



DEPARTEMEN PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN

Chandi Gumpung Of Muara Jambi : A PLATFORM IN STEAD OF A CONVENTIONAL CHANDI ?

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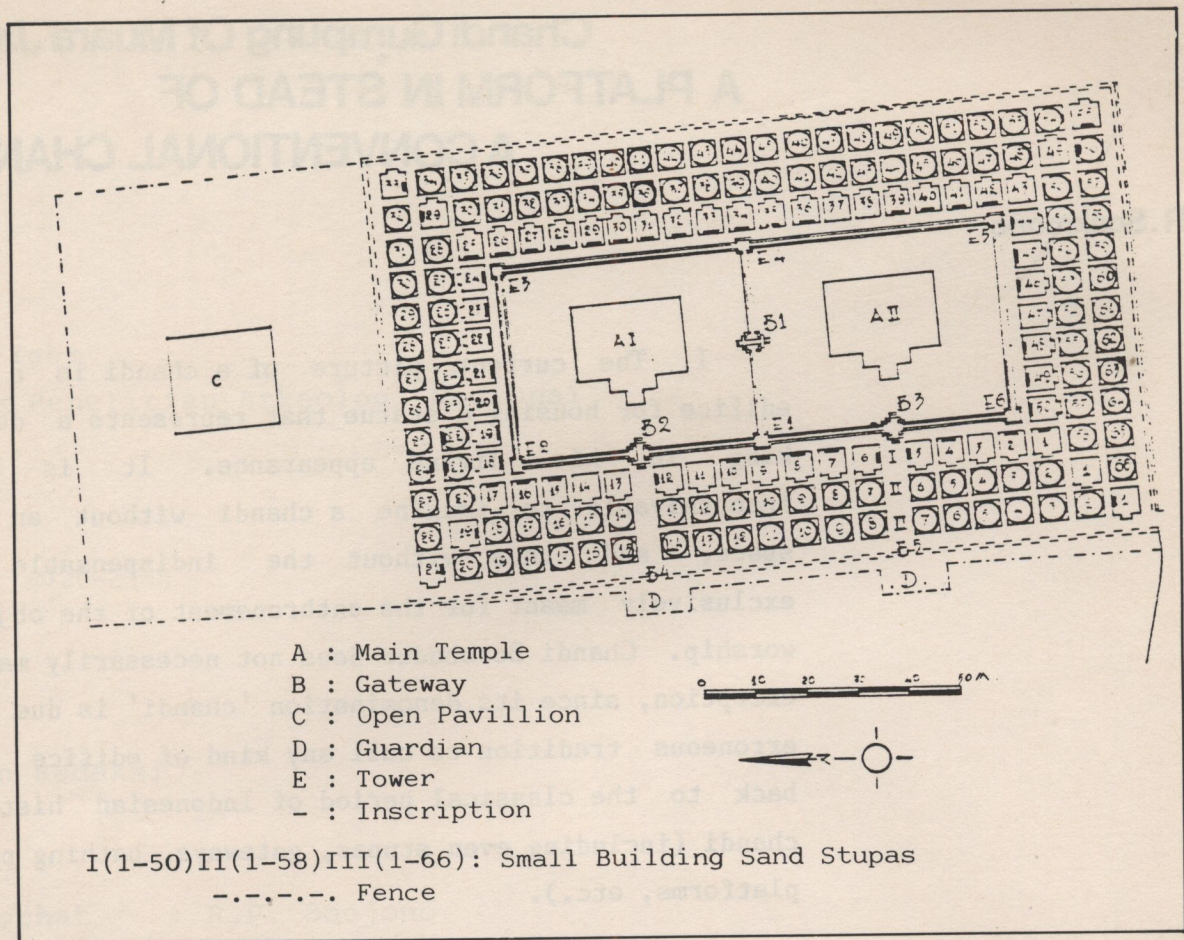
Chandi Gumpung Of Muara Jambi : A PLATFORM IN STEAD OF A CONVENTIONAL CHANDI ? *)

R. Soekmono

I. The current picture of a chandi is a stone edifice for housing a statue that represents a deceased king in his divine appearance. It is simply inconceivable to imagine a chandi without an inner space, and thus without the indispensable room exclusively meant for the enthronement of the object of worship. Chandi Borobudur does not necessarily make an exception, since its denomination 'chandi' is due to the erroneous tradition to call any kind of edifice dating back to the classical period of Indonesian history a chandi (including even stupas, gateways, bathing places, platforms, etc.).

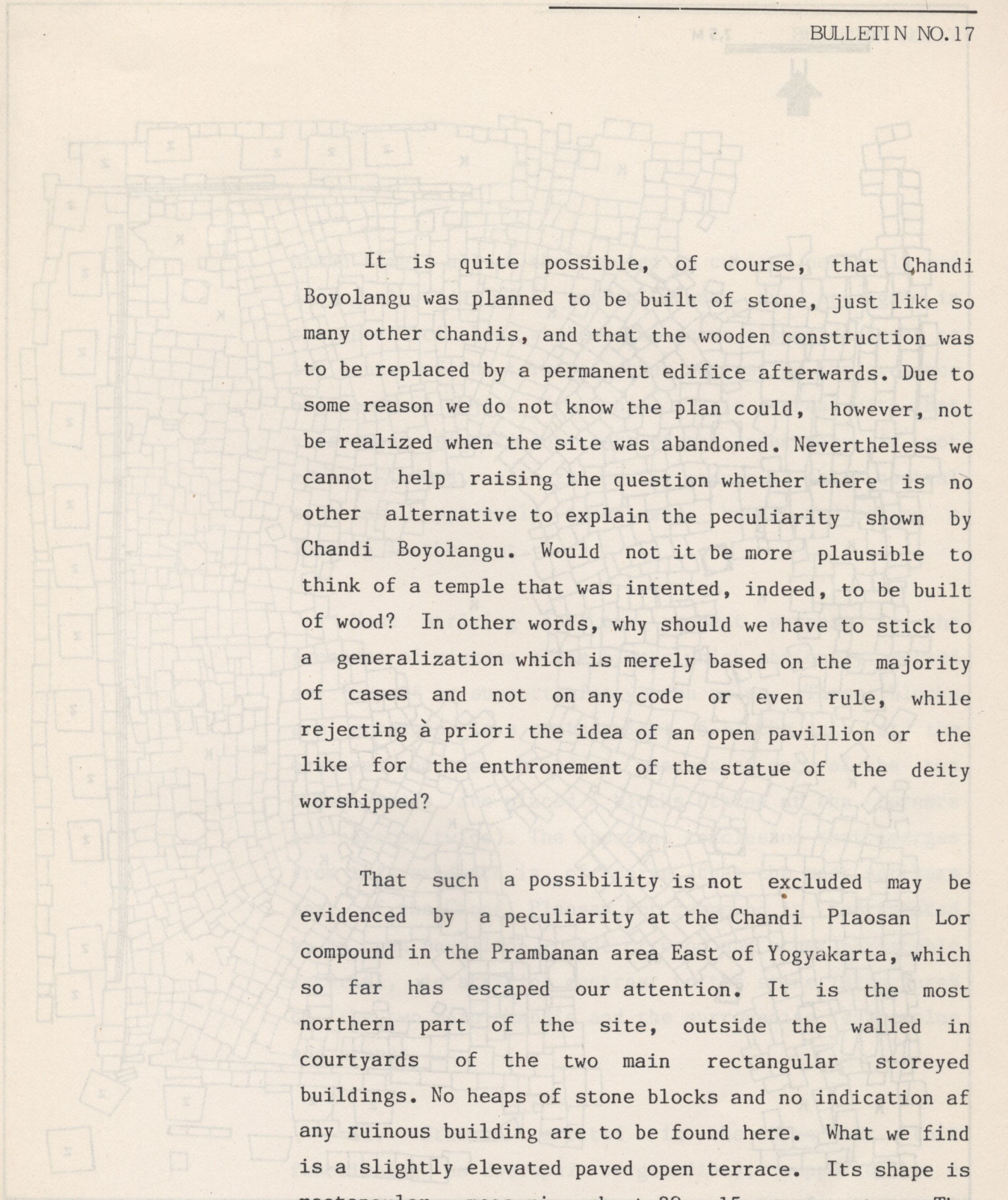
No wonder that, when we come across a statue in the open air, we immediately look for the remains of the accessory temple building. And if the remains are too scanty, making it impossible to get even the slightest idea of how the structure could look like, we blame treasure hunters for the total destruction or the local people for using the site as stone quarries. However, if the scanty remains point to the use of perishable material, we are inclined to think of the preliminary stage of the construction of a chandi awaiting the permanent one in stone. Take for example Chandi

*) *The present paper is an updated elaboration of an oral address to the 3rd Archaeological Meeting (PIA III), held in May 1983.*



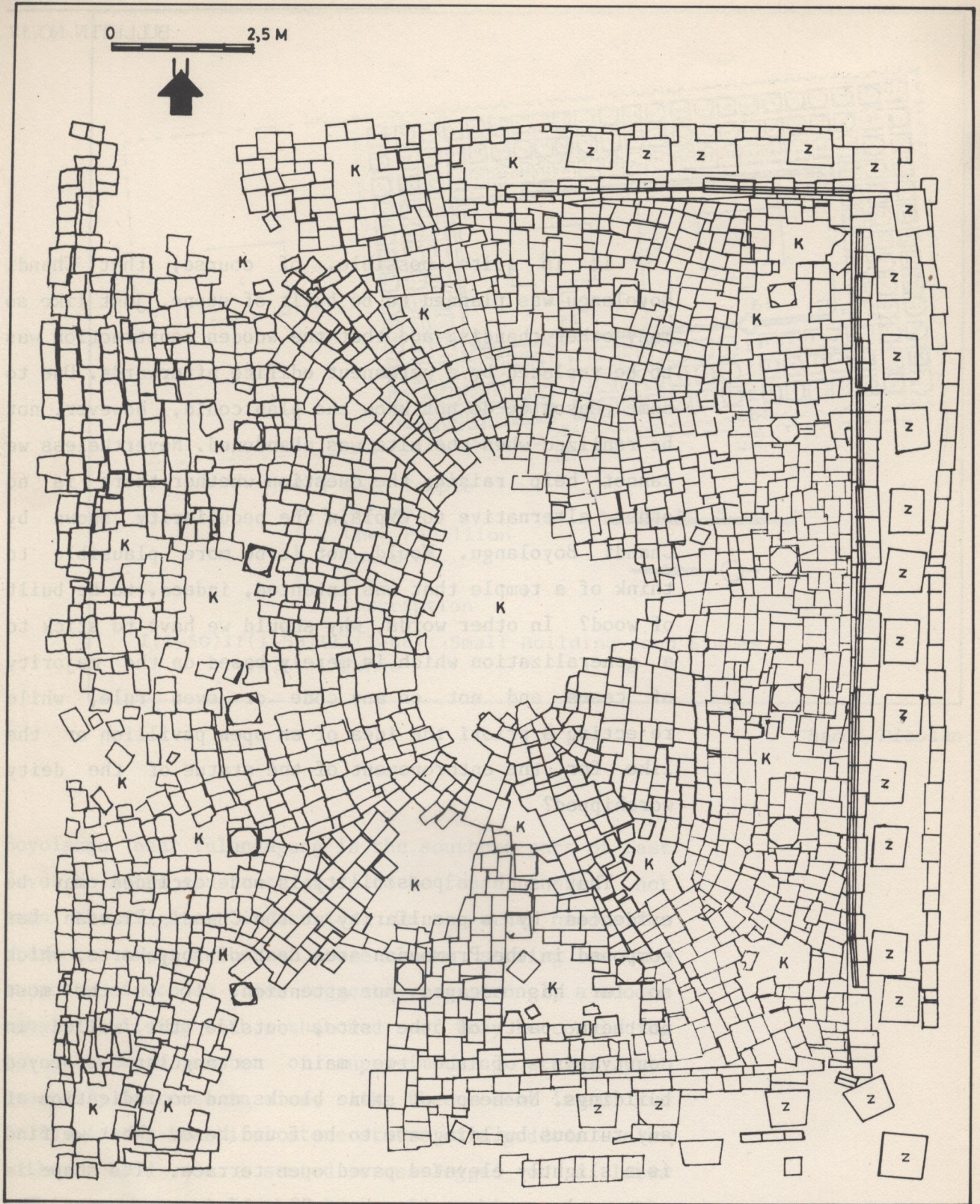
Chandi Plaosan

Boyolangu near Tulungagung in the southern part of East Java. No stone construction is to be found there, not even the slightest indication. On the other hand, the presence of a number of stone blocks serving as the supports of wooden poles suggests very strongly a wooden temple building with a thatched roof (may be consisting of an uneven number of super-imposing stages that gradually decrease in size, like the present 'meru' in Bali). A very beautiful stone statue of a goddess - alas without head now - seated cross-legged on a lotus cushion was certainly the object of worship, presumably representing Queen Tribhuwana of the Majapahit kingdom, who was depicted as the goddess Prajñāparamitā¹⁾.



It is quite possible, of course, that Chandi Boyolangu was planned to be built of stone, just like so many other chandis, and that the wooden construction was to be replaced by a permanent edifice afterwards. Due to some reason we do not know the plan could, however, not be realized when the site was abandoned. Nevertheless we cannot help raising the question whether there is no other alternative to explain the peculiarity shown by Chandi Boyolangu. Would not it be more plausible to think of a temple that was intended, indeed, to be built of wood? In other words, why should we have to stick to a generalization which is merely based on the majority of cases and not on any code or even rule, while rejecting à priori the idea of an open pavillion or the like for the enthronement of the statue of the deity worshipped?

That such a possibility is not excluded may be evidenced by a peculiarity at the Chandi Plaosan Lor compound in the Prambanan area East of Yogyakarta, which so far has escaped our attention. It is the most northern part of the site, outside the walled in courtyards of the two main rectangular storeyed buildings. No heaps of stone blocks and no indication of any ruinous building are to be found here. What we find is a slightly elevated paved open terrace. Its shape is rectangular, measuring about 20 x 15 square metres. The eastern side, and also part of the northern and Southern sides, are flanked by some twenty²⁾ stone statues of



Chandi Plaosan

Detailed groundplan of the
paved open terrace

human size, all of them seated on cubical pedestals, and facing inwards. The paving stones are arranged in concentric circles, whereas the seams alongside point to the centre of the terrace, thus suggesting the presence of a central object of worship. It is a great pity that this most significant part of the sanctuary is not known. Indeed, all the paving stones at this central spot are apparently taken away, hence indicating a looting in the past.

Most striking for our present purpose is the presence of sixteen stone blocks which obviously served as "umpak" or supports for wooden poles. These blocks are arranged in a rectangular: 6 blocks each at the eastern and western sides, whereas at each of the two other sides are placed 4 blocks (those at the corners are counted twice). The apparent conclusion that emerges from this evidence is, of course, that the most northern part of the Chandi Plaosan Lor compound is represented by an open pavillion, made of wood and other perishable material, in striking contrast to the stone structures of the two main chandis and the surrounding subtemples and stupas.

II. Statues erected in the open air (not functioning as *dwarapala* or guardian), supported by a pedestal but without roofing, are known from several places. We need not go too far from Chandi Boyolangu to come across such free standing statues. There is the

seated Ganeṣa of Boro, guarding a crossing over the Brantas river, and there is the standing Ganeṣa of Karangates, watching over the Brantas valley far below. As a matter of fact, it is in full accordance with Ganeṣa's position as the God who clears away hindrances, that his statues are erected at confluences of rivers, at river-crossings, at cross-roads and other vulnerable spots, next to his permanent place at the rear of a chandi when adorning such a monument.

Statues emerging from diggings without any indication of having been enthroned in the chamber of a chandi-building, are - to mention a few but representing the most significant examples - the gigantic Bhairawa from Padang Roco, the peculiar Amoghapaṇa-group from Rambahan, the exalted statues from Chandi Banon, and the quite recently excavated Buddha from Selomerto.

The Bhairawa statue was dug out at Padang Roco near Sungai Langsat in Mid-Sumatra,³⁾ and is now kept in the National Museum in Jakarta. It is until to-day the biggest monolith of the entire archaeological collection, rising more than four metres from its pedestal. The general assumption is that the statue depicts the Sumatran king Adityawarman of the 14th century, though the possibility is not excluded that it represents the East-Javanese king Kṛtanagara around half a century earlier⁴⁾. As a matter of fact, both kings were ardent followers and practitioners of the Tantric

Hindu-Buddhistic Bhairawa cult. The statue shows, indeed, all the attributes and the peculiarities of the frightening God Bhairawa.

At the same site where the Bhairawa statue was found, was also unearthed a large inscribed pedestal of a statue. It could not, however, fit in with the gigantic statue. On the other hand it turned out to belong to quite another statue that was discovered at about the same time near the village of Rambahan, not too far away from the first site⁵⁾. This statue, which is also kept in the National Museum now, depicts the Buddhist deity Amoghapaṇa Lokeśvara, accompanied by 14 other deities. The lengthy inscription, carved on the upright sides of the pedestal, bears the date 1286 A.D. and explicitly refers to this Amoghapaṇa group as a special gift from Çri Viçvarupakumara with the support of the Singhasari king Kṛtanagara to the delight of the people of Malayu.

Both the Padang Roco and the Rambahan sites did not bring to light any convincing structural remains, so that the obvious conclusion is that the Bhairawa as well as the Amoghapaṇa statue was not enthroned in a chandi of the conventional construction. It is only a pity that the reports of the finds in question do not mention in detail what exactly were the accompanying archaeological data.



Chandi Banon

The excavated site suggesting the find of a platform rather than a conventional chandi building

The rotunda of the National Museum in Jakarta, which is to a certain extent dominated by the gigantic Bhairawa statue, also displays a set of masterpieces of the ancient Indonesian sculptural art, viz. the exalted life-size standing statues of the main Hindu Gods, dug out at the Chandi Banon site East of Borobudur in Central Java. These statues, too, were unearthed from a site that only yielded in the most scanty remains of a brick structure. No reports of the excavation are available⁶⁾, but judging from the photographs illustrating the few words in the publication of the find we cannot possibly conclude that the denomination 'Chandi Banon' has to be understood as denoting a chandi in the real sense of the word. It is rather a platform

that emerges from a close observation of the photographs, and seemingly the statues were standing in a row, in contradiction to the conventional placement of divine statues in a chandi. As a matter of fact, the presence of the three main Gods Çiva, Brahma and Visnu, and in addition Ganeça too, but without Durga, is exceptional. At the Loro Jonggrang compound we do have, indeed, the Trimurti plus Ganeça but not arranged in the way we find at Chandi Banon. Ganeça occupies the rear chamber of the Çiwa temple, in full accordance with the general rule, whereas Brahma and Visnu are housed in separate temple buildings.

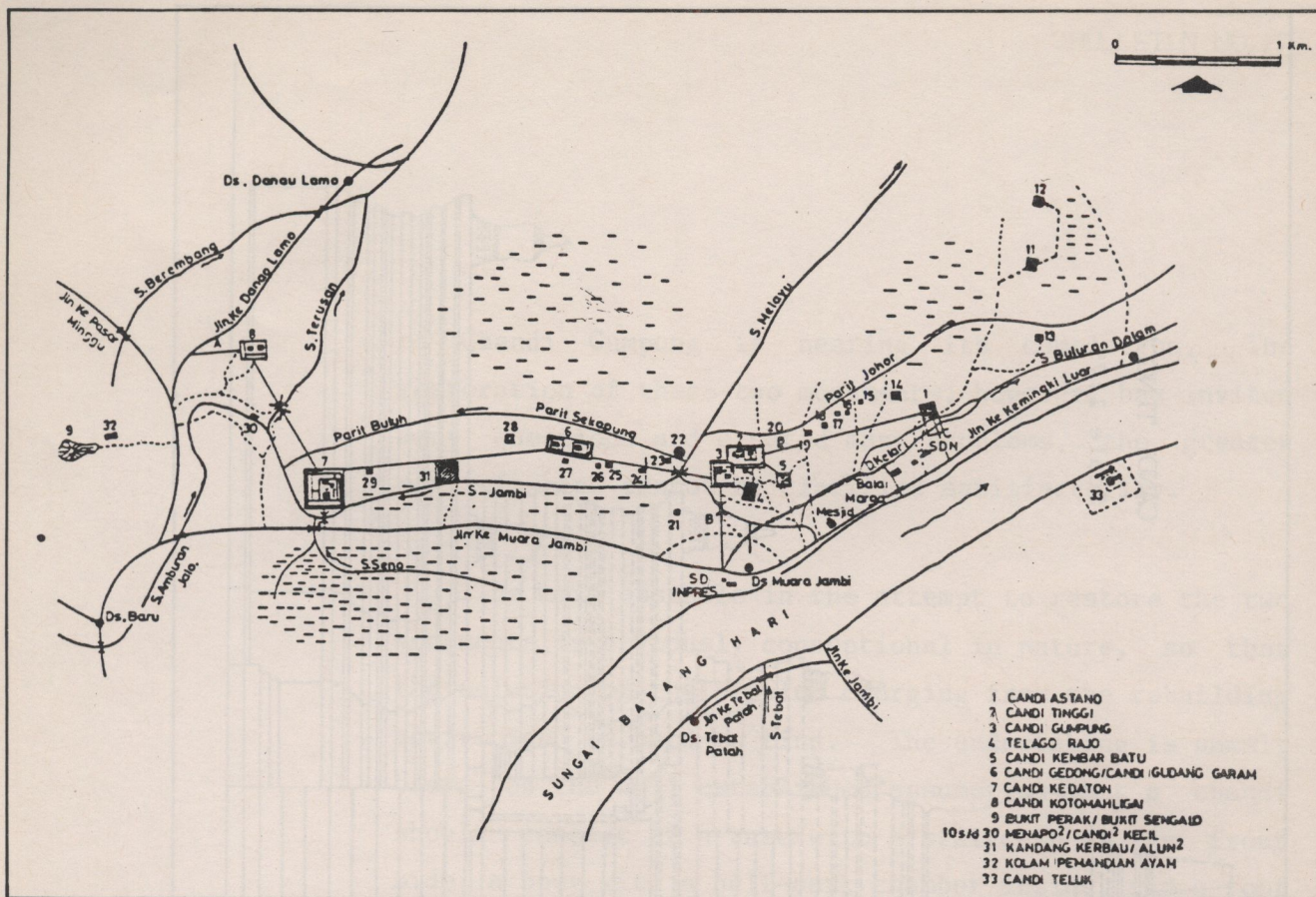
Another evidence, which is moreover convincing, with regard to the enthronement of statues in open pavillions we now obtain from a quite recent discovery at Selomerto near Wonosobo in Central Java. The discovery was followed by systematic excavations, so that the conclusions and eventual reconstructions are entirely based on archaeological data so far collected in the most reliable way⁷⁾.

The discovery started when people were digging a well and suddenly came across a huge Buddha head, measuring more than one metre from chin to top. The subsequent excavations, carried out in stages, yielded in the recovery of the greater part of the missing fragments of the gigantic statue which turned out to be a seated Buddha. Another statue was also found, and

though heavily mutilated it clearly depicts the figure of a seated Bodhisattva. A further search after one more Bodhisattva as may be expected from the usual depiction of the Mahayana-trinity (cf. Chandi Mendut), is until to-day not successful.

For our present purpose it is interesting to note that the excavations have revealed only the very scanty remains of a brick structure, which cannot be associated, however, with any kind of chandi building because of the very insufficient amount of debris. The find of 4 stone supports for poles undoubtedly denotes to a roofed platform or an open pavillion to enthrone the extra big statues.

III. Recent explorations at Muara Jambi have expanded considerably the earlier identified archaeological site at the left bank of the Batanghari river some 25 kilometres downstream from the provincial capital city of Jambi. When until some 10 years ago only the chandis Astano, Tinggi, Gumpung, Gedong I and II were known⁸⁾ - though as shapeless mounds rather than as monuments, except Astano which was uncovered in the thirties already- to-day we have a few more. Chandi Kembar Batu near the chandis Tinggi and Gumpung at the outskirts of the village of Muara Jambi, Chandi Kedaton situated a few kilometres farther inland, and Chandi Teluk at the other side of the Batanghari river, have been unearthed quite recently, following the intensive



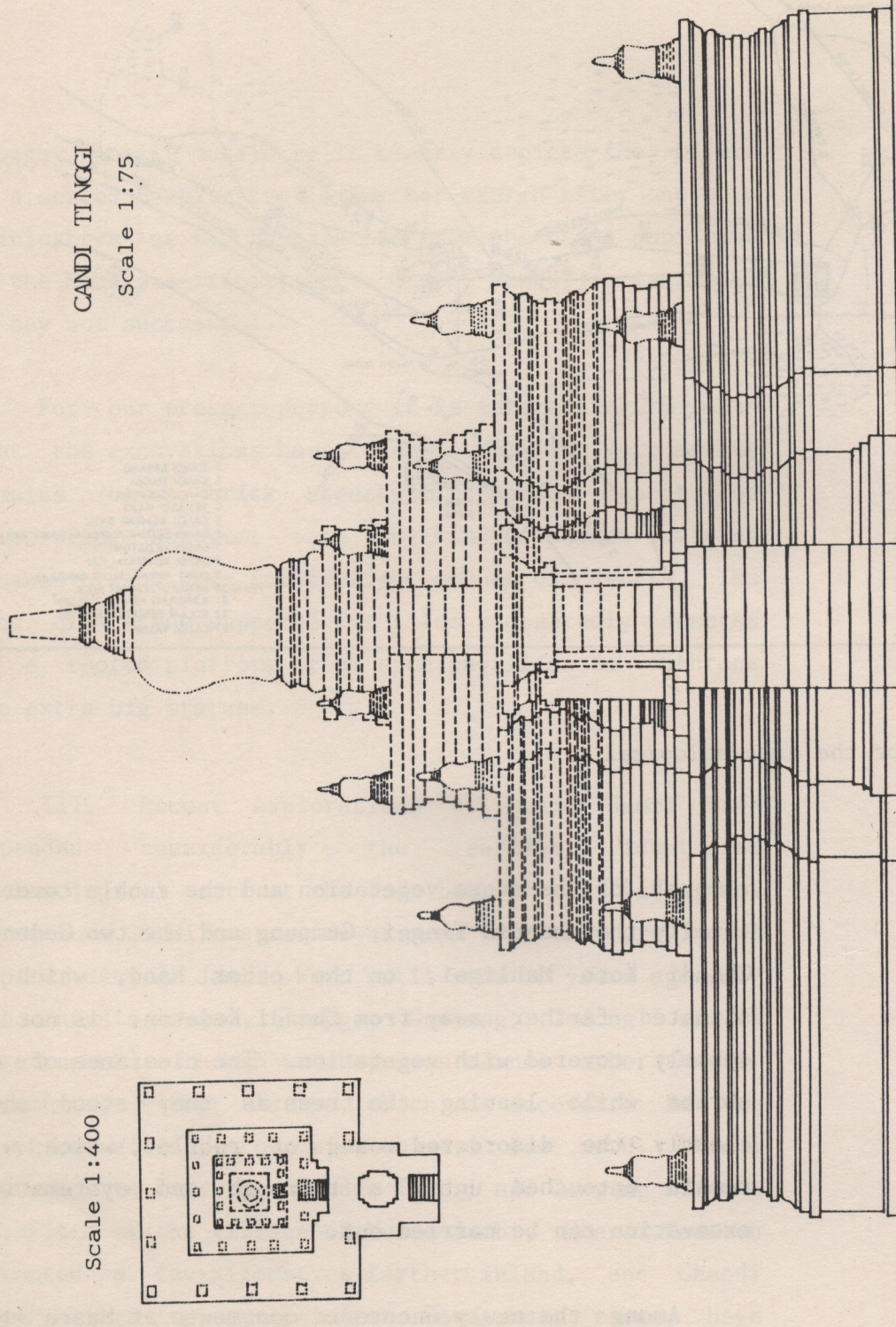
Muara Jambi

Situation map of the archaeological situs

removal of the dense vegetation and the rubble covering totally the chandis Tinggi, Gumpung and the two Gedongs. Chandi Koto Mahligai, on the other hand, which is situated farther away from Chandi Kedaton, is not so densely covered with vegetation. The clearance of the shrubs while leaving the trees as they stood shows clearly the disordered mound of rubble, which will remain untouched until a thorough and systematical excavation can be carried out.

Among the newly uncovered monuments at Muara Jambi Chandi Tinggi has been rebuilt, while the reconstruction

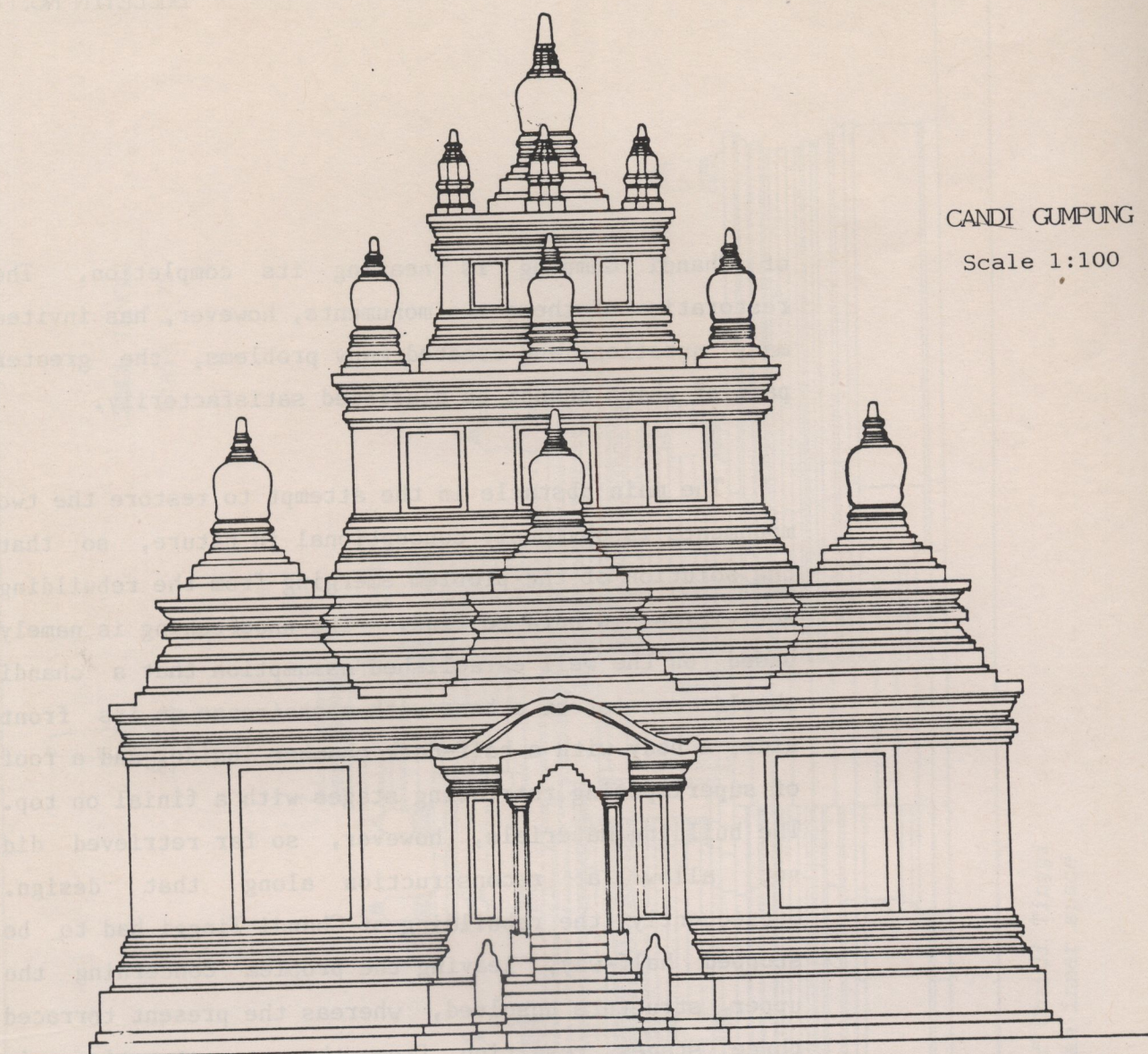
CANDI TINGGI
Scale 1:75



Conjectural reconstruction of Chandi Tinggi
Nevertheless the absence of an inner space
is evident

of Chandi Gumpung is nearing its completion. The restoration of these two monuments, however, has invited many questions and created many problems, the greater part of which cannot be clarified satisfactorily.

The main obstacle in the attempt to restore the two monuments is obviously conceptional in nature, so that the solution of the problem emerging from the rebuilding activities is hard to find. The undertaking is namely based on the well established assumption that a chandi should consist of a base with a staircase at its front side, a body with a half-dark chamber inside, and a roof of superimposing retreating stages with a finial on top. The building materials, however, so far retrieved did not allow a reconstruction along that design. Subsequently the rebuilding of Chandi Tinggi had to be stopped half-way, leaving the problem concerning the upper structure unsolved, whereas the present terraced three stages resulting from the reconstruction is conjectural rather than based on archaeological evidence. The find of another brick edifice in front of it, for instance, has apparently been neglected in the attempt of rebuilding, and now has created an irritating problem since both buildings prove to have a common base or, at least, a common paved courtyard. Such a problem would certainly not be encountered, and the reconstruction of Chandi Tinggi would be more justified, if a comparative study with Biaro Sitopayan of the Padang Lawas region in North Sumatra was carried out



CANDI GUMPUNG

Scale 1:100

The obvious reconstruction according to the conventional conception

prior to the execution of the rebuilding. Biaro Sitopayan consists, indeed, of a main structure and an ancillary one opposite it. Both structures are open platforms with thatched roofs on wooden poles as indicated by the neatly arranged 'umpak' blocks, and are erected on a common paved courtyard⁹).



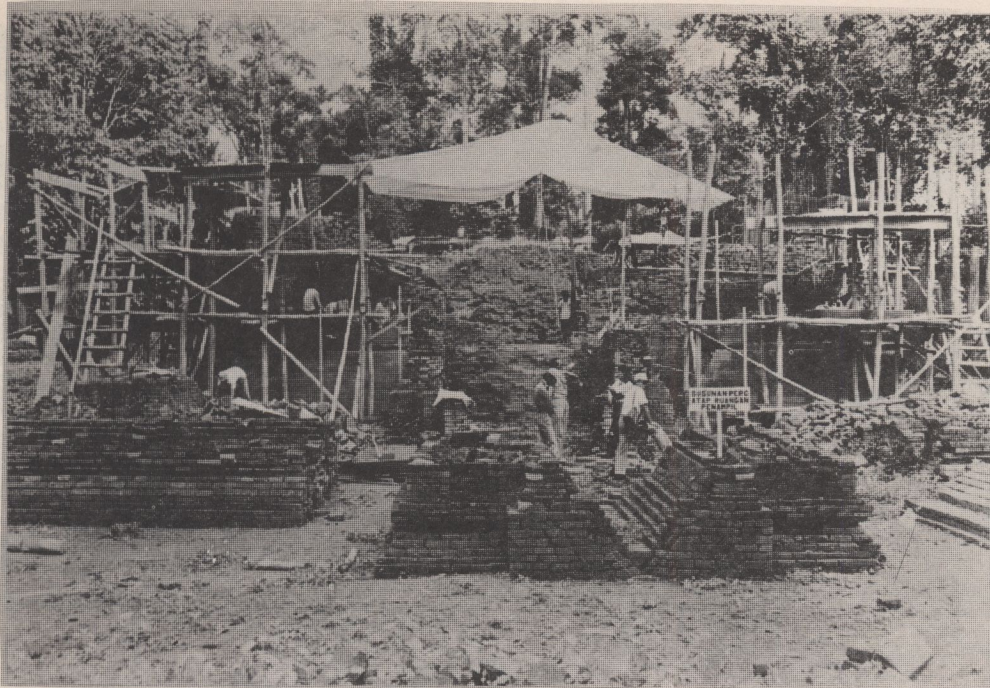
Chandi Gumpung in 1954, completely covered by tropical vegetation



*Chandi Gumpung after clearance
of the site*

We have to admit that this conceptional mishap was owing to a hasty decision to start with the rebuilding before all the necessary archaeological requirements could back up entirely the undertaking. It is furthermore to be regretted that all this was to be done for administrative reasons rather than based on scientific considerations.

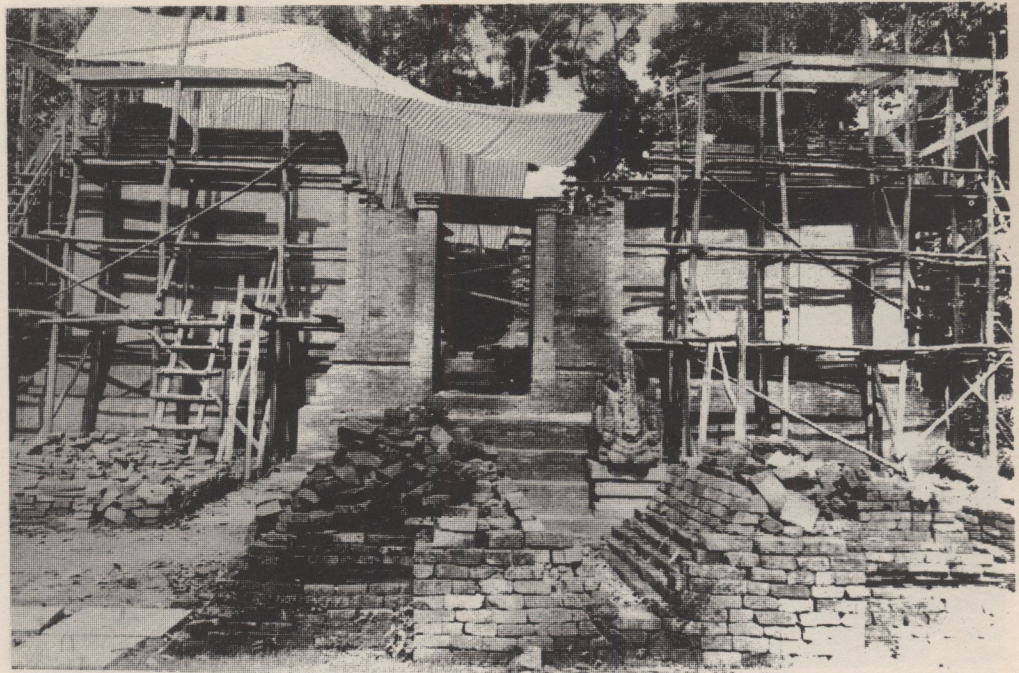
Because of the same reasons a similar dilemma is being encountered at Chandi Gumpung now that its rebuilding is expected to be completed soon. As far as the main building is concerned, the reconstruction will be confined to the completion of the platform, in spite of the fact that the height will remain conjectural. The protruding front part and the staircase, however, can only be adjusted to the said decision by filling up the created vestibule and constructing the staircase as



Chandi Gumpung being restored

giving access straight to the platform. This means that the conjecturally reconstructed entrance will have to be demolished.

When Chandi Gumpung was uncovered by removing the vegetation and the rubble, the structure that emerged was a solid masonry, measuring at the sides 18 x 18 metres, without any trace of an inner space. At some places the wall reached a height of some 3 metres, but the entire upper part was totally lost, while mouldings were only discernible at the base. The central part of the obtained platform was sagging in such a way that the impression of a chamber filled up with rubbish was inevitable. The removal of the rubbish and the dislocated bricks - in fact the digging through the subsided part of the monument - led to the find of the sacred temple deposit. This discovery had apparently



Chandi Gumpung

Reconstructed front side

strengthened the supposition that the uncovered structure was actually the base, whereas the rubble was the result of the tumbled down walls and the collapsed roof.

If the above supposition were true, there would not be such a serious problem as we now encounter with respect to the reconstruction of the protruding part at the front side of the monument and the staircase. The base of the staircase had been found, indeed, projecting as far as some 10 meters from the supposed entrance wall, but the stairs are totally lost except the first two steps and one of the gargoyles terminating the handrail. Thus the supposition that the stairs led to the vestibule before entering the main chamber of the

monument was entirely based on the preoccupied idea of the conventionally designed chandi. In other words, the possibility of being faced with quite another type of sanctuary and the probability that Chandi Gumpung was planned as a terraced platform did not even cross our mind.

This probability, now, turns out to come true. And the evidence is to be found some three kilometers only from Chandi Gumpung, that is to say at the very archaeological site of Muara Jambi. It is the Chandi Kedaton that comes across our mind.

Chandi Kedaton is quite recently brought to light after that the big tree surmounting the mound was cut down and the shrubs as well as the rubble were cleared away. Any attempt to reconstruct it, however, has not been done, so that the situation as it is now may serve as a reliable source of information.

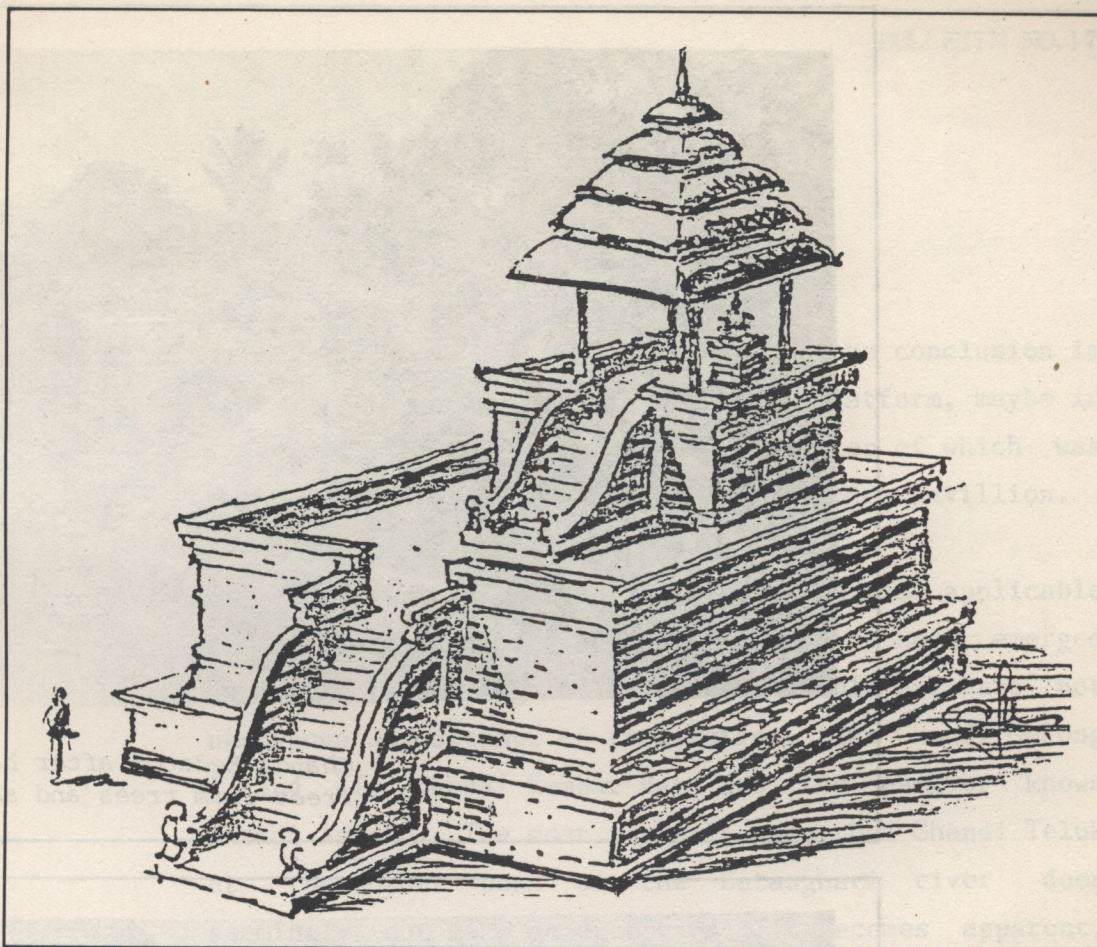
Whereas Chandi Gumpung was entirely built up of brick, thus leaving no room for any kind of an inner space, Chandi Kedaton demonstrated in the most convincing way that it has never been intended to function as a conventional chandi, in spite of the walled-in central chamber and the front room. The edifice is entirely built of brick, and has a square groundplan measuring 25 x 26,8 meters. A protruding part is only to be found at the front side - i.e. northern

side - measuring 8 x 7 m., with another protruding part in front of it apparently meant for the flight of steps. The walls are so thick, measuring more than 4 meters, that the inner space of the structure only measures 16,2 x 17,5 metres. The walls of the front room is less thick, a bit more than 1 metre, proportional to the measurements of the protruding part of the temple.

Queer enough there is no link between the main chamber and the front room: a brick wall of about 3 metres thickness separates definitely one room from the other. More peculiar, however (and therefore more interesting to note), is the fact that the chamber was apparently not meant as such, and certainly not for housing a statue or any other object of worship. It is namely entirely filled up with stones and gravel, and so is the room in front of it.

The stones vary considerably in size as well in sort. The smallest ones measure 1 to 2 centimetres in diameter, whereas the biggest about the size of a man's fist. The sort of stone consists mainly of quartz, basalt, andesite, slate, granite, obsidian and chalcedon, all of them not to be found at Muara Jambi and surroundings.

The fact that the rooms of Chandi Kedaton is filled up with stones, and that for this purpose the material had to be collected in the Upper Jambi region and hence



Chandi Gumpung

Artist's impression

transported (by rafts?) downstream for several hundreds of kilometres, cannot be else than a demonstration of an imperative need to construct a massive building without any room inside. The possibility of having to do with the remains of the base of a chandi of the conventional design is, of course, not excluded. The fact, however, that at several places the ruinous walls rise up to a height of 6 metres from the ground level without the slightest indication of a continuation to another wall that might enclose a chamber, justifies the rejection



Chandi Kedaton after having been freed from trees and shrubs



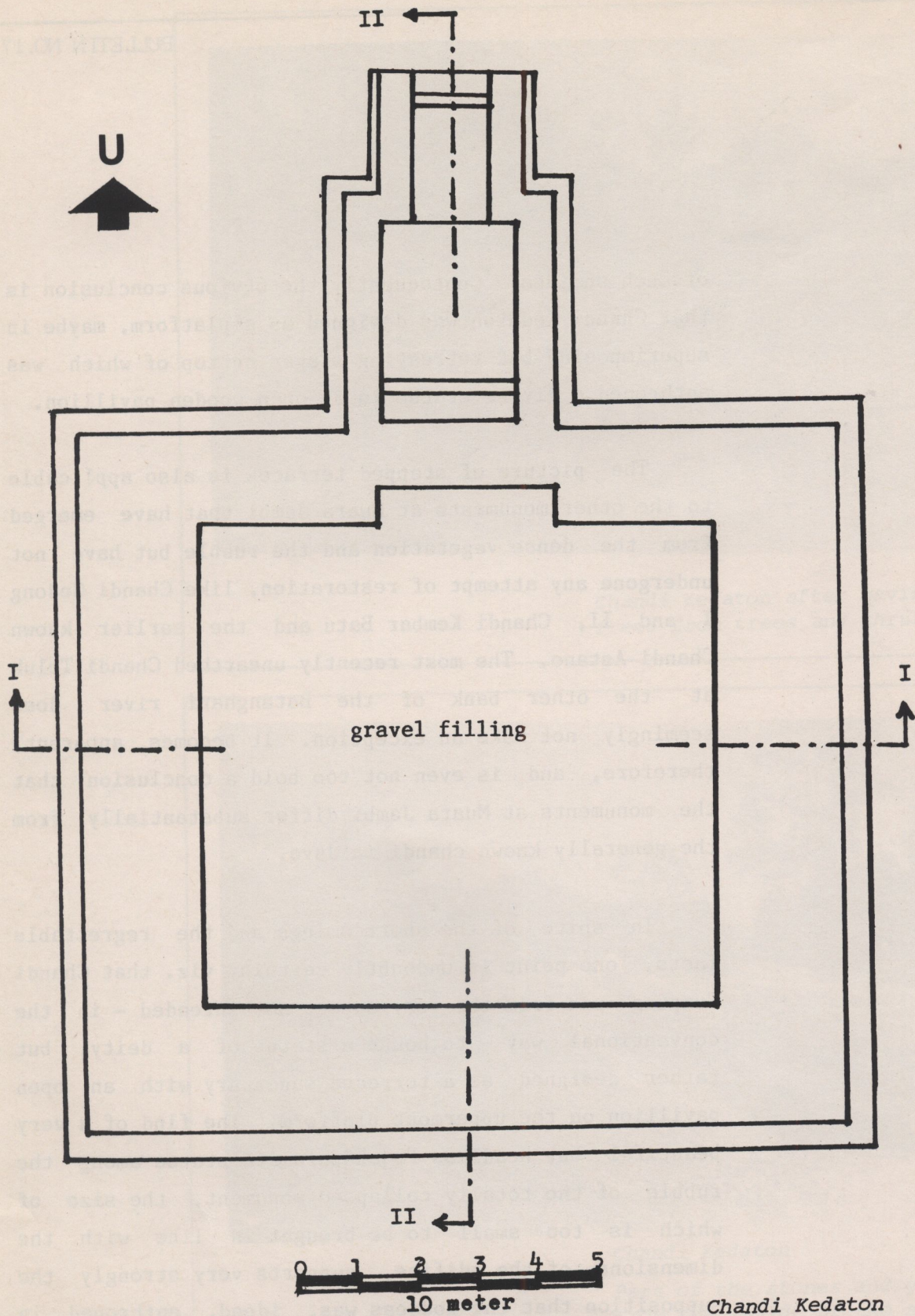
Chandi Kedaton

Part of the stones and gravel from the inside of the structure

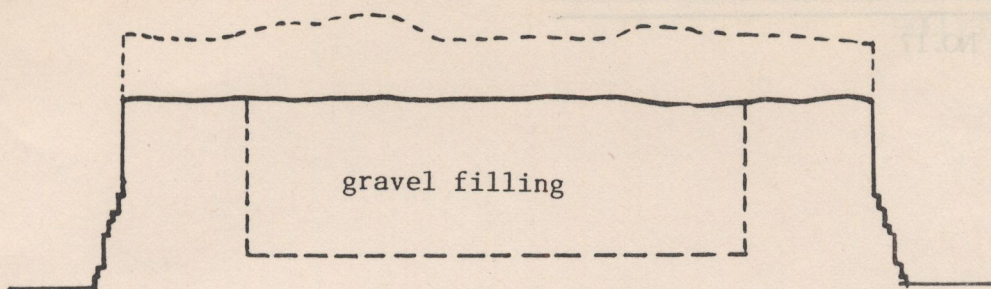
of such an idea. Consequently the obvious conclusion is that Chandi Kedaton was designed as a platform, maybe in superimposing but retreating stages on top of which was enthroned a divine statue in an open wooden pavillion.

The picture of stepped terraces is also applicable to the other monuments at Muara Jambi that have emerged from the dense vegetation and the rubble but have not undergone any attempt of restoration, like Chandi Gedong I and II, Chandi Kembar Batu and the earlier known Chandi Astano. The most recently unearthed Chandi Teluk at the other bank of the Batanghari river does seemingly not make an exception. It becomes apparent, therefore, and is even not too bold a conclusion that the monuments at Muara Jambi differ substantially from the generally known chandi in Java.

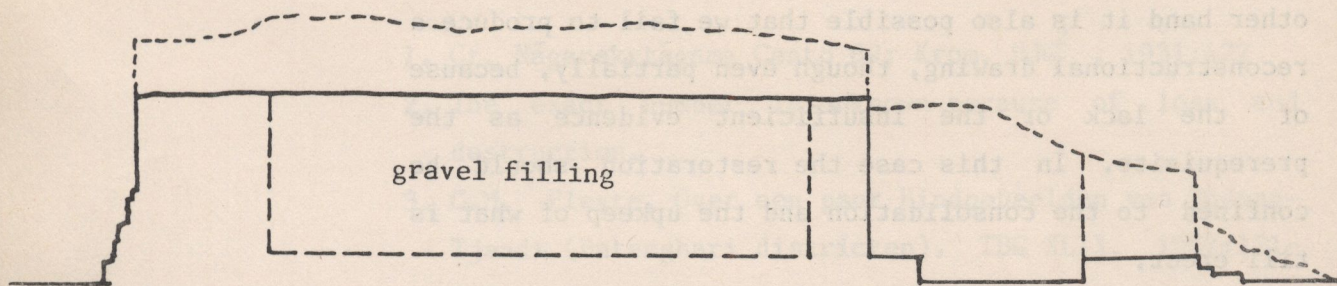
In spite of the shortcomings and the regrettable facts, one point is undoubtedly certain, viz. that Chandi Gumpung was from the very outset not intended - in the conventional way - to house a statue of a deity, but rather designed as a terraced sanctuary with an open pavillion on the uppermost platform. The find of a very beautiful but headless Prjañāparamitā statue among the rubble of the totally collapsed monument, the size of which is too small to be brought in line with the dimensions of the edifice, supports very strongly the supposition that the goddess was, indeed, enthroned in such a pavillion. The find of bricks with rounded sides,



Chandi Kedaton
Groundplan



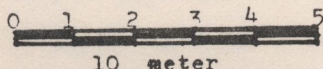
SECTION I - I



SECTION II - II

Chandi Kedaton

Cross section



thus indicating to make part of a stupa, does not contradict to the said reconstruction, since stupas might well embellish either the flight of steps or the terraces.

IV. The case of the rebuilding of Chandi Gumpung at Muara Jambi is very instructive in many respects. In the first place we are once again reminded that the rebuilding of a monument can only be taken into consideration after that a 2-dimensional reconstruction - i.e. on paper - can be obtained from the matching of the original stones so far gathered. By then we are in the position to study the probabilities of a 3-dimensional reconstruction and to decide to what extent

a rebuilding is justified: wholly or partially. On the other hand it is also possible that we fail to produce a reconstructional drawing, though even partially, because of the lack or the insufficient evidence as the prerequisite. In this case the restoration should be confined to the consolidation and the upkeep of what is till erect.

We are also reminded once again, that when facing a brick monument we literally have to redouble our caution. Bricks have practically the same size and the same appearance, whereas mouldings of any other specific feature for the indication of the possible link between one brick with another are generally not to be distinguished. Subsequently in whatever way we re-assemble the loose original bricks the result will be the same: a simulated reconstruction. In other words, the temptation to create a new chandi conform our pre-occupations and imagination is hard to avoid.

Finally, a very significant knowledge we have gained from Chandi Gumpung is that we have to admit that a chandi is not necessarily to be provided with a chamber to house the statue of the deity. Consequently we have to abandon our well established image of the conventional construction of a chandi, and to accept the reality that a terraced platform may well serve as the enthronement of the statue of worship.

Notes

1. Cf. Nāgarakṛtāgama Canto 69; Krom, HJG², 1931:422
2. The exact number is unknown because of loss and destruction.
3. C.M. Pleyte, Over een paar Hindoebeelden van Padang-Tjandi (Batanghari districten). TBG XLIX, 1907:171-177.
4. A.J. Bernet Kempers, Ancient Indonesian Art, 1959:87.
5. C.M. Pleyte, op. cit.
6. R.O.C. 1905-6 and plate 82
7. Djoko Dwiyanto, Hasil sementara ekskavasi Selomerto: suatu tinjauan arsitektur dan ikonografi (Preliminary results of the excavations at Selomerto: a survey on the architecture and the iconography). Paper presented to the 3rd Archaeological Meeting, and published in the proceedings "Pertemuan Ilmiah Arkeologi III (PIA III), 1985:438-454.
8. Cf. F.M. Schnitger, The archaeology of Hindoo Sumatra, 1937:5-10. Note that the present Gumpung is the former Tinggi and the present Tinggi is the former Gumpung (exchange of names by confusion?).
9. O.V. 1930. It is noteworthy that the same lay-out as Chandi Tinggi and Biaro Sitopayan is suggested very strongly by the quite recently uncovered Chandi Kembar Batu.