

judges by the size of the conserved objects, the building must have been of considerable size. It was positioned no doubt in the small sacred wood which spreads behind the pagoda and forms a large mound covered by large trees.³ Further on Henri Parmentier describes a sculptural fragment whose characteristics are those of the great animal statues discovered later: 'The Nandin, fairly mutilated, is interesting notably in the curious geometrical ornamentation that emphasise all parts of the body. The animal carries a large necklace with six layers in two ribbons; from the third row of the upper band hang 15 bells.'⁴ In the journal for the second excavation campaign at Trà Kiệu (1928), when he was on mission in Bình Định, Jean-Yves Claeys was next to record the richness of the remains of Chà Bàn and its surroundings. A few kilometres from the citadel in the village of Khánh Lã, which was supposed to have had a very important monument, Jean-Yves Claeys made a drawing of a telamon lion which Henri Parmentier had described in 1909.⁵ This piece in all but one iconographic detail,⁶ resembled point for point the telamon lions that would be discovered in 1934 at Tháp Mâm. The region had then a great archaeological richness with special importance for the history of art of Champa in the 12th and 13th centuries. Not far from the findspot of the *gajasimha*, the imposing mound excavated by Jean-Yves Claeys measured some 10 m high and 40 m across. The excavation yielded 'Daily, and during more than two months, six or seven sandstone blocks that had a role in the decoration of the monument.'⁷ In total, according to Jean-Yves Claeys, 58 tonnes of sculpted stones were transported to Đà Nẵng after this especially fruitful research.⁸

The *gajasimha*, whose impressive and grandiose aspect derives largely from the elevated trunk, represents the culmination of an iconographic type represented by diverse in-the-round figures that stake out an evolution of Cham art. From the *gajasimha* of Trà Kiệu

(10th century)⁹ to that of Tháp Mâm (c. 12th-13th centuries), passing through the piece of Chiên Đàn (11th century)¹⁰ it is possible to follow the morphological and stylistic transformations of this extraordinary animal – half-elephant (*gaja*) in the head and half-lion (*simha*) in the body.

In the style of Tháp Mâm, as Jean Boisselier defined it,¹¹ the sculptors demonstrate their technical virtuosity above all while appearing very little interested in the anatomy of the body or to the subtlety of modelling that so many earlier works exhibit. The squat body, somehow gathered into itself, comes across as completely stylised, as much in the volumes as in the coat: the legs look like columns attached somewhat dryly to the body, while the mane on the chest is treated as small twisted tufts and on the back of the head in rows of loops rather like leaves, which call to mind a rigid cape. 'The geometric ornamentation emphatic over the whole body' – as Henri Parmentier put it in 1909 when he described some sculptures found in the Chà Bàn area – appears at the top of the legs – one cannot speak of thighs here – and on the animal's cheeks. Among the motifs forming this 'geometric ornamentation' are the stylised curls in the shape of leaves on the cheeks, much as in one of the registers on the chest and the main headset present on numerous pieces in the Tháp Mâm style, as much in statuary as in architectural decoration. The motif of a snail shell or a comma is so characteristic that it alone is enough to identify a sculpture as belonging to this style. Philippe Stern took this as the principal motif of the style of all Bình Định, covering all the final evolution of Cham art and including of course the style of Tháp Mâm, which Boisselier was to later define. The jewelry found in many other pieces is also highly characteristic. The necklace of elaborate large bells, already present in earlier work, nevertheless inscribes the art of Tháp Mâm in a real continuity with earlier styles.

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3 Parmentier 1909 (1), p. 208.

4 *Idem*, p. 209.

5 Parmentier 1909 (1), p. 172, fig. 14 of the journal of Jean-Yves Claeys whose drawing is dated Friday 18 May 1928.

6 This was the presence of a small elephant between the lion's paws.

7 Claeys 1934 (2), p. 757.

8 *Ibidem*, p. 759.

9 Cao Xuân Phổ 1988, no. 124, p. 119.

10 Parmentier 1909 (1), pp. 277-278 and fig. 55; Boisselier 1963 (1), where the piece is wrongly shown as the earliest Cham *gajasimha* in the round, p. 220 and fig. 162.

11 Boisselier 1963 (1), pp. 256-257.

