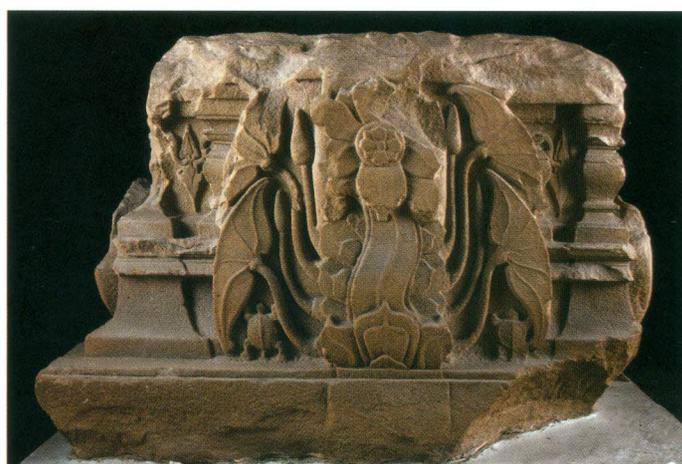




**Figs. 1, 2, 3** Horses on the front and sides of the *vedi* with a lotus on the rear.



The front face has only a horse's head. This arrangement evokes a four-wheeled cart, of indiscernible form, drawn forward by three horses. The rear face is carved with a beautiful large lotus leaves with buds and a blooming flower in the middle. Underneath the lotus roots two turtles swim along suggesting the water the lotus is growing from.

The theme and treatment are unique in Cham art and somewhat puzzling. H. Parmentier, who made an elegant sketch, offered no explanation for categorising it as a pedestal but asked: 'Is this a vehicle passing through water or the shrine of a marine deity?' (1909: 265)

Rather than a pedestal to support a *linga* or statue, the finely carved block is perhaps an altar or *vedi*. This form of *vedi* for sacrificial ritual offerings can be seen *in situ* in front of the Chiên

Dàn temples of Quảng Nam or at Mỹ Khánh temple in Thừa Thiên – Huế. An altar was seen as a symbol of the chariot of Agni, the fire god who functions as a bridge between the mortal world and the heavens. Sacrifices were purified by the fire of Agni before being presented to the deities. In Indian sculpture, Agni is often portrayed riding a ram or a chariot with powerful horses. The lotus on the back could represent an offering to Agni's chariot.

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