

FIG. 12

Duong Long (Ivory Towers), Binh Dinh province, 12th–13th century.



FIG. 13

Canh Tien, Binh Dinh province, 12th century.



As has been pointed out above, the large number of temples in Binh Dinh Province indicates Quy Nhon became an important center by the end of the twelfth century.⁵⁵ French scholars in the twentieth century discussed the temples of Binh Dinh Province in a stylistic continuum with temples from other regions along the Cham coast. Yet, considering each set, a regional style may prove more productive. The structures, many built on hilltops, are numerous, and they attest to a period of energetic temple-building between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁶ Inscriptional evidence for specific dates of the Binh Dinh temples does not exist, but scholars are unanimous in assigning them to this period. Given the Khmer presence at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries, one would expect Khmer influence on Cham temples, as well as influence going in the opposite direction; however, there is no uniform adoption of one or another element in the temples noted above. Inscriptional evidence tells us of trade contacts with the Khmer; the Phum Mien (Kompong Cham province) inscription of 987 mentions a Vietnamese merchant and a Champa merchant who sold goods with local traders.⁵⁷

In the early twentieth century, the scholar Parmentier said that the temples most closely akin to Khmer architecture were the three temples of Duong Long (Ivory Towers, fig. 12), situated on a slight mound in the village of Binh An. The relatively intact, tapered superstructure recalls the lotus-bud form of the towers of Angkor Wat (first half of the twelfth century), constructed shortly before the period of Khmer domination in Champa. Yet the Duong Long towers appear as a series of diminishing stories, rather than a smoothly curved form, and the proportion of the *amalaka* on the top is much larger, by necessity, as the tower does not narrow as much as the Khmer temple tower does. Furthermore, the temples of Angkor have a profile built up of antefixes (abstracted forms based on a *makara* motif) sprouting upward rather than outward, as the antefixes of Cham towers generally do, though they are no longer *in situ* at Duong Long. Not only do the superstructures differ, but the proportions of the walls and the ratio of wall to door and tympanum are also quite different at Angkor Wat and Duong Long. Like most Cham towers, the Duong Long towers appear tall and narrow, with a great deal of undecorated wall space. The walls of the towers of Angkor Wat, on the other hand, are largely obscured by the porch and tympanum over each of the doors and false doors, giving the towers a heavier, more grounded look.

The relief sculpture of the tympanums of Angkor Wat, often describing a scene from the Indian epic *Ramayana*, differs dramatically from that of the tympanums of the Binh Dinh temples. The Goddess included in this exhibition (cat. no. 68) is typical of the arrangement of a single image most often found in that location, while the Nataraja (cat. no. 66) is unusual in the multiple figures included in the triangular or leaf-shaped decorative element. The form of the tympanum bears a relationship to that seen in Khmer architecture, although the influence may go from Champa to Cambodia, for the triangular tympanum occurs in Champa as early as the tenth century, while the lintel is the focus of the doorway in the Cambodian temple of that period. The artists of Champa certainly were not greatly influenced by the sculptors of Cambodia. Whether techniques were being adopted is another issue. Certainly there is a greater use of sandstone—used to accentuate portions of the temple, such as the corners—during this period, and this may have emerged from a familiarity with Khmer temples, which are entirely constructed of stone. And, they were familiar with Khmer sculpture, as it has been found in Binh Dinh.⁵⁸

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