

# Collecting Champa Art: The Role of Charles Lemire and Henri Parmentier in the Establishment of the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture.

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## Abstract:

This article examines several arguments proposed by the art historian Julian Brown concerning the collection of Champa sculpture by Charles Lemire and Henri Parmentier. Lemire is considered to have laid the foundation for the establishment of the *Musée Ćam de Tourane* (the predecessor of the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture), while Parmentier realized Lemire's original vision and played a pivotal role in the early collection, construction, and exhibition of the museum. The article analyzes the motivations and objectives underlying the work of each collector within the historical context of Vietnam under French colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that colonial administrators and archaeologists collected Champa art for various purposes including private possession, cultural preservation, public display, and commercial sale, and that the collecting of Asian art functioned as a representation of colonial power, particularly for France and other European nation-states.

**Keywords:** Charles Lemire, Henri Parmentier, Museum of Cham Sculpture, colonial collecting, Champa

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<sup>1</sup> Champa is a term transliterated from the Sanskrit word *Campā*, which appears in inscriptions to refer to the polities located in central Vietnam. Recent scholarship has argued that Champa should be understood as a generic term used to refer to a group of coastal and Central Highlands polities in central Vietnam until the early nineteenth century (Taylor 1992, 153–157; Hall 1992, 252–260; Southworth 2001, 21–25; Lockhart 2010, 1–53). In this article, the term *Champa* is used when referring to sculptural objects and religious or architectural monuments associated with Champa polities. In addition, terms such as “Cham” and “Chàm” also appear in this article when referring to the name of the Cham Museum at different historical periods—for example, the *Musée Ćam de Tourane* during the period 1919–1935, whose official name today is the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture. Moreover, in French archival sources and earlier translated materials, the term “Chàm” continues to be used. The author employs these terms depending on the context.

## Introduction

Throughout the course of history, the peoples of the ancient Champa kingdom in central Vietnam left behind an invaluable artistic legacy. Today, the terms “Cham art” or “Champa art” refer to Hindu–Buddhist sculptures and the system of temple towers constructed by the Cham people and other ethnic groups living in central Vietnam from the 5th to the 17th centuries CE.<sup>1</sup> Many Champa monuments were drastically destroyed by the ravages of time and violence. Some of them have fortunately survived the destruction, testifying to the glory past of the Champa kingdom in Central Vietnam. Champa sculptures mainly include statues of deities and mythical animals, altars, linga-yoni cult objects, inscriptions, and architectural components of temples. For centuries, this legacy was sadly fallen to oblivion.

The year 1858 marked the beginning of the French conquest and colonization of Vietnam. (Young, 1991, 32)<sup>2</sup> Following their arrival, French archaeologists and colonial officials documented the ruins of Champa temples in central Vietnam and collected hundreds of Champa sculptures through both chance finds and systematic excavations. Today, collections of Champa sculptural art are displayed at many museums in Vietnam and abroad, most notably the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city, the Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, the Binh Dinh Provincial Museum, the Guimet Museum of Asian Arts in Paris, the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and so on. The largest collection, however, is housed at the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture in Vietnam. (Figs. 1–2) In 2015, the museum celebrated the centenary of its establishment. Construction of its first building began in 1915 following the tireless efforts to collect and preserve the art of Champa undertaken by Henri Parmentier and other scholars of the French School of the Far East (also known as the *École Française d’Extrême-Orient* - EFEO).

This paper examines the collecting of Champa art carried out by French collectors in Vietnam from the late nineteenth century to 1936. Charles Lemire (1839–1912), a *Résident*<sup>3</sup> in Vietnam and Henri Parmentier (1871–1949), an architect and archaeologist working for

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest Hindu temple may have been built at Mỹ Sơn in the 5th century. The Mỹ Sơn inscription C.73A (dated to the 6th century CE) states that King Bhadravarman I (5th century) built this temple in dedication to the god Bhadresvara (Golzio, 2004, 7–8). The Po Rome temple, dated to around the 17th century, is considered the latest monument that has survived to the present day.

<sup>2</sup> Under French colonial administration, Northern, Central, and Southern Vietnam were known respectively as Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. Cochinchina was administered as a French colony, while Tonkin and Annam were placed under French protectorates.

<sup>3</sup> *Résident* was the title of a French local governor appointed to supervise a province.

the EFEO, are selected amongst French colonial officials and scholars as the two pioneering figures who played an important role in the collecting and display of Champa art under the French Indochina administration. Their work was the driving force for the establishment of the Museum of Cham Sculpture and paved the way for the study of Champa art. It is argued, in this paper, that colonial administrators and archaeologists collected Champa art for the purposes of private possession, cultural preservation, public display and commercial sale, as suggested by Brown. (2013)<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, this paper points out that collecting Asian Arts represented the colonial power, particularly for France and other European nation-states.



**Figure 1. Front view of the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture after the 2025 renovation.**

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<sup>1</sup> As part of his dissertation, Brown discussed the collecting and documentation of Champa art during the French colonial period. The author characterizes the pioneering work of Charles Lemire in collecting Champa art as that of the amateur, the collector, the exhibitor, and the preserver.



Figure 2. A section of the Da Nang gallery in 2025.

### Charles Lemire: The story of a multifaceted collector

One hundred years after the commencement of construction of the Museum of Cham Sculpture, the name of Charles Lemire continues to appear frequently in the museum's historical publications. Alongside other colonial administrators, archaeologists, and scholars of the EFEO, Lemire started the collection of Champa art and laid an early foundation for both the study of Champa art and the establishment of the Museum. This study therefore addresses two key questions: why Charles Lemire collected Champa art and how his collecting practices evolved from those of an amateur into a professionalized mode.

Charles Lemire was born on June 8, 1839, in Abbeville in northwestern France and began working in the telegraph industry in 1861. (Guillon, 2001, 15–16; Brown, 2013, 174–192) From 1862 to 1868, he served the colonial administration in Vietnam, based in Saigon and My Tho. Whilst living there, he studied Vietnamese and Cambodian languages and began collecting Asian artefacts with the intention of building a private museum in his hometown. (Brown, 2013, 176)<sup>1</sup> After six years of service in southern Vietnam, he returned

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information on Lemire's collecting of Asian art is drawn from his writings and correspondence with his sister and other French scholars.

to France and, from 1874 to 1881, undertook a new mission as head of the Telegraph Corps for the colonial administration in New Caledonia. Soon after completing this assignment, Lemire came back to Vietnam and, between 1881 and 1886, served as *Résident* in Qui Nhon, and later in Vinh and Dong Hoi, all located in central Vietnam. (Figs. 3–4)

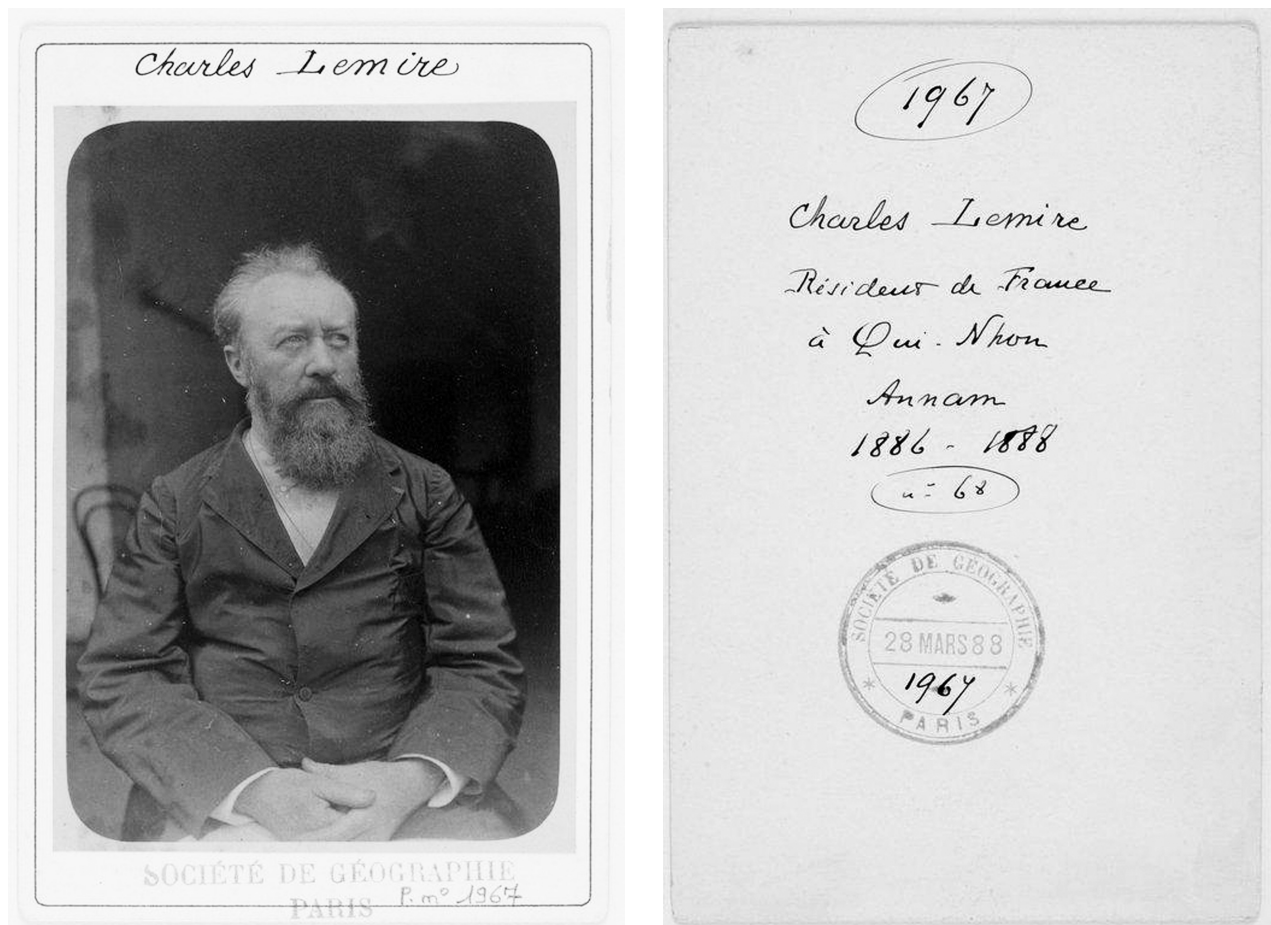
From his first mission in Cochinchina onwards, Lemire expressed his deep concern over the deteriorating condition of Champa monuments and sculptures, which were largely neglected at the time as a result of human indifference and military conflicts. These monuments, in his words, had suffered severe destruction at the hands of what he described as “ignorant and jealous barbarians.” Addressing the devastating condition of Champa monuments, Lemire seemed to blame the “Annamite conquerors”<sup>1</sup> on dismantling the architectural components of temples, taking away blocks of carvings to use for household purposes. More seriously, he added, “they sliced off the noses, ears, stomachs and most frequently, the heads of statues and mutilated the bas-reliefs.” (Brown, 2013, 179–180) To date, we have not gathered enough written documents on the part of Vietnamese that could be used as evidence to accuse the “Annamite conquerors” of their attacks on Champa monuments. Nevertheless, the critical condition of the surviving monuments and architectural remains may bear witness to the bellicose relationship between the Champa polities and the Dai Viet dynasties, and thus lend some support to Lemire’s suspicions.

After years of residence in Indochina and collecting as a private pursuit, Lemire published his first catalogue of collected artworks, entitled *Indochinese Collection of Charles Lemire*. According to Brown, the catalogue was probably compiled between 1887 and 1889 and it listed 592 artefacts accumulated by Lemire. Many of them were Champa objects that Lemire collected during his residency in central Vietnam, where Champa ruins had lain scattered and largely uninhabited for centuries following the decline of Vijaya in 1471.<sup>2</sup> In addition to compiling the catalogue, Lemire organized an exhibition to present his collection in Abbeville in 1890. By this time, it is possible to argue that Lemire had clearly positioned himself as a collector, preserver, and exhibitor.

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<sup>1</sup> “Annamite” was a term used during the French colonial period to refer to the inhabitants of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina.

<sup>2</sup> Vijaya was one of the polities of the Champa kingdom. In 1471, the Dai Viet army captured the capital of Vijaya and burned it to the ground. In the centuries that followed, further losses and the disintegration of other Champa polities to the south occurred, culminating in what some scholars have described as Champa’s “cessation” as a political entity in 1832.



Figures 3–4. Charles Lemire (1839–1912). Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In 1891, Lemire again returned to Vietnam in the role of the French *Résident* in Tourane (Da Nang) and Faifo (Hoi An).<sup>1</sup> He stayed there until 1893 and pursued his interest in collecting. In 1892, Lemire transferred fifty sculptures to the Tourane Garden, which is now the site of the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture. The number of sculptures later increased to ninety, forming the earliest and core collection of the future museum. Apart from assembling the sculptures, Lemire submitted a proposal to the colonial authorities in 1893, emphasizing the need to establish a provincial museum where the artworks could be better preserved. (Guillon, 2001, 16) However, it was not until 1915, three years after his death, that the museum's first building was constructed. Besides the first exhibition in Abbeville in 1890, Lemire organized another exhibition for his collection in Paris in 1894. One year after this second exhibition, he sold 204 objects from Annam, Tonkin, China via a gallery in Paris. (Brown, 2013, 176) and three works entered the collection of Champa sculptures of the Guimet Museum. (Baptiste, 2002, 16)

<sup>1</sup> Tourane and Faifo were the former names of Da Nang and Hoi An Ancient Town respectively during the French colonial rule.

Tracing the collecting activities of Charles Lemire, one may question the underlying nature of his collecting practices. As discussed above, upon his first arrival in Vietnam, Lemire was fascinated by Champa art and the ancient civilizations of Indochina while simultaneously expressing deep concern over the deteriorated condition of Champa temples and sculptures. His collecting activities were initially driven by an interest in ancient Champa art, a passion for curiosities, and an awareness of the need to preserve artworks that had long been neglected. By accumulating Champa sculptures and other Asian artefacts, Lemire originally sought to assemble a collection for a private museum in his hometown. Midway through this process, however, he began to exhibit his collection publicly and gradually transformed his collecting into a commercial business, as evidenced by the sale of Asian artworks. It can therefore be argued that the trajectory of Lemire's collecting followed a pattern common amongst colonial collectors: from the pursuit of curiosities and personal possession to public display and self-promotion, and ultimately to the commercialization of antiquities.

Paula Findlen, in her study *Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Curiosities*, also points out how collecting practices were transformed into commercial enterprises. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, according to the author, the collecting of curiosities functioned as an indicator of wealth, social status, and individual taste, primarily amongst royal families, aristocrats, and scholars. By the eighteenth century, however, the pleasures of collecting had gradually become commercialized, as cabinets of curiosities were open to the public and auction and sale catalogues were offered as means to feature objects for sale. (Findlen, 2002, 297–323) A century later, Charles Lemire appears to have followed a similar path, echoing patterns established by earlier European collectors.

It may be further argued that Lemire's collecting practices were, from their inception, motivated by a deeply colonial ideology. As a high-ranking French official in Indochina, Lemire had his faith in the colonial administration and supported the French occupation of Cochinchina in 1859, which he described as a "march of triumph," signifying the "Glory of France." (as cited in Brown, 2013, 178–179) Lemire, like other French colonial officials in Indochina, believed that the purpose of French rule was to fulfill the so-called "Civilizing Mission" (*mission civilisatrice*), an ideology that France sought to project both in Indochina and on the global stage in competition with Britain. (Taylor, 2000, 149–150; Brown, 2013, 181) In addition to advocating the establishment of a provincial museum to preserve the Champa cultural legacy, Lemire, during the Eleventh Orientalist Congress in 1897, called for research on the Buddhist and Brahmanist monuments of early Southeast Asia as well as for their preservation. His motion was later reported to Paul Doumer, the French General-Governor of Indochina. In 1898, the *Mission Archéologique d'Indochine* was established in Saigon and in 1900 this institution was renamed the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient*.

(Guillon, 2001, 16; Clémentin-Ojha & Manguin, 2007, 18–21) Since its establishment, the EFEO carried out many excavations and fostered the research work of French scholars. Not less importantly, the EFEO facilitated the inauguration of the first museums in Vietnam including the Louis Finot Museum in 1913 (presently the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Ha Noi) and the Branchard de la Brosse Museum in 1928 (the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Ho Chi Minh City). Colonial museums, like those founded by the British in India, were “centers for collecting, depositing, organizing and displaying material knowledge of local culture” through which the colonists could learn more about the colonized, and thereby strengthen their imperial power. (Bhatti, 2012, 22–23) The establishment of colonial museums in Vietnam, Taylor (2000, 181) has argued, can be understood as “the French ambition to enrich and empower itself through its colonial assets” in which the work of governors, collectors and other actors formed an integral part. Lemire was no exception within this broader colonial context.

Without Lemire’s efforts to gather sculptures in the Tourane Garden and his proposals to establish scholarly institutions for the preservation and study of Champa art, it remains uncertain whether such institutions could have been founded and operated in their present form. Without preservation initiatives and collecting activities, the survival of Champa monuments and sculptures over time – amidst warfare and human neglect – would be highly questionable. The politics of colonial collecting and the complex motivations underlying Lemire’s practices – whether as an amateur collector, a preserver, or an exhibitor – therefore remain open to debate.

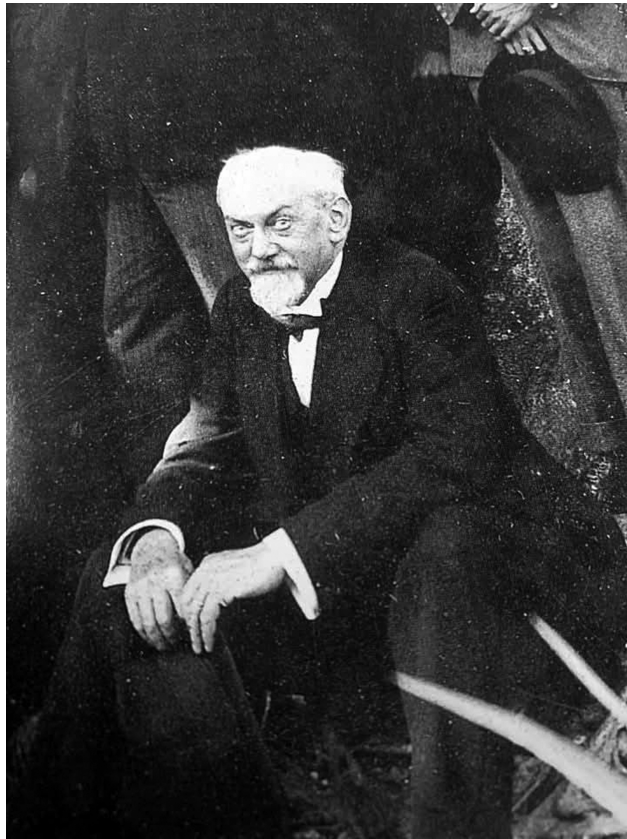
### **Henri Parmentier: From the Tourane Garden to the Henri Parmentier Museum**

Henri Parmentier was a professional architect and archaeologist who, through his work for the EFEO, was involved in the collecting of Champa art and played a pioneering and decisive role in both the establishment of the Museum of Cham Sculpture and the study of Champa art. Born in 1871 into a family of artistic tradition, (Fig. 5) he began his work at the EFEO in Vietnam when this scholarly institution was freshly created in 1900. A graduate of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris with training in architectural drawing, he was assigned by the EFEO to conduct a survey of Champa archaeological vestiges and was appointed *Chef du service archéologique* in 1904. (Brown, 2013, 119)<sup>1</sup> Over the course of his career, Parmentier investigated and documented numerous Champa sites in central Vietnam, and through his archaeological work he formulated a chronology of Champa

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<sup>1</sup> A biography of Henri Parmentier is also available on the EFEO website: <http://www.efeo.fr/biographies/notices/parmentier.htm>

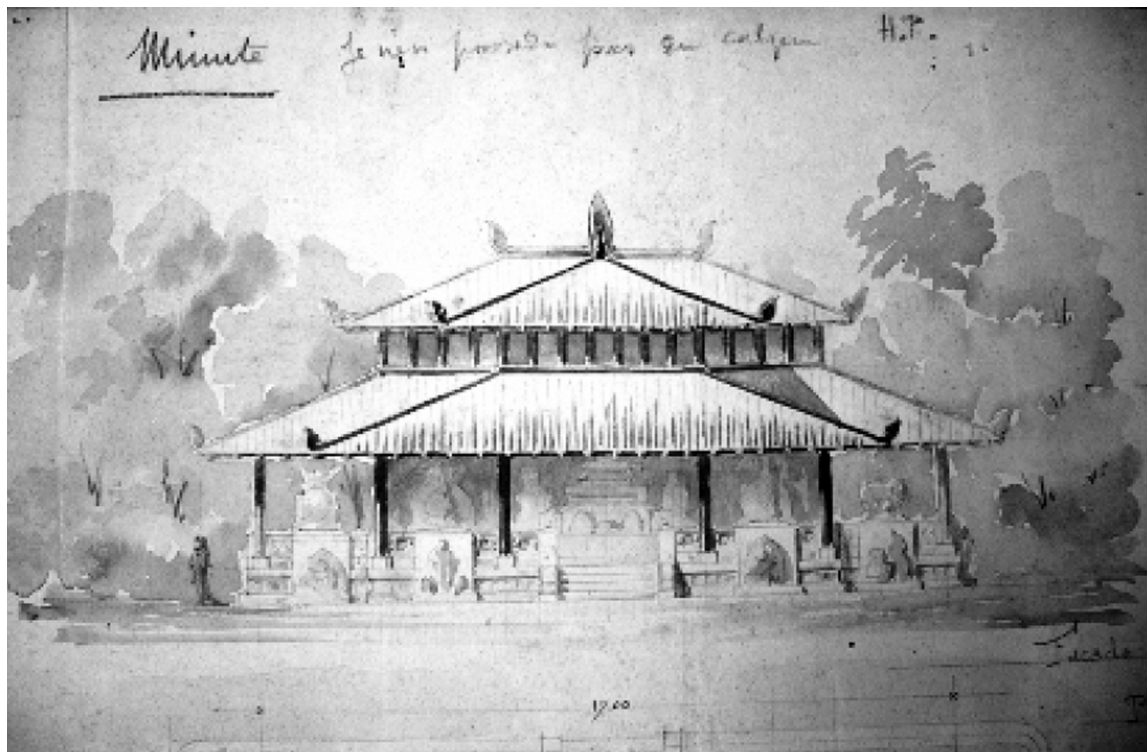
architecture and sculpture. (Southworth, 2001, 128–132; Parmentier, 1909, 1918) Dating Champa monuments and sculptures is a crucial component of how they are described and displayed, yet it has remained an intriguing and complex issue for scholars of Champa art and history to this day. Parmentier was amongst the first scholars to address this issue, and his work laid the foundation for the study of the stylistic development and classification of Champa sculpture and temple architecture that many researchers would reference in subsequent decades. Moreover, Parmentier was a prolific contributor to the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* (BEFEO). He published numerous articles and produced a substantial corpus of drawings of Champa monuments and sculptures during his survey and excavation work.



**Figure 5. Henri Parmentier (1871–1949). Source: EFEO Archive.**

Like Auguste Barth (1834–1916), a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et belles-lettres* and one of the founding members of the EFEO, Parmentier favored the idea of building a local museum where collected sculptures, rather than being sent to the Guimet Museum or elsewhere in France, would be displayed and protected from destruction. In 1902, he started his drawings for “a project for a store of Cham sculptures” (*projet de dépôt*) to preserve the collection of Champa artefacts which Charles Lemire had brought to the Tourane Garden since 1892, yet still left unsheltered in the garden. (Delobel, 2005,

10-11) These drawings sketched a wooden structure in Vietnamese style, with a tiered roof and supporting columns, leaving all sides open. (Fig. 6) At the same time, the EFEO was considering whether to establish a central museum in Saigon to display artefacts collected from Indochina or to build a series of local museums at different locations. The EFEO's proposal to build a Cham Museum in Tourane, however, was rejected by the local administration of Annam due to financial constraints.



**Figure 6. Parmentier's first architectural drawing of a store project for sculptures in Tourane. Source: EFEO Archive.**

In 1908, persistent in his plan for a local museum in Tourane, Parmentier prepared a report on the creation of a Cham Museum. In this document, he convinced the authorities of the feasibility of constructing a "*dépôt unique*" that could function as a museum at relatively low construction cost. (Brown, 2013, 194) Parmentier also reported on the critical condition of Champa sculptures, including those removed from original temples and deposited in Saigon, Tourane and other residencies as well as those still lying scattered in local villages. In addition, he formulated principles to guide the collection policy for the future Cham Museum. The three clearly defined principles with emphasis on preservation, display, and context, are read as follows (Trần Thúy Điểm, 2011, 11- 13):

1. Any object found away from its original site must without fail be taken to the Museum. The same holds for individual sculptures when the original building has

disappeared, provided that they are of sufficient archaeological interest and not under active worship, and for inscribed stelae unless they are part of a surviving monument.

2. Items found in excavations which are part of a recognizable building, the study of which can help to interpret the building, should be left where they are, unless they are in a condition or of a nature which does not allow them to be conserved at the find-spot.

3. The worship of certain items should be respected, as farmers believe they can intercede effectively in times of drought.

On the basis of these principles, Parmentier made an inventory list of 300 sculptures and 70 inscriptions intended to be transferred to the future Cham Museum in Tourane. However, it still took a few more years to make this museum project come into reality. In 1913, Charles Gravelle, Director of the Banque d'Indochine, visited the Tourane Garden, and following this trip he wrote to Claude Eugene Maitre, Director of the EFEO, expressing his concerns over the condition of sculptures in the garden and the urgent need to establish a museum. (Brown, 2013, 203–206) As a wealthy and influential figure, his voice held sway. In 1914, the Governor-General of Indochina approved funding for the museum project, and Parmentier was appointed Director of the project. Construction officially began in 1915 and was completed in 1916. After three years of display work, the museum opened to the public in April 1919 under the name *Musée am de Tourane*. (Parmentier, 1919) The building was designed by two French architects, Delaval and Auclair, who followed Parmentier's suggestion to blend stylistic elements from Cham temple-towers with French colonial architecture. According to the catalogue published by Parmentier in 1919, the museum displayed 160 sculptures collected from the central provinces of Vietnam.

In the following years, the EFEO carried out more excavations, notably at Trà Kiệu (1927–1928) and Tháp Mẫm. (1935) As a result, a large number of newly unearthed sculptures were added to the museum's collection, and the original rectangular building was expanded with the addition of two lateral wings to provide additional space for display, an archaeology depository and a library.

On 11 March 1936 the museum was officially inaugurated in the presence of Emperor Bao Dai; Eugène Jean Louis René Robin, Governor of Indochina; as well as colonial authorities and scholars of the EFEO. On this occasion, it was renamed the *Musée Henri Parmentier*, marking a forty-three-year process in the establishment of a museum dedicated to the display and preservation of Champa art since Charles Lemire's first proposal in 1893. (Clémentin-Ojha & Manguin, 2001, 219–220; Figs. 7–8) Parmentier organized the displays according to the provenances of the sculptures. The museum's 1,000 square meters of floor space were arranged into the galleries of My Son, Tra Kieu, Dong Duong and Thap Mam and the corridors of Quang Tri, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Kon Tum. (Guillon, 2001, 11)



**Figure 7-8. Musée Henri Parmentier in 1936. Source: EFEO Archive.**

Examining the work of Henri Parmentier and Charles Lemire, it is clear that both were pioneers in the establishment of the Museum of Cham Sculpture. Figuratively speaking, Lemire laid the initial foundation upon which Parmentier subsequently developed and brought the project to fruition. Both figures were actively involved in collecting and displaying Champa art, driven by an interest in ancient civilizations, a concern for the preservation of cultural heritage, and a desire to make religious artworks accessible to the

public. Both also chose Tourane as an ideal location for a future museum because the city stood at the very center of all Champa relics in central Vietnam. However, fundamental differences remain between Lemire's and Parmentier's collecting practices, which this study points out.

First of all, Parmentier's collecting was scientific in nature, whereas Lemire's was initially an amateur. In the case of the Cham Museum in Tourane, Parmentier began his collecting through systematic survey work and followed by specific guidelines for object selection. His catalog entitled *Les sculptures chames au Musée de Tourane* (1919) documented detailed information of all objects in the museum's holdings and remains in use as a research reference at the Cham Museum today. Parmentier also disagreed with colonial officials over their treatment of Champa monuments and sculptures. He believed that architectural components and sculptures should not be removed away from their original temples "without any scientific motivation or a will to preserve." (Delobel, 2005, 11) and once being collected, sculptures should be put on display at museums close to their places of origin. Yet in reality, a large number of Champa sculptures were removed from temples and sent to France by colonial officials and collectors. (Beurdeley, 1997, 4-7; Stenuit, 2005, 34-41)<sup>1</sup> By contrast, Lemire collected Cham sculptures in the belief that they should be protected from destruction caused by human activities and harsh weather conditions, and therefore intentionally removed them from their original temples. While working on the collection deposited at the Tourane Garden, Lemire also documented the objects' provenances; however, his documentation did not reflect the systematic, scientific approach later undertaken by Parmentier.<sup>2</sup>

Another difference between the two collectors lies in their attitudes towards artefacts. For Parmentier, institutional collecting appears to have been his central motivation and thus, all the sculptures he collected were accessioned to the museum collection. There is no evidence to suggest that Parmentier amassed artefacts for his own possession during his years of service with the EFEO in Indochina. However, Lemire's collecting was initially motivated by personal ownership and later by commercial interests. At the height of his

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<sup>1</sup> It is reported that Doctor Claude Albert Morice (1845-1877) sent many Cham sculptures to the National History Museum in Lyon. On 17 June 1877, the Mekong, a French Messageries Maritimes ship sailing from Saigon to Marseille and carrying Morice's collection of Cham art sank off the coast of Somalia. Eighteen statues were later excavated from the wreck and ten more works were identified later. In his writing about the Cham collection at Guimet Museum, Pierre Baptiste documented twenty-five Cham sculptures currently on display at the museum, many of which had been sent to the museum by colonial governors and collectors.

<sup>2</sup> This has led to difficulties in tracing the provenances of certain objects in the Cham Museum's collection. For further details, see Parmentier's 1919 catalogue.

career as a colonial administrator and collector, he exhibited his collection of Asian art on at least two occasions, with the intention of projecting his social standing and public persona—namely, that of a French colonial expeditioner advancing the *mission civilisatrice* in Indochina. Although Lemire gathered more than fifty sculptures at the Tourane Garden and called for the establishment of a regional museum to house and preserve them, his action appears to have been prompted “as a result of chance and disobedience,” as Brown has argued. (2013, 200–201) EFEO archives and Parmentier’s accounts reveal that whilst serving as the *Resédent* in Qui Nhon, Lemire was asked by the colonial administration to collect artefacts and send them to museums in France. However, Lemire ignored this request and instead chose to transfer the sculptures to the Tourane Garden.

Last but not least, Henri Parmentier showed his respect to the indigenous communities and took the religious significance of sculptures into consideration during the process of collecting objects for museum display. He believed that local people continued to venerate sculptures placed at religious monuments, and that a sense of spiritual reverence or fear somehow prevented them from dilapidating the sculptures. (Delobel, 2005, 11) Accordingly, when establishing the collecting principles, Parmentier stated that sculptures still actively used in the worship practices of local villagers should not be removed to museums. Charles Lemire, by contrast, viewed the Annam people through the subjective lens of a governor who embraced colonial ideology and believed that part of the mission of French administrators and scholars in the colonies was to rescue ancient art, as Taylor. (2000, 149–150) has argued. Elsewhere in his writings, Lemire affirmed that local people had ignorantly destroyed Champa relics, referring to them as “barbarians” and “Annamite conquerors” - politically sensitive terms that have largely been avoided in recent literature about the history and art of Champa. Nevertheless, the very nature of colonial collecting inarguably represents the power of conquerors, or what Claire Wintle (2013, 73) has termed “colonial violence.” In this context, one may ask who, in fact, were the conquerors, and who, for their own purposes, detached religious sculptures from their previous lives?

## Conclusion

Charles Lemire and Henri Parmentier played pioneering roles in the establishment of the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture. Their efforts in collecting and displaying Champa sculptures paved the way for subsequent research into the art and history of Champa. From the initial collection of approximately fifty sculptures that Lemire transported to the Tourane Garden in 1892, Parmentier assessed their condition, established guidelines for collecting, and developed a concrete museum plan based on Lemire’s earlier proposal. After years of work, the Cham Museum in Tourane was finally constructed on the site of the Tourane Garden near the Han River, where it stands today.

The roles of the two collectors have been widely acknowledged by the Museum of Cham Sculpture and by scholars and admirers of Champa art. However, the motivations underlying Lemire's and Parmentier's collecting practices were complex and may have changed over time. As an architect and archaeologist, Parmentier's commitment to public display and cultural preservation is indisputable, as demonstrated by his systematic collecting approach. Lemire's collecting activities, however, have caused certain controversies, as they were driven not only by concerns for the preservation of Asian art and public display but also by personal ownership and commercial interests.

In the wake of debates on cultural repatriation, the politics of colonial collecting has once again come under scrutiny. (Cuno, 2008, preface; 2019) Champa sculptures have been dispersed to museums and galleries in France and elsewhere. French colonial administrators and collectors, as a matter of fact, removed Champa sculptures from their original contexts and bestowed upon them a museum life; in doing so, they have reconstructed - and simultaneously deconstructed - the meanings and functions of Champa sculpture.

Nonetheless, by the time Vietnam came under French colonial rule, many Champa monuments had already been destroyed, and numerous sculptures had fallen into disuse. From the perspective of a colonial administrator, Lemire believed that his mission was to preserve these ancient monuments; accordingly, alongside his collecting activities, he appealed to colonial authorities to take appropriate measures to prevent Champa cultural heritage from further deterioration. In this sense, he played a key instrumental role in the foundation of the Cham Museum. While acknowledging the contributions of French officials and scholars-amongst whom Lemire and Parmentier were important figures-we must nevertheless examine these historical realities with objectivity and a critical, reflective approach.

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