

**67. Xuân Mỹ, Bình Định.**

13th century
Sandstone: H. 90 cm;
W. 40 cm ; D. 30 cm
BTC 210-11.2

**68. Thu Bồn, Quảng Nam**

10th-11th centuries
Sandstone: H. 74 cm;
W. 70 cm; D. 23 cm
BTC 85-19.3

Some important Cham ruins were uncovered by accident at the site of Chánh Lộ in 1903. The work was supervised by architect Henri Parmentier, which brought to light several large stone sculptures. This image was found in the ruins of Chánh Lộ, an 11th century temple with two towers in a rare octagonal shape, and the sole standing remnant today is the tower of Bàng An in Quảng Nam province.

The main sanctuary of Chánh Lộ was dedicated to Śiva in the form of a *liṅga*. Accessed by an entrance pavilion (*mandapa*) flanked by two door guardians (*dvārapāla*), the sanctuary was built in traditional brick. Most of the stone sculptures are plundered from the site of Chánh Lộ and the old bricks were re-used in new building constructions, furnished by local gatherers of bricks for construction work. Both of the octagonal temples are dated to the 12th century, based on inscriptional similarities with Mỹ Sơn G1 temple, which is specifically dated to 1157/8 CE.

The tympanum was taken to the provincial capital before Parmentier began his excavation, so its original position in the temple is unknown. It depicts what he called 'a dancing female figure between two geese that lift lotus flowers

towards her'.¹ The unfinished birds, of typical 11th century style, spread their wings in sway their necks while holding up lotus buds – complementing the dynamic posture of the dancer.² The geese (*hamsa*) are associated with Sarasvatī, the ancient Indic goddess of wisdom, the arts and nature whose name is borne by a river in northwest India. However the common attributes of the goddess, such as a manuscript, a rosary, a musical instrument, or a water vessel are not seen in the Chánh Lộ tympanum, only the geese and the lotuses. The seated goddesses from Xuân Mỹ (cat. 67) and Thu Bồn (cat. 68) also have both geese and lotuses.

The dancing female figure is dressed in a short loincloth with an elegant, flaring centre fold bearing florets. The body of the dancer moves forward with subtle power, twisting her hips well beyond the Indic *tribhāṅga* posture with with three bodily bends. The poised face is rather broad and square face, and may show affinities with the contemporary Bayon style period of Cambodia. The simple four-petalled flower on the loincloth also appears on Cambodian reliefs of the 11th and 12th centuries at Angkor Wat, Bayon, Banteay Kdei and Preah Khan temples, especially on parasols and on the skirts of standing female devatas.

1 Parmentier 1909 (1), p. 231.

2 For example see the birds carved in the same manner in the false stories of the principal tower of Po Nagar in Nha Trang in Parmentier 1902 (1).