

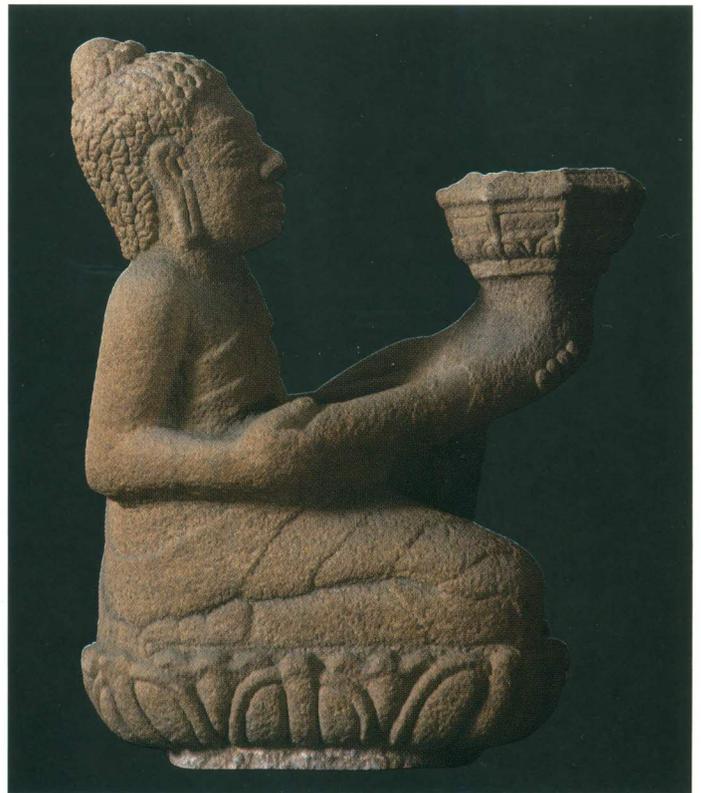
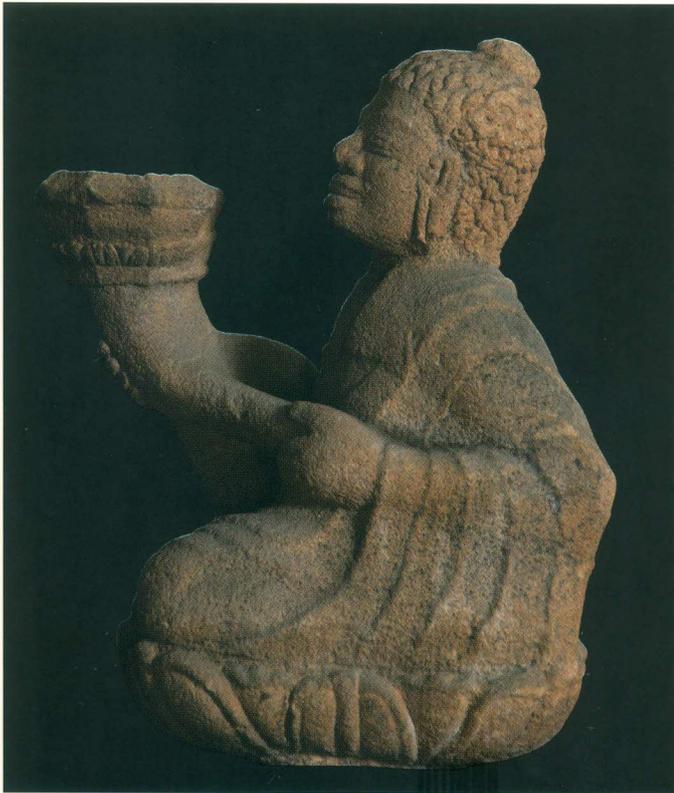
21, 22. Monks with offerings

Đồng Dương, Quảng Nam

9th-10th centuries

Sandstone: H. 55 cm; W. 28 cm; D. 43 cm

BTC 172 44.15 a; BTC 173-44.15b



These half-kneeling figures, seated on a lotus petal pedestal and smiling with head held back, are dressed in the monastic robe in two parts that gathers into large pleats as in the preceding figure. Similarly, the large knotted curls of the hair and the heavy moustache remind us of the head of the Buddha (cat. 16), as do all the masculine figures in the style of Đồng Dương. With flourishing mien, fixed as in ecstasy on the figure of the Buddha they turn to, they participate in the numerous assembly gathered in the nave of the assembly hall of the temple dedicated to Lakṣmindra-Lokeśvara. Both of them were probably placed on each side of the Buddha, no doubt below the principal image, as in compositions for which one once again finds contemporary examples in southern China, in certain sanctuaries excavated in Sichuan.¹

Half-kneeling, they hold with ease the bent stalk of a huge lotus flower. Its petals, largely open, serve as support for a small octagonal cup

in which a large cavity has been prepared. This has given rise to different interpretations: Jean Boisselier saw in it a 'kind of horn of plenty';² which Emmanuel Guillon wanted to confirm in describing it as 'a long torch-carrier (?) in the form of a horn of abundance'.³ If the lotus-form of this element is clear, it is also possible to compare it with certain pieces of Cham precious metal work, like the silver incense-burner in the collection of Vũ Kim Lộc.⁴ This object, in this case inscribed, is very close to incense-burners with long handles made in precious metals that one finds throughout the Buddhist world of the Mahāyāna – notably in the northern tradition of China and Japan – which served to perfume the altars. Set in stone, it could well have taken on this unusual but recognisable function.

PB

1 See for example the large assembly gathered in grotto no. 8 of Shiningsi of Bazhong (Sichuan) around Śākyamuni teaching the doctrine, at whose feet two similar figures appear. *Zhongguo Meishu Quanji*, *Diasu bian*, vol. XII, 'Sichuan shi', pl. 52.

2 Boisselier 1963 (I), fig. 50, p. 98.

3 Ducreest and Vandermeersch 1997, no. 23, p. 102.

4 Lê Xuân Diệm and Vũ Kim Lộc 1996, pp. 88-91.