

Although this work is unfinished (the face, hands and feet have not yet received the enhanced final modelling of finished works), the magnificence of the jewels of this adorned personage, and the elegance of the pose he assumes in a manner both kind and determined, combine to make this work one of the great masterpieces of the art of Champa.

A member of the assembly united around the Buddha Śākyamuni in the great hall of the monastery, he forms a pair with another perfectly symmetrical figure. The small square undecorated base on which he stands was itself originally inserted into a small pedestal shaped like a capital and ornamented with lotus petals sealed in the masonry of brick and stone of the great pedestal of the *vihāra*.¹ The feet are placed asymmetrically on the base, effecting a complex yet supple pose, hips subtly swayed, turning the torso and even more the face to the right, no doubt in the direction of the colossal Śākyamuni. Dressed in a long lower garment (*antariya*) with pleated centre fold held by a large belt with lateral bands attached, this male figure with naked torso, is bedecked with much jewelry: bracelets (*kañkana*), armbands (*udarabandha*), necklace (*hāra*), ear pendants (*kuṇḍala*) and diadem-hair cover (*kiritamukuta*); the care taken to fashion the details of the floral and foliate jewels faithfully echoes the sumptuous repoussé gold and silver work set with precious stones that one may admire in certain private collections in Vietnam and elsewhere.² This jewelry was perhaps completed by a large nimbus like those that adorn other figures and which one could imagine here in wood or goldwork (?). This is what appears to be suggested by the rear of the head, where one sees a salient cubic tenon. According to Jean Boisselier, however, 'these images were intended to be placed against a wall and an important tenon, left behind the neck, allowed them to be assembled with a backpiece'.³ We would object to this remark that, as the figure is slightly inclined forward, the position of the tenon does not appear exactly aligned with the base. Further, as the head is slightly turned towards the right, the same tenon does not fit the axis of the piece. It is therefore difficult to see how it could have been attached to a backpiece. Certainly the back was not made to be seen, but the statue was also not necessarily attached to a base, at least not with this tenon.

With one hand on the thigh, and the other holding an indistinct object (a weapon, a

flywhisk?) of which only the handle remains, this figure seems like a vision softened and composed of the door guardians (*dvārapāla*) who defended the *gopura* of the first enclosure.⁴ It is perhaps this that incited Jean Boisselier to view these figures as 'Dharmapāla, the guardians of the Buddhist Law that we meet in the Mahāyāna sanctuaries, where their position in the *vihāra* explains itself with ease'.⁵ In many respects these figures may equally be considered as assistants of the Buddha who appear on numerous votive plaques and some bas-reliefs of assemblies, notably in the Môn art of Dvāravatī, among whom we sometimes find Bodhisattvas.⁶ They could be compared with many northern Buddhist assemblies of the Mahāyāna tradition from Central Asia to Japan.

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- 1 MAFV 2005, photo 65. These pedestals were rediscovered on 18 November 1902. Henri Parmentier, *Journal de Fouilles*, p. 58 (unedited manuscript conserved in the archives of the EFEO).
- 2 Lê Xuân Diệm and Vũ Kim Lộc 1996, pp. 88-91.
- 3 Boisselier 1963 (1), p. 102.
- 4 MAFV 2005, photos 73-5.
- 5 Boisselier 1963 (1), p. 102.
- 6 Chutiwongs 2002, pl. 79-82. See also the celebrated reliefs of Wat Suthat which offer several points of comparison with the Đông Dương assembly. Dupont 1959, no. 514, p. 140 and Jean Boisselier, *La Sculpture en Thaïlande*, Office du Livre, Bibliothèque des Arts, Paris, 1974, no. 48, p. 226.