

This dancing female figure is identified as Durgā in her fight against the buffalo-demon Mahiṣa, a ubiquitous theme in South and Southeast Asian art. The goddess is sculpted in dance posture with two legs braced, though the lower part of the tympanum is missing. Her ten arms are outstretched and her hands hold various attributes. On her right side, the primary hand holds a long arrow and the second an empty circular dish. The third and fourth together grasp a branch or rope, and the fifth is placed on her thigh. On her left side, the primary hand holds a bow while the second grasps a horn and a conch. The third and fourth together hold a short arrow, and the fifth carries a strap. These attributes are representative of the divine weapons given to Durgā by the gods when she was born. Using her extraordinary powers, she was able to kill Mahiṣa, who accumulated such great strength through practicing austerities that no gods could defeat him.¹ Owing to this legend, sculptures of Durgā standing astride the buffalo is also called *Mahiṣāsura-mardini*.

The ruins of Chánh Lộ in Quảng Ngãi were excavated by Henri Parmentier in 1904. The Chánh Lộ style was named after this site and dated to the 11th century CE, a transitional period from the Mỹ Sơn A1/Trà Kiệu to the Tháp Mẫm style.² The tympanum of Durgā was once located above the main entrance of the Mỹ Sơn E4 temple. Together with the lintel of royal court dance [45.8], it is attributed to the Chánh Lộ style though both do not come from the eponymous site. A close look at this image of Durgā, however, reveals stylistic commonalities with female statues found in Chánh Lộ in terms of body anatomy, headdress and facial features. Durgā's naked torso with full breasts is thrust forward in a way comparable with the Saraswati icon. [21.4] Both also wear a diadem (*kirītamukuta*) with the first tier adorned with leaf-shaped motif that could have been developed from the Trà Kiệu prototype and later became more elaborate in the Tháp Mẫm phase. Another parallel image to the Mỹ Sơn E4 Durgā is the tympanum of a four-armed female deity [4.2] excavated at Chánh Lộ. The goddess is also recognized as a representation of Durgā because of her attributes.

The art of Chánh Lộ style, as exemplified in these sculptures, still retains traditional elements of a Cham face, yet at this period, the fleshy lips of female deities seem to be accentuated by a soft smile, which is characteristic of Trà Kiệu

sculptures. The two tympanums also show the goddess wearing sampots with curved central flaps and rounded upper panels. It is likely that this type of garment was first applied to the Durgā at Mỹ Sơn E4 and later further elaborated for the one in Chánh Lộ, as indicated by the undecorated panels of the first and the embroidered motif of the latter. Yet this also points to a possibility that the two images of the same goddess were crafted by artists of different ateliers, with their own stylistic variations.

Mus discussed at length the assimilation of Indian religions into Cham indigenous beliefs and customs.³ This process of cultural assimilation includes important beliefs in fecundity. The Cham, both past and present, worship the soil as the source of all living beings. As such, they have long defined the soil as their Mother Goddess whose divine force is embodied everywhere. In India, the cult of the Mother Goddess is thought to have begun as early as the Indus civilization (2600-1900 BCE). Around the 5th century CE, this cult flourished in India as illustrated in *Devī Māhātmyam*, a section of *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāna* which tells of the victory of goddess Durgā over Mahiṣa.⁴ This religious text synthesizes the pre-existing cults of the goddess in India into the Śakti tradition, considering the Great Goddess, or Devī and her various forms as the principal focus of worship. Hinduism and the Śakti tradition were then imported to Champa and assimilated into the local religious and artistic traditions. Since the 7th century CE, the image of the Mother Goddess emerged in different forms in Cham art alongside the cult of Śiva. On the one hand, the Cham people conformed to Indian iconographic formula in portraying the Great Goddess, yet on the other hand they transformed that concept of female energy into new visual representations. The subject of Durgā slaying the buffalo as the fierce form of Devī was thus quite at home in Cham art as evidenced by the tympanums under discussion here, and others excavated in Binh Định, formerly Vijayā area of Champa.⁵

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- 1 Veronica Ions, *Indian Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1967), 91-94.
- 2 Emmanuel Guillon, *Cham Art: Treasures from the Da Nang Museum, Vietnam* (Bangkok: River Books, 2001), 134-138; 161-162; Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire de Champa: recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie [Vietnamese translation]* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963), 264-270.
- 3 Paul Mus, *Indian Seen from The East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa*, trans. I.M. Mabbett and ed. I.W. Mabbett and D.P. Chandler (Center for Southeast Asia Studies: Monash University, 1975).
- 4 Srivastava, M.C.P. (1979) *Mother Goddess in Indian Art, Archaeology and Literature* (Agam: Kala Prakashan, 1979), 156; Vidya Dehejia, ed., *Devī: The Great Goddess* (Washington D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1999), 18-19, 37-57; Jackie Menzies, *Goddess: Divine Energy* (Sydney: Art gallery of New South Wales, 2006), 99.
- 5 Guillon, *Cham Art*, 140-141; Provincial Museum of Binh Định, *Collection of Historical and Cultural Relics in Binh Định* (Qui Nhon: 2004), 31.