

qualities of the monuments themselves, this article proposes to view the Cham temple as a dynamic entity that thrived in a network of local and transregional relationships. The early temples at Mỹ Sơn in central Vietnam (until early ninth century) are the focus of this essay. But the place-time boundaries have been transgressed when overarching concepts and practices are being discussed, especially in the section on 'Semantics'.

Semantics

The earliest-known temple in Champa was built during the fifth century in the picturesque Mỹ Sơn valley of central Vietnam. A thousand and five hundred years ago, it was known by the Sanskrit name, *devadevālaya*, meaning the abode of the god of gods (C.73A).² This 'god of gods' was none other than the Hindu god Śiva in his symbolic, non-anthropomorphic form, the *liṅga*, and known as Bhadrēśvara after its eponymous king and patron, Bhadravarman. The king had bestowed almost the entire Mỹ Sơn valley as a perpetual endowment (*akṣaya-nīvi*) towards the upkeep of this 'first' temple (C.72).³

In the second half of the seventh century, during the time of King Prakāśadharman Vikrāntavarman, the term *pūjāsthāna* was used to refer to a place of worship. At least three epigraphs from his time record the term *pūjāsthāna* (C.79, C.136, C.173).⁴ A low, square stone pedestal found at the site of the Mỹ Sơn A 10 temple, which perhaps served as an image-support, bears a seventh-century record mentioning that king Prakāśadharman had fashioned the *pūjāsthāna* for Maheśvara's (Śiva's) friend, Kubera (C.79). A similar inscribed pedestal from Dương Mông records the making of a *pūjāsthāna* of Viṣṇu by the order of Prakāśadharman (C.136). The third record is also inscribed on a stone image-pedestal and records the restoration or remaking (*punas tasya krte*) of a *pūjāsthāna* of the great sage and primordial poet, Vālmiki, by the same king (C.173). The term *pūjāsthāna* in these epigraphs indicates the place where the deity was installed and appears to serve a dual meaning – the pedestal-support for the deity's image as well the site where the deity's image would have been housed or established (a temple).⁵

The act of installing a deity for worship (*sthāpitam*) at a suitable sacred place (*sthāna/pūjāsthāna*) is a most significant one for the Chams, and the act of building a temple to provide an appropriate abode often is only

indirectly implied in the inscriptions (C.25, C.96, etc.).⁶ The importance accorded by the Chams to the rite of installing or establishing the deity at an appropriate 'place of worship' also explains the centrality of the altar-platform (*vedi, mahāvedi*) in Cham temple architecture (C.74).⁷ These altar-platforms were made in brick (*vedi baddheṣṭakamayī*), with stone *vedīs* (*śilāmayīm*) being introduced only towards the dawn of the eighth century (C.74).

A few other temple-terms are found in inscriptions from further South. Temples were also called *prāsādas* (palace/temple), as in the case of an early ninth-century inscription recorded on a door-pillar of the Po Nagar temple in the Nha Trang province of south-central Vietnam (C.31, C2; 817 CE).⁸ Associated components of temples such as temple halls and doorways (*prāsādāni maṇḍapa vicitra dvāreṇa*) are also mentioned in the same inscription, suggesting a more developed and diversified temple-complex during the ninth century as compared to the single-celled units noticed in the seventh century. Temples of a later period at Mỹ Sơn (c. 10th-13th centuries) are sophisticated complexes with enclosure walls, gateways, adjunct halls, treasuries, and ritual spaces. The term *surapuram* (city of gods) was also in use, as for example, at Po Nagar in south-central Vietnam (C.38; 784 CE).⁹ The term *antargṛha*, which conveys the sense of an inner house or a temple's sanctum, is also met with.¹⁰ Another temple-term encountered in a ninth-century epigraph from Bakul in the Ninh Thuận province in southern Vietnam is *devakula* (deity's family-house; C.23; 829 CE).¹¹

An 11th-century bilingual record inscribed on a rock near the Po Klaun Garai temple (C. 13) records Sanskrit terms for temples (*devālaya*) and other religious structures (monasteries, cottages, assembly halls, forest hermitages) in the Cham portion of the inscription suggesting that the adoption and adaptation of Indic temple terminology was an integral part of the process of transfer of knowledge systems relating to temple building practices and rituals.¹² The Cham temple today is locally known by the term *kalan*. To the best of my knowledge, this widely prevalent term is not found in the corpus of Sanskrit and Cham inscriptions or in the Chinese annals! The phonetically affiliated terms *kan-lan* and *gan-lan* in middle and modern Chinese respectively and the Khmer term *khna:n* – all indicate a house. It is most likely then, that