

Another important excavation in 1934 at Tháp Mãm, Bình Định province, yielded an exceptional collection of remarkable objects. According to a report by J. Y. Claeys, 58 tons of stone objects were shipped to Đà Nẵng from the excavation site. The objects were later transferred to the museums in Hà Nội, Sài Gòn and Huế (Claeys 1934). The major part was left in the Cham Museum of Đà Nẵng and formed an impressive collection with distinctive characteristics. The Tháp Mãm monument, was judged from its structure and contents to belong to the thirteenth century, shortly after the end of Khmer occupation in central Champa. With the Tháp Mãm collection, the Cham Museum was in possession of a fully representative collection of objects typical of the key periods in the evolution of Cham art.

From 1945 to 1975 the archaeological missions were interrupted by the terrible and prolonged war in Việt Nam. Despite the huge US airbase beside the city, just one case is recorded of an American soldier transporting a Cham statue to the Museum in 1969 (*Dvārapāla* BTC 279-9.15). It is not clear from the records whether artefacts were damaged, stolen or moved. The current events (*Chronique*) section in several issues of the French EFEO Bulletin show boxes of objects being added to or transferred from the Cham Museum after 1919, but because the Museum archives and inventories vanished during the war, it is difficult today to check what happened to the collection in these 30 dark years.

The Cham Museum's fortune changed dramatically in the post-war reconstruction period in all localities in the province. In the 1980s, 20 objects were discovered at the Cham relic of Quá Giáng as the site was cleared. In 1982 the excavation of an irrigation channel in An Mỹ uncovered a Cham temple foundation. The Museum was called in and the investigation collected three busts, five broken statues and other fragments in sandstone. Their style was so distinctive that the artefacts were designated as in the 'An Mỹ style' (Phương 1983). In Khuê Trung suburb of Đà Nẵng city, villagers restoring their local temple discovered two *yoni* covered by the roots of a banyan tree and alerted the Museum. Especially important was a sandstone pillar with inscriptions on its four faces that was unearthed by a Khuê Trung family while digging the foundations of their new house. The inscription in Sanskrit and Old Cham language is dated in 899 CE and disclosed the existence

of a monastery in the area (Griffiths 2012: 263-270).

The most memorable recent discovery came in 1978 when a farmer uncovered a Cham bronze masterpiece amid the thousands of tons of collapsed brick sanctuaries in the ruins of the great 9<sup>th</sup> century Đồng Dương Buddhist monument. The large, powerful and elegant bronze goddess was subsequently designated a National Treasure of Việt Nam. The bronze (BTC 1651), is thought to be the statue of the diety Lakṣmīndra-Lokeśvara who is mentioned in an inscription found close to her find-spot. The goddess is the largest Cham bronze and is regarded as a masterpiece of Cham art. French scholar Jean Boisselier wrote: 'It is not exaggerated to consider the discovery of this statue...as the most important event for the history of Cham art since the excavation of Tháp Mãm sanctuary in 1934.' (Boisselier 1984: 336)

In recent years, the DMCS carried out excavation projects in the suburbs of Đà Nẵng City. Following the announcement of the French archaeologists of the *dépôt sacré* found at Po Nagar-Nha Trang (Parmentier 1909) and Đại Hữu-Quảng Bình (Arrouseau 1926), the excavation at Phong Lệ and Cẩm Mít in Đà Nẵng in 2011-2012 provides a full view of the structure of the 'underground space' in the centre of the Champa temple, where the consecration deposit was put. And this is the first time the collection of DMCS was added with the religious objects of gold and quartz from the sacred deposit in the Cham temple foundation (Thắng 2013).

### Studying and cataloguing the museum collection

In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with his campaign for the construction of the museum, Henri Parmentier carried out the investigation of the Cham vestiges in the whole of Central Việt Nam. Beside the reports printed in the *BEFEO*, Henri Parmentier accomplished an important work, entitled *Inventaire descriptif des monuments Cam de l'Annam*, volume I, which was published in 1909 with 598 pages and 134 figures; Volume II was published in 1918 with 571 pages and 173 figures. In this great inventory work, Parmentier provided the basic information of the archaeological excavations and the first description of Cham objects with photos and drawings. These close examinations and field experiences helped Henri Parmentier compose the catalogue of the Cham Museum