

## 25, 26. *Dvārapālas* (or *Dharmapālas*?)

Đông Dương, Quảng Nam  
9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries

Sandstone: H.216 cm;

W. 137 cm; D. 120 cm

Sandstone: H. 240 cm;

W. 137 cm; D. 126 cm

BTC 174-9. 11;

BTC 175-912

One of the enigmas of Cham iconography at Đông Dương are the spectacular door guardians (*dvārapāla*) of the temple. They appeared in pairs in side-chapels in each of the four entry pavilions (*gopura*) giving access to the successive enclosures of the sanctuary. The largest and best preserved figure here.

One was discovered in the second sanctuary enclosure in November 1902 by Henri Parmentier and Charles Carpeaux.<sup>1</sup> Formidable and frightening, the ferocious aspect (*krodha*) of this guardian on the left separates him from the many serene divinities found in the complex. Naked to the waist, they are dressed in a simple cloth with a section folded forward ending in a sober border with a number of jewelry pieces. All of these are made fierce with twisted three-headed serpents (*nāga*): ear pendants (*nāga-kundala*), armbands (*nāga-keyūra*), bracelets (*nāga-kankana*), belt (*nāga-kaṭibandha*) and anklets (*nāga-pādavalaya*). On the torso, falling from the left shoulder, the Brahmanical sacred cord (*nāga-yajñopavīta* or *nāga-upavīta*) is treated in the same terrifying and inhabitual way. Only the rich diadem hair cover, forming a helmet (*kirīṭamukūṭa*) and marked with flower jewels is

similar to those worn by other divinities fulfilling a guardian role.

The dress and jewelry are inherited from traditional Indian iconography for *dvārapāla* who for centuries have guarded the main entrances of temples, and whose roots go back to the local forest spirits – the *yakṣa* – whose veneration has long since been absorbed into Buddhism and Hinduism. They are the origin of these terrifying appearances – arched brows, exaggerated forehead wrinkles, bulging eyes, high cheekbones, and mouths opened to reveal large fangs. In conformity with a tradition established in India since at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the *dvārapāla* on the left is a little more friendly (*śantha*) than his neighbour on the right, and whose neck is marked with wrinkles and large veins showing his anger (*krodha*). Their extremely dynamic attitudes are a *tour de force* in Cham sculpture. Their legs braced in the archer position (*ālīdha*), the *dvārapāla* turn towards the *gopura* entrance leaning forward their upper body and brandishing weapons with menace in a state of agitation (*ati-bhaṅga*) that symbolises their superhuman power. The somewhat indistinct weapon of the left

<sup>1</sup> Henri Parmentier, *Rapport des fouilles*, p. 52.

