

# THE STRUCTURE OF STŪPAS AT MUARA JAMBI

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**Abstrak. Struktur Stūpa di Muara Jambi.** Di Muara Jambi dan sekitarnya terdapat tinggalan arkeologi berupa bangunan-bangunan sakral, di antaranya Candi Gumpung, Candi Tinggi, Candi Gedong I dan II, Candi Kedaton, dan Candi Astano yang dibuat dari bata. Tinggalan tersebut bersifat agama Buddha, karena banyak terdapat sisa-sisa bata dengan inskripsi “bija-mantra”, gambar-gambar bunga *padmā*, dan beberapa patung. Struktur bangunan-bangunan khususnya candi induk pada umumnya berdenah segiempat, dengan perpanjangan ke arah timur atau utara, perkecualian terdapat pada Candi Gumpung. Di atas candi induk tersebut kemungkinan diletakkan sebuah stūpa besar seperti Candi Tinggi. Struktur bangunan stūpa semacam itu dikenal sebagai “*terrace-stūpa*” yang pertama kali didapati di daerah Gandara pada masa pra-Kushana. Candi Gumpung berdenah hampir bujursangkar, tanpa tangga dan tanpa ruang dalam (*garbhagrha*). Boechari pada tahun 1985 membaca inskripsi sebagai peripih candi dan berpendapat bahwa peripih berupa susunan dewa-dewa dalam *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*, berarti Candi Gumpung bersifat agama *Buddha Vajrayāna*. Dengan demikian menurut penulis struktur pertama Candi Gumpung hanya berupa lapik dengan 5 buah stūpa di atasnya yang menggambarkan susunan *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*. Dari berbagai data yang dilaporkan dan perbandingan dengan sisa-sisa bangunan di Muara Takus dan Biaro Bahal, penulis perkirakan bahwa tinggalan arkeologi di Muara Jambi adalah sisa-sisa bangunan stūpa, khususnya dalam bentuk “*terrace-stūpa*”

**Kata kunci:** *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*, *Vajrayāna*, Teras-stūpa.

**Abstract.** In the vicinity of Muara Jambi are found a lot of archaeological remains, among others a group of brick monuments believed to date from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Century AD, among others are Candi Tinggi, Candi Gumpung, Candi Gedong I and II, Candi Kedaton, Candi Astano. These monuments are Buddhist, because the majority of the finds in this area are Buddhist statues, many bricks with “bija mantra” inscriptions and drawing such as *padmā* motives on them. The structures of the main temple, except Candi Gumpung, are generally square in plan with projecting portico on the east or north, and terrace platform that may well served for the enthronement of the big stūpa like the one at Candi Tinggi. The type of this stūpa structure is called the *terrace-stūpa*, known for the first time in the Gandhāran regions from pre-Kushana period. In Indonesia *terrace-stūpas* are found at Muara Takus (Candi Tua) and also candi Borobudur in Central Jawa. Candi Gumpung has different structure, a square ground plan measuring 18 x 18 metres without any trace of an inner-room (*garbhagrha*). Boechari in 1985 read the inscriptions found in the deposit boxes found inside the temple floor. He recognized the plan of *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* found in the base of candi Gumpung. It means that candi Gumpung is a *Vajrayāna* temple and it embodies the *maṇḍala* of the five Tathāgath as with Wairocana in the centre. So I assume that the first candi Gumpung in the 9-10<sup>th</sup> Century was a square platform with five stūpas on it to form the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*. By studying the archaeological data from Muara Jambi and comparing them with the monuments from Muara Takus and Biaro Bahal, I consider the remains of brick monuments at Muara Jambi belonged to stūpas, especially the *terrace-stūpas*.

**Keywords:** *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*, *Vajrayāna* -Buddhism, *Terrace-stūpa*.

## 1. Introduction

A lot of archaeological sites and remains of Buddhist culture have been discovered at the left bank of the Batanghari River, about 25 kilometres from the capital city of Jambi. There are groups of candis (temples), the first group consists of Candi Gumpung, Candi Tinggi, Candi Kembar Batu, Candi Gedong (Gudang Garem) I and II, Candi Kedaton. Outside this group there are still several candis, among others are Candi Astano, Candi Teluk, Candi Koto Maligai and others, some of them have not been rebuilt yet. Those monuments are Buddhist, because the majority of finds in this area are Buddhist statues, many bricks with inscriptions and drawings such as *padma* motives on them.

What kind of buildings were those remains originally? Were they monasteries for Buddhist monks and nuns, habitations of gods/ temples, or stūpas, monuments to enshrine relics, a memorial, a *Sanghārāmas*, a group of apartments for a community of monks, or what else?

## 2. The Religious Background of The Monuments

According to the written sources, i.e. the KarangBerahi inscription and a report by a Chinese traveller, I Tsing, the relationship between Jambi (Malayu) began in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. The KarangBerahi inscription from the 7<sup>th</sup> century was found at Batu Besurat village on the north side of the Merangin River, written in Pallava script, and used two languages (*bilingual*): Old Malay and an unknown dialect. This inscription was translated by Boechari (1978), and contains an imprecation formula for the purpose of subduing the people of Jambi, and so they wrote the opening of the inscription in local dialect<sup>1</sup>. That Śrīvijaya acquired supremacy over Jambi

(Malayu, Mo-lo-yue) in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century was reported by a Chinese Buddhist traveller, I-Tsing. On his way to India from China, he stayed in Mo-lo-yue and he mentioned that “Mo-lo-yue is now changed into Sriboga” (Takakusu 1960:xi, Santiko 2006: 375, 2008).

During the 7<sup>th</sup> It is regrettable that the opening of the inscription is written in local dialect, which may have contained valuable historical information. century, Śrīvijaya was the center of the Tantric Buddhism, and several Tantric monks such as Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and Atiśa came to visit Śrīvijaya. According to Magetsari (1985), Tantric Buddhism in Śrīvijaya had a close relationship with Tantric Buddhism in Bengal during the reign of the Pāla dynasty. The official Buddhism of the Pāla period was the mixture of Mahāyana Buddhism also known as Paramitāyana, Tantrism, combined with meditation practices from the Yogācāra school. Edward Conze in 1980 named such combination “the Pala synthesis” (Conze 1980, Magetsari 1985).

Buchari in 1985 studied the short inscriptions found in the deposit boxes (peripih) uncovered from the base of Candi Gumpung. He concluded that Candi Gumpung was a Vajrayāna temple (1985:229-243). Another short inscription inscribed on a gold plate was found among the rubble from Candi Gedong II, and I read the inscription as “*ommanipativajranimaha...*” Also several scripts are written on 28 the petals of the padmas painted on bricks found at Candi Gumpung, Candi Tinggi, Candi Gedong I and II, probably the *bija-mantras* or “monosyllabic mantras”. Each *bija-mantra* symbolizes some particular gods and goddesses, for instance ‘a’ represents Wairocana, ‘ra’ for Ratnasambhawa, ‘ya’ for Akṣ obhya, ‘ba’ for Amitābha, ‘la’ for Amoghasiddha, ‘hum’ is the bija of Vajrasattva (Dasgupta 1974: 56-57, Djafar 1992: 4-6, Santiko 2006: 376-377).

<sup>1</sup> It is regrettable that the opening of the inscription is written in local dialect, which may have contained valuable historical information.



Figure 1. Candi Bungsu of MuaraTakus (Source: Edi Wuryantoro)

### 3. The Structure of The Monuments at Muara Jambi

The Muara Jambi site occupying an extensive area about 11 square kilometres. Up to now no less than 10 compounds of buildings have been rebuilt; they are made of bricks. The common feature of the monument is that they are all grouped in compounds, consisting of the main sanctuary face east surrounded by sub-temples. In front of the main temple we find a *maṇḍapa* with two-flight steps flanking the raised *maṇḍapa* on the west and east side. Some of the compound have *candi perwaras*; the number of the perwaras are different for each compound<sup>2</sup>. The decorations on the wall are very simple, there are mouldings on the base, *padmā*, *ksuddha-padmā*, *kumudā*, *pattika*, and some floral motifs on the wall on the temple. The surrounding wall of brick enclosure with one or two gateways usually in the eastside or west side. Some of the enclosures, for instance at Candi Tinggi and Candi Kembar batu, encircled with moats outside them.

There is no special pattern of the monuments's site plan; each of the compounds has a special way to organize the compound. The site-plan temple in general is determined

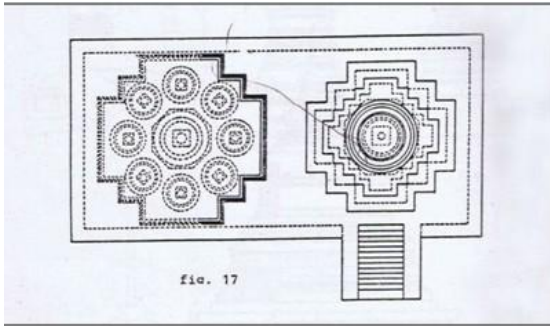
by ritual-purpose of each temple. To understand the meaning of a site-plan, it is necessary to know their religious character/function and their designations of ritual.

The main temples of the compound generally have similarity in architectural style, consisting of a platform with staircases, no room/inner space (*garbhagrha*) to place statue(s). Some of the platforms are extended to the north or gave a projection for a flight of steps usually on the east side. By comparing with other monuments from Padang Lawas and Muara Takus, I consider several monuments in Muara Jambi are stūpas. However, what kind of stūpas could be expected, a circular stūpa, a stepped terrace-stūpa, a tower-stūpa, or other forms? Here are the example of stūpa-structures in Muara Jambi:

*Candi Astano*, a monument is located about 1,250 meters northeast of Candi Tinggi, consists of a rectangular terrace (platform) which has been extended to the northeast (10,6 x 13,8 meters) and to the southwest (5 x 5 meters). On the platform there is a square terrace about 5 x 8,4 meters, with a hole on top of it<sup>3</sup>. Regarding the similarity between the form of Astano's platform with that of Candi

<sup>2</sup> Several of the archaeological finds are found from the *candi perwaras*.

<sup>3</sup> According to Schnitger, the Candi Bungsu was enlarged on the north side by a sandstone stūpa.



**Figure 2.** Plan and elevation of Candi Bungsu  
(Source: Schnitger 1937)

Bungsu at Muara Takus, I consider that Candi Astano formerly has the same stupa-structure like that of Candi Bungsu: on the left terrace is a large stupa surrounded by eight smaller ones, while on the right a single stupa was standing on a double base. A flight of steps ascends on the right side. This stupa dates in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century (Schnitger 1937: 11-12, plate XX).

Candi Kembar Batu is found about 250 metres southeast of Candi Tinggi. The main temple has a square ground plan measuring 11,5 x 11,5 meters, with flight step on the east side. The structure of Candi Kembar Batu is a stepped truncated pyramid cut off at the top. Nothing was found on top of the edifice; probably a single big stupa was put on top of the terrace surrounded by the smaller ones, or just an oppressed flattened dome? In front of the main temple there is a *maṇḍapa* with two flight steps on the east and west side. There are 12 holes on the platform to put pillars for supporting the *maṇḍapa*'s roof. A moat is found surrounding the outside of the enclosure and the gateways is found at the northeast side. There are six *candi perwaras* on the southern



**Figure 3.** Candi Tinggi (Source: Hariani Santiko 2014)

side of the courtyard. There are finds on the courtyard among others are two octagonal bricks, probably octagonal base of stupas like those we see at the roof of Candi Kalasan at Central Java.

Candi Tinggi is located about 200 metres east of Candi Gumpung, square in a plan about 17,9 x 17,9 metres, 7 metres high<sup>4</sup>. The candi consists of a base with a staircase at the southern side, three stages of terrace-platforms with two processional paths. A big stupa probably was put on the top of the terrace. Nowadays, the big stupa is still placed on the left side of candi. This kind of structure is known as a *terrace-stupa*, a new style to replace "the classic circular shape" like the Bharhut and Sañchi stupas. The terrace-stupa was known for the first time in the Gandhāran regions from the pre-Kushana period. The square pedestal of the stupa is transformed into a stepped terraces, usually the stupa has four staircases (Franz 1980:39-41). In Indonesia, there is *no classical circular type of stupa*. The terrace-stupas were found not only in Muara Jambi but also at other places, such as Candi Tua at MuaraTakus, and Candi Borobudur.

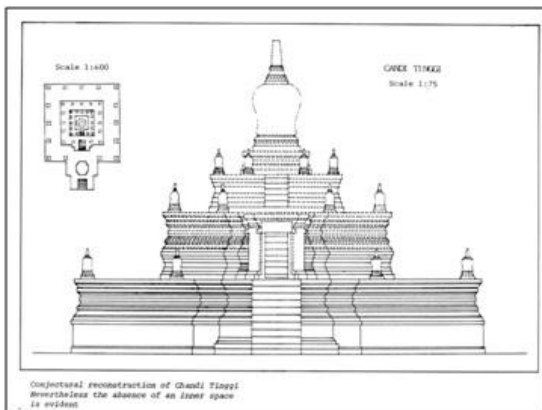
According to Schnitger there were smaller stupas put on each corner of the terraces of Candi Tinggi (Soekmono 1987:12, Santiko 2008).

A *maṇḍapa* in front of the main candi is also nearly square in plan and measures 9,75 x 9,85 meter with two-flight steps on



**Figure 4.** The supposed stupa of Candi Tinggi  
(Source: Hariani Santiko 2014)

<sup>4</sup> There are differentiations on the report of the Candi Tinggi because the big stupa has not been put on top of the terrace yet.



**Figure 5.** The supposed stūpa of Candi Tinggi (Source: Schnitger 1937)

the southern and northern sides. The brick enclosure with two gateways on the eastside and west side, the eastern one is bigger than the west gate, so it should be the main gate to the courtyard. Outside the enclosure there is a moat. In the courtyard there are six smaller candis (candi perwara), one of the perwaras has a deposit of gold leaf, an inscription inscribed on a semi precious stone, with the character from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. A brick with a drawing of a monument similar to Candi Tinggi was found among the rubble of the collapsed monument (Utomo 2011:140).

Candi Gumpung, another monument which has a square ground plan measuring 18 x 18 metres without any trace of an open space. The structure of Candi Gumpung is a kind of a platform or pedestal and probably a staircase which protrudes a little to the east. In 1980 a life-size statue of Prajñāpāramitā was found nearby but her head is missing. Like the other temple, in front of Candi Gumpung is found a *maṇḍapa* with two flights of steps on the east and west sides. In the centre of the *maṇḍapa* there are two holes for pillars to support the roof. In 1980 the restoration of Candi Gumpung had began, but there were difficulty in determining the structure of the temple. After comparing it with the structure of other temples in Muara Jambi, Soekmono concluded that Candi Gumpung was a terraced sanctuary. On the uppermost platform there was small pavilion to enthroned the statue of



**Figure 6.** Candi Gumpung (Source: Hariani Santiko 2014)

a beautiful but headless Prajñāpāramitā statue found among the rubble of Candi Gumpung (Soekmono 1987:23, Santiko 2006:378-379).

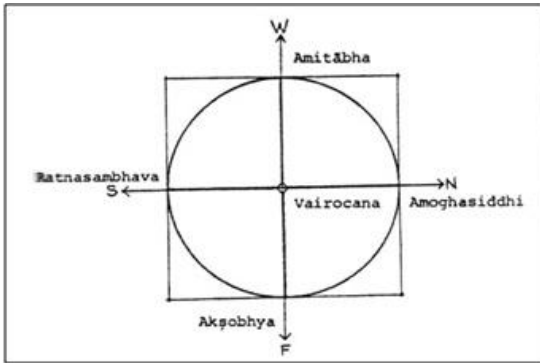
As I have already mentioned from the palaeographical evidence Boechari concluded that Candi Gumpung had been built at least twice, first in the 9<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century and probably was enlarged in the 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD (Boechari 1985: 229-243).

The Prajñāpāramitā statue found at Candi Gumpung has the characteristics of statues from Singasari period, it means that the structure of Candi Gumpung mentioned by Soekmono was the second (or third?) structure of Candi Gumpung after the rebuilding on the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. And so how was the structure of the temple before the enlargement?

In Buddhism, the stūpas built by the Vajrayāna schools of Buddhism are explicitly identified with the *maṇḍala*. The stūpas



**Figure 7.** Prajñāpāramitā statue (Source: Bambang Budi Utomo)



**Figure 8.** The Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (Source: Snodgrass 1985)

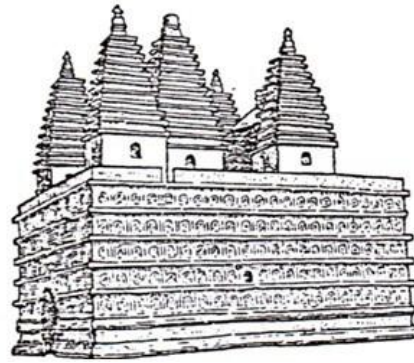
embody the *maṇḍala* of the five Jina Buddhas or Tathagatha: Vairocana is at the centre, Akṣobhya is in the east, Ratnasambhava is in the south, Amitābha is in the west, Amoghasiddhi is in the north. This kind of *maṇḍala* is known as the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* (Snodgrass 1985:135). Boechari in 1985 reports of his study on the ritual deposits of Candi Gumpung found inside the temple foot, put in eleven holes. After he read the inscriptions on the gold plates of the deposit boxes, Buchari recognized the plan of the diagram *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* is found in the base of the Candi Gumpung (Boechari 1985:229-243).

Since the deposit from Candi Gumpung is dated in the 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> Century AD, I assume that the first form of Candi Gumpung was just a *square terrace platform with 5 stūpas arranged on it to form the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*. The structure of the first Candi Gumpung was nearly the same with the structure of the Chinese Lamaist Stūpa (Santiko 2006: 380-381)<sup>5</sup>.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century this temple was rebuilt probably by adding the open pavillion on the upper terrace to enthrone the statue of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, the Buddhist goddess of transcendental wisdom.

Another Candi I will talk about is Candi Kedaton, located about 1500 meters west of Candi Gedong. The main temple has the same structure with Candi Gumpung only bigger,

5 The Lamaist stūpa actually consists of a platform with 5 big towers on it. However I just look at the rows of the towers which might be similar with the 5 stūpas of Vajradhātu maṇḍala.



**Figure 9.** The Lamaiststūpa (Source: Snodgrass 1985)

the ground plan measuring 26,3x 27 meters. No central chamber to house a statue. The protruding part (*penampil*) is on the north side but no flight steps are found on it. However we never find the deposit boxes like those of Candi Gumpung, only gravel and stones filled up inside of the candi. Since the Candi Kedaton belongs to Vajrayāna Buddhism, is it possible that they put the 5 big stūpas embodying *maṇḍala* like we find at Candi Gumpung or probably they placed 5 Tathāgath as instead of stūpas on the terrace?

Another important data from this temple is inscriptions found on the makaras of the northern gateway in front of the main candi. The inscriptions are written in “Kadiri quadrate script” and one of the inscriptions is read:<sup>6</sup>

-[1]// pamusitanira mpu ku [2] suma //0 [...]  
(= the place for pu Kusuma doing warship)<sup>7</sup>

Where was the exact place for Pu Kusuma doing *pūja*, it should not on the temple platform because there is no flight steps to it. Probably he did it inside the *penampil* of Candi Kedaton or at any place in the complex.

#### 4. Conclusion

The facts that nearly all the main sanctuaries have the same structure does not make easier for me to decide what kind

6 This kind of script also was found at Candi Sukuh.

7 The word “pamursita” probably comes from the Old Javense *wursita*, which means to worship, to pay homage to, to welcome.

of buildings they were. The main obstacle in rebuilding the temples is lack of data found on the area.

However from the archaeological reports among others from Suaka PSP Provinsi Jambi, Sumatera Selatan and Bengkulu 1993, and by comparing the remains of monuments at Muara Jambi with other sites in Sumatera, i.e. Muara Takus and Biaro Bahal, I consider that the remains of the brick monuments at Muara Jambi belonged to stūpas, especially the *terrace-stūpas*. A terrace-stūpa or a stepped terrace monuments usually has four staircases, but the terrace-stūpas at Muara Jambi only has one staircase.

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Sumber: Bambang Budi Utomo



Reruntuhan Candi Kota Kapur