

Without doubt contemporary with Śiva's bull (cat. 43), and ordered by the same king who erected the vast sanctuary at Mý Sơn in the middle of the 10th century, the two colossal door guardians (*dvārapāla*) conserved at the museum since 1918 are evidence of the high artistic level achieved by the Cham sculptors of this period. As Jean Boisselier suggested, it is perhaps Mahākāla that we see here.¹ In Śaiva sanctuaries the guardian on the right, and of powerful, aggressive appearance, is often Mahākāla. Although far removed from the huge *dvārapāla* of Đòng Dương (cat. 25, 26), his aspect is virile and athletic (*vīra*), with ferocious (*krodha*) touches in the eyes and brows and some of the jewelry. Among the last are earrings with three-headed *nāga* (*nāga-kunḍala*), the Brahmanical cord (*nāga-yajñopavīta* or *nāga-upavīta*), treated in the same terrifying manner and we perceive a serpentine (*nāga-keyūra*) armband set into the left shoulder. Otherwise, the *dvārapāla* wears ornaments that conform with the aesthetic of the mid-10th century: spiralling

chains, necklace of pearls and jewels, stomacher (*udarabandha*) with two bands of pearls and set with a jewel-flower. The fine diadem (*kirīṭa*) with pearls and five jewels, show the finesse in detailed work in the evolution of jewelry. It finely borders the hair around the face. The large shells of plaited hair are inherited from the Đòng Dương style, yet his pile of ascetic hair, forming a crown, is in the style of the 10th century; the heavy curls are visible through the bejewelled hair cover. A last detail is visible in the handle of the sword whose cover is held by the jewelled belt on his right side.

Despite the fragmented state, he appears like a guardian of a period of balance, a moment of great art in Champa. Imposing and massive, far from being heavy, he is impressive and exalting at the same time. What forgotten sculptor could breathe such a tranquil force into this body in movement, what unnamed artist hides behind the animation of this majestic face of noble gravity, his eyes lost in the distance and yet watching?

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1 Boisselier 1963 (1) p. 186.