

Discovery & Perceptions of Champa: the Đồng Dương Complex of Quảng Nam Province, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Typical scholarly portrayals of the Đồng Dương site refer to a “Buddhist Monastery” of the classical Champā civilization, found in present-day Vietnam. French Orientalist research has strongly shaped scholarly focus on the monastery itself for the past century, informing the most recent English language scholarly production. However, more recent Vietnamese scholarship has begun to revise this portrayal, although most publications are archaeological reports for field experts and thus do not give a holistic understanding of Đồng Dương’s total archaeological footprint within a broader historical context. We bring English, French, and Vietnamese scholarship together in our analysis with field research and knowledge gleaned from indigenous Cham community members. We examine watch-towers, a citadel, relations with nearby ports, religious sites, a production site, and funerary sites while also noting challenges for ongoing research and providing recommendations for preserving the site in our conclusion.

Keywords: Buddhist Sites, Heritage Sites, Champa, Vietnam, Southeast Asia.

Introduction

Contemporary scholarship most often refers to the monumental architecture at Đồng Dương as a “Buddhist Monastery” or a “Temple and Monastery Complex” (Wicks, 1992; Vickery, 2009, pp. 45–61; Hardy et al., 2009; Gunn, 2011, pp. 51–78). Additionally, scholars often use Đồng Dương as a term to refer to an artistic style of Champā art, mainly referring to the period of the end of the 10th century CE (Hubert, 2005; Võ Văn Thắng, 2018, p. 14). While the most notable usage of Đồng Dương refers to the remains of a Buddhist temple from the pre-colonial Hindu-Buddhist Champā civilization of the coastline of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, it is also so much more than both a temple site and the name of an artistic style. The name Đồng Dương is derived from the name of the Vietnamese village where the remains

of the monastery were found at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. The site is now in Bình Định Bắc commune, Thăng Bình district, Quảng Nam province. Đồng Dương was almost immediately of interest and French Orientalist scholarship (Schweyer, 1998, pp. 205–218; Vickery, 2009, pp. 45–61).

As French colonial officials sought “compensation ‘for the lamentable loss of India’” to play upon the words Penny Edwards (2007, p. 29) has written, Orientalist fascination with Champā grew. In 1900, the French Archaeological Mission transformed into the French School of the Far East. The first director of the new institution, Louis Finot, drew on his expertise as a paleographer and began studies of the Champā epigraphic record. Finot published a survey of Đồng Dương epigraphy in 1904, which informed the work of architect and art historian,

Henri Parmentier (1909; 1918) completed a massive survey of the Champā monuments of Indochina, published in two volumes, including plates of detailed drawings of the Đờng Dương temple. Finot and Parmentier's studies impacted every historical, art historical and epigraphic study since. Yet, with the Siamese retrocession of several Cambodian provinces in 1907, new Angkor sites were now open to French scholars. They primarily focused on Angkor in Siem Reap province, in the Protectorate of Cambodia, increasingly leaving Champā sites, and Đờng Dương in particular, neglected (Edwards, 2007; Baptiste, 2005, p. 17). Indeed, both Finot and Parmentier produced significant studies of the admittedly larger scale and more numerous, Angkor sites in the 1920s and 1930s. However, with the notable exception of Stern (1942), fewer and fewer studies had focused on Champā and Đờng Dương by the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The outbreak of the Second World War, the First Indochina War, the Second Indochina War, and the Third Indochina War frustrated research progress for the next half a century. Only Jean Bosselier (1963) managed to publish a notable study on Champā statues, which mentioned some statuary from Đờng Dương. Yet in 1978, during the interim of the Second and Third Indochina Wars, three villagers unearthed a new find of a bronze of a female goddess that scholars have interpreted as either Lakṣmīndra-Lokeśvara or Avalokiteśvara in the Đờng Dương style from the site (Nguyễn Hoàng Hương Duyên, 2018, pp. 171–172). Notably, the find was made while the villagers were digging for bricks to repurpose in their construction. The repurposing of archaeological materials has thus emerged as a problem contributing toward the destruction of Champā heritage sites. It was only in the late 1980s and 1990s that Vietnamese and Cham scholars began to reignite the international interest in Champā Studies. At the same time, it was only in the year 2000 CE that Đờng Dương was recognized as part of the “National Heritage of Vietnam,” when it was granted the standing of “Special National Heritage.” Subsequently, there have been recent archeological studies of the site published in Vietnamese (Trần Bá Việt, ed. 2005; 2007; Ngô Văn Doanh, 2012; 2016). There was also a 2011 conference on Đờng Dương. However, this conference was before the most recent archaeological surveys began in 2013. Quảng Văn Sơn (2014; 2015; 2017) has published summaries of these surveys in Vietnamese. However, these summaries were focused on presenting material to experts in archaeology rather than a broad interdisciplinary audience and thus neglected mention of additional historical research, which might give insight into the persistent destruction of Champā sites across many centuries.

There are several recent contemporary English language publications about the Đờng Dương site. Most are focused on the field of art history, emphasizing studies of the Buddhist monastery and statues (Schweyer, 1999; Guillon, 2001; Seid, 2004; Nguyen, 2005; Hubert, 2005; Guy, 2010; Chau, 2014; Dhar, 2014). A couple of notable updated studies focus on epigraphic evidence (Golzio, 2004; Griffiths et al., 2012) or focus on the Indrapura Dynasty (Schweyer, 1998). Our basic problem is an information gap. Historians and archaeologists need an updated holistic assessment of the Đờng Dương site to inform their studies, which draws together evidence pulled from Vietnamese, English, and French language scholarship, is informed by understandings of the local indigenous Cham population, and connects to a regional history of the Indrapura Dynasty and Amarāvati, noting their place within the larger Champā civilization and history of Southeast Asia as a region. Here, admittedly, we presume that there are scholars who read English who may not read Vietnamese or French but would still be interested in this material. We also presume that historians and archaeologists have access to different skill sets and can make more informed assessments when working together on a single research project. Our simple research question is: *How could we more accurately describe this important site to English language readership?*

Methods

In this article, we draw upon the methods of historians and archaeologists to bring a fresh assessment of the Đờng Dương site to a broader audience. Our team is somewhat unique in that we have a robust combination of English, French, Vietnamese, and Cham language skills contributing to our research across just three authors. Two of us have been working together on research in the field of Champā and Cham Studies for almost a decade. We began with cultural studies and language studies, adopting the methods of anthropologists, before we began more focused efforts, combining our training into interdisciplinary assessments. Hence, we have approached the study of the site from the soil of Southeast Asia up, rather than from the halls of a proverbial “Sanskrit Institute” down, as it were. In doing so, our view of Đờng Dương is much more expansive than it is generally conceived. We see Đờng Dương as a complex of sites, rather than a single archaeological site.

Indeed, based on recent archaeological studies, field surveys, and a historical assessment of the available records, in our view, Đờng Dương is not limited to Đờng Dương village, Bình Định Bắc commune, Thăng Bình district.

Instead, we found a large number of sites associated with the Đồng Dương temple and monastery were distributed across Bình Định Bắc, Bình Trị, and Quế Châu communes. Furthermore, in addition to Thăng Bình district, these sites spread along the Ngọc Khê and Bà Đăng streams, all along the banks of the Li Li River (alt.: *Sông Ly Ly*). Therefore, Quế Sơn district, across the banks of the Li Li River, is also a location of interest in relation to this site. Of course, we do not want readers to underestimate the importance of the monastery itself. Indeed, Buddhism is indicated as a prominent religion of this region as per the evidence of the An Thái inscription [902 CE]. Furthermore, epigraphic records indicate an emergent local syncretic blend of Hinduism and Buddhism across areas controlled by the Indrapura Dynasty, now Quảng Nam, Quảng Ngãi, Thừa Thiên-Huế, and Quảng Trị provinces (Huber, 1911; Golzio, 2004). The prevalence of these inscriptions and other archaeological finds, across Quảng Nam especially, suggested that Đồng Dương might indeed have been an even more significant site than previously thought.

In our analysis, Đồng Dương includes a substantial Buddhist monastery and institute, along with a much larger settlement, protected by a series of embankments, defense walls, and watchtowers, including a royal residence, and citadel. We also found evidence of religious monuments, memorial sites, and a possible stone quarry associated with the site's construction. All of these sites are relatively unknown to international scholarship, as evidenced by the persistent usage of the term "Đồng Dương Monastery" in English language scholarship, which admittedly has relied predominantly on the studies of Henri Parmentier to provide the foundations for more recent assessments. However, Henri Parmentier's analysis, although quite artful and detailed, was incomplete. We would argue, in light of the more recently completed research, a thorough reassessment of the archeological center of Đồng Dương monastery itself, being the 326m long and 115m wide structure, of significant height, still needs to be completed, for the sake of preservation. Yet, we also need a better understanding of the broader archaeological footprint of the sites associated with Đồng Dương and a good understanding of the history of the region, to make such an assessment.

With the above challenges in mind, in this article, we provide an analysis of these most recent discoveries before we outline plans for future potential research while paying due attention to the site from the perspective of conservationists, noting that it should be possible to document the monumental architecture of the Đồng Dương Monastery and the entirety of the surrounding locations per UNESCO standards for World Heritage sites, while

not ignoring the larger imperial core of the Indrapura Dynasty. We would argue conservationists would also need to complete significant research informed by our assessment of past conservation projects and our assessment of the region of Amarāvati, to avoid potential errors in the reconstruction work of such a site. We make this assessment, keeping in mind past errors that were made at the Hòa Lai and Mỹ Sơn sites in particular, where there has been an utter lack of attention to situating individual sites within a broader context. To begin with, we highlight the results of our historical research before moving on to an assessment of contemporary archaeological discoveries.

Results of Contemporary Historical Research on Đồng Dương

By the early 20th century, French scholars came to associate the area of Đồng Dương with the Indrapura Dynasty of the Champā civilization. The association of this site with the Indrapura Dynasty has been retained among contemporary historians, epigraphers, archeologists, and art historians. Specific to our concerns, the Indrapura Dynasty was located at a capital, which we will refer to as the "imperial core" at Đồng Dương, including the broader complex of sites in this area, decidedly from the 9th through 10th centuries [875 CE–982 CE]. The Buddhist temple and monastery were constructed by Jaya Indravarman (C. 31), and the widowed queen of Jaya Indravarman, Haradevi Rajakula, commissioned many statues of gods and goddesses to be installed within the temple area (C. 36) (Majumdar, 1927, pp. 74–89, pp. 258–259; Dhar, 2014, pp. 111–136). Northern sections of Indrapura – those previously associated with Lín Yì of Chinese records, being what are now Quảng Bình and Quảng Trị provinces – were incorporated into Vietnamese control as early as 1069 CE with the campaign of Lý Thường Kiệt. However, those sections of Indrapura further southward, including the imperial core at Đồng Dương, shifted control to Amarāvati (Schweyer, 1998, pp. 205–218; Vickery, 2009, pp. 45–61). Indeed, the Indrapura Dynasty controlled this area and the surrounding vicinity of Đồng Dương, along with areas northward in what is now Quảng Nam province. Yet, by the 11th to 12th centuries, the vicinity was controlled by Amarāvati, which was based at the Châu Sa citadel in what is now Quảng Ngãi province.

Orthodox historical interpretations argue the decentralized political structure led to declines in Indrapura's power. Invasions from the north by the Vietnamese and from the southwest by Cambodians further threatened

any aspect of centralization for Champā, according to the orthodox vision of classical empire-making (Finot, 1904, pp. 83–115; Majumdar, 1927, p. 145). While successful invasions certainly threatened stability, more recent scholars have tended to emphasize that the Southeast Asian pattern of pre-colonial warfare established that control over people was more important than territory. Armies frequently raided, collected spoils, and then returned to a socio-political-cum religious center to celebrate (Schweyer, 1998, pp. 205–218; Vickery, 2009, pp. 45–61; Quảng Văn Sơn, 2015, pp. 252–274). Hence, it does not follow that a centralized political structure would be strength. Indeed, decentralized socio-political systems ensured that while northern portions of Indrapura were absorbed into Vietnamese areas, comparatively more southern regions, including Đồng Dương, retained independence by recognizing Amarāvati.

Remaining relatively distinct allowed particular Champā polities to be comparatively less impacted by the invasion of Angkor's armies in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Afterward, a polity based at what is now Bình Định province, called Vijaya, regained power, lasting until the late 14th and early 15th century. That said, Đồng Dương and other sites associated with Amarāvati through the 15th century, when the settlements in the area passed briefly into Vietnamese hands in 1402 CE, only to be retaken by Vijaya-Champā in 1407 CE. These southern sections of Indrapura – being the north of Amarāvati – the Amarāvati core itself (Quảng Ngãi) and Vijaya (Bình Định) were then invaded by the Vietnamese Lê dynasty armies in the 1470s (Schweyer, 1998, pp. 205–218; Vickery, 2009, pp. 45–61; Quảng Văn Sơn, 2015, pp. 252–274). Nonetheless, in both northern and central regions of the coast, evidence of a Champā cultural presence remained throughout the early modern period. In contrast, in the south-central coastal area, the independence of Kauthāra (Khánh Hòa and Phú Yên provinces) and Pāṇḍuraṅga (Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận provinces) remained through the early modern period.

Ngô Văn Doanh (2006, p. 70) has previously mentioned that the 19th-century official geographical record of the Nguyễn dynasty (*Đại Nam nhất thống chí*) gives an explicit description of the Đồng Dương monastery as a collection of two towers. However, what Ngô Văn Doanh neglects in that description is the evidence presented from an 18th-century Nguyễn dynasty map of the broader region. Indeed, the *Giáp ngọc niên bình Nam đồ* (1774) by Bùi Thế Đạt makes mention of several elements of the broader areas associated with Indrapura and Amarāvati. For example, there reference to an “old Champa citadel” north of what is now Thừa Thiên Huế province (Bửu

Cẩm et al., 1962, pp. 144–145). The same map also has a reference to the Great Port of Champā (*Đại chiêm môn thâm đạ*) and marks the Cham Islands although it only refers to the hamlet on the islands (*Cù-lao xã*). Another apparent reference to Champa on the map is the marking “*Chiêm thành chủ*” or “the head of Champa” which would seem to suggest that the location is either Sīṃhapura (Trà Kiệu) or Indrapura (Đồng Dương) by naming conventions. However, the physical placement on the map, far upstream and in the mountains, suggests that it is Mỹ Sơn (Bửu Cẩm et al., 1962, pp. 148–149). The massive complex of Mỹ Sơn would be near impossible not to note on a map, although there is no clear evidence of Đồng Dương on the map at all. In other words, there is a knowledge gap between the late 18th-century map and the late 19th-century gazetteer. The evidence suggests a few important historical points. Although the 15th-century Lê dynasty expansion presumably destroyed sites, the 17th century Nguyễn-Trịnh conflict likely resulted in further destruction of sites, even among those in the Nguyễn core, as they raided them for construction supplies. The 17th and 18th-century conflicts with the Trịnh and Tây Sơn also kept the attention of Nguyễn officials focused outward, only resulting in a revived Vietnamese interest in detailed geographical records, and thus a record of the site, in the 19th century. These positions are not mutually exclusive, but it is important to remember that the Nguyễn officials were not totally oblivious to Champā sites, correcting French Orientalist assumptions.

Results of Contemporary Archaeological Research at Đồng Dương

In Vietnamese, Đồng Dương Monastery itself is often colloquially referred to as *Tháp Sáng* – meaning “The Shining Tower” or “The Tower of Light.” However, we asser that there are many sites beyond *Tháp Sáng* itself, which scholars ought to understand as associated with the imperial core of the Indrapura Dynasty. The area that scholars refer to as the “imperial core” of the Indrapura Dynasty includes the Cham Islands (*Cù Lao Chàm*), the Great Port of Champā (*Cửa Đại Chiêm*), Sīṃhapura (Trà Kiệu – *Duy Xuyên*), the Mỹ Sơn complex, and Indrapura itself (*Đồng Dương*). However, the polity by the same name also controlled many sites much further northward in Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị, and Thừa Thiên-Huế provinces. The area in the imperial core then passed into the hands of the Amarāvati polity by the 11th to 12th century, before it was recentralized under the control of Vijaya from the 12th to 15th century. However, five centuries of substantial neglect and incremental devastating warfare left many of the satellite sites associated

with Đồng Dương itself utterly unknown until a series of local archaeological surveys began in 2013. To date, ours is the only contemporary English language publication of these findings, representing, we hope, a significant contribution to scholarly studies of the Champā civilization and Southeast Asia. Indeed, even in significant Vietnamese language studies, leading scholars such as Lương Ninh (2004) and Ngô Văn Doanh (2006, 2011) did not cover these details, as they lacked the evidence to do so. To clarify, we refer to the sites individually as follows: The Watchtowers, The Citadel, The Palace Area, The Expanded Buddhist Complex, and Trà Cai Mountain.

The Watchtowers:

While the Li Li River is the northern passageway for areas most associated with Indrapura's imperial core, it is quite protected, being a narrow southern branch of the Thu Bồn River. From here, it would have been relatively easy to access the port locations along the coast – being the Cham Islands and the Great Port of Champā – as well as the Thu Bồn River, making it additionally possible to access Simhapura and Mỹ Sơn. Furthermore, despite shifting geographies in many parts of the coast, the natural elevation of the region seems to suggest two contemporary streams feeding into the Li Li River have indeed been long flowing. Just north of Đồng Dương, the Ngọc Khê Stream cuts back eastward, as a branch of the Li Li River, proceeding southeast in the direction of Tam Hải, Bàn Than – Núi Thành district. Then, the Bà Đẳng Stream cuts southwest, off of the Ngọc Khê Stream, back in the direction of the Li Li River, nearly paralleling the Li Li on the southern boundary of the area. Hence, the Đồng Dương settlement area is located directly between the Bà Đẳng and Ngọc Khê Streams, with easy access to the Li Li River. Following the Ngọc Khê Stream one can easily follow along a generally overland route, but generally along the stream, reaching the Tam Kỳ and Trường Giang Rivers. Thus, significant port areas – what are today Tam Hải and Cửa Đại – are accessible from the center of the settlement area. The remains of what we believe are “watchtowers” are located along the Ngọc Khê Stream, formulating a northern boundary of the development. Although we have clear evidence of five watchtowers, we suspect there may have been as many as eight, based on their relative placement. It is admittedly difficult to tell since the position of the stream could easily have shifted across the historical epochs. Given the contemporary placement, four are on the southern edge of the stream, while a fifth is along the northern bank. From another perspective, the tower on the north bank of the Ngọc Khê and three of the towers on the southern bank form a staggered line, while the fifth is placed closer to

the settlement but strangely alone. Hence, the working hypothesis is that there is at least one other tower paired with the tower that stands oddly alone, or, perhaps, up to three other towers on the northern banks of the Ngọc Khê.

Preliminary surveys of the area around the Ngọc Khê Stream yielded only ruins of the watchtowers. This explains why earlier studies ignored these developments. Nevertheless, their foundations of blocks and rubble are Champā constructions, with decent-sized rectangular vestiges of nearly 300m². Oral histories from local elders in their 50s and 60s claim these watchtowers were *less* collapsed in the early and mid-20th century. However, the fact that they appear to have been defensive constructions, helps to explain how they escaped the interest of French studies. We found the foundations were simple, square, and the body of the towers was mostly formulated from bricks and quadrilateral stone blocks. At the heart of these watchtowers were brick stairs running around the central wall in a spiral. Their total height was significant, at least 10m. There are also a series of two-sided inscriptions at the center of the towers on tablets (120x70x50 cm). However, the inscriptions appear to be Vietnamese. Thus, they are not part of the original constructions (Quảng Văn Sơn, 2015, pp. 252–274). Furthermore, during the 20th century, locals dismantled parts of the watchtowers, pulling building supplies from them, accelerating their collapse. Construction projects in the 1960s, under the Republic of Vietnam, pillaged stones and bricks from the watchtowers for local dam construction as part of wartime efforts to build irrigation systems and feed populations under incredible stress. Locals from Quế An and surrounding villages in Bình Định Bắc gathered supplies from the watchtowers and dammed the Ngọc Khê Stream. They additionally used materials for the foundation of bridges to cross this and other nearby streams. Although the hasty wartime constructions were destroyed quickly by flooding, there are still reinforced concrete foundations as physical evidence of their past existence. Sadly, for researchers, the flooding appears to have washed the original Champā bricks away. However, the difficulty of finding deeper foundations below the alluvial layers of the soil in this incredibly fertile area has prevented further excavation. Nonetheless, recent archaeological surveys *have* recovered a citadel nearby this location.

Citadel

Following the position of the Watchtowers eastward along the banks of the Ngọc Khê Stream, approximately 1km, toward the Ông Triệu Bridge and the Thành Forest,

there is clear evidence of a citadel between the southern bank of the Ngọc Khê Stream and the northern bank of the Bà Đăng Stream. The size of this location is quite similar to the later Châu Sa citadel of Amarāvātī, in the nearby province of Quảng Ngãi. Preliminary surveys have suggested that the Đồng Dương Citadel has two layers. The outer layer with lighter architectural styles surrounds the inner layer, with the outer layer running along the nearby streams. The inner layer has thick brick walls. There is also a large cubicle “Square” structure in the innermost part of the inner layer, oriented toward the northeast. Each side is around 110m. There are also traces of bastions or watchtowers in this location, at the four corners of the construction.

What differentiates the Đồng Dương Citadel from the Châu Sa Citadel is that this citadel is built on a relatively high point with respect to the surrounding terrain. By contrast, the Châu Sa Citadel is located on a low-flat plain between an inner and outer urban area and entirely square, with noticeable evidence of moats. Furthermore, the Đồng Dương Citadel area is embellished with a thick layer of soil, at least 1m higher than the surrounding natural elevation. Along the edges of the brick structure, researchers uncovered a substantial collection of Champā tiles. We have hypothesized these were once part of a singular structure, which would explain the large vestige of rubble inside the inner settlement area, of which the “Square” seems to be on the edge of the area. Based on an assessment of Champā patterns of construction, it is very likely there was a religious building or shrine attached to this structure. This “Square” is also at the end of the main thoroughfare, which progresses toward the center of Indrapura-Đồng Dương, toward the relative west. From here, there is a clear route of travel downstream from the Ngọc Khê Stream to the Li Li River, and thus to the aforementioned ports along the South China Sea. The way westward also connects to the main palace area and then onward to the center of the monastery.

The Palace Area

Approximately 1 km to the west of the citadel of Đồng Dương, there is a Palace area where we have evidence of a wide moat and the potential political center of the Indrapura Dynasty. *What is this palace area?* Indeed, readers may be surprised to find that the “Square Pond” that Henri Parmentier decidedly pitched his tent in actually also features the Headquarters of the People’s Committee of Bình Định Bắc Commune. After all, this is directly above the remnants of the palace of Indrapura.

Utilizing the methods of historical archaeology, we determined this area was very likely the core of Indrapura itself. It is located on an artificially elevated portion of the landscape, suggesting it was built up for both ceremonial and defensive purposes. Following the remnants of the square pond here, we found this an area showing evidence of a low hill on an agricultural plain, separated from the rest of the constructions in the area by trenches. Indeed, there is evidence of several trenches in the vicinity and a rectangular pond (180m x 100m).

Construction of soil reinforcements and walls could have pulled earth easily from the surrounding area and piled it into a square and flat structural accumulation, running along the pond and reinforcing it. The inner edge of the soil reinforcement is 30m from the end of the pond, with the widest ramparts approximately 50m away, additionally exhibiting the light architectural vestiges reminiscent of the citadel’s construction. Here, the artificial hill is carefully designed in a somewhat convex, rectangular structure (340m x 260m), facing the northwest and surrounding an artificial defense mound. To answer the question of potential sources of agricultural production, we have hypothesized that the peoples of Indrapura could have built a dam, or dams, on or nearby the location of the nearby Bà Đăng Stream, thus bringing freshwater flowing into the southeastern corner of the urban area, water that could have additionally been useful for the process of trench construction. In the internal area of the square pond, there is an ideal area for growing lotus plans. Indeed, there are even lotus flowers that bloom every season in the pond today. Hence, we are reminded of the Jaya Simhavarman I [898–903 CE] inscription “... The splendid royal Indrapura city... beautified by white lotus, and ornamented with excellent lotus flowers, made by Bhṛḡu in ancient times...” (C. 67; Corrected for fluency from Golzio, 2004, p. 87). But, unfortunately, parts of this stele have already broken off and been scattered elsewhere. We say ‘unfortunately’ because the original four-sided stele likely provided and an even richer account of the Hindu-Buddhist culture of Đồng Dương.

The Expanded Buddhist Area

From the west gate of the palace area, there is an artifice with ramparts across the field, next to the eastern gate of the Buddhist Monastery. The approximately 750m long road between the two is 10m wide and 1m higher than the surrounding area. Henri Parmentier drafted the details of the Đồng Dương Monastery after the 1902 excavation and the form the basis of every scholarly study since, even though they were completed more than

a century ago. Hypothetically, the site was less damaged at the time, although Parmentier completed the drawings by hand and the workload was enormous. Thus, they may not represent an accurate representation of the remnants of the site, but also included embellishments introduced by the artist's imagination. Furthermore, since Parmentier (1918) only focused on the area directly around the Buddhist Monastery itself, we can rightly assert it is time to revisit the site with the advantages of digital mapping technologies, especially as much of the material enumerated above and below was left out of his studies. Our combined analysis of contemporary surveys and Parmentier's works confirms the Buddhist Monastery is of substantial size, encapsulated within a rectangular urban structure, with a long edge running east to west (326m x 155m), and normally referred to as the outer wall. Traces in the foundation of the structure suggest this wall was high and thick, with settlement existing both inside and outside it. The Buddhist Monastery itself has three east-west coaxial architectural clusters or enclosures and three artificial ponds, two in the northeastern corner and one in the southeastern corner, although one



Figure 1: The Vihara of Đồng Dương

of these ponds were filled in at a later date for agricultural purposes.

At present, the central portion of the citadel has two discernable gates: east and west, with faint vestiges. According to Mr. Trà Dú (now, he died in 2017), a local historian, the east gate was more substantial and had a tower shape. There were statues on both sides of the door, likely *dvārapāla* protectors of the gate. The western gate is connected to the rear of the Buddhist Monastery. The clear view from the west gate to the back of the hill indicates there were architectural extensions. The structure is organized concentrically, with an inner urban and another urban area, with the innermost area surrounding the central temple, including the main remaining tower. *Did this tower also serve as physical support for other structures?* While we cannot answer this question, inside the inner compound researchers found a "Well Tower" in the southwestern corner. The area was initially a well that has since been filled in. The well also connected, we think, to the large square pond. As local legends reveal: if one were to throw a pomelo into the well, there would be a pomelo in the pond the next day. Hence, there should be remnants of an underground waterway between the Royal Palace and the Buddhist Monastery. There have been past hypotheses that this passageway was for the sake of security. However, we suspect, as have others, that this was an irrigation system. There is a similar well at Trà Kiệu, an archaeological site not too far away from a similar historical epoch.

Based on our analyses of the site, the peoples of Champā likely had developed ceramic technology and could have used this technology to construct ceramic pipes to an underground aquifer. Like sticking a straw into a coconut, this would have quickly produced high-quality freshwater from underground reserves. Additionally, since we have



Figure 2: A Piece of Decoration alongside the Đồng Dương Complex & the Bridge

evidence of the technology of dug wells, even though they are more impacted by alum and dependent on surface water reserves, their resources might also be directed through pipes. We hope future excavations shed further light on this site. Such excavations should also focus on the northeastern corner of the area – 300 m from the monastery and 200m to the east, as measured from the Bãi Chờ monument – where there is a brick hill that is likely a vestige of a temple-tower complex. Figure 4 gives us a sense of the length of distance under discussion.

The Trà Cài Mountain

There are sizeable monolithic stone sculptures of non-human divine figures from the Đồng Dương Buddhist



Figure 3: Indravarman II Inscription, Đồng Dương (C. 66).
Source: Quảng Văn Sơn, 2018

Monastery and the Đồng Dương Showroom at the Museum of Cham Sculpture – Đà Nẵng. There are also solid stelae engraved with Champā script in both the Cham and Sanskrit languages. *From where did the artisans collect this stone? What was their production process?* There have been several theories attempting to answer similar questions at similar Champā sites, although no production sites have been found. Nonetheless, through extensive surveys of Indrapura’s Citadel and the surrounding area, we have concluded the ancient stone processing area was nearby Trà Cài Mountain, Bình Trị commune, near the boundary of Bình Định Bắc commune. The mountain range takes a strange series of turns nearby Highway 14E, with the highest mountain located to the southwest of the Buddhist Monastery, about 1km from the monastery. The mountain peak forms a natural cave that was a guerrilla shelter during the Second Indochina War, according to local oral histories. Standing on the highest peak, one can see the South China Sea to the east quite clearly. Atop this mountain peak and along the mountainside, numerous pre-formed rock casts could be extracted without much effort. The stone in this location is exceptionally similar to Đồng Dương statues, rough sandstone; light greyish-white in color. Similar stones are not available elsewhere in the vicinity of Indrapura. Furthermore, it is possible to find large rocks in this area with unfinished saw marks, indicating the probability of a stone splitting technique that made it possible to harvest medium-large stones without crumbling the flesh of the valuable material. On some of the most enormous stones in the area, there are unusual lines that have been carved. There are two possible hypotheses for these lines. First, they could be an esoteric diagram. Second, they could be unfinished writing.

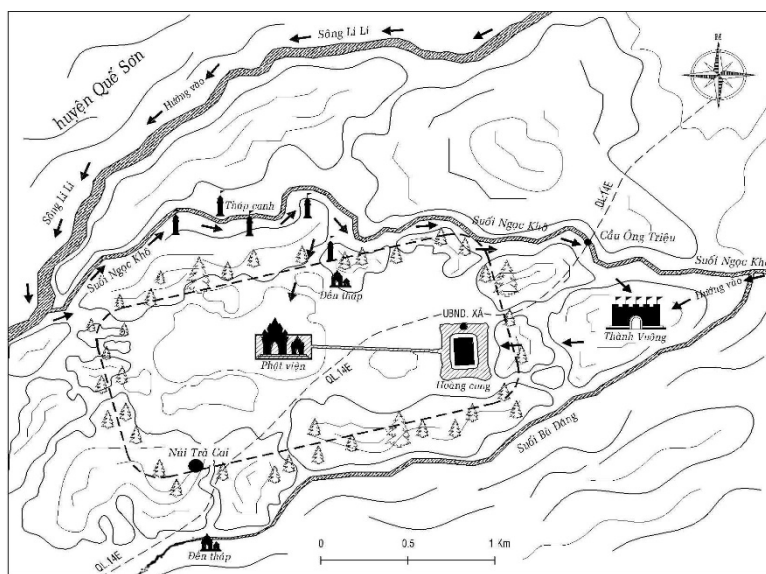


Figure 4: Đồng Dương Monastery
Source: H. Parmentier, 192, Republished in J. Boisselier, 1963; edited by Cao Quang Tổng, 2012

In the years before Highway 14E was constructed, locals came to quarry stones at Trà Cai. Consequentially, some of the stones on the mountain were dynamited apart in recent history. Additionally, larger boulders were used to make *de facto* bunkers during the Second Indochina War, which are no longer available. Nonetheless, even local Vietnamese populations associate this tall mountain peak with lasting potency, linking it to Champā. Furthermore, local oral histories had argued that when rock was quarried recently, although they used methods to ensure they did not damage the ancient site. However, there have been no local designations to protect or research this location in depth. Hence, we should consider the research of the quarrying processes of this particular site quite urgent and move to designate the site as a protected location since modern quarrying of stone threatens the stability of the site. Finally, we should mention that another religious area of Indrapura's structures is nearby Trà Cai Mountain, in the imperial core. Here, we have evidence of an old burial ground, where ancient Champā cremations were located. These locations are south of the Li Li River, but one is in the relative north of the site. Researchers identified traces of this area during local digs for irrigation canals (Quảng Văn Sơn 2015, p. 260). Nonetheless, it should be noted that only preliminary surveys of these sites have been completed, as it is difficult to ascertain the proper permissions for such a large, somewhat disparate, still inhabited settlement area.

Discussion

We have delineated several newly discovered archaeological finds that greatly expand our understanding of the Đờng Dương site above. Historical evidence suggests that periodic warfare, repurposing of construction materials by local populations and the natural environment have led to the gradual destruction of this important heritage site. We should note that parts of these finds were motivated by a proclamation published in *Tuổi Trẻ* newspaper on 17 August 2011.¹ Leading scholars in Vietnam announced a Workshop on the Conservation of Champā Monuments of Đờng Dương Buddhist Monastery. However, as we previously mentioned, the workshop focused on recirculating older assessments already present in French in a Vietnamese translation. The conference admirably broadened awareness of the site and created support for new archaeological surveys. However, even after these surveys, we found the concern from the indigenous Cham

community was simple: *Were Vietnamese officials and international scholars planning to build new Cham-esque temples in the heart of the Buddhist Monastery like the E7 Temple that the Institute for Conservation of Monuments (ICM) had been working on at Mỹ Sơn?* Based on our existing studies, the project of the restoration of temple-tower complex at Group G at Mỹ Sơn has been riddled with mistakes, almost entirely destroying an ancient structure, replacing it with a much less artful contemporary replica (Hung, Noseworthy & Quang 2020). As a result, Cham descendants of the Champā civilization even call this an "ICM Temple" rather than a "Champā Temple-Tower." It was difficult to understand, since these works revered the scholar of the Mỹ Sơn site, Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, but ignored the principles of restoration that he had established for the Mỹ Sơn World Heritage Site. Hence, we sought to consider what an ideal path of action would be.

We have considered several variables for the restoration of the Đờng Dương site as it has been currently proposed. First, the socio-economic costs estimated are enormous, with incredibly uncertain results. Second, the technical research that has been necessarily completed before the "restoration stage" is currently incomplete. More research is necessary, given that we have amassed a much broader knowledge of the Đờng Dương site. While we have highlighted citadels, defensive ramparts, watchtowers, and new religious sites, as well as a production site that we argue are all affiliated with the Đờng Dương site. The work is just beginning. We need to confer with experts in landscape planning, architecture, sculpture, structural studies, urban planning, and other technical categories before we envision this massive research phase being complete enough even to begin to make appropriate recommendations for restoration. Any restoration that begins before this research is complete, however, would be destructive. Third, we need to consider training to establish the human resources necessary to implement the restoration of such sites while recognizing that the existing resources of project management teams have their weaknesses. There would have to be the gathering of investments, organizing, and bidding for the construction of the site, design, construction supervision, and so forth. We have not trained enough local community members – who are also members of the indigenous Cham community – to fill such positions. It is necessary to ensure that the indigenous community is acting as stakeholders rather than observers in any restoration project. Finally, we would have to work with members of the local Vietnamese community, especially since almost the entirety of the inside of the Greater Đờng Dương Complex has been settled in recent decades, including with the construction of Vietnamese religious sites (see

¹On 17 August 2011, People's Committee of Quảng Nam province held a Scientific Workshop to conserve and promote the value of Đờng Dương Buddhist monuments. Quảng Nam newspaper reported.



Figure 5: A Contemporary Vietnamese Temple inside the Greater Đồng Dương Complex Site. Nearby the Đồng Dương Monastery.
 Source: Quảng Văn Sơn, 2018.

Figure 5). These new sites present additional challenges, as researchers and conservations would have to negotiate with religious leaders from such sacred sites regarding any plans to change the local landscape.

Conclusion

In short sum, our most solid assertion is the need for further studies on this site to expand our scholarly knowledge of these monuments. Đồng Dương is not simply a “Buddhist Monastery” magnificent though that monastery may be. Indeed, it is a much more substantially sized center of Indrapura, as clearly illustrated in Figure 4. To begin with, we need a process of utilizing stereo imaging, Lidar, or other such mapping technologies, to examine the site and establish where further excavations need to occur. Second, we need to develop a method of documenting monuments in a massive systematic fashion. For example, the ongoing work with the University of British Columbia’s *Database of Religious History* has created a possible digital repositior for such religious sites. Indeed, a recent entry has been created for Đồng Dương (Chau 2020). However, we need to consider such possibilities for the field of historical archaeology as well.

As work continues at the Đồng Dương site, we may find there may be local farmhouses and families relying on the larger land complex, which would have to be communicated with to ensure they accept the plan of conservation work. Finally, we would be able to develop a better mapping of the region, including the corridors of the area, creating a non-residential buffer zone (*Số Đố*) with local authorities to ensure that the system of Indrapura is protected. We would then also have to mobilize local media in Vietnam to raise the sense of public responsibility to

preserve this site so that the monuments are not intentionally, or unintentionally, destroyed any further. Essentially, we would have to make use of an understanding of what Victor King (2019, p. 6) has called “identities in motion” to better understand how indigenous Cham, Vietnamese, and international identities are formulating various interactions with this site. We have been particularly concerned about locals attempting to dig for treasures at this site, as rumors spread about the value of classical statues during the early 20th century and permeate through to the present. A higher aim for the Đồng Dương – Indrapura site would be to elevate its recognition within the global community. One site is already recognized as a World Heritage site: Mỹ Sơn. However, we are confident that with the proper investment of UNESCO partnered to research, this would elevate the recognition of Đồng Dương to a similar status. Finally, we are confident that if, and only if, *all* of the above suggestions are taken into account, that the Đồng Dương architectural site would be safely protected.

Competing Interest Statement

The authors have read and approved the manuscript and take full responsibility for its contents. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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