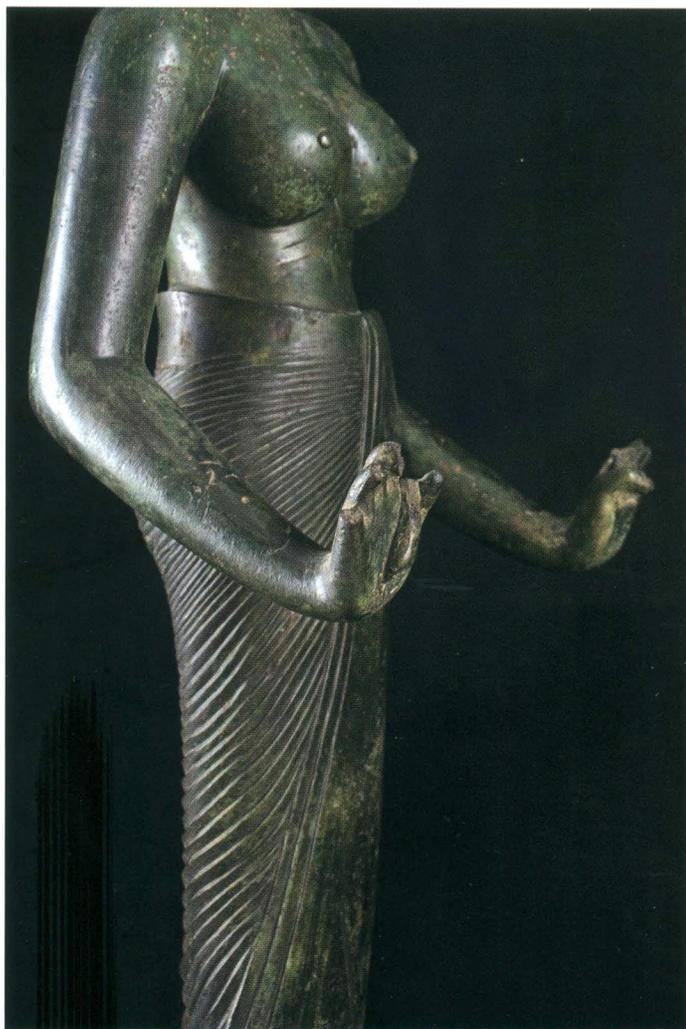


**Fig. 1** Fingers, conch and lotus bud attributes broken off by villagers.



11 Ngô Văn Doanh measured the area around the feet of the statue, which was at 19cm x 17cm, and linked the statue to the square indentation on the central component of the Đổng Dương pedestal [22.24]. The tenon at the bottom of the statue, he surmised, indicated that the statue was fixed into a base before being placed on the indentation.

12 Ian Mabbett, 'Buddhism in Champa', in *Southeast Asia in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A.C. Milner, 289-313; John Guy, 'The Avalokitesvara of Yunnan and some South East Asian Connections' in *South East Asia & China: Art Interaction & Commerce, Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia* No.17, ed. Rosemary Scott and John Guy (Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, London, 1995), 64-83.

13 Further to the north of Champa, this religious syncretism was still perceivable, as read from Nhan Biều inscription of 911 A.D: "Just as the unstable earth finds strength in the mountains, so this country will draw strength from Śiva and Avalokiteśvara in their sanctuaries" (cited Huber (1911) in Guillon (2008: 80).

why Lakṣmīndra-Lokeśvara was portrayed in a female form.

Concerning the religious environment of Champa in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, it has been agreed that there existed an amalgamation of various cults in Champa which reflected a certain degree of religious syncretism.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the course of their history, the Cham people were receptive to Buddhism; however, this form of religion never supplanted Śaivism as the principal religion of the Champa polities. Cham kings of the Indrapura dynasty, albeit being devout Buddhists, still practiced the cult of Śaivism alongside Vajrayāna Esoteric Buddhism and the indigenous cult of the Mother Goddess.<sup>13</sup> Religious syncretism thus lends weight to the identification of the Đổng Dương female deity as the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. While the identity of this female deity is still an enigma, I would like to argue for applying the generic term of Avalokiteśvara to the statue. In terms of iconography, this is supported by the image of Amitābha carved in the locks of the coiffure

and the two attributes, which are typical features in most images of Avalokiteśvara. By honouring a *līṅga* dedicated to Śiva, as mentioned in the inscriptions C.66 and consecrating an image of Avalokiteśvara to the Đổng Dương sanctuary, the Cham King Indravarman II showed his intention to absorb Śaivism into Buddhism and simultaneously legitimize his authority under the divine protection of both Buddhist and Śaiva deities. That Avalokiteśvara was exquisitely portrayed in the feminine form also speaks to the *Prajñā* concept of wisdom and female power in Tantric Buddhism, which is similar in nature to the concept of Śakti energy in Śaivism. The female form of the statue tellingly refers to the Mother Goddess cult in this deeply matrilineal ancient polity, which perhaps catalyzed the gender transformation of Avalokiteśvara in Champa.

NHHD