

Chapter 2: Outline of the Survey and Restoration Project of the Central Sanctuary

Section 1: Progress of the reassembly of the central sanctuary

As of December 2019, the reassembly of the lower part of the central sanctuary was completed, and the reassembly work of the middle platform was almost complete, except for the northeast part. We completed the reassembly of the middle platform in January to February 2020 and continued to reassemble the middle and upper platform from March to July. In August, we reconstructed the platform of the central sanctuary and the Buddhist pedestal located in the east.

Regarding the reassembly of the building frame, the work was carried out after a trial reassembly. From September to December 2020, the doors of the four cardinal openings were temporarily assembled and reassembled. In November, the walls between the east and south openings were reconstructed.



Fig. 24 Curving the new stone blocks for the central sanctuary



Fig. 25 View of the reassembly work of the central sanctuary



Fig. 26 View of the reassembled platform of the central sanctuary (view from the east)



Fig. 27 View of the reassembled platform of the central sanctuary (view from the northeast)



Fig. 28 View of the reassembled platform and façade of the central sanctuary (view from the east)



Fig. 29 View of the reassembled middle and upper platform and façade of the central sanctuary (view from the east)



Fig. 30 View of the reassembled platform and façade of the central sanctuary (view from the southeast)



Fig. 31 View of the reassembled south façade of the central sanctuary (view from the south)

Section 2: Return of decorative stone materials from Conservation d'Angkor

During and after the Cambodian Civil War in the 1970s, the decorative stones, statues of gods and Buddha images from the Angkor monuments were stolen. Therefore, the Cambodian government took the decorative stones and statues from the temples to the Conservation d'Angkor, which was established in Siem Reap City, and stored them. To date, more than 10,000 sculptures have been stored at the Conservation d'Angkor. Sculptures were also taken from the Western Prasat Top site and are safely stored there to this day.

In preparation for the restoration and reconstruction of the central sanctuary, a survey of the sculptures associated with the central sanctuary was carried out by the Conservation d'Angkor in 2018-2019. The survey revealed that the stone collection includes lintels, colonnettes, pediments and other sculptures related to the central sanctuary. We considered the possibility of replacing them with new sandstone, but we believe that the priority should be to restore the site to its original state, so we approached the Cambodian government to return some of the original sculptures stored at the Conservation d'Angkor to the site. The reconstruction policy of this project was accepted and approved by the Minister of Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Cambodia in October 2020, as the decorative stones, such as lintels, are essential components for the reassembly of the temple structure and it is important to reconstruct the original decorative stones to their original position.



Fig. 32 Transporting the colonnette from the storage room of Conservation d'Angkor



Fig. 33 Check the items to transport by the conservator of Conservation d'Angkor

Accordingly, the decorative stones belonging to the central sanctuary were transferred from the Conservation d'Angkor to the Western Prasat Top Site in October 2020. Officers from the Conservation d'Angkor and heritage police accompanied the transfer work, and the stones were safely transported to the Western Prasat Top site. After that, we started to repair those parts of the lintel and colonnette which needed to be joined and repaired. On the other hand, the pediment blocks were reconstructed with other parts placed at the Western Prasat Top site, and the reassembly of the iconography is in progress. The restored pieces will be reassembled in their proper position in the central sanctuary.

	Inv. No.	Width(cm)	Height(cm)	Depth(cm)	Type	Note
	N332	16.5	116	14	Colonnette	Central sanctuary
	N333	19	100	16	Colonnette	Central sanctuary
	N423	140	48	40	Lintel	Eastern façade of central sanctuary Yama + Nandin
	N424	42	48	35	Lintel	Western façade of central sanctuary

Table1-1 Inventory of the returned decorative stones from Conservation d'Angkor

	Inv. No.	Width(cm)	Height(cm)	Depth(cm)	Type	Note
	N425	75	47	36	Lintel	Western façade of central sanctuary
	N435	18	46.5	36	Pediment	Kendi Lotus bud Bird-shaped spout
	N437	34	25	16	Pediment	Seated Buddha with bhūmisparśa mudrā
	N445	64	50	23	Pediment	
	N446	90	40	19	Pediment	Yama with stick

Table1-2 Inventory of the returned decorative stones from Conservation d'Angkor

	Inv. No.	Width(cm)	Height(cm)	Depth(cm)	Type	Note
	N451	52.5	20	36	Pediment	Head of Buddha
	N452	70	43	21.5	Pediment	Kendi Lotus bud Bird-shaped spout
	N453	55	33	14	Pediment	
	N454	20.5	38.5	19	Colonnette	Central sanctuary

Table1-3 Inventory of the returned decorative stones from Conservation d'Angkor