

Looking to ninth- to fifteenth-century Hindu-Buddhist Java (the Indonesian island most profoundly affected by Indian religions) for comparative material, we might consider the pedestals and niches of Candi Sewu. A temple with a complex iconographic plan, it provides one of the closest comparisons in Southeast Asian that we have for the Cham pedestals (fig. 6). The primary images of the main temple would have been placed on these carved pedestals, while smaller bronze objects would have been placed within equally elaborate niches.²¹

Although the concept of this elaborated platform may be a new addition to the Indian temple, the iconography of the Cham pedestals from the Thu Bon River area (Quang Nam Province) comes directly from the Hindu-Buddhist milieu, and, hence, presumably from India.²² The ascetics of the My Son E1 pedestal may well allude to the forests of the slopes of Mt. Kailasha where Shiva makes his abode, while the Hindu Tra Kieu and the two Buddhist Dong Duong pedestals include scenes from either the *Bhagavatapurana* or the *Ramayana* in the former, and the life story of the Buddha in the latter. The carving of the Van Trach altar (cat. no. 57),²³ includes images of the *dikpalas*, the directional deities, a group identified in texts such as the *Agni Purana*, and of the Hindu trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. This is not to overstate the influence Indian thought had on the Cham, but rather, to illustrate points of connection.

The pedestals previously mentioned have all been found in the northern Cham regions, in the Thu Bon River area (Tra Kieu, Dong Duong, and My Son) and in the vicinity of Hue (Van Trach) and appear as an element that is prominent in a local regional style during the earliest extant period of Cham art (up to the eleventh century)²⁴ and distinct from developments in other centers of Cham culture. Later pedestals, such as that from Thap Mam (Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, 22.43), exhibit different types of decoration—the motif generally assumed to be a breast, but also described as evolving from a fruit,²⁵ and the broad, bold, deeply carved floral motifs and playful animals of the later period—rather than the specifically Hindu and Buddhist content of the earlier period. With later temples, however, we encounter a simple outdoor platform where ancestor stones (*kut*) were installed, and it may be that these platforms took over the function of the earlier pedestals, previously installed within the temple.

Other elements of the temples speak of artistic connections the Champa people shared with their neighbors. As discussed in the Introduction (p. 4) and in the essay by Reinecke (p. 49), recent excavations at Tra Kieu show more evidence of Chinese exchange in the early centuries A.D. than was previously believed.²⁶ Moreover, during the Cham period, texts describing the tribute missions from Champa to China include some examples of artistic exchange.

Thus a twelfth-century Chinese text, the *Song hui-yao ji gao*, provides a history of tenth- through twelfth-century tribute missions the Champa royalty made to the Song court. While the list of goods taken in tribute to the Chinese emperor consists mostly of perishables, the monk Jing-jie is said to have brought such gifts as “gold, ‘dragon-brain camphor,’ gold bells, an incense censer, Buddhist scepters, and so on.” One would like to have a complete list of the Buddhist materials the monk took to the Chinese court, but this reference acknowledges the exchange of Buddhist paraphernalia. A further example of the exchange of Buddhist goods, this time a stone sculpture going as tribute to China, is found in another account of the Cham missions, the official history of the Song dynasty

FIG. 6

Candi Sewu niche for a sculpture, Central Java, 10th century.

