

1 100 YEARS OF THE ĐÀ NẴNG MUSEUM OF CHAM SCULPTURE

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Đà Nẵng is a port city in Central Việt Nam. The historical documents and ancient relics found in the vicinity of Đà Nẵng show that the area had been occupied by the people of the ancient kingdom of Champa from the early centuries of the first millennium to the fourteenth century CE.¹ In the French colonial time before World War II, the city was known in French as Tourane. Some of the buildings from French colonial times can be seen today in Đà Nẵng, the most special of them being the *Musée Cham* (Cham Museum), which was built in 1915 in the *jardin de la ville de Tourane*, on the scenic bank of the Hàn river. The 100 years of the museum are intertwined with the changes in the history of Việt Nam. When the French 'protectorate' ended in 1945, the French-sponsored institutes were transferred to the new governments of Việt Nam. Since 1963, in the turmoil of the complicated war, the *Musée Cham* was put in the custody of the Saigon Archaeology Institute of the South Việt Nam Government. When the war ended in 1975 with the collapse of the Southern Government, the *Musée Cham* was affiliated as a department of the Provincial General Museum of Quảng Nam-Đà Nẵng. In 2007 it was re-established as an independent museum, with the official name of the Đà Nẵng Museum of Cham Sculpture (DMCS). The history of the museum can be reviewed as a mosaic of collecting, conserving and displaying the Cham artefacts for the public by the efforts of generations of enthusiasts over 100 years.

A century of collecting Cham objects

The ruins of the Cham temples caught the attention of the French scholars and antique collectors who were in various ways involved in the 'protectorate mission' in the provinces of central Việt Nam from the end of the nineteenth century (Baptiste 2005; Brown 2013). As the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO) was established at the beginning of the twentieth century, the collecting and studying of Cham art was carried out with a more academic

orientation. In 1901, Louis Finot, the first director of EFEO, published a research paper attached to an inventory, in which he noted 68 objects from the Cham sites that were already collected to the *Jardin de Tourane* (Finot 1901: 32).

In 1902, Henri Parmentier, the head of the Archaeology Department of the EFEO, developed the idea of a storage of Cham sculpture in Tourane' and in the following years as the collection grew with new finds he proposed a purpose built museum in Đà Nẵng, at the *Jardin de Tourane*. Parmentier said one of the reasons for the choice was that the Đà Nẵng region had been the centre of a Champa kingdom. Much debate occurred among the governmental offices and the professionals before the final decision was made to start the construction of the museum in 1915. The museum was opened to the public in 1919 with the display of 268 objects.² The result was finally achieved, but it required seventeen years of patient effort.³

After its inauguration in 1919, more objects were added to the museum collection as the results of archeological excavations. In 1927 and 1928, when Léonard Arousseau was the director of EFEO, an investigation project was carried out at Trà Kiệu under the supervision of J.Y. Claeys. Some decades earlier, several impressive objects had been found in the area, including a big pedestal with elaborate carvings (Trà Kiệu pedestal BTC 95-22.2) and the artistic reliefs of dancing apsara (BTC 118/1-22.5). Scholars began thinking that Trà Kiệu must have been a capital of Champa, as mentioned in Chinese sources (Arousseau 1923). And the Claeys excavation in 1927-1928 aimed to clarify this hypothesis with a focus on architecture and sculpture (Glover 1997). The objects discovered raised the question on the date of the Cham settlement of Trà Kiệu. A relief of a *Yakṣa* (BTC 136-20.2) suggested a date before the seventh century and a circular piece with a distinctive human breast motif indicated it remained into the later centuries.