot imagine looking into the past”. He suggests that “old art may pose similar problems”, and that “imaginative time travel may be impossible” (Carrier 2006: 49).

³⁶ These formed the basis of the text of the *Petit Journal* – see above (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005b).

May be the best place to start an investigation into this “fascinating journey” in time is the Guimet’s own description of the overall layout of the display, in the exhibition’s

Press Release:

The exhibition will open with the presentation of several of the photographs from the Charles Carpeaux collection (1902-1904) which retrace the rediscovery and initial studies into the great Cham sites. A selection of ancient mouldings (from the 1930s) will allow the illustration, by way of an introduction, of certain important aspects of the architecture of Champa. The chronological presentation of the works themselves will enable the tracking of the evolution of the oldest pieces of Cham statuary known today – circa 5th century – to the swan’s (sic) song – circa 15th century – prior to the progressive decline of the (sic) Champa until its disappearance in the 19th century. The event that this exhibition represents is set within the framework of a spirit of cooperation between Vietnam and France, more particularly between the Da Nang Museum and the Guimet Museum. In 2002, the creation of a sculpture restoration workshop at the Da Nang Museum, at the instigation of the Guimet Museum, with the support of the École Française d’Extrême Orient, led to the strengthening of the ancient cultural links between Vietnam and France. This exhibition is the realisation of it. (Musée Guimet 2005a: 4)

This *framework* of international cooperation to which the Press Release refers is but one of multiple frames at work in the exhibition. These frames overlap and interlink in complex webs. As we have seen, the framework of international cooperation was itself framed within an inter-museum power struggle. Frames also influence the exhibition visitor. The first, and often overlooked frame that the visitor encounters is the museum building itself.

6.5 Frames of Reference: The Container

In the past two decades, increasing critical attention has been paid to the relationship between a collection or display and the container in which it is housed. Bridging a gap

in museum studies, which on the whole tended to represent the art museum either as a collection or as a work of architecture, Carol Duncan has termed art museums “complex totalities that include everything from the building to the selection and ordering of collections and the details of their installation and lighting” (Duncan 1995b: 10). More recently, David Carrier, in keeping with current trends in museological studies, has stressed that “like paintings and sculptures, art museums too can be interpreted”, and he maintains that “they should be, for to fully understand art we must analyze its setting”. The museum, as “a container for individual works of art”, is, according to Carrier, “a total work of art” (Carrier 2006: 6). For Duncan, “this totality is best understood as a ritual setting, a ceremonial monument in its own right and not just a container for other monuments” (Duncan 1995b: 10). In the case of the Guimet, this “ceremonial monument” is certainly more than a mere neutral container. Modelled on an earlier museum created by Émile Guimet in Lyon, the Paris Musée Guimet was built in 1889 the year of the World Exhibition which saw the construction of Eiffel’s tower. The museum’s official name is the *Musée National des arts asiatiques Guimet*, the national status endowing the museum with authority, burdening it with the weight of French history. This is a place in which the visitor can place his or her trust. Indeed, “our relationship with museums is based on trust”, but, Lynne Munson has proposed, “while we expect history museums to know the facts and science museums to understand the math, we demand more of art museums” (Munson 1997: 60). At the Guimet, the history and trust are framed in the topography of the district. One of the capital’s very first purpose-built museums, it stands in the exclusive 16th Arrondissement, which is amongst the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city. The building itself reflects all of this. This is the physical frame through which visitors entered the Cham exhibition. The material architecture of the building

as well as its prestige, history and international standing, all affect the way we approach the artworks on display inside. Leaving the busy intersection, with its statue of George Washington, offered by America in recognition of the mutual aid France and the United States afforded each other during the First World War, and entering into the domed museum building, the visitor is conditioned by the location, the building, the name and reputation of the museum. All of these elements provide what we might call a frame of reference, or better, a frame of intelligibility. “In the wake of postmodernism”, claims Michaela Giebelhausen, “the museum as architecture has been reinstated in all its complexity and contradiction”. She applauds the fact that “after decades devoted to the white box – allegedly neutral, devoid of symbolic significance and simply functional – the museum building is again being conceived as an evocative entity that is in dialogue both with its content and urban context” (Giebelhausen 2003: 7). As we have seen in the previous chapter, Cham sculptures on display in a department store are in a very different context than those in a museum, even though, in the case of both the Bon Marché in 1995/1996 and the Guimet in 2005/2006, the precise location was a basement. As Sally Price has said, “ ‘contextualization’ enters the experience in a wide range of ways, many of them so subtle that viewers hardly notice their presence”. Price suggests that, in addition to the clearly didactic messages to be found in catalogues and on labels, “hints about how to ‘read’ an object are lurking all around it – its ornate gilt frame, its location in a flea market, the presence of crowds pressing eagerly for a view of it” (Price 1989: 21). As Carrier points out, “when the museum envelope changes, we view its contents differently” (Carrier 2006: 7).

6.6 The Exhibition Labelling

Once inside the exhibition, the visitor is carefully guided by labels and texts. At the Guimet exhibition, each sculpture was accompanied by a substantial label. In this, the exhibition broke from the practice of the permanent collections in the museum galleries overhead where, as we have seen in chapter 2, information is kept to a strict minimum. Again, this is frequently the case for temporary exhibitions where presentation of artworks is invariably much more informative than in permanent museum displays. Most of the labels were though small and difficult to read, often placed in awkward positions, forcing the viewer to bend down low or squint through reflective glass. In some instances, for example in the glass show-cases of metal objects in the 11th century room, labels were lined up in a series which did not correspond to the layout of the pieces themselves, making it difficult to know exactly which label corresponded to what. It would appear that there was “a certain tension” between the exhibition curators and the designers in charge of the cases and displays.³⁷ While the curators would, it seems, have liked information to be clearer, and, perhaps, in places more comprehensive, the designers were more intent on the visual display of the objects, the *mise en scène*, where labels and written text are seen to detract from lighting, space and so forth. Clearly the designers won the day. The choices and decision-making about labelling and information at exhibitions are rarely, if ever, explained, either in the exhibition itself or in the accompanying

³⁷ Pierre Baptiste (personal communication)

documentation. Visitors' books, on the other hand, are filled with comments about labelling.³⁸

In a paper written at the end of the Second World War, Philippe Stern explained that the Musée Guimet had adopted “the latest ideas in museology”. The museum’s purpose in doing this, Stern said, was two-fold. Firstly, “to supply the visitor, in easily accessible form, with the information he is likely to require”, and secondly, “to avoid labels which are too conspicuous and which are apt to interfere with, and even destroy, the aesthetic effect of works of art and create an unfortunate classroom atmosphere”. He claimed that “*unobtrusive instruction was therefore the aim*”,³⁹ and that “without having to buy a catalogue, the visitor is supplied with historical details, explanations, plans and maps”, information which is “supplemented by scientific catalogues and guide-books, in full or summary form”. According to Stern, the museum believed that “it [was] possible to give the visitor a sub-conscious impression of order, light and well-being”. He further explained that “while adhering as a rule to chronological order, or at least to arrangement by groups, [the curators] ha[d] made a special effort to display the most important works more or less by themselves, with nothing between them and the wall behind them”. A photograph of the Guimet Cham room accompanies the text (Stern 1948: 55).⁴⁰ This is one of the very rare examples at the Musée Guimet of a description of their labelling policies, and, in many respects, Stern’s comments still hold true for the museum today, where excess labelling is still seen by most of the curators to interfere with the art which is supposed to speak for itself. The Southeast Asian galleries on the ground floor of the

³⁸ Usually to complain about how inadequate they are. A good number of entries in the exhibition Visitors’ Book made disparaging remarks about the labelling of the objects.

³⁹ The italics are Stern’s own.

⁴⁰ See figure 3, chapter 2, showing the Cham room in 1938 in a very similar layout.

museum are an exception to this. After the remodelling of the museum at the turn of the last century, the curators of this department introduced laminated information panels in French and English, for example, in the Cham, Khmer and Vietnam galleries, which visitors can consult and carry around as they view the exhibits. This was met with much opposition from curators in other departments.⁴¹

6.7 Entwined Chronologies – The Exhibition Layout

The main part of the exhibition was laid out as a standard chronology. Aided by a series of explanatory wall panels, visitors passed through an enfilade of partitioned sections, taking them from the 5th to the 15th centuries. These sections represented, variously, either sites or time periods. Thus, starting with early sculpture and epigraphy (5th/7th C), one proceeded on through Mỹ Sơn (7th/9th C); Đồng Dương (9th/10th C); Cham “classicism” (10th C); Trà Kiệu (10th C); the 11th century; Tháp Mẫm (12th/13th C); and, finally, the “twilight” of Cham art (14th/15th C). On the surface this was a fairly standard narrative, taking the visitor from the earliest pieces in room 1 and ending with the final stages of Cham art in room 6, passing through a “classical” high point (room 4) in between. A classic tale with a beginning, a middle and an end. Such a tale might seem to imply a single narrative thread, but we shall see that this was not the case.

This type of chronological layout is highly traditional, and can be traced back to Hegel and the early 19th century museums. In his lectures on aesthetics given in the late 1820s, Hegel postulated that “unless we bring with us in the case of each picture a

⁴¹ Pierre Baptiste (personal communication).

knowledge of the country, the period, and school to which it belongs and of the master who painted it, most galleries seem to be a senseless confusion out of which we cannot find our way". Thus, he concluded, "the greatest aid to study and intelligent enjoyment is an *historical* arrangement" (Hegel 1975: 870). As Carrier has pointed out, this lecture series "provided the intellectual framework for the historical hangings of the new public museums" in the 19th century (Carrier 2006: 13). A chronological layout clearly tells a story. Unlike a written historical account, the museum display uses actual objects to recount the story of the past. These objects exist here in the present, but, since they are visibly old, appear to come from the past, so that we have the sensation of entering into the history of Champa, and walking through a time-line. According to Carrier, "the art on display really cannot stand free from its museum context" (Carrier 2006: 37) and, as we have noted, this museum context is a complex web of multiple frames. Following Carrier, I suggest that the Cham sculptures cannot really stand free from these multiple contexts within which the exhibition, drawing on a century of Cham art historical studies, places them. Cham art chronology is, as we have seen in chapters 1 and 2, based on a detailed study of styles. Although initiated by Henri Parmentier, we owe the stylistic dating of Cham architecture largely to Philippe Stern, and of Cham sculpture to Jean Boisselier (Stern 1942; Boisselier 1963a). Their systems place Cham art and architecture in a chronological sequence. The Guimet exhibition followed this system, placing objects of the same period in the same room. Several of these rooms, moreover, related to specific Cham sites, thus the walk through time performed by the visitor was also a walk through space, moving from one time zone to another, from one geographical location to another. In this, the exhibition might be seen to loosely represent the Cham past as it progressed through time and its power base shifted geographically.

Nevertheless, whilst Cham temples and Cham sculptures may have been made one after the other in different styles, corresponding to the different periods of their creation, in the reality of the Cham past, buildings and sculptures of different styles and time periods co-existed simultaneously. Clearly, a chronological exhibition layout cannot reflect this. The exhibition, like Cham art history itself, is a construction radically different from the lived Cham past. This is the illusion of museum display. Following the American philosopher of history Hayden White, we might term this “fictions of factual representation” (White 2004: 22). White has demonstrated the extent to which the discourse of the historian and the imaginative writer overlap. In the museum there is a similar overlap between fact and fiction when the ancient artefacts, signs for the real historical past, are made to tell stories about that past which they signify. White observes that “every history has its myth”, since there are “different ways of hypotactically ordering the ‘facts’ contained in the chronicle of events occurring in a specific time-space location”. This means, for White, that “events in the same set are capable of functioning differently in order to figure forth different *meanings* – moral, cognitive, or aesthetic – within different fictional matrices” (White 2004: 28). In simple terms, the “myth” told at the Guimet exhibition is essentially the myth or fiction that underlies traditional Cham art history, namely that styles followed one another in a neat historical progression. Such a progression is based purely on the chronological order of production, ignoring any order of use, since, for example, a 10th century sculpture might well be used for worship in a 12th century temple, or a 9th century monument might outlive a 13th century one alongside it. In this way, we can say that in the Guimet exhibition the myth of Cham art history created a fiction (the historical progression) of the facts (the objects). This is, of course, what happens in any art exhibition. In the case of ancient Champa, this is

further complicated by the history, since we now reject the idea of a single unified Champa. We have already seen, in chapter 5, the complexities of trying to display Champa within Vietnam. Trying to tally a single chronological time-line with the concept of independent Cham polities is equally problematic.

Many of the contributors to the catalogue embrace the concept of multiple Cham polities as opposed to a single unified Champa. Thus Glover claims that “the term Champa generally designates a series of small coastal states”, though he is perhaps being over optimistic since this is only true, of course, in recent literature (Glover 2005: 14). Zéphir underlines the fact that since, in the light of new historical trends, Champa is no longer seen as a unified kingdom but rather as “a juxtaposition of States”, this poses a problem for the chronology elaborated successively by Parmentier, Stern and Boisselier. He suggests that “the simultaneous existence of several kingdoms helps to explain the relative difficulty that we find in placing Cham sculptures within a continuous and coherent stylistic development, comparable for example with that of Khmer art in Angkorian Cambodia” (Zéphir 2005: 127-128). This problem, far from insignificant, is largely glossed over in the exhibition, where Champa appears to be unproblematically presented, as it has been for over a century, as one entity. Only the most astute visitor might have picked up the plural, “Cham *kingdoms*”⁴² in the opening line of a wall panel on “the sources of history and the epigraphy” in the first room. Visitors progressed from room to room, moving with relative ease from one geographic location to another, alternating effortlessly between distinct religious systems, without, apparently, the need for any excessive explanation. The exhibition, it seemed, embraced certain new trends in thinking about Champa

⁴² My italics

while at the same time clinging on to old traditions. Despite the current trends away from “Indianisation” towards “Localisation”, one of the wall panels was entitled “Un art indianisé”. On the other hand, the label for the plaster cast of the Trà Kiệu dancers, as we shall see presently, introduced a totally new piece of research.

6.8 The Colonial Era Makes an Entrance

As we have seen, before entering the exhibition proper, the visitor first passed through an introductory gallery. On display here was a selection of Charles Carpeaux’s 1902-1904 photographs and EFEO plaster casts made for the 1931 Exposition Coloniale. Information panels presented Champa and the “pioneers” of Cham studies. The aim of the exhibition, the visitor read, was “to evoke the development, apogee and twilight of an art which has long remained unknown”.⁴³ This, then, was the major narrative: the evolution of Cham art, with a clear beginning, middle and end. The “pioneers” were the amateurs who had assembled the first collections at the end of the 19th century, before “scientists under the auspices of the *École française d’Extrême-Orient*”, such as Henri Parmentier and Charles Carpeaux took over the work of compiling inventories, and clearing and restoring the monuments. These “pioneers” remained nameless, however.

A succinct historical sketch of the Cham people was provided in a panel facing visitors as they entered the introductory gallery. It began with the statement that “archaeologists are united in considering the remains of the Sa Huỳnh (500 BCE-200 CE) culture as the earliest traces of their presence in this region”. This was a sign that

⁴³ The unreferenced quotations in this and the following paragraphs are taken directly from the exhibition wall panels (author’s translations). There were a total of 17 of these distributed throughout the exhibition.



Figs. 76 & 77 The exhibition entrance gallery

the exhibition wanted to keep abreast of the most recent historical and archaeological research, even though it must be said that evidence for this remains hazy and, as yet, the hypothesis has not been unanimously accepted. The visitor could then read that the Cham had adopted the fundamentals of Indian civilisation, using their religions and writing. The panel continued, “slowly pushed southwards or absorbed by the Vietnamese” from the 10th century onwards, the Cham “today constitute just one of the 54 ethnic minorities of the country”. Somewhat misleadingly, the text suggested that the majority of the present-day 130 000 Cham live in the Phan Rang region, ignoring their actual spread through southern Vietnam and Cambodia. Since the exhibition made no further reference to the modern-day Cham population, this was of little consequence. The exhibition was about the Cham past, and other than this one passing reference, no attempts were made to link the present day with this past. The historical outline concluded with the mention that “Champa disappeared definitively from the geo-political map of Southeast Asia in 1832 when its southernmost possessions were annexed by the Vietnamese”, at which point, “most of the territories which had formerly constituted Champa had been abandoned to the Vietnamese for centuries”. Consequently, the text explained, their temples, decorated with sculptures, had been destroyed, neglected or transformed by the new occupants of the sites. Again, this later history would play no further role in the exhibition display. Without naming them, this first panel concluded with mention of the French explorers, archaeologists and epigraphers who initiated the studies of Cham art and history at the end of the 19th century. Significantly, the text specified that these men had been working within the “colonial movement” (*la mouvance colonial*), though no discussion of what exactly this meant was provided. Finally, the visitor was informed

that this work, “long dormant because of the dramatic conflicts which shook the country”, started up again in the 1990s at “the instigation of the Vietnamese and international scientific community”. This brief history thus set the scene for the exhibition, placing Champa in between prehistoric origins and its final collapse, within the framework of those who have excavated and studied it. Of the latter, only three, Henri Parmentier, Charles Carpeaux and Jean-Yves Claeys were actually named in the exhibition.⁴⁴ This choice placed the archaeological reconstruction of Champa exclusively within the colonial period. No further mention was made of the present-day “Vietnamese and international scientific community”, which includes, of course, the organisers of the exhibition themselves. It is members of this community, specialists in the various fields of archaeology, art history, history, epigraphy and museology who contributed the essays in the catalogue.

It is worth noting that the only characteristic of Cham history singled out in the introductory panel was the absorption by the Cham of fundamental elements of Indian civilization. The concept of “Indianization” was then continued in the first room of the exhibition proper where a panel entitled “An Indianized Art” stated that “in the earliest studies devoted to Champa and its art, the Indian influence which marks many of the monuments and sculptures was highlighted”. Indeed, until relatively recently the so-called process of “Indianization” dominated all Cham studies. We have already noted how there is now an increasing tendency to emphasize the local influence, and in many more recent works on Champa, the old idea of total “Indianization” is tempered by the concept of processes of “localisation”.⁴⁵ Vickery has questioned the use of the word *Indianization* by pointing out that George Coedès, largely credited

⁴⁴ There was also a passing reference to a fourth, Eugène Navelle, on one of the exhibit labels. See chapter 2 on Navelle.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Higham (2002: 230, 253) or Lockart (2011: 32)

with introducing the concept to the study of Southeast Asia, in fact employed the term *Hindouisation* (Hinduization) and that, in the English translation of his work, this was “bowdlerized to ‘indianization’, in a type of political correctness before the letter” (Vickery 2003: 103). Lockhart has gone further and termed this the “Indian-centric approach” and has suggested that the insistence on the importance of the Indian aspects of Cham art, architecture and religion by scholars of the EFEO implied that “Cham civilization had little worth studying *apart from* its Indian elements”. Clearly this has serious consequences for the way Cham art history was perceived. As evidence, Lockhart points to the EFEO history which “says that the ‘classical’ period of Cham art ended after the eleventh century, when Indian influence began to fade” (Lockhart 2011: 5). This is precisely the story told in the Guimet exhibition narrative. So while the exhibition paid lip service to modern scientific scholarship in its panels, it maintained a standard, traditional, and, at times, outdated art historical approach.

6.9 The Photographs of Charles Carpeaux

The first thing that confronted the visitor, upon descending the steps into the Guimet basement, was the collection of photographs by Charles Carpeaux. Displayed in a line against a dark background along the left-hand wall of the introductory gallery (figs. 76 & 77), each photograph was accompanied by a one-line caption. The twenty photographs on display (eighteen prints and two stereoscopic plates) were all reproduced in a book on sale at the end of the exhibition, and in which they are accompanied by more detailed descriptions (Ghesquière 2005). It is interesting to note that although this book was published to coincide with the exhibition, involved

the active collaboration of the museum (Farçat and Lefèvre 2005: 20) and has a preface written by its director, it is not a catalogue, and in fact makes no reference to the exhibition. Nevertheless, in the preface, Guimet director Jarrige does provide us with an intriguing insight into what might motivate curators to host exhibitions. He suggests that it is something of a *duty* to make as large a public as possible aware of the contributions made by French archaeologists who died prematurely, after exhausting work in difficult climactic conditions (Ghesquière 2005: 7). This is a reference to the fact that Carpeaux died in Indochina in 1904. Jarrige seems to be suggesting the idea of the exhibition, or publication, as a memorial to those who died on the job. Carpeaux's own mother did exactly this when she contributed to an exhibition in her son's memory hosted at the Petit Palais, Paris, in 1905, a year after his death (Ghesquière 2005: 18). In many ways, as we shall see, the Guimet exhibition did indeed pay homage to French colonial archaeologists, though not just ones who died young in the field. Jarrige further claims that the photographs published in the book are, to this day, "the only records we possess on the state of the monuments and sculpture of Champa at the beginning of the 20th century" when the sites began to be cleared. He suggests that "they represent, therefore, a veritable and indispensable treasure for the study and understanding of Cham art" (Ghesquière 2005: 7). The extreme importance of the photographs of the Cham sites and monuments, many of which no longer exist, in particular the site of Đồng Dương, came to the notice of the museum curators, and a thorough study of them was undertaken with a view to utilising them for the exhibition. This involved the restoration, classification and digitalization of some 800 photographic views of Champa by the museum's archive and photographic departments (Farçat and Lefèvre 2004: 96; Baptiste 2005a: 27). The programme of a conference held at the museum

during the exhibition⁴⁶ referred to them as “unpublished”, which must, however, be either a surprising oversight or over-zealous publicity on the part of the exhibition organisers, since many of them were reproduced in a collected tome of Carpeaux’s diaries, published by his mother a few years after his death, and still widely available in libraries today (Carpeaux 1908). As we have already seen in chapter 1, surprisingly, there is almost no reference to this work in the Cham art historical literature and there appears to have been little attempt over the course of a century to reproduce, or even to consult, the photographs contained in it.

As we have noted, it seems that there were in fact two sets of Carpeaux’s photographs, one in the care of the EFEO, and the other entrusted to the Musée Guimet. The existence of two sets of photographs, as well as the ones published in Carpeaux’s diaries, makes the almost total lack of attention paid to them all the more curious. The publication of Parmentier’s line-drawings, which were discussed in detail in chapter 3, may, at least in part, have something to do with this. It seems, though, that after having been largely forgotten for a century, the closing of the Guimet for renovation, the consequent clearing and emptying of its storage spaces, and the apparent “re-discovery” of the photographs, has turned them into a “veritable and indispensable treasure”. As Baptiste suggests, “may these images, so long in slumber, contribute to a better knowledge of a heritage which, for a century, has suffered so much” (Ghesquière 2005: 13).

Sculptures which were on display in the exhibition figured in several of the photographs, which thus formed invaluable records of elements of the biographies of

⁴⁶ *Journée d’Études* : “Patrimoine du Vietnam: aspects de la civilisation cham - cent ans de recherches et de découvertes”, 7 December 2005.

these objects. For instance, the first photograph of the display⁴⁷ showed the statue of Nandin (cat. 63),⁴⁸ which was on loan from Danang for the exhibition, in its very first museum setting in the Jardin de Tourane, probably in or around 1902 (Ghesquière 2005: 37) (figs. 78 and 79).⁴⁹ The label made no mention, though, of the fact that this photograph thus bore witness to the origins of the Danang museum from which so many of the exhibits came, nor that the same Nandin had survived and that visitors would be able to see it a few rooms further on. It is doubtful how many visitors would have made the connection between the Nandin in the Trà Kiệu room (room 4) and one of twenty fairly small photographs displayed four rooms earlier, and because of the one-way layout of the exhibition, few visitors would have returned to the introduction gallery after viewing the Nandin sculpture. These two worlds, the early colonial context of the sculpture and its modern exhibition setting, were tantalisingly close yet physically separated in the Guimet show. If, on the contrary, the curators had chosen to display the photograph alongside the sculpture, the story each told would have been markedly different because the interconnections between these two worlds would have been made manifest. While this was not done in the exhibition display, the catalogue did, on the other hand, draw attention to the important role played by this Nandin in the garden at Tourane: “at a period when the numerous pieces were displayed in total disorder in the ‘Tourane (Dà Nang) Sculpture Garden’, this bull was one of the prize objects, placed to advantage on part of a pedestal base from Trà Kiệu” (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 274). A footnote referred the reader to Carpeaux’s photograph, though no mention was made of the fact that this same photograph had also figured in the exhibition. Clearly, Carpeaux’s photographs were an exhibit in

⁴⁷ Inv. AP 14490

⁴⁸ Numbers for display objects refer to their number in the exhibition catalogue (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a)

⁴⁹ See chapter 4

their own right, and intended to be seen as such. They served as a witness to the early archaeological work executed by the “pioneers” Carpeaux and Parmentier on Champa. Their role was strictly confined to this, hence no mention in the catalogue, and no linking with the principal galleries of the exhibition. This total separation of the photographs from the part of the exhibition where the sculptures were on show ensured that the artworks were displayed as museum pieces, unconnected with the sites they came from and the messy archaeological excavations illustrated in Carpeaux’s photographs. Such isolation placed them in an art historical museum time, neither that of the colonial period nor that of ancient Champa.

Another of Carpeaux’s photographs showed temple A1 at M̃y Son,⁵⁰ which, like the others, was accompanied by a simple one-line caption. This small photograph was displayed almost directly opposite a large blown-up version of Parmentier’s line drawing of the same temple-tower (figs. 80 and 81). Although nothing drew the visitor’s attention to this, the proximity of these two contemporary representations of the same monument allowed a direct comparison. It is obvious, even if one takes only a cursory glance, that a very large part of the architectural decoration depicted in Parmentier’s drawing, particularly on the upper part of the tower and above the doorways, is not visible in the photograph, where the tower can be seen to be in a fairly ruinous state. Temple group A is amongst the earliest at M̃y Son and also one of the most damaged and, as is clearly evident in Carpeaux’s photograph, already was in 1903 (Ghesquiere 2005: 51). The photograph published by Parmentier in his 1904 article on the monuments of M̃y Son would appear to be a close-up from the same negative. This article further includes photographs of details of the upper part of the

⁵⁰ Inv. AP 14514



Fig. 78 Carpeaux's photo of Nandin in the Tourane Garden, c.1902
(Ghesquière 2005)



Fig. 79 Nandin on display in the exhibition

tower (Parmentier 1904: 812). Thus, direct comparison between the photographic record and Parmentier's drawings has been available for over a hundred years, but has apparently been almost completely ignored, since, while occasional old photographs of the temple have been published, it is above all, as we have seen, Parmentier's drawings which have been endlessly reproduced in publications on Champa. It is Parmentier's reconstituted view of tower A1 at Mỹ Sơn, in other words his interpretation of how the tower might once have looked, which has become the paradigm for the temple. The temple itself, as has been noted, no longer survives as it was totally destroyed by bombs in 1969.

No Cham art works were exhibited in the introductory room. Instead, it contained only the old photographs, the plaster casts, Parmentier's drawing of Mỹ Sơn A1 and a map of Vietnam. Upon entering this space, the visitor was immediately greeted by a large blow-up of an old photographic plate (fig. 82). This blow-up shows an Asian man standing in a temple entrance surrounded by lush as yet un-cleared vegetation. The photograph had no label. All that is visible of the temple are two door pillars, making it difficult to accurately identify the building, however, this was not what was important. The photograph was not showing the visitor a specific temple, or a location, nor was it an example of Cham architecture, rather it served to create an atmosphere. This image was evocative of a past place and time: no precise date, no specific location. The photograph was, however, evocative not of the remote past of ancient Champa, but rather of ruins buried in the jungle, ready for discovery. It was an introduction to a world, seemingly inviting the visitor into the past of colonial discovery. Significantly, this photograph showed an Asian figure, one of the hundreds

of anonymous workers visible in many of Carpeaux's other photographs displayed on the opposite wall, workers who are entirely absent from the rest of the exhibition.



Figs. 80 & 81 Carpeaux's photograph of Mý Son A1 in 1903 (Ghesquière 2005: 51) and Blow-up of Parmentier's line-drawing of Mý Son A1 displayed opposite



Fig. 82 Blow up of a Charles Carpeaux photograph at exhibition entrance

Surprisingly, nothing in the introductory gallery informed the visitor about the history of these photographs, other than the fact that they were taken by Charles Carpeaux, who, along with Henri Partmentier, was one of the “pioneers” who first took an interest in the ancient monuments of French Indochina. No other photographs were displayed anywhere in the exhibition after this first room and, as we have seen, the catalogue, the only lasting trace of the exhibition, makes no reference to the photographs. The reason for not reproducing the photographs in the catalogue may, of course, simply have been because they were the subject of a second book, which was a joint publication between the Musée Guimet and the publishing house Les Indes Savantes. It reproduces some 260 photographs of Champa sites and monuments taken

by Carpeaux, which are a small part of a total collection of over 5000 stereoscopic glass plates of Indochina, kept in the Guimet photographic archives.⁵¹ These photographs were taken by Carpeaux during the four archaeological expeditions which he undertook, two in Angkor and two in Annam, under the auspices of the EFEO between 1901 and 1904. Baptiste and Zéphir, the curators of the exhibition, are the principal authors of the texts that accompany the photographs in the book, thus emphasizing its close links with the exhibition.



Fig. 83 Charles Carpeaux at Đông Dương, 1903 (Ghesquière 2005: 110)

⁵¹ See chapter 7

In the course of a public lecture, one of a series given at the museum during the exhibition, Baptiste projected a large number of these photographs, linking them with the works on display in the exhibition galleries and the sites they came from. Periphery events and books thus provided information which was absent in the exhibition itself. This information was received by only a tiny fraction of the total visitors to the exhibition, since the conference was attended by only about thirty people, and the official total number of visitors who attended the exhibition, between 12th October 2005 and 6th February 2012, was 60 931 (Farçat and Lefèvre 2005: 93; Farçat and Lefèvre 2006: 77).

6.10 Missing Persons – Notable Absentees from the Exhibition

The wall panels in the introductory gallery informed visitors that after the initial work done by “amateurs”, EFEO “scientists” took over the task. This theme of pioneer amateurs being replaced by the professional scientists of the EFEO in early Champa archaeology and art historical studies was one of the *leit motifs* of the exhibition. In the Trà Kiệu room (room 5), for example, another wall panel made reference to the idea of the EFEO taking over in this way. The text informed the visitor that the ruins of Trà Kiệu had “long been known” and that many of the sculptures from there had been taken to Tourane in the 1890s, where they are still kept today, and that some of them were actually on display in the exhibition. This was an indirect reference to the work of Charles Lemire and Camille Paris, though they were not named. Instead, the text continued, “it fell to Jean-Yves Claeys (1896-1979), of the Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient to carry out the archaeological excavations (1927-1928) of this

particularly disturbed site”. Choosing to frame the artworks on display with the story of the archaeologists that unearthed and studied them was highly imaginative and crucial to an understanding of the art. It is interesting that the decision was made to name only three men and that all should be connected with the EFEO. Since reference was made in the information panels to the founding of the Danang museum, and that so many of the objects on display came from there, Charles Lemire, in particular, was notably absent from the exhibition. In the Mĩ Son room (room 2), credit was given to Parmentier and Carpeaux for the work they carried out there in 1903-1904, but no mention was made of Camille Paris, generally considered to be the “discoverer” of the site. Both Lemire and Paris are mentioned in several articles and exhibit entries in the catalogue, as are the major twentieth Cham art historians Philippe Stern and Jean Boisselier, but none figure in the exhibition. As amateur collectors and art historians these men do not, it would seem, fit in with the archaeological theme.

That Henri Parmentier, Charles Carpeaux and Jean-Yves Claeys were all members of the EFEO is clearly spelt out in the texts of the wall panels. The sites they each worked on and the dates of their excavations are also specified. The only other person named in the exhibition is Eugène Navelle,⁵² whose name appears on the wall panel in the 11th century room (room 6) in connection with the ten-armed Siva from the Guimet’s own collections (cat. 77). No information is provided on him other than the fact that, in 1885, at the ”Tours d’Argent”, he discovered this great statue which, according to the wall panel, “is today the chef-d’oeuvre of the Musée Guimet Cham collection”. Navelle, had a brilliant career as a high civil servant in the colonial administration and had, like Lemire, been *Résident* in Qui Nhon. During his time

⁵² See chapter 2

there, in the words of Pierre Baptiste, he “had the possibility of finding this remarkable sculpture”, and “quite naturally”, sent it to the Louvre. As we have already seen, out of place in the Louvre collections, the sculpture was subsequently transferred to the new Musée Indochinois at the Trocadéro, from where it eventually ended up at the Guimet. These details, although absent from the exhibition labels and panels, are noted in the catalogue (Baptiste 2002: 3; Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: 293; Auboyer 1934: 20).

Thus, to all intents and purposes, Cham art history and archaeology becomes, in the exhibition narrative, the more-or-less exclusive domain of the EFEO. Other than the brief mention of Navelle, anyone not part of the school, such as the early “amateurs” and the indigenous workers in the photographs, remains resolutely anonymous.

The second of Carpeaux’s photographs in the display showed the Tours d’Argent (Bánh Ít), where the Siva was found by Navelle. Once again, neither in the photograph label nor that of the sculpture was any link made. In fact, virtually all the photographs had direct links with one or more of the works on display in the exhibition, but this was never pointed out to the visitor. The only reference to the photographs in the wall panels was a sentence at the end of the panel entitled “Pioneers” in the introductory gallery. Rather than linking them with the sculptures on display, this merely recognised the photographs as witnesses to the archaeology: “photographs of the first excavations at the great sites of Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương, along with various views of major Cham sites, here bear witness to the quality of this work”. Clearly these photographs were not intended as illustrations to accompany the sculptures. Photographs and sculptures stood as entirely separate series in the

exhibition. Since almost two thirds of the photographs showed the two major sites represented at the exhibition, Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương, this may seem curious, especially since no other photographs, either modern or old, were used to illustrate the exhibition. Carpeaux's photographs of Champa form an important art work in their own right. They also form an invaluable record of colonial archaeology.

6.11 Colonial Era Plaster Casts

Opposite Carpeaux's photographs, which lined the left wall of the introductory gallery, were three plaster casts displayed on a low raised dais (figs. 84-87): the Mỹ Sơn E1 pedestal, a pilaster fragment from Mỹ Sơn A1 and the Dancers pedestal from Trà Kiệu. Like the photographs, these three exhibits do not feature anywhere in the exhibition catalogue. There is one brief general reference to plaster casts in the preface, mentioning merely that "a certain number" of casts were exhibited at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, where they reflected the archaeological work of the EFEO in Vietnam, and that they were transferred to the Musée Indochinois after the exhibition (Jarrige 2005: xxi). Surprisingly, no mention is made, though, of the fact that some of these very casts were actually on display in the Guimet exhibition. A wall panel in the exhibition itself, on the other hand, did specify that these casts were made by the EFEO for the 1931 colonial exhibition and that they had been "recently restored". According to the wall panel, "they reflect certain aspects of decoration that it was scarcely possible to integrate into the exhibition", although the reasons for this are not explained. The exhibition Press Release announced that "by way of an introduction", these casts "will allow the illustration, of certain important aspects of the architecture of Champa" (Musée Guimet 2005a: 4).



Figs. 84 & 85 Plaster casts of Mý Son E1 pedestal (front and rear views)



Figs. 86 & 87 Plaster casts of pilaster fragment from Mỹ Sơn A1 and dancers pedestal from Trà Kiệu

The label for the *moulage* of the Mỹ Sơn E1 pedestal read as follows :

This plaster cast of a work at the Cham Museum in Danang was exhibited at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition; since then it has been kept in the Guimet collections. On display here is the principal face of the base of a linga pedestal, discovered by Henri Parmentier in 1903 in the ruins of sanctuary E1 at Mỹ Sơn (7th century).

Here then, is a display object of great museological importance. In this one piece alone is what might be seen as a microcosm of Cham art historical studies. A copy of an ancient Cham object discovered by one of the “pioneers” of the EFEO, created for the most important of the colonial exhibitions, at a time when for over two decades studies of Angkor had to a large extent overshadowed those of Champa, and forming a direct link between the Guimet collections and the Danang museum. Together the cast, label and wall panel summarize major elements of the larger story told in the exhibition. Nearby, the label of the cast of the Trà Kiệu Dancers’ Pedestal, which was displayed at the end of the introductory gallery, states that “this very famous bas-relief was long considered to be a fragment of pedestal”. In fact, though, the label claims, “it is part of the décor of the base of a 10th century tower-sanctuary which today no longer exists”. This short statement is of particular interest, since it is actually the result of several years of research on Cham pedestals carried out by Pierre Baptiste. The museum label thus becomes a medium for launching new, largely unpublished research. It is worth bearing in mind that museum labels, somewhat like museum displays in general, are more-or-less anonymous. Rarely is a curator’s name directly attached to the label, seldom is there any reference to existing literature, as there is, for instance in the catalogue notices. Moreover, the museum label, as we have seen in chapter 2, tends to enshrine facts in an aura of authority turning them into

unquestioned truths. In the label for the cast of the Trà Kiệu pedestal, Baptiste's speculations on the original location and function of the sculpture become fact. Just as the Guimet Ganesh becomes 10th century Mỹ Sơn A1 through its label, so the Dancers' Pedestal is now a temple base.

This plaster cast also plays an important temporal role within the exhibition display. As a copy of a 10th century Trà Kiệu original it is a referent for the ancient Cham past. Created for the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, it stands as a marker for the colonial enterprise, an echo of earlier attempts to bring the attention of Champa to a large public. Recently renovated, it symbolizes the current renewal of interest in Cham art history, and newly defined as a basement, rather than a pedestal, it stands for evolving trends in Cham art history and looks forward to the future. No longer a simple chronological stroll through time, the visitor's "fascinating journey to the time of splendour of this kingdom" (Baptiste and Zéphir 2005a: xvi) is embedded in a complex temporal web.

The three casts on display in the Guimet exhibition were there to "illustrate", we are informed, "aspects of the decoration" and "aspects of the architecture of Champa". There was, though, no reconstruction, no attempt to link these three plaster casts with the sculptures on display in the following rooms, very little to help the visitor to associate these isolated pieces with architectural structures. There was no real explanation of either how or why these fragments of architecture and decoration did in fact "illustrate". If indeed these pieces did allow "the illustration, by way of an introduction, of certain important aspects of the architecture of Champa" (Musée Guimet 2005a: 4), the only way they did this was by standing alone as display objects

in their own right. Trần Kỳ Phương has recently drawn attention to the problems caused by the fact that 20th century archaeologists and art historians of Champa “focused specifically on either architecture or sculpture”. He points out, though, that “Cham religious art represents an integral relationship between the two – that is a relationship between the temple and its pedestal or icon”. In an attempt to rectify what he sees as the long-standing error of the separation of architecture and sculpture in Cham art studies, with separate chronologies for each, Trần Kỳ Phương adopts, therefore, an “integrated approach”. He has produced drawings and life-size reconstructions, notably in the exhibition centre at Mỹ Sơn, which show, for example, pedestals covered by architectural structures (Trần Kỳ Phương 2011: 277-278; Trần Kỳ Phương et al, ca. 2003: 18):



Fig. 88 Hypothetical architectural reconstruction for a pedestal, Mỹ Sơn exhibition hall

The Guimet exhibition, on the other hand, steadfastly maintains the separation of architecture and sculpture. Indeed, architecture is all but absent in the exhibition. Temples, frequently mentioned in the *texts* of the wall panels, scarcely featured in the exhibition *visually*. Furthermore, most of the few visual references to Champa that *were* present in the exhibition were relegated to the entrance gallery where, as we have seen, visitors were able to view the plaster casts, Carpeaux's 1902-1904 photographs and Parmentier's line-drawing of temple Mỹ Sơn A1. In the exhibition proper, there were only two other visuals. These were towards the start of the exhibition in the sections dedicated to the sites of Mỹ Sơn and Đồng Dương. In room 3 an enlarged version of one of Henri Parmentier's maps of the Mỹ Sơn site was displayed alongside the wall panel (fig. 89). A little further on, one wall of the Đồng Dương room was covered in a very large blown up version of one of Parmentier's ground plans of the site (fig. 90). As we saw in chapter 3, Parmentier's drawings have been endlessly reproduced in the vast majority of published works on Cham art and architecture for over a century. Interestingly, in his 1963 magisterial tome which remains to date the most important reference work on Cham art, Jean Boisselier also chooses to include just two of Parmentier's line-drawings, a map of Mỹ Sơn and a ground plan of Đồng Dương (Boisselier 1963a).⁵³ The Guimet exhibition made an identical choice.

In the Mỹ Sơn room, the wall panel briefly described the site, explaining that after the first studies carried out by Parmentier and Carpeaux, "the monuments were classified in different groups designated by letters", and that "within each group, the buildings

⁵³ *Cartes et Plans* C and D, at the end of the volume (Boisselier 1963a).



Fig. 89 The Mỹ Sơn E5 Ganesha with Parmentier's map of the site visible on far wall



Fig. 90 The Đồng Dương room with Parmentier's ground plan filling one wall

were then allotted a number”. Thus, for example, “the main monument of group A is designated as tower-sanctuary A1”.⁵⁴ At the bottom of the text is the mention “Plan of the site of Mỹ Sơn, after Henri Parmentier”. No other explanation of the map is given and it is not dated. A little further on, an extremely large blow-up of one of Parmentier’s ground plans of the Đòng Dương monastery complex lined one entire wall of the room. There was no label and no mention of it in the wall panel. The latter, entitled “The Temple of Đòng Dương”, described the site as “an important ensemble of monuments, combining tower-sanctuaries and assembly halls regularly spaced along an East-West axis”. The “different enclosures” of this complex were entered, the visitor read, via great entrance pavilions (*gopura*), guarded on either side by menacing *dvarapala* (guardians). Visitors were left to make the connection between this description of the monastery complex and Parmentier’s ground plan on the wall. Because of the proximity of the floor plan, which was located immediately to the right of the room’s two information panels, and the fact that architectural floor plans and drawings are a commonly used and recognised two-dimensional visual code for understanding built architecture⁵⁵, it can be reasonably supposed that most visitors would have had no problem in making this connection. What is of particular interest is that, in making this connection, visitors were being invited to re-contextualize the sculptures not into the temples that once housed them, nor into the ruins in which they were discovered, but rather into in a colonial era technical drawing. It is true that seven of the photographs by Carpeaux on display in the introductory gallery were of the site of Đòng Dương, and they reveal dramatically the incredibly ruinous state of the site when he and Parmentier began to clear and excavate it, and the enormity of the task. However, since these photographs were by now three rooms behind the

⁵⁴ See chapter 1 on this French numbering system.

⁵⁵ See chapter 3

visitor, any attempt to relate the sculptures on display to the archaeological excavations which unearthed them would have been very difficult. Back-tracking to the photographs was not an option since this would have involved going back past the ticket control and exiting the exhibition. The opportunity to *visually* re-contextualize the sculptures within the archaeology of their excavation, so emphasized *textually* in the wall panels, was, therefore, more-or-less missed. Furthermore, apart from Parmentier's drawing of M̃y Son temple A1 in the entrance gallery, there was no attempt to show the monuments as they would have originally been, the only two visual aids being a map and floor plan. Inviting the visitor to imagine the sculpture in some sort of 'original' setting was, therefore, not an objective of the exhibition either. Lastly, the total absence, anywhere in the exhibition, of present-day photographs, or representations of any kind, of the sites and monuments as they are today made it equally impossible to situate the sculptures in a modern setting. The extraordinary result of this was that the sculptures were entirely contextualised within now antiquated, colonial-era representations: Carpeaux's photographs, the plaster casts and Parmentier's line drawings. This was a totally museological and art-historical presentation of the artworks. In stark contrast, the catalogue was replete with high quality colour photographs of the temples and sites as they are today.

Long out of fashion in museums, plaster casts, once seen as art objects in their own right, have recently become the focus of much museological and academic attention, and are making a re-appearance in exhibitions and museum displays. A series of conferences has been dedicated to the subject over the past decade and ancient

collections are being unearthed and restored.⁵⁶ The “interest is today focused not only on the original objects reproduced, but also on the cast itself, the reasons which led to its being made, the conditions of its creation, and of its preservation”. It is now recognised that “the great collections of casts are not just records of the state of the original object”, which is sometimes partially or totally destroyed, “but are also the result of the historic and aesthetic tastes and choices of a particular period” (Font-Réaulx 2001: 26). The three examples on display in the Guimet exhibition (figs. 68-71), “unearthed” in the stores during the renovation of the museum, reflect this current trend of renewed interest in old plaster casts.

The history of French plaster casts of Indochinese art and architecture commences in the mid 19th century when Doudart de Lagrée⁵⁷ made the first casts of architectural and sculptural details of temples at Angkor. In 1866, he organised a display in Saigon using plaster casts to supplement fragments of sculpture which he had collected during his first expeditions. Other members of Doudart de Lagrée’s expedition team subsequently made a great number of further casts, which were displayed collectively at the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris (Dagens 1995: 60-63). A decade later, when Louis Delaporte set up his collection of Khmer art at the Trocadéro, for the 1878 Exhibition, he “wanted to put the public in direct contact with original pieces, casts and photographs, which were more tangible documents than simple descriptions” (Auboyer 1934: 15). He “had the brilliant idea of making schematic models which incorporated genuine casts”, and “the result was a mixture of heterogeneous elements

⁵⁶ At the time of writing, the Musée Guimet is researching and restoring its plaster casts of Cham and Khmer art in preparation for an exhibition. Guimet curator Pierre Baptiste has presented a number of papers on these cast collections at recent international conferences. For example, “Œuvres disparues en Orient: les moulages”, at the conference *La Tradition de la Copie*, Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris, 11 June 2011 and “Virtual Visions of Angkor”, at the conference *Archaeologising Heritage?*, University of Heidelberg, 2-4 May 2010

⁵⁷ See chapter 4

true to the spirit of Khmer architecture without representing an actual building” (Dagens 1995: 60). In 1882, dying from fever, Delaporte was urgently repatriated from Saigon. He did not die, though, and unable ever to return to Indochina, he devoted the next two decades to recreating Angkor at the Trocadéro, through his “architectural representations” (*évoations architecturales*), making extensive use of plaster casts (Zéphir 1996: 66-67). In 1889, the year of the Great Exhibition and Eiffel’s tower, and the year that saw the opening of the Paris Musée Guimet, the original Khmer museum at the Trocadéro became the Musée Indochinois. A year earlier, the first Cham piece, the 11th century Siva from Bánh Ít on display in Room 5 at the Guimet exhibition, had entered Delaporte’s museum, and four more Cham sculptures arrived in 1891. In the first decades of the 20th century, Madame Clément-Carpeaux “gave moulds and photographs in memory of her brother” and in 1912, Henri Parmentier “had several casts made” (Auboyer 1934: 17). When Delaporte died in 1925, Philippe Stern replaced him as curator of the Musée Indochinois. Almost straightaway, Stern and Hackin, director of the Musée Guimet, conceived the idea of uniting the original Khmer pieces from their two collections at the Guimet and keeping all the casts at the Trocadéro. This new arrangement was duly set in place in 1927. Thanks to Groslier, director of Cambodian Arts in Phnom Penh, the collection of casts at the Musée Indochinois continued to grow over the following years, with most of the new casts being made from recently discovered sculptures. Over the same period, more and more of the original sculptures were transferred from the Trocadéro to the Guimet. In 1931, the casts which had been made for the Exposition Coloniale at Vincennes, were entrusted to the Musée Indochinois, while the original Khmer and Cham pieces that had been displayed were transferred to the Guimet. While the Guimet was ensuring that all plaster casts were relegated to the Musée Indochinois,

they entrusted their large collection of rubbings of stone inscriptions to the Bibliothèque Nationale and other institutions (Auboyer 1934: 21). By this time, therefore, it was clear that the Guimet was establishing itself as a museum of originals. The 1931 Exposition Coloniale would be the last major occasion in France that plaster casts of art from Indochina would be displayed alongside originals. In 2005, therefore, the Guimet returned to this tradition, while, nonetheless, ensuring a strict separation between the genuine works and the casts.

At the Guimet display, the casts were placed outside the exhibition proper, both *physically*, since they were in the introductory gallery, and *textually*, because they were absent from the official catalogue. They were, it would seem, not part of the historic narrative of Cham art that formed the exhibition properly speaking. True to its vocation as a collection of original artworks, the Guimet Cham exhibition, meticulously separated representation and original. In the case of two of the plaster casts, there was no question of mistaking the fact that they were casts and not actual sculptures, since they were displayed with their metal and wooden skeletons quite clearly visible on their rear sides. The first of three casts, the Mý Son E1 pedestal was, on the other hand, positioned in such a way that its hollow inside and metallic framework were not immediately visible. Unless visitors took care to read the label, or glanced around the back of the piece (see fig. 85) it was not immediately evident that this was not the actual artwork, especially since the casts had been recently and expertly renovated. Only very close scrutiny revealed that this was an extremely well made plaster cast rather than the stone original. Such was the quality of 1930s French craftsmanship and the 21st century restoration, that anyone not paying attention to the

label or wall panel might easily have been taken in, thus raising interesting questions about the display of originals and copies, and their function in museological contexts.

Opposite the plaster casts, Carpeaux's 1902-1904 photographs were in fact modern prints made from the original glass plates. Although this was duly noted in the labels, it was not discernible by merely looking at the photographs. On the wall behind the plaster casts was, as we have seen, the large blown-up version of Parmentier's line-drawing of Mĩ Son A1, an early 20th century representation of the monument which partly reconstituted it in a form more complete than its 1902 condition. This introductory gallery was, effectively, an illusory space, with everything standing for something else. Copies manufactured in the 1930s represented the ancient Cham past, 21st reproductions conjured up the early 1900s, and early 20th century images represented a partly imaginary earlier time.

6.12 Champa on Film

While the visitor was introduced to Parmentier and Carpeaux from the outset, alongside the display of the early photographs, Claeys did not come on to the scene until the classical and Trà Kiệu rooms, where the works he excavated were exhibited. Thus there appears to have been an attempt to interweave the two narrative threads of the artworks and their "discoverers". The story of the EFEO "scientists" paralleled that of the art. Coupling the already daunting challenge of introducing Champa, about which we know so relatively little, and its art, for which we have a highly codified stylistic chronology, with the parallel narrative of its "discoverers" was an ambitious

and imaginative endeavour on the part of the curators. Though, as we have seen, such an approach was not without its pitfalls.

On exiting the exhibition, the visitor was confronted with a screen showing a black-and-white film produced by Jean-Yves Claeys, entitled “Cambodge et le Champa: Petite Suite Archéologique.” The film was continuously projected throughout the exhibition opening hours, though its position, in the public area of the basement, close to the auditorium and just across from the exhibition sales counter, with no seating and much coming and going and distraction, seemed to indicate that visitors were not necessarily expected to view the entire film. Moreover, the film had no label to explain it and visitors who *did* stop to watch it were left to make what they could of it on their own. Nothing was revealed of its creation or the circumstances of its resurfacing in the 1990s, and the catalogue made no reference to it.⁵⁸ It was, though, projected in front of a large audience in the museum’s auditorium on the occasion of the *Journée d’Études* held in association with the exhibition, and during this showing curator Pierre Baptiste gave a running commentary on it.⁵⁹

The film, shot between 1927 and 1951, is just over half an hour in length, and, as its title indicates, presents an overview of Khmer and Champa archaeology. It includes film of most of the major Cham sites and documents the main activities carried out by the EFEO. Key members of the school appear in the film and there is considerable footage of archaeological excavations. Sections shot from a bi-plane include what

⁵⁸ See Glover (1997) for a description of how Claeys’s field notebooks, that had remained in the possession of his family, were tracked by Ian Glover and Pierre-Yves Manguin in the mid 1990s. This encounter between Glover and Claeys’s children, in particular his architect son, Henri, subsequently led to Claeys’s films also coming to light.

⁵⁹ Held on 7 December 2005. No transcription of Baptiste’s commentary is available for public consultation.

may be the earliest known aerial photography of the site of Mỹ Sơn.⁶⁰ In the course of the film, several sequences showed objects that were on display in the exhibition. Since the film was unlabelled, however, there was nothing to draw attention to the direct links between the footage and the actual artworks on display, so visitors watching the film were expected to pick up any connections on their own.



Figs. 91 & 92 Screen projecting Jean-Yves Claeys film on Cham archaeology at exit of the exhibition

⁶⁰ A trained architect, keen photographer, skilled draughtsman and talented painter, Claeys had learnt to fly light aircraft in the 1920s in order to take aerial photographs of Trà Kiệu (Glover 1997: 173).

6.13 A Cham Icon: The Hương Quế Devi

Towards the end of the film, in a sequence on the museums set up by the EFEO in Indochina, Jean-Yves Claeys can be seen walking through the galleries of the Louis Finot Museum⁶¹ in Hanoi cradling in his arms the Hương Quế Devi sculpture which featured prominently in the Guimet exhibition. At the end of the scene, Claeys appears to place the statue outside, presumably in order for it to be photographed. The identity of the statue and its origin in ancient Champa are unknown. In the 19th century the sculpture was covered in garish varnish and used as a ritual object in a Vietnamese pagoda. It came to the notice of the EFEO in January 1911 when, in the words of the exhibition catalogue, it was “discovered” in a small modern sanctuary in the village of Hương Quế along with some other sculptures and an inscription. A footnote in the exhibition catalogue points out that because of its “considerable weight” the inscription was left on site and has therefore never been properly studied. The great artistic merit and aesthetic qualities of the sculpture were immediately recognised and it was speedily removed from its temple setting and taken into the care of the EFEO. Thus began its history as a museum piece. Baptiste, drawing on a note written by Claeys in 1928, has commented that “very quickly the beauty of this female statue would lead those in charge of the museum in Danang to exhibit this work in an ostentatious manner”⁶² (Baptiste 2005: 244). This was part of the process that rapidly turned the sculpture into a Cham masterpiece, and it would soon become one of the major icons of Cham art. Pierre Baptiste, recalling the words of Boisselier who had called her “one of the most beautiful examples of Cham statuary,” proclaimed her the “the greatest chef d’oeuvre of the exhibition”, and suggested that

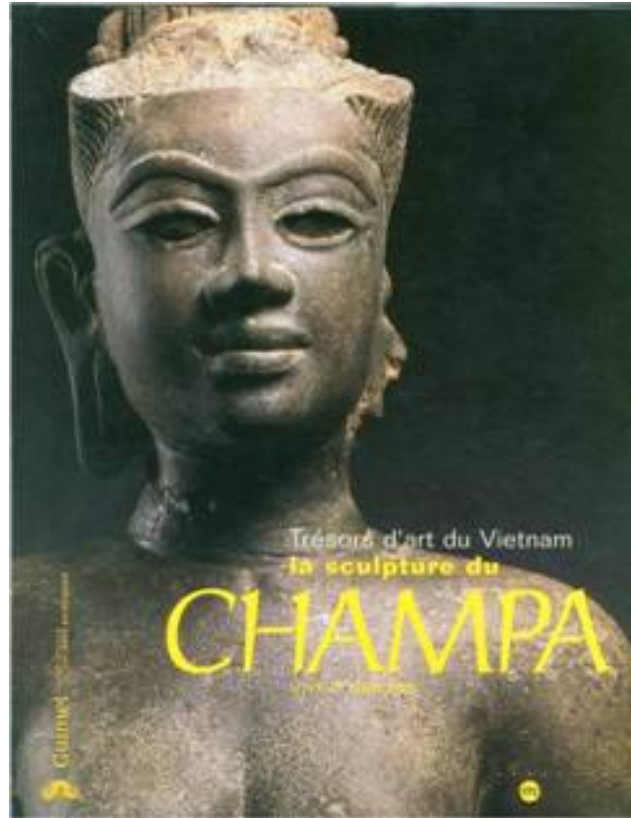
⁶¹ Now the National Museum of History (Viện Bảo tàng Lịch sử Việt Nam)

⁶² The statue, which was transferred to the new Louis Finot museum in Hanoi as soon as it opened in 1932, is now in the collections of the HCMC Historical Museum (Baptiste 2005a: 244).

“she has an immediate power of seduction, because of her juvenile and timeless character, beyond time and space” (Baptiste 2005: 244). Her image was selected for the front cover of the exhibition catalogue and for one of the posters advertising the exhibition. For several months in 2005-2006 it was, therefore, plastered across Paris, on the façade of the museum, street billboards and the walls of metro station platforms. (figs. 93 and 94). This was probably the greatest coverage she had had in her career, though by no means the first, since the statue had already long been something of a Cham superstar. Her image has been reproduced in countless works on ancient Champa, making her quite possibly one of the most photographed stars in the whole of Cham art. She has featured on the cover of many books, including the catalogue of the HCMC Historical Museum Champa collection where she is represented alone along with a stylised line drawing of the Cham breast motif (fig. 95), and was used as the logo of the Société des Amis du Champa Ancien, featuring on the cover of each issue of the *Lettre de la SACHA* until the Society was dissolved in 2010. A final edition of the bulletin which came out in 2011 had a full page photograph of the statue on the cover page.⁶³ She has also been represented in art and numerous replicas of the statue have been made. One of the very first of these is now owned by Jean-Yves Claeys’s son Henri, another sits on the desk of one of the curator’s of the Musée Guimet, and one is displayed in the Hanoi Fine Arts Museum. The original is now on display in the Historical Museum in HCMC. Figure 96 shows a line drawing of the statue done by Jean-Yves Claeys. In this drawing, Claeys has used the image to create a decorative letter “L” at the start of a chapter in a special edition of the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* devoted to Claeys’s study of Annam

⁶³ *Lettre de la SACHA* 14, 2011

and Champa (Claeys 1934). This is one of many such imaginative illustrations by Claeys which were discussed in chapter 3.



Figs. 93 & 94 The Huong Qué Devi on the Guimet exhibition catalogue and on exhibition posters in the Paris metro

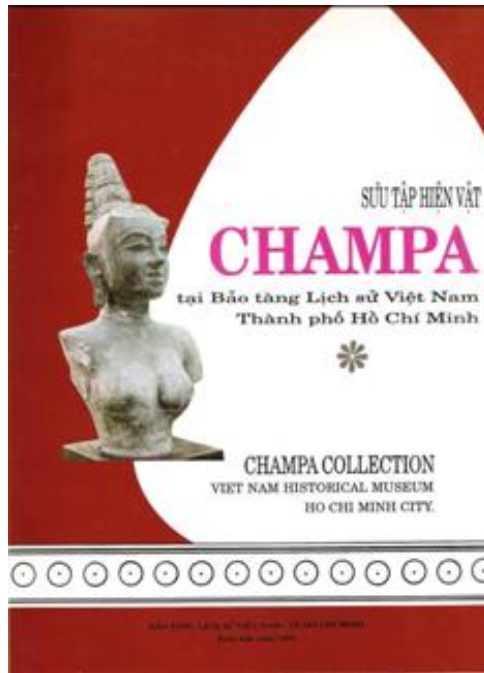


Fig. 95 The Hương Quế Devi on the cover of the HCMC History Museum Cham catalogue

It is perhaps revealing that this statue which is, in many ways, untypically Cham in appearance should have become so representative of Cham art. Her beauty seems somehow closer to Western Greco-Roman classical ideals, than to the art of Mỹ Sơn, Đồng Dương, Trà Kiệu or Tháp Mẫm, and, like the Venus de Milo, her mutilated condition seems to add to her Charm and mystery. While such questions of seemingly Western aesthetics and their appeal have yet to be studied in the case of Cham art, a parallel can be drawn with the field of Gandhāran art studies where the issue has been extensively debated. Stanley Abe, for example, has written persuasively on the history of the question of Western influence on the Buddhist art of Gandhāra, but admits that “a definitive accounting of this elusive issue has yet to be produced”, and that quite simply “art history has been unable to fix the history of [this] Western influence” (Abe 1995: 63). Many of the other difficulties encountered in the study of Gandhāran

art, discussed by Abe, such as its geographical limits, the range of styles that may be subsumed under the term, the provenance of many works, and the particularly vexed problem of their dating, are common also to Cham art studies. Indian scholar Partha Mitter, who “question[s] the dominance of the Western classical canon by showing it to be the product of a specific historical and cultural situation rather than one with a timeless and universal quality” (Mitter 1992: xiv), has looked at similar questions of Western ways of looking at and classifying Asian, and in particular Indian, art. He talks of “the distortion of the chronology of Indian art, devised on the basis of an extraneous element, namely classical taste, rather than on internal evidence” (Mitter 1992: xv-xvi). He suggests that “[s]ince it was never in doubt that classical art was the epitome of perfection, the art of Gandhāra produced under that influence had of necessity to be superior to the rest of Indian art” (Mitter 1992: 258). This too finds echoes in Cham art studies and the frequent treatment of the Hưong Quế Devi as one of the masterpieces of Cham art solely, it would seem, on Western aesthetic grounds.



Fig. 96 Claeys Line Drawing of the the Hưong Quế Devi (Claeys 1934: 51)

6.14 Imagining the Past - The Tháp Mãm Gajasimha

Another important sequence in the film concerns the large 12th-13th century Gajasimha which was on display in the Tháp Mãm section of the exhibition. The first account of the extraordinary story of the discovery of this statue by Jean-Yves Claeys in 1934, written by Claeys himself, was published in an English translation in the Illustrated London News the year following the excavations:

At the end of November 1933, a season when the annual ravages of typhoons in Annam are no longer to be feared, a humble peasant clearing his plot of land struck on a stone which obstructed his plough. Desiring to remove it from the ground, he began to dig around it [...]. Eventually our peasant, digging out his stone, brought to light the raised trunk of an elephant. Much agitated, and fearing reprisals by the spirits of the Beyond, he notified the mandarins. The French School of the Far East was immediately advised through the Resident Minister. On proceeding to the spot, we found that the object in question was a lion with an elephant's head (*gajasimha*), the raised trunk of which was flush with the ground [...]. Not far away we observed a mound [...]. The site was called "Tháp-mâm", the Annamite pronunciation of two characters meaning approximately "the demolished tower" [...]. Systematic investigation began on March 1, and, immediately on clearing the ground and cutting the first excavations, a sort of raised bank (fire-step) and parapet (mounted with Cham bricks well fitted, though without mortar) on the west, north and east of the mound, were brought to light [...]. A dozen trenches were cut at the base of mound and at various points above. On the third day of excavation large sandstone blocks were found which had belonged to an important Cham monument [...]. Soon the excavation proved extremely fruitful in sculptures remarkable for their dimensions and their excellent state of preservation. Daily for over two months, six to seven blocks of sandstone were extracted. (Claeys 1935: 376)

An almost full-page photograph of a Dragon-Makara found at the site dominated the front cover of the edition of the newspaper. This is almost certainly the first occasion when such international prominence and recognition is given to Ancient Champa and to the French archaeologists working on vestiges of its civilization.



Fig. 97 Cham art on front page of the Illustrated London News Saturday March 9, 1935

The discovery of such a huge quantity of a hitherto more or less unknown type of Cham art caused something of a sensation both in terms of archaeological discoveries and in the way it modified knowledge of Cham art and its evolution. Re-telling the discovery in an essay on Champa archaeology written a number of years later, Claeys commented that “we had counted on spending three days on this mysterious mound, and ended up spending three months”. He recounts that, “on the remains of a collapsed temple, which must have been amongst the biggest in all Champa, we unearthed 85 tonnes of unknown sculpture, which led to the discourteous comment ‘Archaeology by the tonne’” (Claeys 1942a: 5). This was a reference to a scathing

attack on the work of the EFEO by Émile Gaspardone, in which he had referred to the find as “sculpture by the tonne” (Gaspardone 1936: 628). Claeys riposted by declaring how nice it would be “to reap such a sculptural and architectural harvest more often”, and “all the more so since the art of Bình Định⁶⁴ was so sumptuously made known to us by it”. The discovery of such a large quantity of hitherto unknown Cham art in extraordinarily fine condition was the major reason for extending the Cham museum in Tourane, in order to accommodate the new pieces.



Fig.98 The 12th-13th century Tháp Mẫm Gajasimha

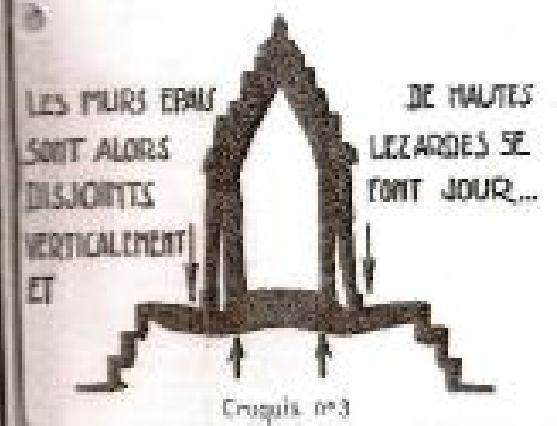
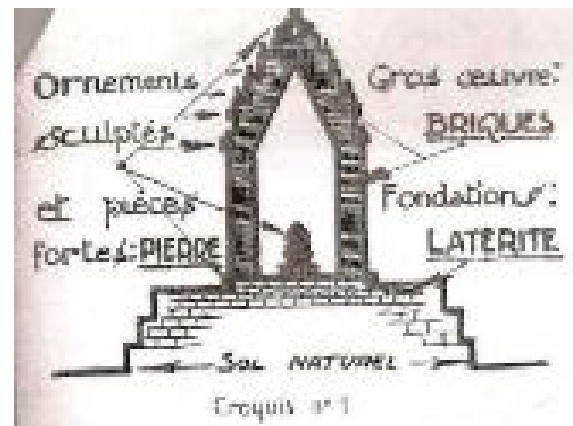
⁶⁴ The site of Tháp Mẫm is in the province of Bình Định and both names are used to refer to the 12th-13th century Cham art of this region.

The entire process of the three-month long excavation carried out by Claeys and his team at the Tháp Mẫm site is documented in a sequence about half-way through the film. One of the written captions which are interspersed between the filmed sequences, announces that “From the North to the South of Champa, many monuments collapse prematurely”, and that “the example of Tháp Mẫm (1934 excavations) allows us to reconstruct the stages of destruction of a monument”. This is the introduction to an extraordinary animated sequence which vividly documents a hypothetical process of events which demonstrate the way the Cham tower may have collapsed, resulting in the subsequent burial of the sculpture.

The animation begins with a plan of the citadel of Vijaya.⁶⁵ A magnifying glass superimposed over the image zooms in to show a close up of a temple surrounded by buildings. A cross-section then reveals the temple interior with a lingam in the centre of the tower. Moving arrows are used to indicate the walls of the tower collapsing through weight. A close-up of the temple, exquisitely painted in what looks like a water colour, shows the buildings around it fading out one by one, while the tower itself starts to disintegrate. A new caption then states that, “once abandoned, vegetation absorbs the ruins”. Close-ups of drawings of sculptures, many of which are recognisable, are followed by the mention that “rubblings are taken of inscriptions which will date the monument”. Filmed scenes of this process then follow, along with footage of excavation work at the find site and in the pit. The sequence concludes with the caption: “This work will find its conclusion in the publications of the EFEO”, and the shot cuts to a view of the school’s library.

⁶⁵ The Tháp Mẫm site is located to the North of the Cham citadel of Chaban, the Vijaya of the inscriptions, about 25km to the North of Qui Nhon

This highly didactic animated sequence was originally an independent work, entitled *Archéologie chame*, made by Claeys to accompany a lecture held at the Musée Louis Finot sometime in the late 1930s, as a response to the frequently asked question about how these sculptures could have become buried and forgotten (Claeys 1942a: 5). This lecture, like the Guimet exhibition, was an ephemeral event, but its trace survives in the film and in two illustrations accompanying Claeys's 1942 essay on Champa Archaeology (Claeys 1942a) (figs. 99 and 100). The first of these shows three sketches, *croquis* nos. 1-3, which summarise the process of collapse of the tower. These are not realistic images, rather they are technical explanatory cross sections accompanied by arrows to demonstrate the thrust and movements of collapse. The second illustration shows four artistic renderings of the temple, which Claeys terms "photographs", thus drawing attention to the complex relationship between photographic and artistic representation, since these are stills, or photographs, extracted from a film of Claeys's drawings. Photograph A imagines the temple at Tháp Mãm as it was originally, surrounded by a complex of buildings. Claeys recognises that "this is naturally hypothetical", but claims that the basic structure of the building is based on monuments of the same period and that the detail of the motifs is derived from the sculpture unearthed at the site. In Photograph B the process of collapse is beginning to appear, becoming more evident in C, until vegetation takes over and smothers the monument in the last image. These four images are beautifully rendered works of art, showing the buildings as they might have appeared, in a painterly fashion. These seven illustrations, three technical and four artistic, are therefore exemplars of two entirely different manners of depiction adopted by Claeys, but both the technical diagrams and the artistic illustrations combine to demonstrate



Figs. 99 & 100 Frames from animated sequence in Claeys's film on Cham archaeology (Claeys 1942a)

very clearly the process of destruction at work on the building. They are, however, stills extracted from the animated sequence in Claeys's film and, as Claeys himself pointed out, "cinema was able to render the tragic collapse" of the tower in a much more dynamic and dramatic way (Claeys 1942a: 5-6).

In this same 1942 essay on Champa Archaeology, Claeys gives us a succinct summary of how Cham art history and archaeology is constructed:

In order to find these vestiges, a chance set of circumstances is needed. The peasant toiling his land and coming up against a resistant piece of sculpture; the telling indicator which draws attention to the interest of the find; the watchful archaeologist who is notified in time. This was the case at Tháp Mẫm. Sometimes it can be ancient texts, the onomastic peculiarities of a region, deductions made from human geography, even chance or intuition which guide the archaeologist towards a virgin site. (Claeys 1942a: 6)

Such a diverse combination of circumstances, in which varying degrees of chance, skill, research and intuition come together in the way described by Claeys, forms, to a lesser or greater degree, the basis of all aspects of Cham art studies, from the unearthing in the excavation pit to classification and preservation in the museum environment. However, this is all too rarely acknowledged.

6.15 Conclusion

Some of the aspects of Cham art studies which were documented in Jean-Yves Claeys's film were also present at the Musée Guimet exhibition. We have seen how the ancient Cham objects which formed the core of the exhibition were framed within the *representation* of Champa, via the display of photographs, architectural drawings,

plaster casts and a film. The art objects themselves are physical traces of the ancient Cham past, while the framing objects which represent Champa are traces of a more recent past, the past of the colonial period when Cham art studies and archaeology began. This colonial period was further represented in the exhibition by three of the early pioneers of Cham art historical studies. These three men were all early 20th century members of the EFEO, reflecting the virtual monopoly that this institution held over Cham studies during this period. One of the introductory wall panels informed visitors to the exhibition that these men were working “within the colonial movement”.

Other than in the name of the exhibition, present-day Vietnam was conspicuous by its total absence, so the problems of how to locate Champa within Vietnam, which were discussed in the previous chapter with regard to other exhibitions, were not a preoccupation for the Musée Guimet curators. Viewers were confronted with the material traces of the *past*, not the present. These material traces came, from two very different pasts, the ancient Cham past and the more recent colonial past, with the former presented through the lens of the latter. Visitors both entered and exited the space of the old art via the world of French colonial Indochina. Inside the space of Ancient Champa, represented by the actual sculptures, visitors walked through a one-way display which took them from the earliest examples of Cham art to the last. This was not, though, a simple chronological time-line, as galleries simultaneously attempted to reflect geographical locations, periods and styles. More than a reflection of the ancient Cham past, therefore, the exhibition mirrored Cham art history, which has classified Cham art in these three overlapping ways.

We have seen how the Guimet exhibition made no use of modern photographs, nowhere was there any image of Champa as it survives today. For the purposes of the exhibition the civilization of Ancient Champa was *visually* represented entirely through the artworks on display, a handful of drawings dating from the early 20th century, Charles Carpeaux's photographs from the same period, and Jean-Yves Claeys's cinematographic footage from the 1930s and 40s. In all of these artefacts, perhaps nowhere is the complex temporal web with which visitors to the exhibition were confronted, with its superimposed historical layers in which one past is viewed through the lens of another, more manifest than in the exquisite architectural drawings of Henri Parmentier, which have dominated all Cham art historical studies and displays for over a century.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Towards an Ancient Cham Art of the Future

“It is so customary to think of the historical past in terms of narratives, sequences, dates, and chronologies that we are apt to suppose these things attributes of the past itself. But they are not, we ourselves put them there”, David Lowenthal¹

7.1 Thesis Summary

The starting point for this study was our fragmented knowledge of the Cham past and the fragmented nature of its material traces. We saw, in chapter 1, how reconciling this with a primarily traditional art history based largely on stylistic analysis and the search for origins is fraught with problems. Indeed, the idea that a unified Champa probably never existed raises fundamental questions about how and why we are seemingly able to identify some sort of unified art, and what exactly this art is.

By uncovering and opening up multi-facets of Cham art history I have attempted to demonstrate that Cham art is much more than just the physical traces of the Cham past. While the study of Cham art at its origins, the traditional focus of Cham art history, will always remain a vital part

¹ Lowenthal (1985: 219)

of Cham studies, a much broader approach is needed and above all an acceptance of the part we ourselves play in making Cham art what it is.

In Chapter 2, I contrasted two statues of the same god located in two very different French museums, in order to examine a number of issues that surround Cham art today and highlight its complicated nature. I demonstrated how the label on the Guimet Ganesh took us to places that the museum may not have intended us to go, and how, in fact, the label revealed as much, if not more, about the recent, albeit highly fragmentary, past of the sculpture than its Cham origins. Indeed, we saw in fact how nothing of the Cham origins of this particular sculpture can actually be known, and how its identification as Cham relies almost entirely on a tentative and very recent interpretation which has very quickly become enshrined in its label. Other than the date and name of the god represented, what the label indicated about the Cham past was either unintelligible except to the initiated (the coded style name) or useless in terms of information (unknown provenance). The only truly identifiable origin of the statue was its entry into the Musée des Colonies just after the end of the Second World War. This is when, as it were, the statue first came on to the world stage. Through an investigation of the scant information provided in the label, it was clear that interest in the sculpture was short-lived, and subsequently it went in and out of circulation, tossed around in 20th century inter-museum politics. It took a passionate individual to bring the statue back into the public domain, though even once it entered the hallowed halls of the national museum of Asian art, it has been little studied or written about, and when other Cham stars went on display in the museum's 2005 exhibition, it was abandoned forlornly in a closed-off gallery surrounded by packing crates and empty pedestals. All this was seen in stark contrast to the non-Cham Ganesh housed in the provincial museum of Rochefort-

sur-Mer, which has been constantly on display for over a century, has well-documented provenance and has been considered much more worthy of scholarly attention over the years. I suggest, on the other hand, that while the little eroded statue, tucked away in a recess of a wall in the Cham room of the Musée Guimet, may add little to our knowledge of the Cham past, it in fact contributes much to our understanding of twentieth-century Cham art studies. We will probably never know any more about its past existences, so the much more recent “unearthing” of the sculpture in museum storage in Paris has now effectively become its provenance. Its identification, publication and labelling are what has made it into a Cham piece. Through its transfer to the Musée Guimet, it entered into the established Cham canon, even though somewhat on the sidelines. Is it perhaps time, therefore, to fuse the ancient Cham past and the ancient Cham present and, at the very least, give him a new label? After all, as we have seen, the information is already provided if you search for it.

In the next chapter, I examined the visual archive of Cham art, looking at the ways ancient Champa has been represented in non-textual form, focusing in particular on the architectural line drawings of Henri Parmentier. In a detailed analysis of these drawings I examined the complex temporality through which we envisage the ancient Cham past, highlighting the links between image and imagination. By questioning what exactly these drawings are and how they have been used, by investigating the man who created them, and by contrasting them with other very different ways of illustrating Cham art, I attempted to show how they embody the way we understand ancient Champa. I demonstrated that seemingly scientific representations of Cham art are far from neutral and have accumulated meanings of their own. They carry with them a multitude of symbolism over and above the monuments they serve to represent.

Chapter 4 looked at the history of the Danang Museum. Rather than presenting a linear progressive history of the museum from its founding to the present day, I chose to isolate certain key moments and people in order to reveal how, why and when Cham art has been preserved and displayed. I gave considerable attention to Charles Lemire, founder of what would eventually become the Danang museum, but also closely involved with the origins of Cham art studies and of the creation of the EFEO which would so dominate these studies throughout much of the 20th century. I raised questions of colonial ideology and Lemire's status as an amateur, highlighting the crucial role that both the colonial period and amateurs played in the shaping of Cham art historical studies. We saw how Parmentier developed the museum out of the foundations created by Lemire, and how administration, finance and politics turned the genesis of the museum into a long and protracted struggle. We saw too how, once the museum was established, historical events and neglect created for a tumultuous history of the art on display, and how a handful of individuals, both foreign and Vietnamese, worked to preserve the collections and record them in catalogues.

An examination of the discovery of a large bronze statue at Đồng Dương in 1978, raised questions about interpretation, and how this may vary according to what researchers have access to, be it missing parts of sculptures or studies by other scholars. We saw how a mixture of chance and politics affected the recent history of this piece, and how tentative identifications can quickly become fact. The story of local officials taking affront brought to the fore ways that art can be appropriated and the new roles that it can serve.

The Danang museum is a quite unique institution. Unique not only because it is the world's only major museum devoted solely to the art of ancient Champa, but also because it may well be the only art museum where the three men chiefly responsible for its creation, Lemire through amassing the first collection of sculptures on the site, and Parmentier and Claeys by adding to the collections and designing the building to house them, were also the main individuals behind the foundations of the art history of the works on display. All three men lived and worked in Indochina, unlike the other major names connected with twentieth century Cham art history, notably Philippe Stern and Jean Boisselier, who worked on Cham art mainly from a distance, in Europe, and primarily from photographic archives.

Very little of the history and background of the institution, so fundamental to our understanding of the art it displays is made available to the visitor. This is a failing. Far from neutral, the building and its collection bear the traces of their history from the late 19th century onwards, and we need to be more aware of this in order to achieve a more rounded appreciation of the ancient art exhibited.

In Chapter 5, I broached the question of how to locate Champa historically. Since Champa no longer exists, but was once in what is now present-day Vietnam, this creates a problem in terms of how we write or display history and art and how we describe localities. I looked at a series of exhibitions on Vietnam, which attempted to integrate Champa into the wider narrative of Vietnamese history and culture. One, in Washington DC, during the build-up of the American conflict in Vietnam, went as far as making Champa the pivotal moment of Vietnamese archaeology, with pre and post-Champa periods forming exhibitionary sections around a central

theme of Champa. At an exhibition in Brussels, Champa was displayed as one of many historical and themed periods, sandwiched in between an introduction of war and an exit comprising the world of commerce and religion. In yet another exhibition, Champa was exhibited as part of a tradition of artisan crafts, and complemented by purpose-created Western-Vietnamese fusion objects on sale to visitors. Each of these approaches framed the civilization of Champa and its surviving physical traces in very different ways, mirroring the multiple ways we approach Cham history and art today.

Chapter 6 was devoted to the 2005 Musée Guimet exhibition of Cham sculpture. Setting out to create a comprehensive record of what would otherwise be merely an ephemeral event, I analyzed the intertwined narrative threads of this exhibition, which told the story not only of Cham art and its evolution, but also of early 20th century Cham archaeology and its main protagonists. While this was a highly innovative and informative way of displaying the ancient art, it was confined to a tiny handful of individuals, all associated with the EFEO, and all from the early 20th century colonial period. The ancient artefacts were framed within a colonial world, illustrated by drawings, photographs and plaster casts, and the present was totally absent. The ancient Cham past was seen entirely through the lens of the early 20th century colonial past.

In the many examples I have examined in each of the chapters, I have demonstrated how, alongside scientific and empirical research, fictions operate. The labelling of the Cham Ganesh is, in a way, a kind of fiction, since we have no way of tracing the piece's origins any earlier than a 1946 line entry in a museum archive. Everything we say about it must inevitably to a certain extent be invention. Champa was never part of Vietnam, yet exhibitions and publications have

invented ways of incorporating the two concepts. This is a fiction of sorts. The Cham exhibition at the Musée Guimet was an elaborate fiction, the fiction of the history of Cham art. And we saw through an examination of Parmentier's architectural line-drawings that we imagine, in the sense of understanding through image (image-ining), Ancient Champa through partly fictional illustrations. None of this, however, should be a problem since art history itself is a kind of fiction.

Many of the themes I have broached in the chapters of the thesis are common to other areas of art history, but until now have been absent in Cham art studies. It is time for this to change and for the field of Cham art studies to embrace many of the art historical and museological trends that have become commonplace in other areas of art history. It is to be hoped, therefore, that forthcoming exhibitions and museums may contribute to a broadening of our approach to ancient Cham art and result in a more rounded and less traditional field of study.

7.2 Forthcoming Exhibitions and Museums

International interest in exhibiting Champa does not seem to be on the wane, with several important exhibitions currently in the planning stages. This is clearly a good thing for Cham art studies, but what form will these exhibitions take? The exhibitions examined in this thesis were largely classical in their layout and format, adding little to our knowledge or understanding of either Ancient Champa or current trends in Cham art historical, historical and archaeological studies. This is perhaps only to be expected since Champa is almost unknown outside Vietnam

and for the time being any international exhibitions tend to be general introductions aimed at wide audiences. However, exhibitions introducing a wide audience to unknown or little known art can take many and varied forms. The major exception discussed in this thesis was the Guimet exhibition which, while displaying the art in a traditional way, with a chronological layout and minimal labelling, was innovative in other ways. Of particular interest was the way the exhibition wove a second narrative thread, that of the pioneers of Cham art history and archaeology, alongside the major narrative of the art itself. The exhibition also took the important step of displaying colonial era photographs, drawings and plaster casts, affording a glimpse into the world of early 20th century archaeology in Indochina. This is a promising new area of Cham art studies since, as we have seen, the Musée Guimet is currently preparing an exhibition of colonial era plaster casts. It is hoped that this exhibition will include casts of Cham art and will bring to the fore these early ways of visualising and understanding ancient Champa.²

This thesis has examined ways in which the discovery, preservation and display of Cham artworks has influenced our understanding of Cham art and has contributed to the construction of the field of Cham art history. We cannot know of course how exactly these same processes will modify Cham art in the future, and we are faced, therefore, with a number of unknowns, since Cham art objects are continuing to be unearthed. Future finds may well include archaeological artefacts, entire sculptures and quite possibly whole sites. Just as in the past, some of these finds will almost certainly be fortuitous discoveries made by villagers and farmers, while others will be the object of organised archaeological excavations. In what ways will these new finds modify the existing canon of Cham art? Vigilance will be needed in terms of how such finds are recorded and where the artefacts end up. How many fortuitous finds will, for instance, go

² See footnote 56, chapter 6.

unnoticed by the authorities and be sold on the international art market? How many artefacts will be stolen from sites and suffer a similar fate? We have seen how early on in Indochinese archaeology the EFEO failed to make detailed records of many of their finds before the objects were transferred to museums, creating problems later in terms of determining exact provenance.³ We have seen also that this problem is even greater in the case of more recent finds which have been sold straightaway and end up in private collections without ever coming to the notice of the academy. Even when such works are subsequently published, a total lack of provenance makes their place in the general canon of Cham art highly problematic, and raises serious questions of authenticity.⁴

In 2014 -2015, the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut will hold an exhibition on the archaeology of Vietnam, which, the institute suggests, “will offer visitors something long overdue: an overview of the finest that the Vietnamese archaeologists have discovered over the past 50 years” (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut 2013).⁵ An exhibition devoted entirely to Vietnamese archaeological finds of the past 50 years will be the first of its kind. By promoting in Europe the work carried out by Vietnamese archaeologists, it may go some way in helping to redress the balance of an approach to the study of the Vietnamese past which has for long been Euro-centric.⁶ The choice to limit the exhibition to the display of objects discovered over the past 50 years is a highly innovative one. The exhibition will thus be set entirely in the post-colonial

³ See chapter 4

⁴ See discussion of Hubert (2005b) in chapter 5.

⁵ The exhibition, curated by Andreas Reinecke, will be held at the LWL-Museum for Archaeology in Herne in the second half of 2014, then at the House of Archaeology and History in Chemnitz in Saxony, in the first half of 2015 and finally at the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museums / Museum of World Cultures in Mannheim in the second half of 2015. A fourth exhibition venue is planned at a museum in Hanoi (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut 2013)

⁶ For interesting discussions of this topic see Glover (1993 and 2003).

period, a period which, as we have seen, saw the drastic decline of direct European involvement in the country and an increase in Vietnamese research and fieldwork.⁷

Since the exhibition is about *Vietnamese* archaeology, how exactly the curators will tackle the problem of locating Champa within Vietnam, which was the topic discussed in chapter 5, will be of particular interest. By limiting the exhibition to finds of the past 50 years, the curators are faced with question of which narrative thread or threads to adopt in the exhibition display. Will they choose to highlight the artefacts found and attempt to weave them into an art historical narrative or will the main emphasis be the story of the archaeological work and the Vietnamese researchers responsible for the finding of the pieces? Alternatively, will the exhibition attempt to interweave the two, as was the case at the 2005 Guimet Cham exhibition? An exhibition comprising solely of objects found over recent decades will give a totally different view of the art displayed, where the geographical spread and stylistic variety of the artefacts are entirely the results of the fortunes of discovery rather than selective choices of art historians and archaeologists. In the case of Cham art, display has of course always been dictated to a lesser or greater degree by the fortunes of discovery, but in previous exhibitions, curators, selecting from a much broader corpus of work, have followed other criteria when deciding which art to display.

The finds of the past 50 years do not of course exist in isolation, but rather complement the finds of the colonial period. How the curators of the German exhibition will choose to link the new finds with the pre-existing corpus of artefacts will highlight the ways such new discoveries contribute to the ever evolving art historical narrative. Seemingly comprehensive art displays, such as the 2005 Guimet Cham exhibition, tend to give the illusion that they are showing the

⁷ See literature review, chapter 1.

entire range of the art, the whole story as it were. This illusion is laid bare whenever new unknown art is found at a later date, as was dramatically the case, for example, in 1934 when Jean-Yves Claeys discovered large quantities of a hitherto unknown Cham art in Bình Định, and which dramatically changed the narrative of Cham art and resulted in the extending of the museum in Tourane to display it (see chapter 6). It is to be hoped that an exhibition like the German one will be a chance to show the ways in which new discoveries can often reveal gaps and absences in our earlier knowledge, and thus emphasize the way art historical narratives are inevitably dictated by what material exists or is known.

Until relatively recently, our entire understanding of ancient Cham art relied on the choices and decisions made by colonial archaeologists and collectors. Finds and choices made by new generations of Vietnamese archaeologists in the post colonial period have started to modify this and this needs to be greater reflected in the literature and museum displays.

In Vietnam, discussions are currently taking place concerning the creation of a new Cham museum based in the city of Hue. For the time being, these are shrouded in a veil of secrecy and no official information is available. It is thought that one of the possibilities being discussed is for a museum that mixes art, archaeology and ethnology.⁸ Such a museum would be a major break from current trends. At present most museums in Vietnam that include Champa in their collections are either art museums or ethnology museums, displaying either the artefacts of the

⁸ Personal communication Anne-Valérie Schweyer.

ancient past or the culture and everyday life of the modern-day ethnic Cham. Rarely is there any attempt to link the past and the present in the museum displays.⁹

7.3 Ownership of Cham Art

The ownership of other peoples' art has been the subject of an ever-increasing international debate over the past few decades, and there have been a number of high profile cases of Western museums returning works of art in their collections to their countries of origin.¹⁰ There have, to the best of my knowledge, been no requests to date for the return to either Vietnam, or to the Cham people, of Cham objects in foreign museum collections. While such demands for the physical return of objects may well shape Cham art of the future, ownership can nonetheless be seen in a more general sense. Who, for instance, has the right to display or even to write about the art? These questions, which have, for example, been the subject of much academic discussion in the case of African or Indian art, have yet, it seems, to enter into the arena of Cham art studies. As we have seen, Cham art history was largely written by the French, and later Vietnamese scholars contributing to the field for the most part used the French research as the basis for their own studies. The resulting entirely Eurocentric approach to the art of a little known ancient Asian civilization has until now gone largely unchallenged. While writers such as Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta have written persuasively about how European approaches to Indian

⁹ The Danang museum does have one room devoted to the modern Cham ethnic group. This is relegated to the upper floor of the new wing, thus distanced from most of the sculpture galleries, and other than the display of a few photographs of festivals taking place at Cham temples, no real attempt is made to connect this room to the sculptures on display in the other galleries of the museum.

¹⁰ In the case of Southeast Asian art, most recently, for example, the Metropolitan Museum in New York returned to Cambodia two Khmer sculptures which had been in their collections for over two decades (Mashberg and Blumenthal 2013). For a full discussion of the question of who owns ancient art see James Cuno's *Who Owns Antiquity* (Cuno 2008).

art have resulted in a biased and at times inaccurate art history which is often at odds with an Indian approach, this has yet to be done for Cham art.¹¹

In this thesis, the inter-museum rivalries over the hosting of a Champa exhibition in Paris, discussed in chapter 6, raised general questions of ownership of Cham art amongst museums, albeit in this case temporary ownership for the duration of an exhibition. As we saw, the battle for ownership of the exhibition in Paris was won by the Musée Guimet, the national museum. They then chose, in their exhibition, to highlight EFEO claims over Champa during the colonial period. None of this was noted at the time of the exhibition and this is regrettable. The debate needs to be widened in the future. Within Vietnam itself, a number of Cham temples and Cham statues are in active use for ritual purposes, most notably, for example, at Po Klaung Garai.¹² The temples here, rather than mere museological relics, are functioning places of worship, and provide an excellent example of ritual continuity. But who has the moral right of “ownership” of such sites? Those who worship there, or the archaeological and museum community who seek to preserve the temples as national heritage? The annual Kate festival held at the temple around October every year to celebrate the Cham New Year is attended by thousands of people, but many of those taking part are in fact Vietnamese rather than ethnic Cham. Clearly questions of ownership are complex. All this forms an integral part of Cham art and needs to be better acknowledged in the literature, museum displays and exhibitions.

¹¹ See Mitter (1992) and Guha-Thakurta (1997, 2004 and 2007) for insightful discussions on the implications of Western approaches to the study of Asian art and the ways it is displayed.

¹² See Schweyer (2011: 86-91 for a description of this 13th century temple complex located in the province of Ninh Thuận.

7.4 Conclusion

I have aimed in this thesis to demonstrate how a series of new ways of approaching ancient Cham art highlights the way that our understanding of this is as much a product of the present as of the past. New and varied meanings are produced by looking at the biographies of the sculptures and the people responsible for their survival, display and classification. It is the preserving, the displacing, the labelling, the recording, the copying, the interpreting and the displaying of the art that makes it what it is just as much as, if not more than, its original functions. This is inevitably the case with all ancient art, but is particularly true for Champa because of the extremely fragmentary nature of the surviving material traces coupled with our sparse knowledge of the Cham past. This is why I suggest that the field of Cham art is actually something of our own creation, a 20th century invention. We live in an era where academic disciplines have become acutely more aware of their own activity. Cham art studies need to embrace this so that, to re-quote Nora Taylor, “it no longer seems frozen or ossified in comparison with other areas of current art historical study” (Taylor 2000a: 12). To complement the traditional art historical research carried out to date, therefore, we should be moving towards a fusion of what we do and what we study. *Asian fusion* has become a common way to describe such things as food or crafts or buildings which combine Western and Asian elements. It can equally well be applied to ancient Cham art.

This thesis must remain open-ended. Since Cham art is not fixed in time but changes with it, we do not yet know what the Ancient Cham art of the future will be.

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Abbreviations used:

- BAVH* : Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue
BCAI : Bulletin de la Commission Archéologique de l'Indochine
BEFEO : Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient
BSEI : Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises
CHCPI : Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Péninsule Indochinoise
EFEO : École Française d'Extrême-Orient
ICOM : International Council for Museums
SACHA : Lettre de la SACHA (Société des Amis du Champa Ancien)
KCH : Tạp chí Khảo cổ học (Journal of Archaeology)

Note on Archives of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient:

At the time of consultation, the Indochinese archives of the EFEO, kept at the École's main headquarters in Paris, were referenced by box (*carton*) number in Roman numerals, followed by folder (*dossier*) number and document number written in Arabic numbers, if and where these exist (some material in the boxes was unclassified). Example: EFEO Archives: X- 32-7 (document no. 7 in folder no. 32, archived in box X).

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