

Some less known Brahmanical Divinity Sculptures of the Classical Period in Jāvā

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As I recall, in 1968 at the American Academy of Benares, in the course of our conversation, Dr. Pramod Chandra cited an observation of a scholar (either British or American) that, for the sculptural art in Southeast Asian countries (where Indian cultural influence had prevailed),¹ Jāvā is the closest to India. This is abundantly attested by the divinity sculptures² as well as the thousands of figures depicted in the narrative panels in bas-relief on the faces of the four superimposed and staggered jagatīs (platforms) (c. late eighth century) as well as the inner faces of the railing enclosures occurring over each one of the four jagatīs of the Stūpa at Borobudur.³ We must also include the cult images as well as the figures on the jaṅghā¹ friezes and those figuring in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Kṛṣṇacarita narratives depicted on the inner faces of the railing over the jagatīs of each one of the three shrines of the Tripuruṣa-prāsāda⁴ near Prambanan (c. late 9th or very early 10th century CE). (The temple complex is now called Caṅḍi Lara-Jonggrang).

For the present article, I have selected six divinity sculptures, one semi-divine figure, the last one being a guardian figure (plausibly one of a pair).

The first instance (Fig.1) represents an image of Āditya seated on a substantial chariot with four-spoked pair of wheels, driven by seven horses. The deity is shown in the padmāsana posture and seated on a pīṭhikā

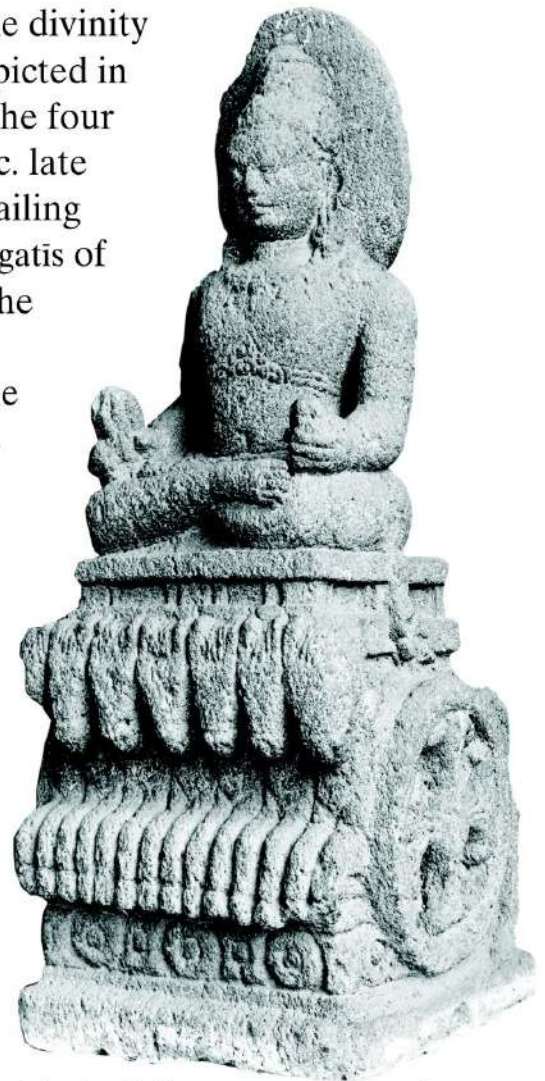


Fig. 1 : Āditya, provenance unknown,
c. early 8th century CE

(pedestal) placed above the chariot.⁵ He wears a sort of kirīṭa crown; a plain bhāmaṇḍala (aureole), partly mutilated at the upper right side, is shown behind his calm and contemplative head. A hāra (necklace) and an udarabandha or belly-band decorates the torso between the abdomen and the chest. A pair of keyūras (armlets) graces his arms. His right hand seemingly carries a lotus and the left one an indistinct object. Beneath the regimented and tightly packed seven horses' trotting legs occurs a padmapaṭṭī – a band showing five full-blown lotuses. The figure, in its entirety, reflects vestigial schematization,⁶ suggesting a relatively early date, the beginning of the Classical Age and hence plausibly early or mid eighth century in the Jāvānese chronology relating to its history of sculptural art. The figure's provenance is not recorded but could be from some site in northern Jāvā where the Brahmanical Sañjaya dynasty ruled. The image is in the assemblage of sculptures placed in a lobby situated beyond the main hall in the Government Museum, Jakārtā.⁷

Figure 2 shows an image of Candra standing on a padmapīṭha, in turn placed over the top of a pīṭhikā whose front is hidden by ten horses, which are supposed to draw his chariot. The moon-god, in his raised right arm, shows what looks like a fragment of a branch with leaves (soma-vallī ?) and his left hand holds a dhvaja (flag staff ?) with a furled narrow piece of cloth (patākā ?). On Candra's serene head is a crown; a halo appears behind his head. He wears a muktāvali (pearl-string) in the neck and a wide hāra or necklace below the pearl-string. The deity, as usual with the Jāvānese Brahmanical deities, wears an upavīta and the udarabandha : the three-fold

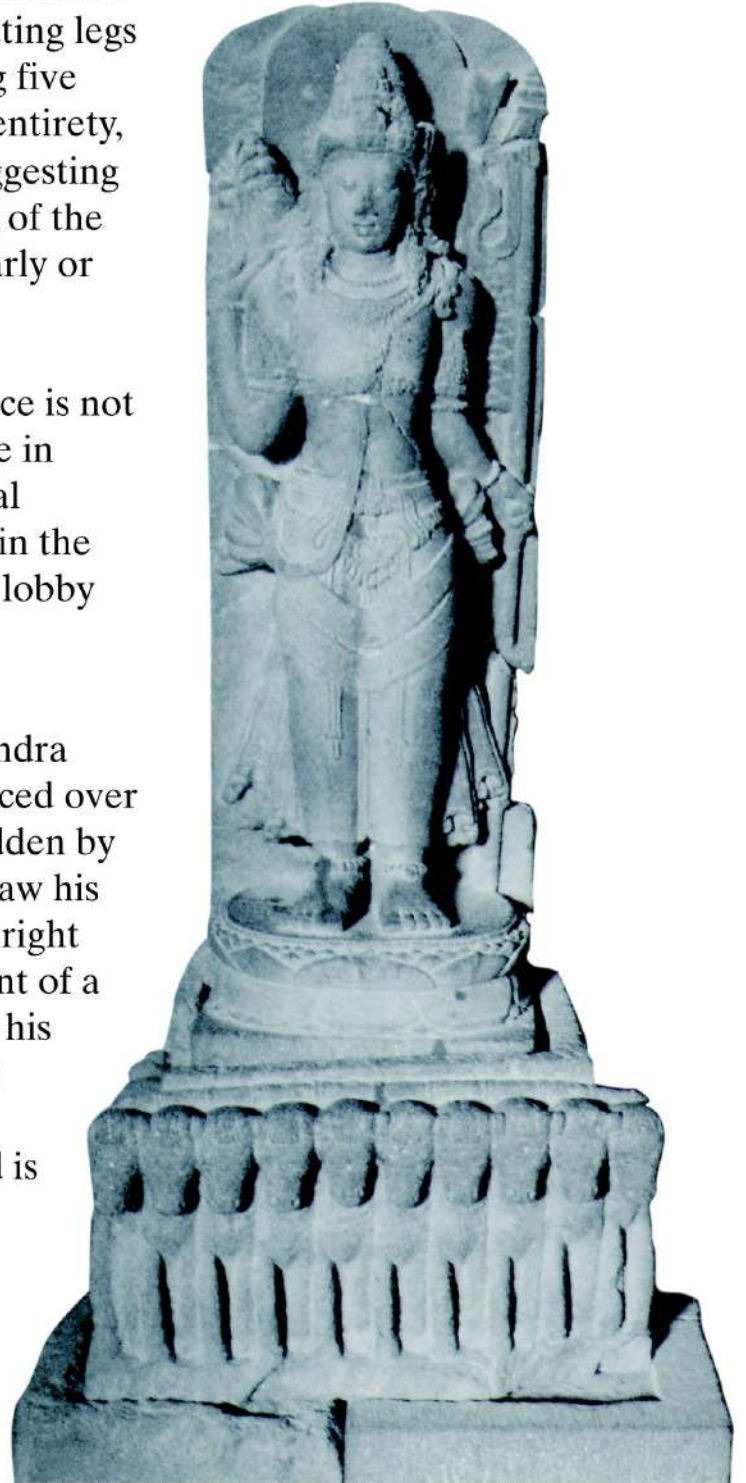


Fig. 2 : Candra, Nandimaṇḍapa, Caṇḍi Lara Jonggrang, Prambanan, Jāvā, c. late 9th or very early 10th cent. CE



Fig. 3 : Śiva in iconic form and riding on Nandī, provenance unknown, c. late 8th century CE

kaṭibandha on the transparent dhotī, spread out and having a scalloped lower end. The image may be of late ninth or tenth century. (There is a seated image of Candra in the Jakārtā Musuem). The images of Candra are somewhat of rare occurrence in India.

Figure 3 illustrates an unusual figure of Śiva, four-armed and seated or riding on the shoulders of a bull-headed anthropomorphic Nandī. Śiva's jaṭā is fashioned as though it is a kirīṭa with a defaced skull figuring in the centre. A plain orbicular halo is noticeably present behind the head, the face is slightly disfigured. His ornaments, all bejeweled, are an upavīta, and an udarabandha occurring immediately below the chest, a pair of keyūras, and the plain round kaṭakavalayas decorating the wrists. Anklets, too, are shown at deity's lower ends of the feet. A pair of ring-shaped earrings decorates the elongated ears. The jaṭā's hair fall over the shoulders. His upper right arm carries a trīsūla (trident, largely effaced) but sans the daṇḍa

(supporting stick), and the upper left arm carries a cāmara (fly-whisk), an attribute characteristically present in the Jāvānese Śiva figures,⁸ but totally unknown from the Indian representations of Śiva.⁹ His lower two arms, in the present instance, repose on his upper horizontal lay of the bent legs and the feet rest on the palms of the Nandī who wears a transparent dhotī and, besides the neck-ornament and the belly-belt, is bedecked with a pair of armlets. He is seated in a cross-legged posture. The image of Śiva with Nandī is as impressive as is notable for its uniqueness of representation vis-à-vis the Indian images of Śiva.

There is a similar, but plausibly slightly earlier image, head gone, in the Site Museum, Dieng Plateau (Fig. 4). The anthropomorphic Nandī, in this instance, is seated on a



Fig. 4 : Śiva riding Nandī, Dieng Plateau, Site Museum, Jāvā, c. mid 8th century CE

padmapīṭha. The image appears to be of the last quarter of the eighth century.

The Figure 5 illustrates a rather rare image of the two principal deities – Śiva and Viṣṇu – shown together,¹⁰ carved as the two are on the same plaque and each one of the two is shown riding on his conventional mount, each of which in the anthropomorphic form. The

Śiva figure rides on the shoulders of Nandī (who is shown seated in cross-legged posture) as in figures 3 and 4; similarly does Viṣṇu on Garuḍa. The true crowns are absent on the head of both of the deities; the rest of the adornments and the postures are almost the same as in the previous two instances discussed (Figs. 1 & 2).

Their faces reflect deep trance. The attributes of Śiva are indistinct,

but Viṣṇu's cakṛa or disk (upper right arm) and gadā or club (lower right arm) are clear. The Garuḍa's beak looks as if it is not an organic part of the visage but artificially attached or fixed from outside. Viṣṇu's bent legs rest on the Garuḍa's palms, a manner of depiction likewise seen in the case of Śiva figure.



Fig. 5 : Śiva and Viṣṇu, Jāvā, c. mid 8th century CE

Figure 6 illustrates a centrally placed divinity image seated in ardha-padmāsana, looking like a syncretic representation – Śiva-Agastya – but in the Jāvānese iconographic lore, Dikpāla Agni.¹¹ The cāmara, the trisūla, and the kuṇḍikā – of these the first two characteristically are of Śiva in Jāvā – are shown in the empty space near the right side of the deity's head, while a large kuṇḍikā-like object supported on a daṇḍa occurs on the left of the figure. Agni's diagnostic attribute,



Fig. 6 : Dikpala Agni flanked by Rsis, Tripuruṣa-prāsāda, Prambanan, c. late 9th or early 10th century CE

the libation spoon, is absent here. The deity's face is depicted with a beard. His legs are shown in padmāsana posture and his right arm carries an akṣamālā (rosary). In lieu of jaṭā, Agni here wears a bejeweled crown or may be the jaṭā is cast in the kirīṭa shape due to the prominently shown bejeweled paṭṭabandha band. An oblong halo figures behind the head. Agni's face is calm but looks more human, portrait-like, than divine.

Agni's image is flanked by a framed panel on either side, the right panel shows a pair of Ṛṣis, the third figure there plausibly is some two-armed Śaivite divinity(?), in whose upper left side are depicted the cāmara and the kuṇḍikā and the left panel, too, contains a pair of Ṛṣis, the third one there carries an akṣamālā in his right hand and a trisūla is shown near the head, left side : the figure, perhaps, may be identified as Agastya muni.

As on the medieval temples in India, the Dikpāla figures occur at the cardinal and sub-cardinal situations on the elevation's jaṅghā-like register of images that figure on the centrally placed Śiva temple's walls. In the Javanese sequence of buildings, the temple is stylistically and, on account of a few historical associations, dateable to the late ninth century or latest by the earliest years of the tenth century.¹² The temple complex has four staggered platforms, each one supporting at its borders several juxtaposed subsidiary shrines in rows on all the four sides. It indeed is a vast complex and must have taken long years to complete it.

The image shown in Figure 7 again is rare in the sense that the Nandī sculpted in that manner is, to my knowledge, never found in India. The Nandī here is anthropomorphic, shown alone, and seated here in ardha-padmāsana on a low carved pedestal. His two palms rested in the lap support a full-blown lotus in a style which is not known from any Indian divinity figure. All of his ornaments are what are properly worn by a classical Jāvānese deity, plus a paṭṭabandha below the pair of horns and a bewelled



Fig. 7 : Seated Nandī, Jāvā, c. late 9th or early 10th century CE

mukhabandha, the adornments largely unknown for Nandī in India. Nandī is treated here as a divinity in his own right, and legitimately hence may be called 'Nandikeśvara.'

Figure 8 represents a rākṣasa (demon) as a guardian figure seated in a half utkaṭita-āsana, his right hand is supported on a mudgara-like club and the left rests on the waist. In his neck is noticed a gem-studded necklace; also seen are a plain double or triple-banded armlets. The left arm shows a bracelet. He wears a kaṭipaṭṭaka or waist-garment with a waist-belt made of cloth. A heavy but beautifully worked out anklet, set with gems, is visibly present on the right leg. In

the right ear he wears a large ring-formed and prominently displayed earring. Such guardian figures occur at the Buddhist shrine at Caṇḍi Kalasan and at the Caṇḍi Sewu complex, both in Jāvā, and not far from Prambanan; both of them date from around mid-ninth century. They, however, and with one exception, are shown with pacific facial expression.¹³ The guardian's head in our instance possesses fierce, terrifying, demonic visage as suggested by the protuberant pair of teeth of his open mouth, bulging frightening eyes, and heavy ear-ornament. The nose is mutilated. A flatish keśabandha ties guardian's multi-plated hair. His mudgara-like club reminds remotely of the Mudgarapāṇi Yakṣa figuring in the Arjuna-māli anecdote connected with Arhat Vardhamāna's life (c. 5th century BCE).

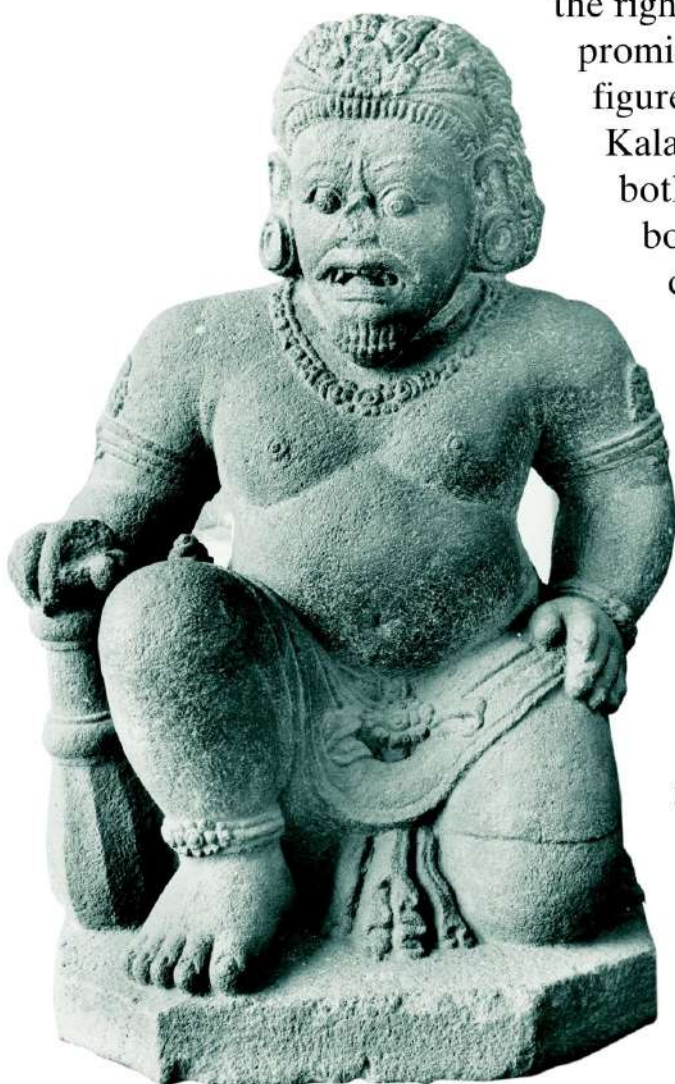


Fig. 8 : Seated rākṣasa guardian, provenance unknown, mid 9th century CE

Jāvā, which is of the latter half of the 14th century. However, the style of ornaments in the present figure seems early and possibly not later than the late ninth century in the context of Jāvānese art. As a matter of convention, the

It is difficult to date this figure. For the guardian figures of this description occur as late as in the complex of Pantaran temple in eastern

guardian figures in Jāvā were stationed at the entry-path of a large temple, or larger temple complexes.

Annotations

1. These are the present day Indonesia, Cambodia (Kamboja), Vietnam (its central and southern part, then called 'Campā'), Thailand (Siam) and Myanmar (Burma, i.e. Brahmadeśa) forming the aggregate of the dvīpāntara-deśas of the ancient Indian literature.
2. They are largely Buddhist and Brahmanical cult and pantheonic images. The Buddhist pantheon in Jāvā included, besides the Buddha figures, Padmapāṇi, some other Bodhisattvas like Kṣitigarbha, next Tārā, perhaps Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi, as also Śrī and Prajñāpāramitā. The Brahmanical deities, besides the usual representations of Śiva in the symbolic liṅga form and the Nandis, also include Śiva in anthropomorphic form and Nandī, too, as his anthropomorphic mount as also Nandikeśvara; next Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Caṇḍikā/Durgā, Lakṣmī, and Āditya, Candra and Agastya muni. Agastya had importance in Jāvānese divine lore. In India, a solitary late-eighth century figure from Roḍā in north Gujarat (now lost) and those situated in the ardhamañḍapa's south wall-niche of some late tenth century temples of the Choḷa period in Tamilnadu are the only instances known.

* An image of a four-armed Ṛṣi, who is seen seated on a large kumbha and being anointed by elephants, seen at Rānī Vāv, Patan, has been identified as Agasti/Agastya, sage being kumbhodbhava. – K. Mankodi, The Queen Step Well at Patan, fig.200 – **Editors**.

3. Originally, at the spot of what is now the main 'stūpa' complex figuring over these four lower jagatīs, was a caturmukha shrine, subsequently removed and replaced some time in the second quarter of the ninth century by the three superimposed, staggered, concentrically circular jagatīs, each supporting a series of minor perforated stūpas, each of which containing within it an image of Buddha (Cf. Jacques Dumarçay, Borobudur, Oxford, 1978). The third topmost jagatī supports at its central part a larger stūpa completing the form and concept of a maṇḍala. This architectural change was effected because of the subsequent changes in sectarian, and hence, metaphysical orientations leaning towards the Kālacakra tāntrika sect and consequently due to the changed mode of worship.
4. These are the three juxtaposed and sumptuously ornamented shrines for the Brahmanical trinity, each shrine having a front closed hall placed at some distance. The central shrine, which is of Śiva, is larger and taller than the two flanking shrines meant for Brahmā and Viṣṇu. The three front closed halls plausibly were meant for enshrining the mounts of those three divinities : at least the Nandī figure is still found within the hall facing the central Śiva shrine.
5. In India, the seated Āditya/Sūrya, in rare instances – as from Uñjhā and Kārvaṇa in Gujarat, both of 10th century – is shown with seven horses below the pīṭha. But the 'full

wheeled chariot' and a moulded pedestal placed above it for the image to seat on is, to my knowledge, unknown. It is clear that the Jāvānese image-makers differed from, and followed more literal interpretation of representing Sūrya than did their counterparts in India. In overall consideration, the Jāvānese sculptors plausibly followed somewhat different iconographical prescriptions/formulations, textual or through an oral tradition and created differing iconograms.

6. Visibly less pronounced than seen on the early Pallava period images at Mahābalipuram's monolithic shrines in Tamilnadu (c. mid 7th century CE).
7. There is one other seated image of Sūrya, more or less of similar iconographical generalities/particulars in that assemblage in the Jakārtā Museum, but much weather-worn, the faces of the horses, too, are mutilated. Judging by the style, it could be slightly earlier than the one illustrated in plate 1.

A standing image of Sūrya (not illustrated), fashioned perhaps by a lesser artist, is placed in the right hand corner of the Nandimaṇḍapa confronting the main, that is Śiva shrine in Prambanan. Instead of kirīṭa, Sūrya here wears a bejeweled paṭṭabandha or head-band (appropriate more for his charioteer Aruṇa); in the palm of his bent right arm touching the belly he supports a full-blown lotus. His featureless pipe-like legs look lifeless. Below the deity's feet are shown seven horses. The stone of the image apparently is of inferior quality and somewhat eroded.

8. The cāmara is noticeable also with the four-armed cult image of Śiva in the principal cella of the central Śiva shrine of Prambanan's Tripuruṣa-prāsāda, where the image carries it in his upper left hand (Cf. A.J. Bernet Kempers, *Ancient Indonesian Art*, Amsterdam, 1959, plates 157, 158). It is, moreover, met in association with some of the Dikpāla images of the jaṅghā-panels of the said central Śiva temple.
9. In India, Śiva is almost invariably represented and worshipped in the liṅga form. But there are a few exceptions, of relatively earlier times, when the deity is also shown in human form, generally with two arms and with his characteristic trident attribute as also the bull standing beside or behind his legs. One such image from Śāmaḷājī, north Gujarat, is displayed in the Museum and Picture Gallery, Vadodara (Cf. U. P. Shah, *Sculptures from Śāmaḷājī and Roḍā, Baroda [Vadodara] 1960*, p.1). It belongs to c. early 5th century. (On the walls of the medieval temples in north India, in his form of, and function as the Dikpāla Īśāna, Śiva of course meets in iconic form). But the moot point is that why Śiva should carry a cāmara, an object which normally is held by the fly-whisk bearers attending the image of Buddha, or, for that matter, the Jina figure in India. (The iconographers in India, predictably an authority on iconography like Dr. N. P. Joshi, can throw light on this enigma with the help of some puranic source).
10. This reminds of an equally rare depiction of the 'Ādyāntanātha' image, where the Ādi Jina Rṣabha and the antima or the last tirthaṅkara Jina Mahāvira are shown together standing as a pair in kāyotsarga-mudrā. (For illustration, cf. Maruti Nandan Prasad Tiwari, *Jaina Art and Aesthetics*, New Delhi, 2011, pl.85. The image is from Orissa and

dateable to tenth century. It is in British Museum, London. It was also illustrated in some earlier publications). As I remember, an inscription dateable to c. late 10th century CE, which refers to the installation of an 'Ādyāntanātha' image (in or in the vicinity of Gaṅgādhārā? by Somadeva Sūri? in the time of and region governed by the Calukyas of Vemulavāḍa, now in Andhra Pradesh). (I cannot now recall the details with exactitude but, on that basis, I identify the fore-cited two juxtaposed Jina images as 'Ādyāntanātha').

11. The iconography of the Dikpāla figures observable on the Prambanan Śiva temple sometimes differs in regard to the attributes known for the standard representations found on the medieval northern Indian temples.
12. Prambanan is situated in Central Jāvā which, along with the southern Jāvā, originally was within the domains of the Buddhist Śailendra dynasty. The last Śailendra king had no male issue. His daughter, then, was married to the prince of the Brahmanical Sañjaya dynasty of northern Jāvā in mid-ninth century, who, as a result, inherited the entire Jāvā, which increased his power and wealth. One of his successors, as believed by some historians – Balituṅga – built the vast Prambanan temple complex for the Brahmanical trinity. The earlier temples of the Sañjaya dynasty, known from Canggal, of c. 732 CE, and carved fragments of a temple lying at a site near Canggal, as also some four surviving buildings at Dieng Plateau of c. 775 CE, and some seven or eight at Gedong-sanga, Mt. Ungaran – the earliest one, the first in the series there, plausibly is contemporaneous with the Dieng temples – and a few other places such as Banon (where images were left but the building that housed them do not exist or is in very ruinous condition), then Caṇḍi Sambisāri, Caṇḍi Pringapus, Caṇḍi Ngwaén, etc. are all small buildings.
13. Cf. the guardian figure from the monastery of Caṇḍi Kalasan (plate 105) and the one from Caṇḍi Sewu (plate 125) in A.J. Bernet Kempers, 1959. Also, cf. Caesar Voûte and Mark Long, Borobudur, Delhi, 2008, plate 2.3 showing the pair and plate 4.22 for the right figure of that pair.

(For the chronology of the Jāvānese temples, I largely have depended on Joanna Williams, 'The Date of Barabuḍur in Relation to Other Central Javanese Monuments,' in Barabudur : History and Significance of a Buddhist Monument, eds. Luis O. Gomez & H. Woodward Jr., Berkeley 1981). Except one (Fig.4), all of these images are displayed in the Government Museum, Jakārtā, Indonesia. From these photos, those that are illustrated in Figs. 2, 4, 5, and 7 are reproduced by the courtesy of Parul Pandya Dhar; the rest are reproduced here by the courtesy and kindness of American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi/Gurgaon.