



Fig. 2 *Decorated miniature pilasters.*

with sinuous strings of jewels and miniature of pilasters. (Fig. 2)

In his first account in 1909, Henri Parmentier detected no stories of the Buddha.³ Fifty years later (1963), while re-examining the early photographs of the pedestal, and comparing them with the reliefs of the Borobudur monument in Central Java, Jean Boisselier suggested that the Cham sculptors were inspired by the *Lalitavistara-sūtra* and by *jātaka* stories of the Buddha's previous lives. He detected panels on the pedestal that depicted Queen Māyā at his birth in the Lumbinī garden (panel J), the archery contest for the hand of his future wife Yaśodhara (stairways wing B), the cutting of his hair and exchange of clothes to become an ascetic (panel O), the return to the palace of charioteer Chandaka and the horse Kaṇṭhaka carrying his ornaments (stairway wing N), the army of Māra (the stairways wing B) and the daughters of Māra (panel A). Boisselier found the other scenes unclear.⁴ In a notebook that Boisselier handed to his successor Emmanuel Guillon that was published in 1997, the authors provided further remarks on the artistic style and motifs of the pedestal.⁵ Nandana Chutiwongs in 2011 found more previous life stories of the Buddha.⁶ The following interpretation is mostly agreeable to Ngô Văn Doanh (2015)⁷ that the pedestal was attached to the sanctuary wall, the narrative reliefs did not follow clockwise for *pradakṣiṇa*.

The sculptors depicted the main episodes of the Buddha life as told in *Lalitavistara* on three sides of the main pedestal, starting on the front (east) side, then going onto the north side and ending on the south. The east has stairway H

with two wings G and I, and two double panels F and J. The theme on the east is the Bodhisattva descending from Tuṣita Heaven to be born on earth as told in *Lalitavistara* chapters 1 to 7. Before leaving, the Bodhisattva installs Maitreya as his regent in Tuṣita and descends, surrounded by divine offerings and auspicious signs to incarnate as a prince of the Śākya clan king Śuddhodana, in Kapilavastu, Magadha, north India. His descent is shown in the double panel F where the Bodhisattva sits with pendant legs on a throne with a halo behind his head. The lower panel of F depicts followers who want to accompany him – one of them is caressing the horse presented to him for the journey. Three registers on the wing G show the long journey, which Parmentier (1909: 469) described as 'the voyage of the king'⁸

The impressive images of two elephants on the front stairway H are probably auspicious signs at the birth of Buddha (Fig. 3).⁹

5 Guillon 2001: 97 - 102.

6 Nandana Chutiwongs 2011: 12-27.

7 Ngô Văn Doanh 2015: 57-74.

8 Nandana Chutiwongs (2011) interprets the reliefs G and F as telling the Vessantara *Jākata*, one of the last previous lives of Buddha.

9 Nandana Chutiwongs (2011) took the view that this elephant is the vehicle of the Demon Mara who threatens Gautama on the day preceding his final Enlightenment.



Fig. 3 *Two elephants, heads missing, on the front stairway H.*