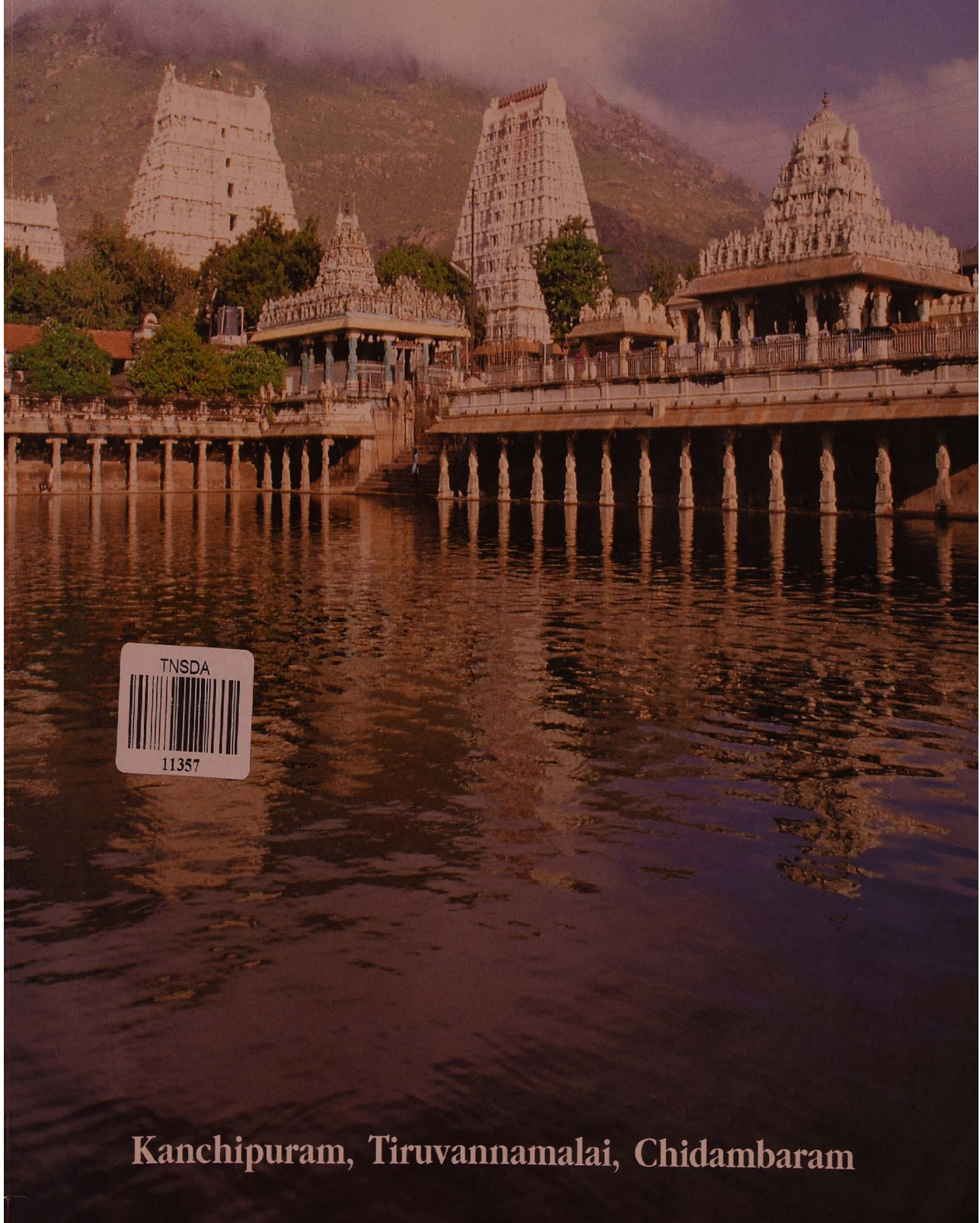


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Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, dancing Ganesha.



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Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Shiva bestowing a wreath on Chandesha.



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Darasuram, Airavateshvara temple, decorated column.



Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Devi.



Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Durga.



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Madurai, Minakshi-Sundareshvara temple, Nataraja.



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Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Vishnu.

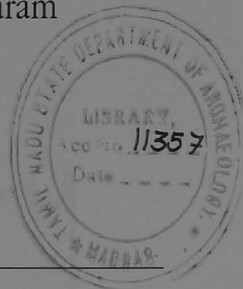
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Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram

Volume XLIV No. 3.

A MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS



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Cover: Tiruvannamalai, Arunachaleshvara temple, tank in outermost enclosure.

Photography: Bharath Ramamrutham.

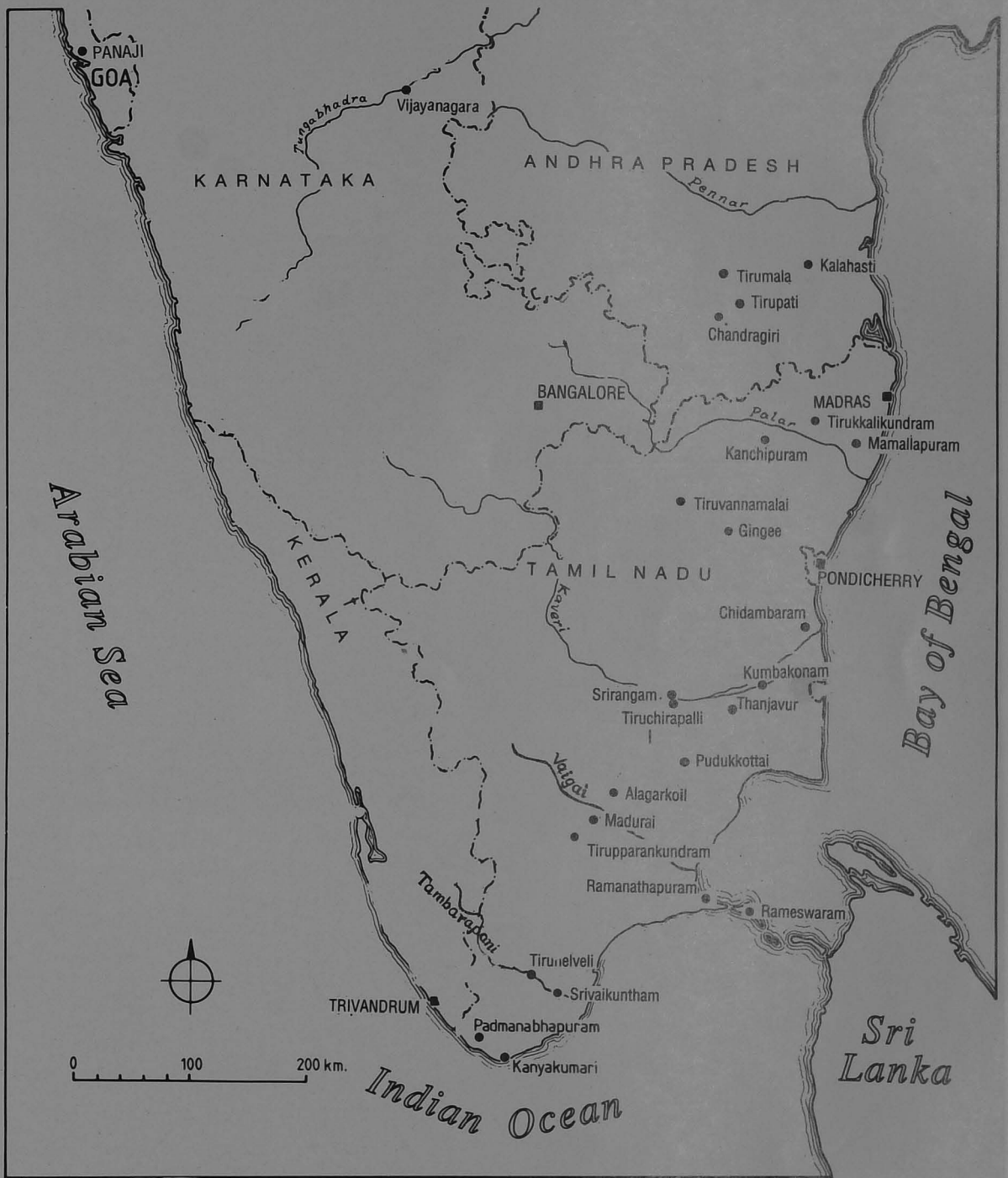
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PREFACE

Tamil Nadu preserves virtually intact a remarkable and vigorous religious tradition. Myths and rituals continue to dominate the everyday lives of almost the entire population, dictating the daily, weekly, and annual calendars of shrines, towns, and cities, and inspiring major building projects and works of art. While this issue of *Marg* acknowledges the genius of South Indian architecture, sculpture, and painting, the chapters look beyond the monuments to focus on the interaction between sacred space and urban space that is such a prominent feature of Tamil Nadu's temple towns. The studies concentrate on a select number of examples—Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Chidambaram—each of which is examined in terms of its broader mythological and ritualistic context. Taking an approach that derives more from religious studies than from art history, the writers contribute towards a better understanding of the enduring purpose of the architecture, sculpture, and painting by locating these arts within a still living, urban religious tradition.

The editor wishes to thank the writers who so generously agreed to contribute to this volume at unreasonably short notice, offering the results of their many combined years of research. The photographer wishes to thank Shri B. Sundaresan Iyer, Commissioner, and Shri Swaminathan, Deputy Commissioner, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Madras, for arranging permissions to work at the various temples. Suneet Divecha proved to be both an efficient assistant and delightful travelling companion. As ever, the staff of *Marg* have made every effort to publish a volume of the highest standards. Without the gracious co-operation of all these individuals, this volume would not have been possible.

George Michell
Bharath Ramamrutham



Map of Southern India, now divided among the four states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. After the map prepared by Graham Reed for George Michell, ed., *Living Wood: Sculptural Traditions of Southern India* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1992), p. 2.

INTRODUCTION

George Michell



Tiruchirapalli, Rock Fort, overlooking Kaveri River, as viewed from Srirangam Island.

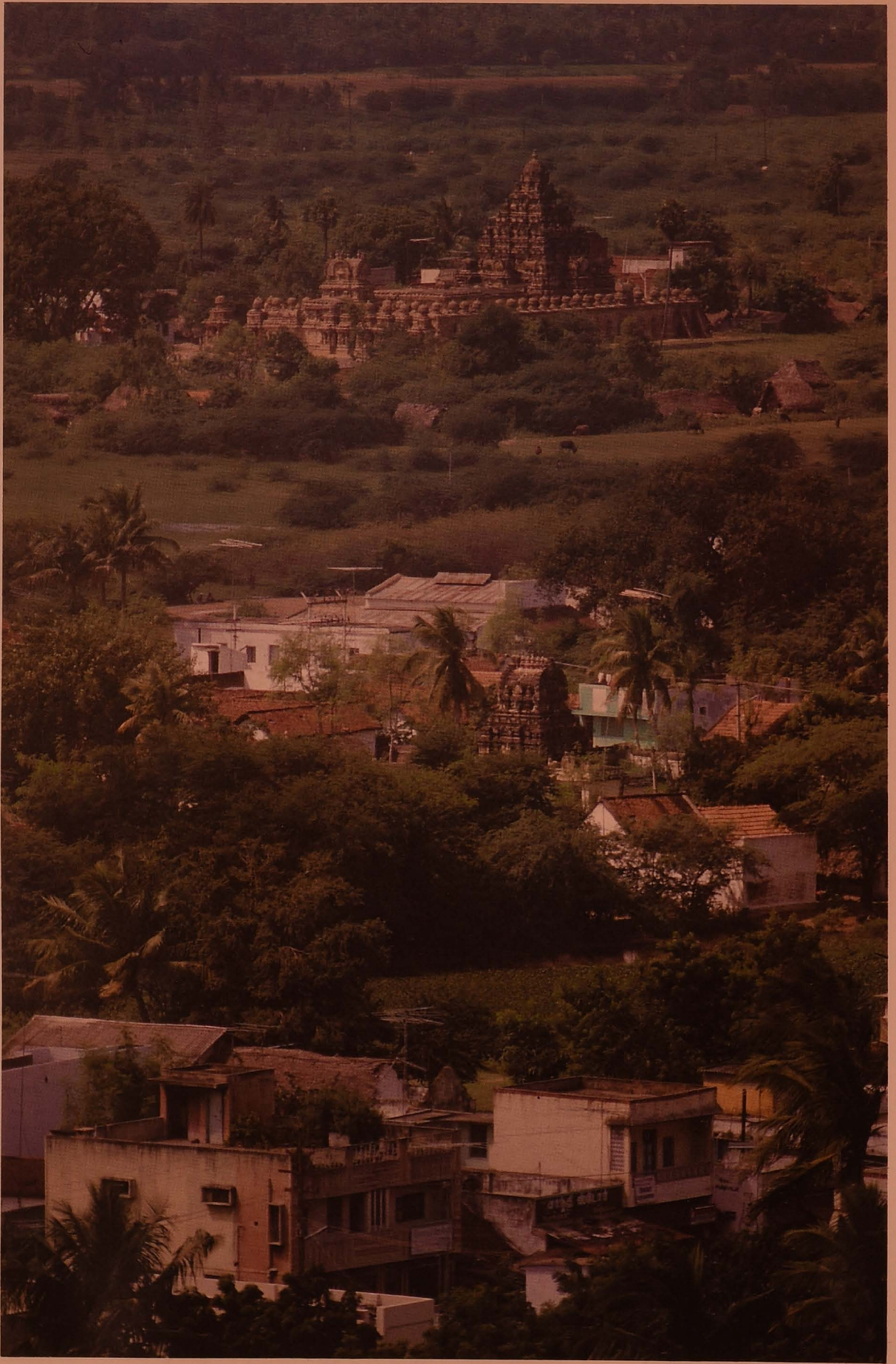
THOUGH religious traditions in Tamil Nadu may be traced back to the shadowy world of prehistory, little is known about temple building in the region prior to the seventh and eighth centuries AD. At this time Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas, rulers of the northern part of the Tamil country; many of the temples that still stand in the town, including the Kailasanatha and Vaikuntha Perumal, are royal foundations bearing the names of the Pallava kings.

Under the Cholas, the most influential monarchs of the Tamil zone in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a number of sites in the Kaveri delta were built up as dynastic shrines. One of the most important of these, the Nataraja sanctuary at Chidambaram, was set within a great square compound, entered through gateways with pyramidal towers, known as *gopuras*, in the middle of each side. The invention of this particular feature, which came to dominate all subsequent temple architecture, is credited to the Cholas.

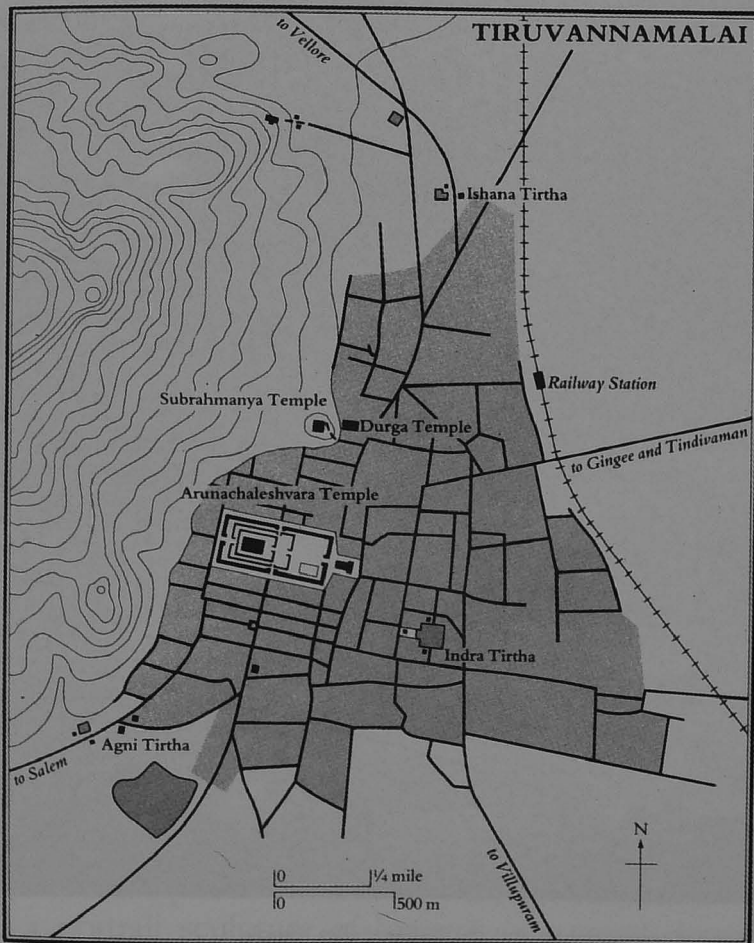
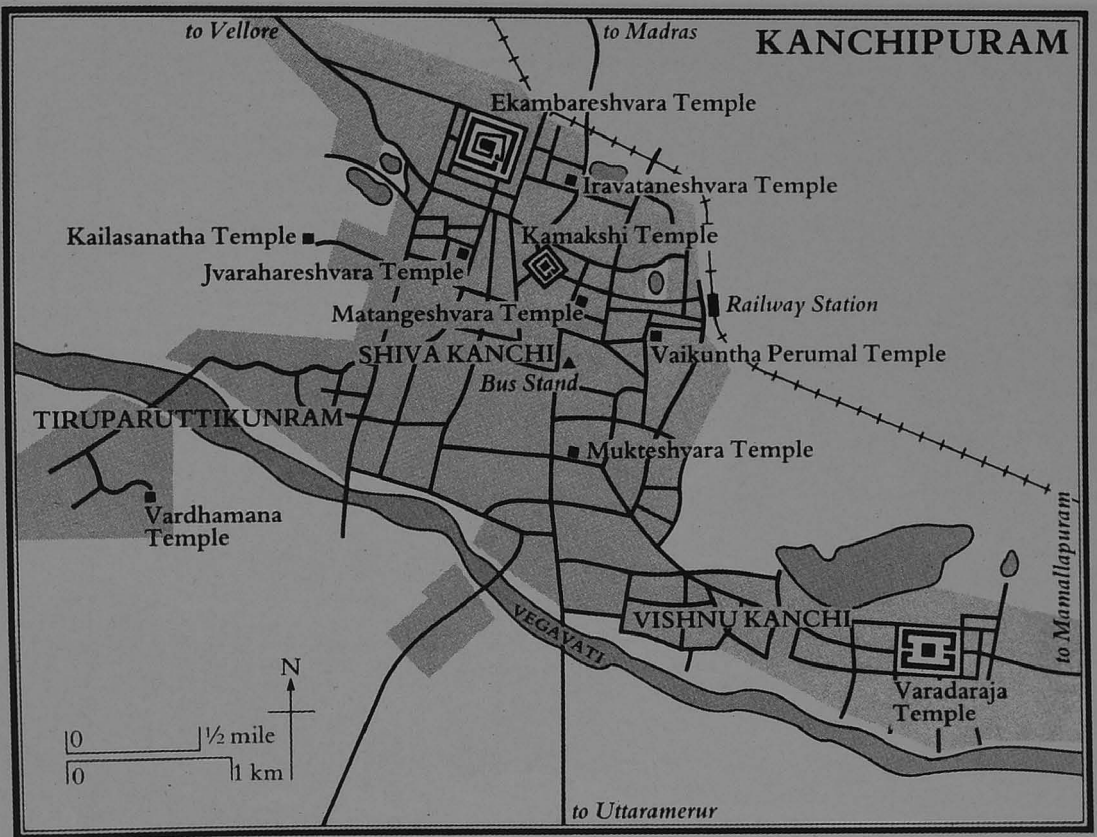
The Pandyas, who were governors of the southernmost part of the Tamil country, were contemporaries of the Cholas. Their principal place of worship was the double sanctuary of Minakshi-Sundareshvara at the core of their capital city, Madurai; it, too, was contained within four great walls, each with a soaring *gopura*.

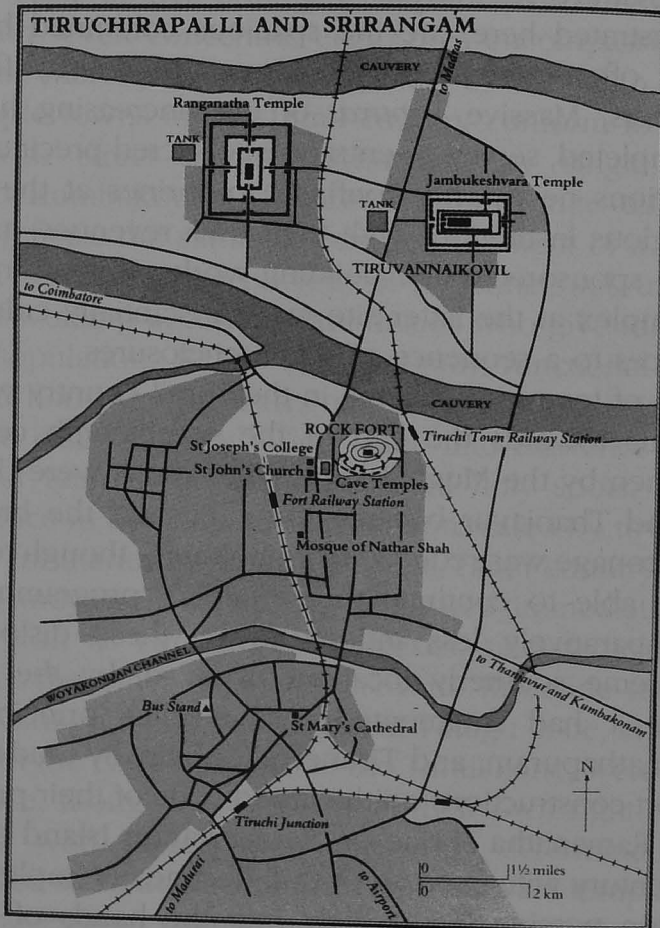
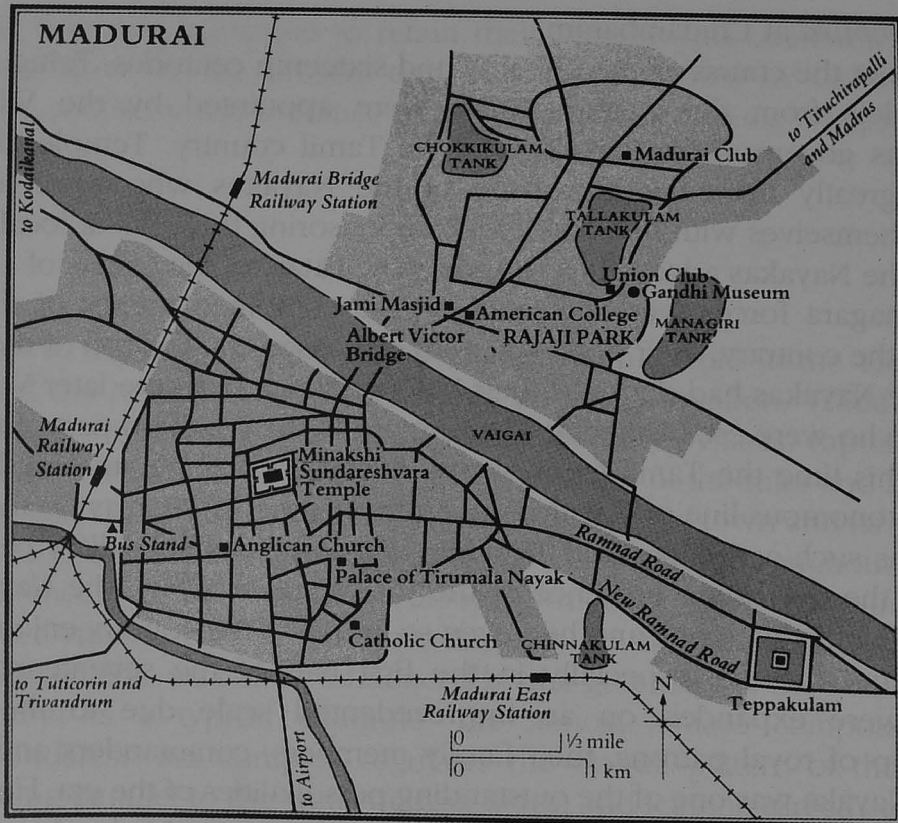
Patronage of religious architecture came to an abrupt end with the invasion of South India by the army of the Delhi sultans at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Within just a few years the conquerors established themselves at Madurai, which became the capital of an independent line of sultans. But this proved to be only an interregnum. The foundation of the Vijayanagara kingdom, with its capital on the bank of the Tungabhadra River in the Kannada zone, some six hundred and fifty kilometres to the north, signalled the resurgence of indigenous power; by the end of the fourteenth century the Madurai sultanate had been abolished and virtually all of South India was incorporated into the new state. Despite the martial nature of Vijayanagara, which soon assumed the proportions of an empire, its rulers embarked upon a systematic programme of temple repairs. Kumara Kampana, son of the king Bukka, was commander of the Vijayanagara forces in the Tamil country; in 1371 he ordered the re-installation of images in the Ranganatha shrine on Srirangam Island, so that ceremonies could once again take place there.

The consolidation of the Vijayanagara empire in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries brought about an unprecedented period of stability and prosperity. The viceroys of the Tamil provinces were tireless sponsors of religious foundations, renovating and extending almost all of the monuments in the region. The emperors, too, were a presence in the Tamil zone, through which they regularly made tours, pausing to pay homage to important deities. Among the sanctuaries visited by Krishnadeva Raya on his campaign in 1516-1517 were those at Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Chidambaram; major constructions at these sites testify to his generous benefactions. The monumental scale of this emperor's additions may be judged from the soaring *gopura* that serves as the principal entrance to the Tiruvannamalai complex, and which bears his name. But Krishnadeva was not merely content with funding buildings and leaving inscribed records; he had a portrait sculpture of himself as a royal donor placed inside



Kanchipuram, distant view of town, fields, and the Kailasanatha temple.





the north *gopura* at Chidambaram.

Throughout the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Telugu speaking warrior chiefs from the Eastern Ghats were appointed by the Vijayanagara emperors as governors, or Nayakas, of the Tamil country. Temple architecture benefited greatly from the patronage of the Nayakas who were anxious to ingratiate themselves with their subjects by sponsoring the cults of local divinities. Nor were the Nayakas adversely affected by the catastrophic events of 1565, when the Vijayanagara forces were defeated by the combined armies of the Deccan sultans; to the contrary, their power steadily increased. By the end of the sixteenth century the Nayakas had declared their independence from the later Vijayanagara emperors who were established at Chandragiri, in the southern part of the Telugu zone. By this time the Tamil country was divided into separate kingdoms, each with an autonomous line of Nayakas ruling from Gingee, Thanjavur, and Madurai; other towns such as Vellore and Tiruchirapalli served as subsidiary centres.

Without the overriding presence of the Vijayanagara rulers, the Nayakas often came into conflict with one another; even so, much of the country enjoyed periods of peace and fortune, especially in the first half of the seventeenth century. Temples were expanded on an unprecedented scale due to the sustained sponsorship of royal patrons, their family members, commanders and ministers. Tirumala Nayaka was one of the outstanding personalities of the era. His ambitious remodelling of the Minakshi-Sundareshvara shrine at Madurai, as well his additions to other temples in the vicinity, are unmatched in elaboration and splendour. Typical features of Nayaka architecture, as can be seen in many of the monuments illustrated here, are the spacious columned halls aligned with temple sanctuaries, often with donor sculptures of courtly figures sculptured onto the central piers. Massive *gopuras* of ever-increasing heights, some too grandiose to be completed, served as entrances to sacred precincts. Nor were such ambitious constructions necessarily confined to shrines at the Nayaka capitals: self-supporting religious institutions with their own revenues, as at Kanchipuram and Srirangam, also sponsored major building works. It is during this period that the Ranganatha complex at the latter site was substantially enlarged, its *gopuras* marking the entrances to a sequence of seven enclosures.

The efflorescence of temple patronage in the Tamil country was interrupted by a series of invasions towards the end of the seventeenth century, at first by Maratha warriors, then by the Mughal army. The results were drastic: the Gingee citadel was lost, and Thanjavur became the capital of the breakaway Maratha kingdom. Royal patronage was reduced to a minimum, though temple centres like Kanchipuram were able to continue their building programmes. The Madurai kingdom was comparatively less influenced by these dislocations, probably because of its extreme southerly location; even so, by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had fragmented into smaller principalities. Rulers at Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, and Tirunelveli, originally feudatories of Madurai, were able to support constructions on the grand scale of their predecessors, as the renovations of the Ramanatha shrine on Rameswaram Island testify. The course of the eighteenth century witnessed an overall decline in temple building, with the wealth of the region passing increasingly into the hands of the British. Some

institutions however, managed to retain their income and continued to sponsor major works down to the present day, as is demonstrated by the lofty *gopura*, marking the southernmost entrance to the Srirangam complex, completed only in 1987.

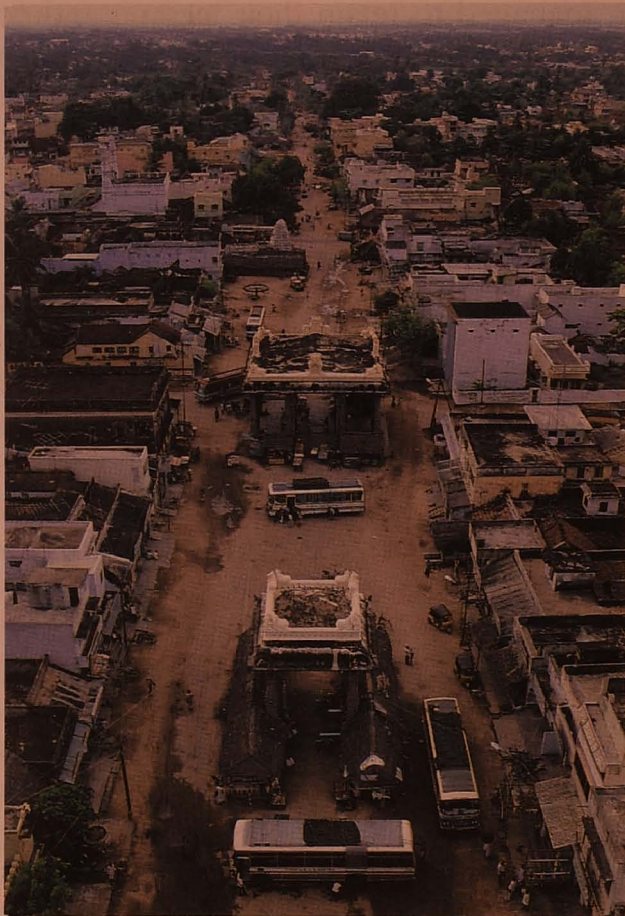
URBAN CONTEXT

It is difficult to separate the growth of religious architecture in the Tamil country from that of the towns; both developed in parallel formation. Traditional South Indian texts on architecture state that towns, especially dynastic capitals, required a major shrine to house the protective god or goddess of the ruler and his subjects; this divinity was directly responsible for the welfare of the town and its population. That such temples were actually erected is evident in towns throughout the region. In most instances, shrines to tutelary deities formed the core of the urban fabric, with crowded streets and markets clustering around the outer walls; the layout of these urban elements was often influenced by the geometry of the sacred complex itself. Madurai is a typical example: the almost square compound of the Minakshi-Sundareshvara complex regulates the overall pattern of the city, with streets running parallel to the walls on four sides, and leading directly towards the gateways that soar above the houses. Other temple towns, such as Mylapore (Madras), Tirukkalikundram, Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, and Tirunelveli, are variations of this basic model. Srirangam is perhaps the most perfectly realized scheme of all, with seven concentric enclosures encompassing an area of more than sixty hectares, thereby incorporating most of the urban population.

But not all temple towns in the Tamil country conform to such highly regular configurations, with street layouts dominated by single, focal sanctuaries. Kanchipuram and Kumbakonam, for instance, are quite different: their overall urban patterning reflects the simultaneous development of a number of separate cult centres, each serving as the nucleus of a distinct, sub-urban quarter. These multiple places of worship accommodate deities who give identity to a particular locality and its population. Roads are generally functional links between the different neighbourhoods rather than components in a strictly geometrical plan.

Many towns and cities in Tamil Nadu came into existence as complements to the construction of temples at well-established holy spots. River sites were of particular significance in this regard, as is demonstrated by towns that grew along the Kaveri and its tributaries in the heart of the Tamil country. Dominated by the rock fort of the Pandyas, Tiruchirapalli is located immediately to the south of Srirangam Island with its two great complexes, one dedicated to Ranganatha, already mentioned, the other to Jambukeshvara. Riverside temple sites, such as Kalahasti on the Svarnamukhi, in the adjacent Telugu zone, and Srivaikuntham on the Tambarapani, in the extreme south of the Tamil zone, were population centres of some significance, though never towns in their own right.

Cults associated with sacred mountains also determined urban locations. Tirupati was founded as an adjunct to the Venkateshvara temple at Tirumala in the wooded hills of the Eastern Ghats immediately north of the Tamil country. This



Kanchipuram, south axial street leading to Ekamranatha temple.



Kanchipuram, the tank of Ekamranatha temple and view of the town.



Tiruvannamalai, south axial street leading to Arunachaleshvara temple.



Chidambaram, view of streets and houses from east *gopura* of Nataraja temple.



Chidambaram, Nataraja temple, commercial street leading to east entrance.

shrine was developed by the later Vijayanagara Rayas into a major dynastic centre; indeed, the citadel at Chandragiri, already mentioned as the residence of the later emperors, was barely ten kilometres away. Rocky outcrops in the hinterland of Madurai, particularly Alagarkoil and Tirupparankundram, became places of major structural activities under the Nayakas. Little remains of any settlement at Alagarkoil other than the expanding walls and gateways of the sacred precinct; Tirupparankundram is still a flourishing town. Tiruvannamalai owes its existence to the steep rocky hill that rises to the west of the town. Arunachaleshvara, or Red Lord, the aspect of Shiva worshipped in the temple at the foot of the hill, is named after the spectacular bonfire lit each year on its summit.

The most important temple towns in Tamil Nadu have always had a commercial identity: religious centres were, and still are, market towns with festivals coinciding with great fairs. The simultaneous growth of pilgrimage and trade is an outstanding feature of urban life in the region. Kanchipuram provides an excellent example of a significant religious-commercial centre dealing in locally woven textiles and other goods. Festivals in temple towns are generally sensational events that also benefit business. Processions take place in the streets, in full view of crowds of visitors who pay homage to gods and goddesses before proceeding to the business of buying and selling. Structures located on axis with temple gateways are often reserved for commercial activities. Each of the larger religious complexes at Kumbakonam, for instance, is approached by a long colonnade that functions as a market, thronged with merchants and customers. The main street in front of the eastern *gopura* at Tiruvannamalai has a free-standing, lofty hall sheltering a variety of stores. The broad thoroughfares approaching the principal gateways of the Kanchipuram temples are lined with shops and stalls. Markets sometimes even invade the sacred precinct; the columned halls of the outer enclosures of the Madurai complex, for instance, are almost entirely inhabited by shopkeepers and their wares.

SACRED SPACE AND URBAN SPACE

The main purpose of religious festivals in Tamil Nadu is to extend rites and ceremonies beyond temple walls so as to permit an interaction between sacred space and urban space. The highly ordered movement of people and deities through the streets, which is the basis of most public ceremonies, forges links between the focal monument that stands in the middle of the town and the lesser shrines of the sub-urban quarters, and sometimes even the sacred spots in the countryside beyond. Patterns of movement are only partly governed by the physical layout of the town itself; a conceptual dimension is always present that is dictated by an abstract spatial model. The most important spatial model for temple towns, as has already been shown, is the diagram composed of concentric arrangements of squares. This serves as a mandala, expressing in geometric form the essential structure of the universe. The layout of sacred complexes on mandala plans, as is usual in most of the temples considered here, is a means of investing sacred space with cosmic meaning. The continuation of this patterning into the



Madurai, Minakshi-Sundareshvara temple, tailors in Pudu Mandapa.



Kanchipuram, Ekamranatha temple, stall in outer colonnade.

urban fabric, with the streets and open spaces imitating the geometry of temple compounds, creates an urban mandala that provides a spatial and conceptual link between temple and town.

Religious rites also charge urban space with meaning. The clockwise circumambulation, or *pradakshina*, of a deity is ubiquitous. Worshippers within the temple precinct pay homage to the principal god or goddess by making an auspicious *pradakshina* of the central shrine: similarly, they honour different deities by making complicated clockwise itineraries through labyrinthine halls and corridors. Devotees of Ekamranatha (Ekambareshvara) at Kanchipuram make an auspicious round of the earth-linga representing the principal deity; they also circumambulate the mango-tree that grows in a rear court of the complex, thereby enacting one of the fundamental myths of the temple — the adoration of the earth-linga beneath the mango-tree by the goddess Kamakshi. In double temples, such as the Minakshi-Sundareshvara, visitors are compelled to make two *pradakshinas* in order to pay respect to both the god and goddess. Nor is this movement confined to worshippers; images of gods and goddesses are carried in palanquins from one part of the religious complex to the other, always in conformity to a prescribed round. Sundareshvara spends every evening with Minakshi, but first is ceremonially transported in a *pradakshina* around his own shrine before arriving at that of his consort.

Pradakshina ceremonies outside the walls of the sacred compound replicate those inside. Public progressions along the streets circumambulate the main shrine, expressing the radiating influence of the temple deity, thereby confirming in ritual terms the unity of sacred space and urban space. This is achieved in different ways in different urban settlements. In towns with regular configurations, such as those mentioned earlier, the focal monument is surrounded by regularly spaced, broad thoroughfares that serve as settings for spectacular parades of sacred images. In towns with irregular layouts, public processions create quasi-circular routes that establish a *pradakshina* around the core shrine. Similarly, the passage of gods and peoples through the towns, no matter how haphazard the actual street plan, helps to create a mental image of the town that conforms to a regular mandala scheme. This interplay between formal movement and conceptual urban models is a constant feature of religious life.

Circumambulatory paths in Tamil Nadu's towns are by no means confined to the streets immediately beyond the temple walls. Since the populated zone and even the surrounding countryside are considered extensions of sacred territory, various holy sites, or *tirthas*, throughout the landscape are also incorporated into the domain of the deity. These sites vary from small structures enshrining local divinities to bathing spots at nearby rivers and ponds. Rounds of *tirthas* are made by worshippers on particular occasions, generally in a clockwise sequence, thereby creating *pradakshina*-like routes. Some twenty-seven holy spots encircle the main hill at Tiruvannamalai, each with a shrine and a small tank. Pilgrims make a prescribed circumambulation of the hill by pausing at each of the sites, starting and ending with the worship of Arunachaleshvara in the main temple of the town. Nine ablution sites on the banks of the Kaveri are regularly visited by devotees to Srirangam Island, starting at the Ranganatha sanctuary in the middle, and moving

in a clockwise sequence from the north bank of the island to the south. Nor is this ritual movement beyond the town limited to worshippers; temple deities, too, make similar journeys. Minakshi and Sundareshvara are taken in procession to the boundary of Madurai, on the bank of the Vaigai River, where they are met by the deity of the Alagarkoil temple who is a form of Vishnu. This "celestial rendezvous" acknowledges the supremacy of Shiva and his consort.

This festival at Madurai is still the most important feature of religious life in the city. As originally developed by the Nayakas, it was intended to promote the power of Madurai, both as a capital and as a kingdom. Little wonder, then, that this and other such ceremonies served as public statements of might and influence, expressing the forces that radiated outwards to encompass the whole region. In this respect, temple rites within urban settings took on an almost political dimension, being an effective means of expressing the overlapping spheres of royal power and sacred power. While rulers were rarely confused with divinities, the ceremonies that paid homage to kings were identical in all essential respects with those appropriate for gods and goddesses. Ritual practices established an intimate connection between kingly and divine personalities. Public festivals in temple towns took on a particular importance in this respect since they proclaimed the dominant role of the rulers, who were themselves present on such occasions, not merely as spectators but also as active participants. Many of these festivals continue today in Tamil Nadu without their royal sponsors, a testimony to the vitality of religious traditions in the region, and the sustained wealth and influence of its temples.

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LINE DRAWINGS

Town plans are reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd., after George Michell, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India, Volume 1: Buddhist, Jain, Hindu* (London: Penguin Group, 1989), pp. 435, 449, 476, 483.



Varadaraja temple, principal entrance from west, typical late Vijayanagara *gopura*.

KANCHIPURAM (or merely Kanchi) sustains an unbroken continuity with the ancient scholarly and religious heritage that once ranked it among India's seven most sacred cities, the only one south of the Vindhyas. Once the seat of an empire that reached far into South-East Asia, that cultural and religious heritage is sustained today not by palaces of the imperial king of kings but by palaces of the sovereign divine "King of the king of kings". The town is surrounded with fields on a flat plain and flanked on the south by the Vagavati River before it joins the Palar River flowing eastward into the Bay of Bengal. A relaxed mercantile busyness on the town's broad and long streets lined with closely built houses and stores suggests the prosperous streets of the imperial past.

Kanchi has been occupied continuously since at least the second century BC. Remains of a Megalithic culture are notable at its centre, an elevated portion of which supports ancient temples still in worship; and there is also evidence of trade with ancient Rome. A Tamil poem of probably the late second century AD describes the generosity of the enthroned king of Kanchi in his walled capital, and explicitly refers to two deities still housed in temples at the centre, the Kamakottam of the goddess (later Kamakshi) and the Urakam of Vishnu (Trivikrama, conqueror of the world) where massive brick remains of probably Buddhist buildings have been found. The poem also suggests the shrines of Skanda near the Kamakottam and of Vishnu (Krishna) in the Patakam temple west of the central elevation, and explicitly refers to Vishnu reclining in the Vehka temple south-east of the walls along the route to Kanchi's flourishing ocean harbour. These components of Kanchi's centre are still in existence and worshipped, although the Buddhist and Jaina structures have disappeared.

The poem views Kanchi's dynasty as distinct from the Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras to the south and west. By the fourth century AD, however, Kanchipuram was the Pallava capital until the end of the dynasty five hundred years later. Positioned at the crossroads of land and sea trade, the Pallavas mediated culturally and religiously between North and South India, transmitting Indian civilization into Thailand, Cambodia, Java, and Vietnam. Their court was famous throughout India for its patronage of Sanskrit literature and of Buddhist, Jaina, Vaishnava, and Shaiva scholarship, rituals, and temples.

The Pallavas used the wealth generated by mercantile expansion to develop their sacred and busy harbour at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), to expand the wall of the capital and its moat outward from the sacred centre, and to build new temples. When the dynasty ended, Kanchipuram continued as a vibrant sub-capital of the Chola and Vijayanagara empires. Between the tenth and seventeenth centuries (except for one raid by the Bahmani sultanate in 1481), temples continued to be patronized, expanded or newly built, though not without interruptions and periods of decay due to varying political fortunes. Along with the Kamakottam housing the goddess, two old temples received lavish patronage; in particular, the Ekamra shrine for Shiva north-west of the centre, and the Varadaraja shrine for Vishnu south-east of the centre. As the Vijayanagara rule declined and the British ascended to power, Kanchi's temples suffered, notably from the battles between Haidar Ali and the British in the late eighteenth century.



Kailasanatha temple, main shrine built by Rajasimha, the Pallava King.



Kailasanatha temple, Dakshinamurti, south-facing form of Shiva.



Vaikuntha Perumal temple, historical reliefs of Pallava rulers.



Vaikuntha Perumal temple, a priest decorating pillars with coloured garments.

Though the wall and moat of Kanchi have long disappeared and buildings now spill in all directions, the Pallava expansion oriented toward the centre guides the layout of the town even today. During the Pallava period, all temples within the walled city and in the enclave to the south-east were built so that icons in their sanctuaries faced the direction of the palace in the central zone now demarcated by two royal "Raja Streets". Alternatively, they were oriented toward the goddess near whom the palace stood. By the seventh century AD, the enclave south-east of the wall called Attiyur contained four icons all facing west, most notably Vishnu standing on a hill as "the king who graciously gives boons" (Varadaraja). Attiyur is now part of the town known as "Vishnu Kanchi".

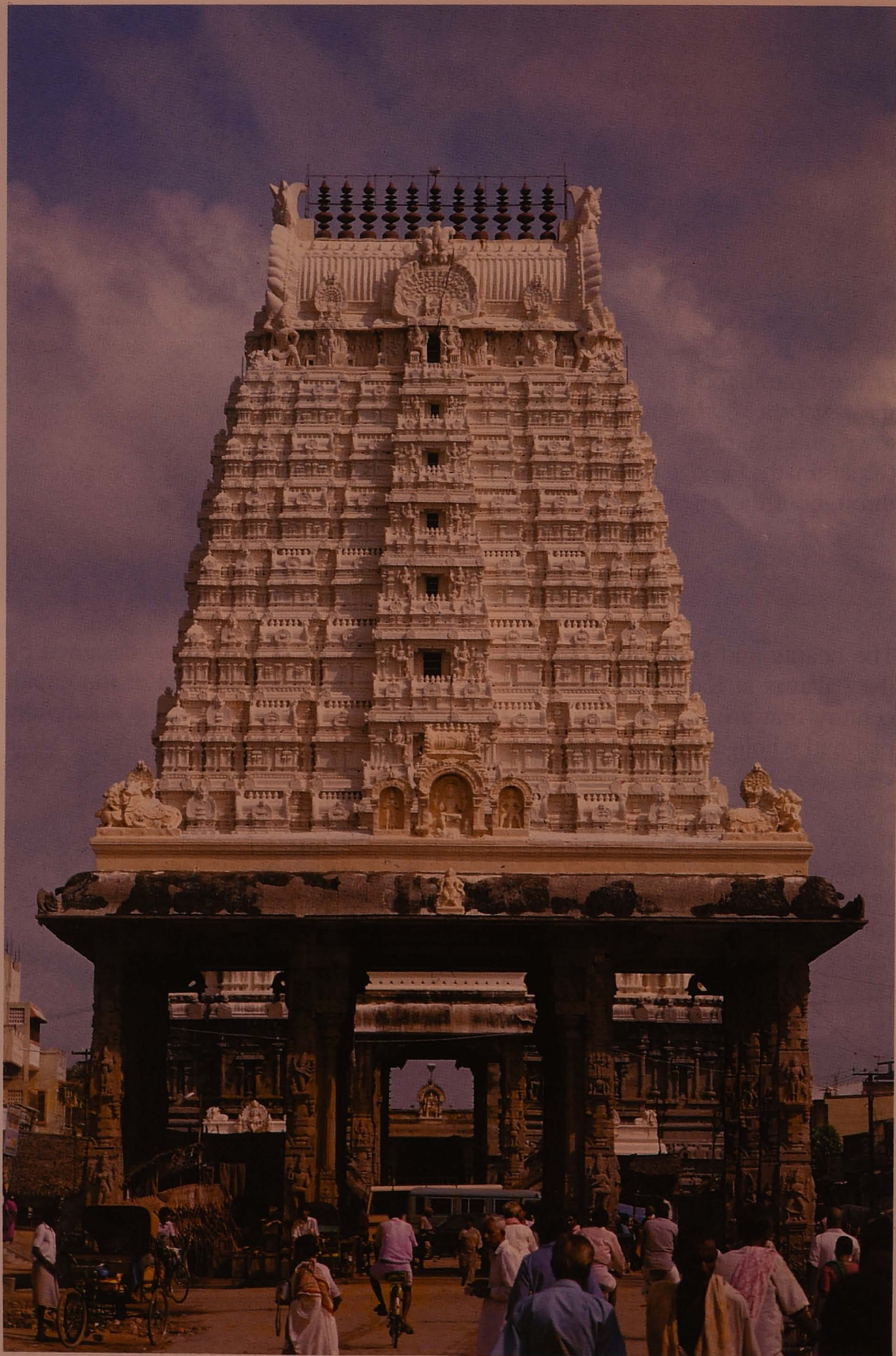
The same concern for orientation is found in Shaiva temples. In *circa* AD 600 the temple of Shiva's earth linga under a mango-tree (Ekamra) stood north-west of the central zone facing east (yet Chola and Vijayanagara expansions oriented the rest of it southward). Shiva, the goddess, and Skanda have given the central town the name "Shiva Kanchi". Pallava imperial temples on the west (Kailasanatha) and east (Vaikuntha Perumal) continued the focus on the centre throughout the reign of the dynasty.

TEMPLES OF THE CITY

The beauty and systematic complexity of the temples of the city as designed by the Pallavas at Kanchi are best seen in the two imperial buildings of the eighth century that are now archaeological monuments in worship. Each is a carefully planned whole divided into differing parts unified by the varied repetition of ideas and forms, not unlike South Indian classical music and dance.

The Emperor Rajasimha (AD 700-728) built the Kailasanatha temple as the palace for his lord Shiva (Rajasimheshvara). Rajasimha was viewed as analogous to Shiva's warrior son Skanda, and the portrayal of Shiva and the mother (Uma) sitting with the young Skanda in the middle (Somaskanda) repeats itself in various sub-shrines, each with a small tower, aligned along the wall behind the linga facing the doorway; other aspects of Shiva gaze inward from sub-shrines on the other two walls. A large bull (Nandi) recumbent on a destroyed *mandapa* (hall) fixes the east-west axis with his gaze toward the two and a half-metre tall, sixteen-faceted black stone linga hidden within the innermost sanctum located below the main *vimana*, or towered sanctuary. Garlanded with repeated rows of miniature halls with waggon-vault roofs and square aediculae, the *vimana* culminates in an octagonal cupola crowned with a jar-finial.

Nandi's gaze leads past eight small sub-shrines along the east wall through the gateway topped with a waggon-vault roof to a larger shrine built by Rajasimha's son, Mahendravarman III. It is fronted with two ritual structures that stand at the entrance and on the main axis of every temple, a small altar for sacrifices and a tall flag-pole. Sculptures inside its sanctum introduce aspects of Shiva repeated on the major *vimana*: Shiva as a begging ascetic (Bhikshatana) on the south wall, and Shiva performing the dance of destruction (Samhara-Tandava) on the north wall. Inside the rectangular compound the splendour of this most highly sculpted



Ekamranatha temple, with the recently painted south *gopura*.

Pallava temple reveals itself. All along the inside of the enclosing wall the sub-shrines repeat with variations, those on the south and north walls opening toward the east. Originally they were painted inside, probably with Somaskanda panels on the west walls, yet were also empty. Along the walls at the base of those cells over three hundred of Rajasimha's titles run clockwise, engraved in four different scripts.

The sides of the cells facing the main *vimana* depict stories of gods in a clockwise order corresponding to demarcated spatial directions. The linga inside the *vimana* signifies the Primordial Light, and the sculptures on the outside of the *vimana* depict the forms that Light takes as it transforms itself into the dark universe through self-imposed misperception. Sub-shrines on the *vimana* mark its cardinal and intermediate directions, the eastern direction replaced by the doorway into the inner sanctum. The sculptures facing each other across the courtyard at the cardinal directions were made especially noteworthy. Shiva as the south-facing teacher (Dakshinamurti) on the *vimana* appears to be instructing the four-faced Brahma gazing at him from the enclosing wall opposite and flanked by Durga. In the corresponding positions on the north, Shiva as the lord of yogis (Yogishvara) looking north is gazed upon by Vishnu with Shridevi and Bhudevi (goddesses embodying two attributes of Vishnu — wealth and the earth) flanked by Trivikrama. Expressing the subordination of Brahma and Vishnu to Shiva, those pairings encode theological, liturgical, and social issues in Pallava Kanchi.

Entrance to the sanctum by way of the *mandapa* and *vimana* doorway is a journey into darkness. Appropriate to deluded perception in the Kali Yuga (age of destruction), Light is seen as darkness and no light shines inside the sanctum except that of oil lamps used by a priest to show the faceted black glistening linga and the Somaskanda panel behind it. Flickering lamplight also reveals the liveliness of shadowed sculptures in adjacent shrines. Support for the enormous tower above created a double wall around the inner sanctum, which has left an unpainted hallway, now interpreted as an esoteric circumambulatory path.

The second imperial temple, the slightly later Vaikuntha Perumal, presents a smaller and more compact architectural experience. It is a sandstone mandala once brilliantly painted. Its focus is the towering, mountain-like *vimana* shooting up like the Flaming Light whose western wall extends to create an enclosed hall. When plugged up, a drainage "moat" surrounding the *vimana* and hall symbolizes the Ocean of Milk encompassing the blazing White Island where the god dwells. Surrounding that "moat" a covered circumambulatory path runs along the enclosing wall, its pillars carved with lions facing inward. A two-tiered sculpted history of the Pallava dynasty, from its origins in Vishnu down through Nandivarman II Pallavamalla who built the temple, runs clockwise along the circumambulatory wall. While circumambulating the *vimana*, Kanchi's history appears on the left; on the right is the *vimana* whose sculpted panels signify cosmography and Vishnu's acts as related in books one to six and eleven to twelve of the *Bhagavata Purana*.

That part of the temple is exoteric; the esoteric dimension begins with the sanctum. Filling it is the huge four-armed icon of Vishnu carved of black stone, seated as transcendent king (Vaikuntha Perumal) facing west. On the outer walls

of the sanctum at the cardinal directions are three seated sculptures surrounded by an enclosed hallway. Clockwise they depict the emanations (*vyūha*) from Vasudeva (Vishnu) seated in the sanctum: the snake-hooded Samkarsana on the north followed by Pradyumna on the east and by Aniruddha on the south. The esoteric dimension then extends upward to a second sanctum directly above where the black stone icon depicts Aniruddha asleep on the snake Samkarsana in the primordial waters of consciousness, permeated by Pradyumna who generates the desire for forms. The forms he dreams are sculpted on the outside of the sanctum as viewed by an outdoor circumambulatory path. The panels on the four sides signify patterns of time and significant rituals corresponding to the functions of the emanations and depicts stories drawn from books seven to ten of the *Bhagavata Purana*. Above this sanctum is a third without a circumambulatory path, no longer accessible. It once housed a standing icon, presumably of black stone, identified by an Alvar (saint) as Krishna the victorious lover.

The temple mandala may be understood in two ways. Exoterically, it moves from the centre outward as the seated Vasudeva of Light shines across the Ocean of Milk into dark human history on its border. Esoterically, the three vertical sanctums reverse that mandala. The progression upward signifies a move inward to the centre; it replicates Vasudeva's emanation of forms "inside" his own luminous being, ending with our dark world at his centre, where he appears as Krishna.

Compared with these Pallava temples, those developed by Chola and Vijayanagara patrons are now like architectural museums arranged by the fortunes of history yet according to a liturgical plan. The Varadaraja temple illustrates this vividly. The Cholas first rebuilt and expanded an older temple, creating three walled enclosures around a mandala. The mandala is an artificial hill nearly eight metres high and thirty metres square that appears to signify the high altar for a fire sacrifice. On top, a square that includes two walled entry porches and a circumambulatory path (now closed) signifies the altar of fire; the square sanctum signifies the square clay fire-pan in the altar's middle. The sanctum is the "womb" of the fire that is believed to hold the manifest universe within which the standing Vishnu appeared (just as he does on the top floor of the Vaikuntha Perumal mandala). A two-storey oblong tower of the waggon-vault type rises over the sanctum, renovated and replastered in the 1930s.

In 1053 the Cholas built (or rebuilt) the base of the "hill" on the east-west axis a low masonry sanctum fronted with a hall to signify a cave in the "hill", within which the icon of the man-lion (Narasimha) sits as yogi facing west. They encircled the "hill" with a double-storeyed cloistered verandah with colonnades of uniform pillars, creating an open courtyard with a Chola-style gateway on the west, broad, squat, and smaller than the central *vimana*. They then enclosed that entire area with a wall to create another gated courtyard in which they built a kitchen in *circa* 1100 and other buildings. Expressing growing dependence on Shakti (goddess of strength) in those centuries, they built a separate shrine for Shri Lakshmi (Perundevi Tayar) on the south-west facing her elevated husband (rebuilt *circa* 1487), and a hall for the unction rites of movable icons on the west along the central axis. By the early fourteenth century they had created an even larger open



Ekamranatha temple, showing the layout of inner enclosures.



Ekamranatha temple, sacred mango-tree under which Kamakshi worshipped the earth linga.

courtyard with an encircling wall to enclose the bathing tank and gardens, and topped its west gateway with a seven-storey tower in the late Chola or Pandya style in *circa* 1374. Counting the open area around the outer wall, the temple now possesses five courtyards encompassing the sanctum and entered from the west.

Vijayanagara rulers developed that area and in continuing devotion to Shakti built structures with minute carvings and extravagant embellishment, mostly in the early sixteenth century. They enclosed the first courtyard on top of the "hill" with a pillared verandah for circumambulation; in the courtyard below they built a shrine for the Malayala goddess and one for Andal, the poet-incarnation of Bhudevi; near the goddess in the next courtyard they built a large hall for the Navaratri festival and an intricately chiselled swing pavilion, and added shrines for the Alvares and Acharyas (teachers); and in the fourth courtyard they built an elaborately sculpted wedding hall or *kalyana mandapa*, of five hundred and seventy-five square metres on a two-metre high carved plinth. Among that hall's ninety-six monolithic pillars, those of the interior display geometric designs and those on the exterior bear *yalis* (mythical leonine creatures) and rampant horsemen that depict Shakti's manifestation as Vijayanagara's military vigour (including European soldiers portrayed with firearms). Finally, even though the east entrance had little use, they gave it a slender fifty-metre gateway of nine storeys topped with eleven vase-finials.

RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

The guide of the liturgy of royal service is the *Agama*, revealed service of God in iconic form (*archa*) that subsumes the fire cult of the Veda. Vaishnava temples use either the *Pancharatra* or the *Vaikhanasa*, each with its own canon of ritual texts. Shiva and Skanda temples follow *Shaiva Agama* and its *Shaiva Siddhanta* dominates their temples and *mathas* (monasteries). Worship of the goddess in the Kamakottam sanctum follows the Saubhagya Chintamani system of *Shakta Agama* as revealed by the sage Durvasa. Of all the temples, the Kamakottam is the most unusual ritually. The rites in its sanctum are addressed to the Shri Chakra *yantra* (mystical diagram) in front of the goddess image (not to the image) and confer the worldly welfare for which Kamakshi is popular. Yet that *yantra* is believed to have been installed by Shankara who renounced the world, as the knowledge (*vidya*) that pierces through to the absolute being expounded in *Advaita Vedanta*. The Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha Adipati headquartered in Kumbakonam has been the trustee of the temple since 1842.

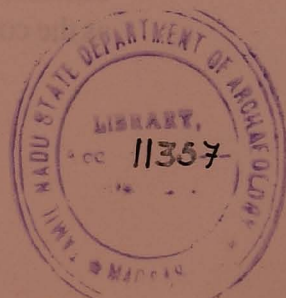
The history of the Kamakottam, which may date from the earliest period, reflects increasing interest in Shakti in Kanchi. According to K. R. Venkataraman, the earliest Kamakottam still exists near the Skanda temple where a seated black goddess with matted hair holds a noose, goad, skull, and shows the gesture of fearlessness. On her plinth three crowned heads in low relief face a stone bowl inscribed with a *yantra*, now defaced. That image dates at least from the ninth century AD and its *yantra* may have been installed by the first Shankara when its bloody Kalamukha rites were performed. The new Kamakottam was built in the



Kamakshi temple, main courtyard with *kalyana mandapa* on the left.



Priests browsing at stall outside the Kamakshi temple.



eleventh century amidst Jaina and Buddhist temples, some of whose images it incorporated, and its present disorienting layout began in the fourteenth century: standing in a pillared hall, the goddess faces east, yet must gaze at the main gateway through a small window in the enclosing wall; worshippers entering through the east gateway see the flag-pole and altar in front of the window, but must enter at the north. The present Shri Chakra *yantra* was installed in the sixteenth century and is represented by a pacified image: the enthroned four-armed Lalita Kamakshi holds a noose, goad, sugar-cane bow, and flower arrows.

The temples of Ekamra, Kamakshi, and Skanda are popularly thought of as forming a “Somaskanda” cluster, though they are independent temples with their own liturgies. Nevertheless, popular perception informs devotion, and stories in Kanchi tie all its temples together as the houses of gods belonging to a single extended family. According to one story, whose major events are depicted at Ekamra, the gods came there for specific liturgical reasons. Parvati once playfully closed Shiva’s eyes and threatened the universe, and was born on earth to perform ascetic *tapas* (penance) at Kanchi, where she made a linga of earth, under a four-branched mango-tree, which she served. In play, Shiva threatened to dissolve the linga by sending a flood from the Ganges in his hair, but Kamakshi’s companion, Kali, caught it in her skull bowl. When Shiva caused it to overflow from the skull bowl, Parvati’s brother Vishnu, who had appeared from the fire of Brahma’s sacrifice, appeared in his huge all-encompassing form to stem the flood. When he realized it was Shiva’s jest, Vishnu asked Shiva finally to bestow the fruit of her *tapas* on his sister. Kamakshi then embraced the earth linga to protect it from the flood and, inflamed by her touch, Shiva appeared to her as the lord of the mango (Ekamreshvara) and they married. That Shaiva-Shakta story neatly ties together the icon of Varadaraja, the huge stucco icons of Trivikrama and Krishna, the fierce and peaceful icons of Kamakshi, and Ekamra’s ancient mango-tree and earth linga.

The birth of Skanda the prince at the Kumarakottam is explained by a story in the *Lalita Mahatmya* appended to the *Brahmanda Purana* in which erotic desire (*kama*) is the issue. Kamakshi is Vishnu’s bewitching Shakti (Maya) who had emerged from a human sacrifice conducted by gods to defeat the destructive anger arising from the ashes of erotic desire that Shiva had burned up with his central eye of insight. After she, with eyes desiring Shiva (Kamakshi), married Shiva the destroyer of desire (Kameshvara), she destroyed Shiva’s anger arising from the ash of desire (Bhanda) and then re-embodied desire (Kama) so that he would stimulate the birth of Skanda to defeat Bhanda’s friend, Taraka.

The story apparently encodes tantric discipline. The yogi first divinizes his body and mind and enables insight to burn up his own ego-centred erotic desire. He then undergoes a ritual “death” through which Shakti emerges in his body. Using disciplined rites he then allows her to restore his own erotic desire and to use it to facilitate the conquest of obstacles to true perception within himself. Kamakshi signifies the potency of ritual action (*kriya-shakti*) to transform the yogi’s problem into its solution. Faith in Vishnu’s Shakti manifested through rites continues today, as the consecration of a new discus (*chakra*) shrine at Patakam in June 1992 attests.



Kamakshi temple, flag-pole on axis with main shrine.



Varadaraja temple, east *gopura*, used as a subsidiary entrance.

Like the *yantra* at the Kamakottam, Vishnu's discus (*chakra*) embodies *kriya-shakti*.

Liturgies at Kanchi today are attenuated versions of extravagant Vijayanagara elaborations based on the principle of reciprocity: the more wealth the resident Lord possesses, the more service he may receive; the more powerful he will be, the more he will bestow in return. Ideal devotion, however, serves for God's own pleasure and without thought of reward, and he has graciously appeared in iconic form for the sake of others. Many temples are not wealthy any more, but daily and periodical rites continue in all of these (and in more), each with characteristic variations of shared patterns. In each temple, the immovable icon in the inner sanctum may receive the services directly, or by means of small movable icons that extend the deity's presence elsewhere in the temple and outside on the streets. The movable icons bear their own titles and stories so that Vishnu or Shiva or the goddess in one temple may have various personae, as they do in the town, expressing liturgically the "monotheistic polytheism" of the *Agamas*. Variations in liturgical detail encode those stories. Since the linga in the Ekamra temple, for example, signifies an earth linga threatened by a flood, yet Shiva loves baths, the linga is covered with silver and is anointed with civet-cat oil, while the altar from which it emerges is bathed.

The most elaborate daily ceremonies, also shared at the huge Ekamra temple, are seen in the wealthy Varadaraja temple. Serving priests (*archaka*) approach Varadaraja five times a day: when he awakes in the early morning, at noon, at six o'clock, at eight o'clock, and at nine o'clock in the evening, after which he goes to sleep and the temple closes. All services are abridged portions of the early morning ceremony, which begins by invoking Vishnu's presence into the icon through mantras. The king is then bathed: a small silver icon is anointed daily, the immovable icon and the queen on Fridays, and the festival icons on six days of the month and on festival days. Dressed royally in clothes and jewels, he is fed and entertained with offerings of basil and mantras. Portions of the offered food are taken to the shrines of the Alvars and Acharyas (each with their own priests), but the man-lion and the queen receive separate offerings. Leftover food and water go as modes of divine grace to the priests and devotees present. At night the sequence closes when the king is put to bed. At the morning and evening ceremonies singers recite portions of Alvar hymns, fifty verses each day so that all four thousand of them are completed several times a year. (In Shaiva temples the hymns of the Nayanmars, Shaiva saints, are sung.)

During these ceremonies, devotees initiated into a *sadhana* (discipline) of worship will visit the temple and follow their doctrinal discipline (*samaya*), usually around sunset. Initiates into the Shaiva Siddhanta Samaya, for example, ideally will know that the palace symbolizes the body of a yogi on his back and corresponds to their own body. When they enter the gateway, they symbolically enter through the lowest part of the visible physical body, the feet. Inside the outer wall, they are in the invisible physical body at the base of the spine where the yogi halts normal consciousness by controlling breathing, a place signified by the flag-pole. The adjacent altar of sacrifice represents the binding matter (*pasha*) defiled by ignorance that the yogi's individual consciousness (*pashu*) will now go beyond in a journey up the spine to the head. The pacified bull Nandi ("happy")



Varadaraja temple, tank in outermost enclosure.

gazing on Shiva represents that consciousness and the various walls and courtyards enclosing the sanctum signify the material layers within the invisible body that it passes through. The inner sanctum corresponds to the centre of the yogi's forehead between the eyes where the visible and invisible material bodies link. The linga within is the Lord (*pati*) whom the yogi perceives standing there beyond both bodies, which means everywhere.

Behaviour appropriate to such a walk "inward" is governed by the etiquette of an imperial palace adjusted to gender and ability. Having bathed and dressed properly (women covered from the shoulders down, men from the waist down) and carrying a plate of offerings above the waist, ideal worshippers venerate Ekamra's south gateway. After entering they place both hands over the head, move to the altar of sacrifice, and prostrate at its south-east corner. Worshippers then circumambulate Shiva's sanctum at least three times through the courtyards, thinking steadily of him and watching carefully lest they step on an insect. The direction of circumambulation depends on the intent of the visit, most commonly clockwise, the direction signifying emanation of the world and enjoyment of it. Unmarried devotees should walk clockwise; householders and retired meditators should walk both clockwise and counter-clockwise, the direction of the world's devolution and emancipation from it; renunciants should walk only counter-clockwise.

Once prepared to pass to the sanctum, worshippers venerate the door guardians with joined hands and ask Nandi permission to enter so that they may receive the fruits of having seen the Lord. Without walking between Nandi and Shiva, they go to Ganesha (son of Shiva and Parvati), remover of obstacles, gaze at him and visualize him while (in apparent self-abasement) they knock their fists to their foreheads three times, pull each ear down three times with the opposite hand, and praise him. Placing both hands on their heads they then go to the sanctum where Shiva resides as the earth linga and as Somaskanda on the back wall. While they gaze at Shiva through the doorway (as he gazes upon them), the ideal worshippers will visualize him while their mind dissolves, their body hair stands on end, and joy wells up and overflows within them as they sing a Tamil hymn of praise. They then present their offerings through the priest standing inside the sanctum (bael leaf, fruit, burning camphor, and so forth), concluding with a ritual gift to the priest that transfers the fruits of his acts on their behalf to them.

Having worshipped the Primordial Light, they now worship its emanations in the sanctum area — Dakshinamurti, Somaskanda, Chandrashekara (Shiva as Lord of the moon), Subrahmanya (Skanda), and others — and the Acharyas who transmitted the *Shaiva Agama*. Next they approach the sanctum of Parvati and perform appropriate rites for her with offerings. They conclude their worship-through-vision (*darshana*) by applying Shiva's sacred ash to their bodies and approaching the shrine of Chandeshvara, the keeper of accounts. With three claps of the hand they ask him to give them the fruits of *darshana*. Returning to Nandi they venerate him, prostrate at the altar of sacrifice, and sit down facing north to visualize Shiva while uttering his five-syllable mantra (Namah Shivaya) repeatedly. Free to go home, they take care not to have their backs facing either Shiva or Nandi. According to the *Agamas*, such visual worship with true devotion

at daybreak removes the sins of the night; at midday, sins committed from the day of birth; at evening, sins committed during seven births. Worshippers may remove unintended ritual mistakes by reciting the Rudra or Aghora mantras.

FESTIVALS

Added to such daily liturgies are festivals conducted throughout a deeply symbolic year. The year is divided according to the solstices and equinoxes (in Tamil Nadu these periods are observed about three weeks after the celestial events), each of which is thought of as a day in the life of the gods: the winter solstice is sunrise and the summer solstice is sunset; the month before the winter solstice is "Brahma's hour" at the end of night when gods (like humans) arise to prepare for their own worship of the king. During the "day" the major events in the life of the resident royalty and leading saints and teachers occur, as do rites of the life-cycle, personal vows, and celebrations of life of resident subjects.

Each temple at Kanchi celebrates one festival grandly as an identifying "Brahma festival" or *brahmotsava*, the interesting events for most people being morning and evening processions of the king and queen in gorgeous attire, carried in ornate vehicles illustrating their stories. The sequence remains the same year after year, yet some temples print broadsides to publicize the processions and the townsmen who sponsor them.

The "sunrise" of the winter solstice is celebrated at home with the two-day Pongal festival beginning on the first day of Tai (usually January 14), a time to venerate the sun and cattle and to renew social ties. The *brahmotsavas* of Kanchi then begin, all but one during the "day" time of the year (winter solstice to summer solstice). The theme of the early morning bath is found in the "sunrise" month of Tai, in the *brahmotsava* of the Urakam where Vishnu bathes in a tank. In the following month of Masi (February-March) the Kamakottam conducts its *brahmotsava*, and the Ekamra conducts its own in the next month of Panguni (March-April). On the tenth day of the festival coinciding with the constellation Phalguna Uttara, Shiva of the earth linga marries Parvati who embraced it under the mango-tree. Customarily, many couples belonging to various castes marry at the same time in the wedding hall of the temple, as subjects imitating their divine rulers.

Brahmotsavas skip Chittirai (April-May), the first month of the Tamil year, and then three occur in Vaigasi (May-June) in the "afternoon" of the gods' day: the *brahmotsavas* of Varadaraja, Vaikuntha Perumal, and Skanda in the Kumarakottam. Interestingly, Krishna's *brahmotsava* at Patakam accentuates the meaning of his name, "dark", though it is of course brilliantly colourful, since it takes place in the "darkness" after the "sunset" of Adi (July-August) as a ten-day festival which begins with that dark king's birthday in "dark" Avani (August-September).

Other important festivals also fall in the "night" of the year to re-enact events crucial to the "dark age" of history, the Kali Yuga. Beginning with the new moon in Purattasi (September-October) when domestic rites for the dead are enjoined,



Varadaraja temple, *kalyana mandapa*, with fine examples of late Vijayanagara sculptures.



Varadaraja temple, musicians circumambulating central shrine.



Varadaraja temple, *kalyana mandapa*, gods and warriors, the swing pavilion at the rear.

the Kamakottam celebrates with splendour the nine-nights (Navaratri) of the goddess's victory over dark demonic powers, as told in the *Devimahatmyam*. Each day, as the new moon waxes she receives offerings of songs while enthroned in a special hall and since 1985 has been worshipped on the "victorious tenth day" (Vijaya-dasami) with an especially potent unction of her through a golden pot and by her procession in a golden chariot. Similarly, she receives another special unction in the "row of lights" (Dipavali) festival falling on the next new moon in Aippasi (October-November). Seven days later, her son Skanda's birth, defeat of Taraka, and marriage all in six days are celebrated in the Kumarakottam. Between the even "darker" new and full moons that follow in Karttigai (November-December) numerous lamps appear on Kanchi's temples at night.

Margali (December-January) ending the "night" time of the year signifies the predawn hour of meditation on revealed knowledge. Accordingly, temples enact significant moments of revelation that month. On the day of the full moon, at the Ekamra temple, the important Ardra unction is performed on one day. The dance of Shiva is presented as worship the following sunrise, with singing and celebrations of the Shaiva Saint Manikkavachakar's *Tiruwempavai*. In the Varadaraja temple the entire Alvar canon is recited in front of Vishnu, the Alvars and Acharyas, beginning on the first day after the new moon for ten "day" times and continuing from the eleventh for ten "night" times, when Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli* only is recited. In Margali mornings the revelatory *Tiruppavai* and *Tiruvempavai* may be heard on Kanchi streets arousing devotion at the beginning of a new day and a new year.

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Arunachalesvara temple, dominated by the hill, at the summit of which the annual fire ritual takes place.

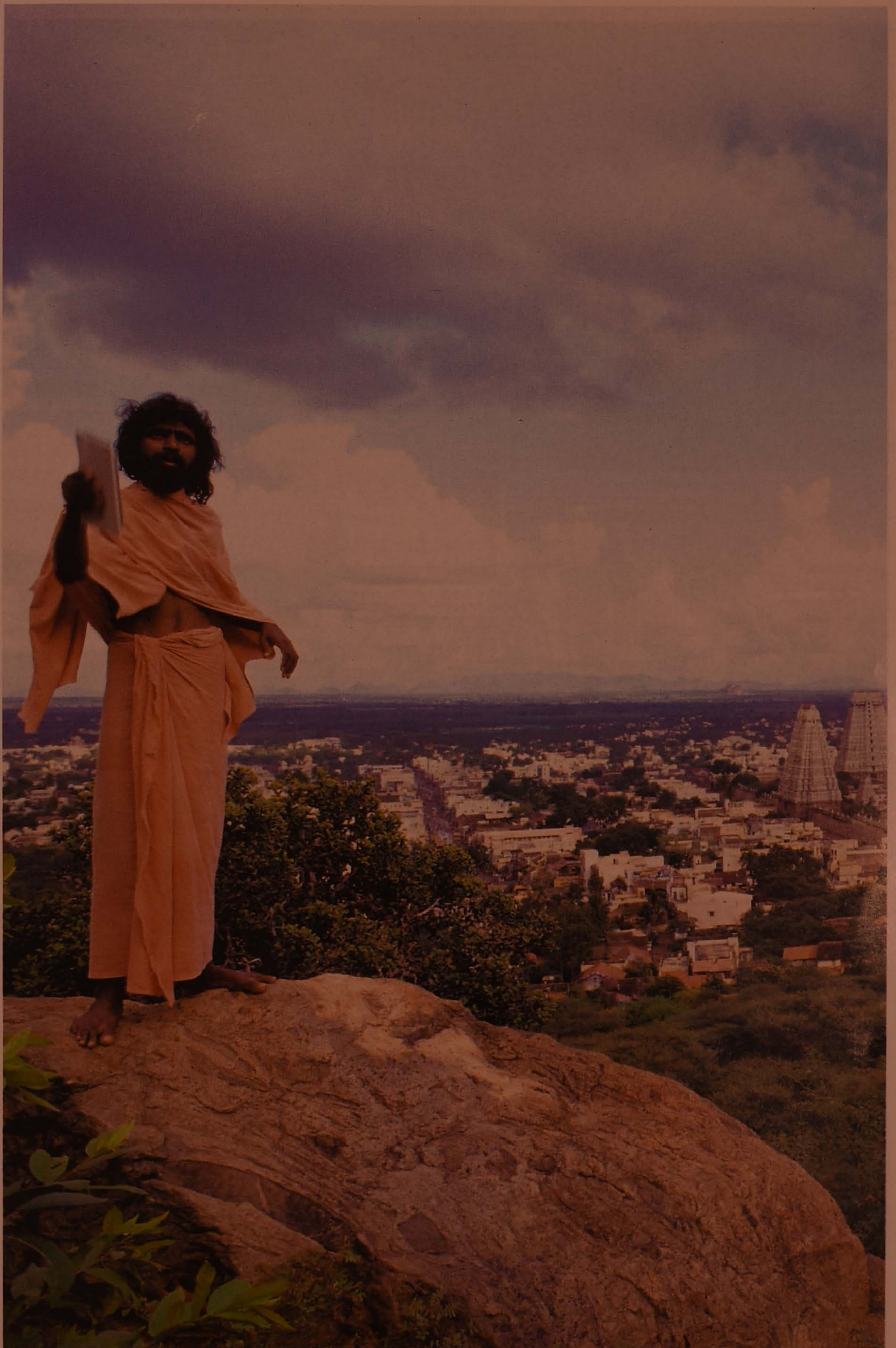
SHIVA has long been identified with Agni—fire; in the Puranas he appears as a column of fire before which Brahma and Vishnu must admit defeat, a modified version of the ancient theme of the *Kenopanishad*, in which Brahman manifests as the supreme divinity before whom Agni and Vayu must bow. Because of this long tradition linking Shiva with fire, and of the five lingas of the elements (earth at Kanchipuram, water at Tiruvannaikoil, ether at Chidambaram, air at Kalahasti), the fire linga at Tiruvannamalai is the one whose myth is most consistent and has most resonance in the religious-geographical symbolism of Tamil Nadu. This site, mentioned as early as the seventh century in the songs of the Nayanmars (Shaivite saints), continued to develop considerably up to the Vijayanagara period; on an eighteenth-century map the surface occupied by the temple represents one-fifth of the total area of the town.

At first sight Tiruvannamalai does not seem a very suitable spot for the development of a major centre: the town stands in an infertile plain that is punctuated by isolated hills (inselbergs) and piles of crumbling rocks devoid of vegetation. Nevertheless it was a favourable position, at a crossroads connecting different regions. Already by the Sangam period, in the first centuries of the present era, the north-south route from Kanchipuram to Karur passed close to Tiruvannamalai; another major road from east to west, passing through the Chengam Basin, also led to Tiruvannamalai. In addition, water draining off the rocks and inselbergs could be collected in tanks and used for irrigating crops. Thus a settlement grew up at the foot of one of these inselbergs, one which according to tradition embodies the column of fire from which Shiva emerges.

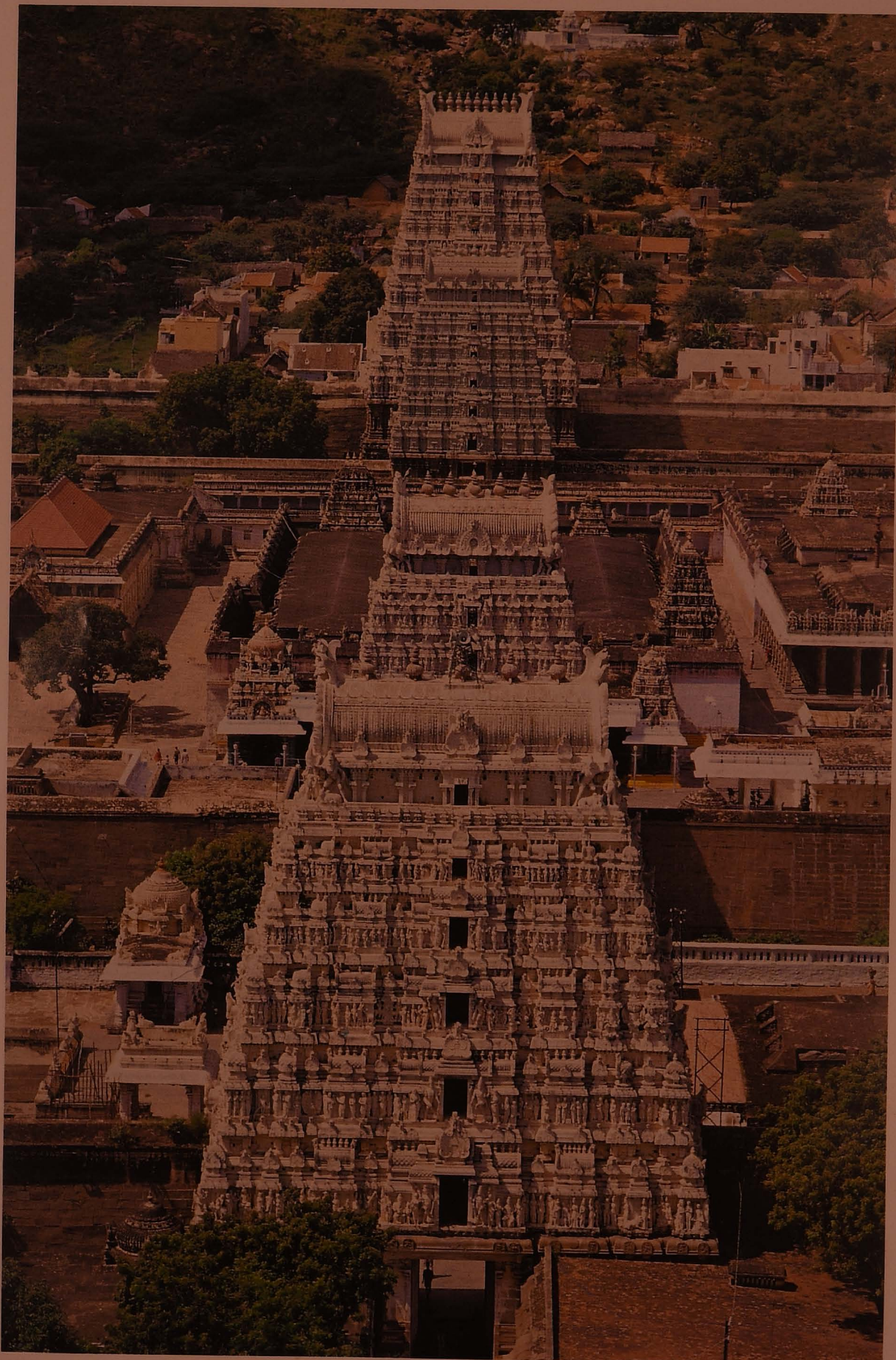
This mountain, or rather hill, an isolated cone eight hundred metres high that is visible for twenty kilometres around, organizes the geographical, social, and symbolic space of Tiruvannamalai (*malai*, or mountain, hill). This visual focal point is the emblem of the place; it is depicted on stones marking the boundaries of temple lands as an equilateral triangle filled with semicircular incisions resembling rocks. The mountain also figures in the iconography of the deity in a form not mentioned in iconographical treatises that is unique to Tiruvannamalai, the *Adi Mudi* or “high and low”: these are the words used by the Shaivite saints when singing of Brahma’s and Vishnu’s vain attempts to reach the crown and the feet of Shiva the Vast. The *Adi Mudi* is a slab set at the centre of small shrines. It is carved on both sides: the front surface bears Shiva and Parvati, while the back, visible from the rear niche of the shrine, shows a linga against a background of semicircular lines symbolizing the mountain. This iconography is a perfect illustration of the double aspect of the divine manifestation: on one side (the linga against the mountain), the god as a yogi; on the other side (with Shiva and Parvati in human form), the god with his Shakti, Parvati.

BIPOLARITY OF THE SITE

A bipolarity appears between the site of present-day Tiruvannamalai and several villages situated in the immediate vicinity to the east. In these villages, the west, together with Tiruvannamalai and its mountain, is referred to as *kadu* (forest,



Pilgrim on rock, high above the Arunachaleshvara complex.



Arunachalesvara temple, series of *gopuras* decreasing in height from outermost to innermost enclosures.

waste or uninhabited land); and the villages claim rivalry with the town as the former royal seat of the Hoysala king, Ballala III (early fourteenth century). Although there is no archaeological trace of this, and opinions vary about exact locations, two of the annual temple festivals do seem to confirm this claim. A few weeks after the announcement of the death of King Ballala during the festival of Tai Pusam (January-February), in the course of another festival, Masi Magham, Shiva is crowned king at the Arunachaleshvara temple in Tiruvannamalai in the absence of a royal heir. It is for this purpose, revealingly, that he comes to Pallikondapattu, one of the eastern villages where King Ballala's palace is supposed to have stood. In addition, when the deity is carried around the mountain in the course of the festival of Tiruvudal (the god's quarrel), it is on the west side of the mountain, in the least settled area, that his jewels are stolen. Significantly, it is to the east, at Kilnattur, a village of cultivated fields, that he recovers the jewels.

In addition to these festivals which show a long-standing distinction between these eastern villages and the mountain, the configuration of the town of Tiruvannamalai itself seems to show that originally there was only a small sanctuary at the foot of the mountain, near the crossroads linking different regions (Chengam, Polur, Gingee). It is clear that as the town and the temple expanded—especially with the construction of the fourth and fifth temple enclosures—these roads were submerged in the urban structure; they now pass through the town along the square of "car-streets" around the temple. With the growth of the town and the temple the original opposition between the eastern villages and the mountain area has been displaced so that it now applies to the mountain and the town of Tiruvannamalai at its foot.

The town is contrasted to the mountain by a ritual demarcation of its limits during the *parivettai* (hunting) episode enacted twice a year during the ten-day festivals at the winter and summer solstices. One of these *parivettais* takes place to the north, not far from the temple of Durga (goddess), the other to the south, near the present hospital, two places which on the eighteenth-century map correspond to the limits of the town. During the *parivettai*, after a lamp-offering to Subrahmanya and the elephant who accompanies him, the deity aims his bow from his palanquin, while the elephant runs after a drummer and a torch-bearer, circumambulating Subrahmanya three times. This ritual mime represents a royal hunt on the uncultivated borders of the settlement. It is significant that the eastern limit of the town is not involved, probably because the oldest settlements in the area lay in that direction.

The contrast between the town as a settlement and the mountain as a wilderness disappears when their borders are overstepped by the ritual circumambulation of the mountain, which involves passing through part of the town: this is done in order to include the Shiva temple, which is both a duplicate and a substitute for the mountain which embodies Shiva. The uncultivated space around the foot of the mountain ceases to be undifferentiated when it becomes the path for the ritual circumambulation. It is ordered in two ways: as a mandala whose centre is the vertical axis of the mountain; and oriented by the distribution around the mountain of sanctuaries and ponds dedicated to the cardinal and intermediate points of the compass. The route is domesticated, punctuated with small shrines

erected by individual devotees, with resting-places for the deities and ponds nearby. When several of these elements are situated close together, they form something like "stations", where the deities pause in their processions to receive offerings. Moreover, this circuit is perfectly controlled and marked out. The total length of fourteen kilometres was demarcated in the thirteenth century by milestones in the name of the Pandya dynasty, bearing their insignia of a sceptre and two fishes as well as the number of the division of the route, starting from the temple. Thus one of the stones reads, "Hail! Prosperity! Way of Vikrama Pandya, 4th division." From the few milestones which have survived it has been possible to reconstruct the whole system of signs and to determine the measurement used. There were nine markers altogether, one for approximately every one and a half kilometres. This is the distance that can be covered during one *nali*, a time-distance unit of twenty-four minutes. So, three and a half hours were required to cover all the divisions, covering the total distance.

Although the temple at the foot of the mountain is identified with the mountain itself as its substitute, a distinction is made between the top and the bottom. In some areas the double nature of the god, both yogi and dispenser of wealth, is symbolized by one temple at the summit of the hill and another at the base. At Tiruvannamalai this complementary contrast is not expressed spatially, since there is no temple at the top of the hill, but by four annual ceremonies during which two rocky protuberances on the summit of the hill are worshipped as the feet of Shiva.

One of these ceremonies takes place at Shivaratri, the night of Shiva, when the god manifests as a column of fire; a few months later another puja takes place to celebrate the union of the god and the goddess by a marriage ceremony. In the later part of the year two more pujas are performed. One takes place at Karttigai (November-December), before the fire is lighted on the summit to commemorate Shiva's appearance as the column of fire; at this moment he is united with his Shakti (Parvati), as is signified by the Ardhanari dance in the temple courtyard. The last puja on the top of the mountain represents separation from the goddess, and a return to the manifestation of Shiva's supremacy.

TOWN AND TEMPLE

Tiruvannamalai is one of the major sacred places of Tamil Nadu. It is impossible to ignore this because of the great area occupied by the Shiva temple, the many processions, and the frequent festivals, especially that of Karttigai, the festival of fire, which more than doubles the population. This influx of pilgrims is received in *choultries* or hostels, most of which are situated in the north and south car-streets.

Another aspect of the temple which has determined the physical form of the town was the construction of the fourth and fifth enclosures. This important extension caused the relocation of residences, especially of brahmins (*gurukkal* priests, or *smarta* brahmins), who would usually live around the temple in the square formed by the four car-streets.

At Tiruvannamalai, the west car-street behind the temple has very few houses

because the mountain slopes upward almost immediately. The only *gurukkal* brahmin residences near the temple are those in the north car-street. As for the east and south streets, which follow the main regional highways, they are quite naturally crowded with shops, and also hostels for pilgrims, who thus benefit from the passing processions. For these reasons the *smarta* brahmin quarter was located relatively far away from the temple, almost at the old town limits, around the Ayyan Kulam or Indra Tirtha Tank.

Besides occupying a large area, the great temple radiates its influence throughout the whole town due to its connections with outlying tanks. The sacred bath which takes place at the close of each of the numerous temple festivals is performed either in one of the two temple tanks, or in one of the outlying tanks: Indra Tirtha, Tamarai Kulam, Agni Tirtha, and Ishanya Tirtha. The last two of these lie at the two extremities of the circumambulatory route around the mountain; that is, at the outer limits of the town, where the cremation grounds lie. For this reason they are used for ablutions after funerals.

In Tiruvannamalai the Shiva temple is omnipresent and all-powerful, so that there is no Vishnu temple. Apart from three abandoned Shiva temples, there are about a hundred temples to the goddess or to Ganapati. These are street shrines or community temples, all of which relate to the great Shiva temple. During their festivals the processions from these temples proceed through the four car-streets of the great temple. The final bath takes place, depending on the location of the temple, either in the Ishanya Tirtha to the north or in the Agni Tirtha to the south.

THE SHIVA TEMPLE

The temple today is the outcome of a millennium of building, alteration, and extension. The original enclosure containing the main shrine with its Shiva linga was enlarged eastwards, and gained the name of "second enclosure". What is now known as the "first enclosure" is in fact the platform around the shrine. This is a theoretical enclosure for ritual purposes, the enclosure being considered as the inner circle of Shiva's divine court, where the sub-shrine of Chandikeshvara (one who maintains accounts), receives the leftovers from Shiva's puja, is located.

The main shrine, made up of a cella and a vestibule, bears tenth-century inscriptions on its base, but above this there has been much remodelling. A square hall in front of the shrine, dating from the sixteenth century and containing Nandi, the bull, and Surya, the sun-god, is used for the first of the six daily pujas performed in the temple.

The second enclosure, originally without a roof but covered in the nineteenth century, is entered through a gateway known as the Rishi Gopura. Around its perimeter there are several deities, either free-standing or in small shrines. First, facing east, comes the temple's second Nandi; then in their obligatory position to the south stand the sixty-three Nayanmars and the Seven Mothers. On the west are Ganapati; Somaskanda (group of Shiva, Parvati, and Skanda), a bronze processional image in a small shrine; also in a shrine, Vishnu in the form of Venugopala (Krishna); then Gajalakshmi (goddess of wealth); and last,



Arunachalesvara temple, tank in outermost enclosure.



Arunachalesvara temple, steps leading down to the tank.

Subrahmanya with his consorts in a shrine. The south side has in addition to the bronze processional images of the sixty-three Nayanmars, Bhairava (Shiva in his fierce form); the bedchamber of Shiva and his consort; and the shrine of a processional bronze Nataraja (dancing Shiva).

Most of these shrines and images are not original, for rich temples undergo frequent renovations. Thus the original tenth-century Seven Mothers have been replaced by more modern ones; and Jyeshtha, the goddess of misfortune, also an ancient statue, now stands near a shop in the town, ousted from the temple in favour of Gajalakshmi, as has happened in many other temples in Tamil Nadu.

From inscriptions, and from some of its structures—the linga shrines, the pillared hall, and the gateway known as the Kili Gopura—the third enclosure can be dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Together with the buildings and deities of the first and second enclosures, it contains all the fundamental elements for the life of a temple; this means that the structures in the fourth and fifth enclosures can be considered superfluous from the ritual point of view.

On the east-west axis stands the third Nandi, an altar for offerings, and the mast on which Shiva's flag is raised during the great festivals. The north side is occupied by the shrine of the goddess, on Shiva's left as usual. This shrine was thoroughly renovated in the nineteenth century by the wealthy merchant community of Nattukkottai Chettiars. At the south-eastern corner of the courtyard, the corner of Agni, stand the kitchens where food for the deities is prepared. As usual, in the north-eastern corner stands the sacrificial pavilion used during the four great annual festivals (*brahmotsavas*). This type of structure started to become a permanent building only from the thirteenth century onwards, with an opening on each of its four sides as in the Vedic sacrificial pavilions, which were light structures to be burnt after the sacrifice was completed.

The modern shrine of Pidari, housing the tenth-century Seven Mothers who originally stood in the second enclosure, is a perfect example of how temple life has changed over the centuries. In fact, when worship of the Seven Mothers declined after the end of the Chola period, their images were often removed from Shiva temples and installed in small village temples under the name of a single deity, Pidari, who functions as the guardian of the village, facing north. In this capacity Pidari presides over orthodox brahmin temple festivals, giving protection by touring the village before the first day of the festival. The unusual feature at Tiruvannamalai is that Pidari is found within the great temple itself, and that new images of the Seven Mothers have been provided for the second enclosure at a later date.

Although construction of the fourth and fifth enclosures and their buildings extended over two hundred years, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the asymmetrical placing of the gateways on all four sides of the fourth enclosure indicates that a fifth enclosure was planned from the outset. The Brahma Tirtha Tank, originally outside the temple precincts, as is often the case, was included in the fourth enclosure where two pillared halls were erected on the west side, as well as one on the east, the Puravi Mandapa. Here too are the fourth Nandi, and several shrines with lingas. The eastern gateway, the Vallala Gopura, contains within its passage a niche holding a statue of King Ballala which is worshipped

twice a year, in commemoration of his death and of Shiva's coronation as king.

The fifth enclosure is pierced with four gateways which are much higher than those of the inner enclosures; this composition, of a series of gateways which increases in height as one moves away from the central shrine, seen already in the eleventh century with two gateways at Thanjavur, became a rule for all temples with several enclosures. The two main elements in the fifth courtyard at Tiruvannamalai are the huge thousand-pillared hall and, opposite to it, a tank surrounded by a colonnade, the Shivaganga. Like the other courtyards, this one too has its Nandi facing the main shrine.

The other structures here are the results of spontaneous devotion on the part of worshippers, rather than the outcome of deliberate planning determined by ritual requirements. Thus, Gopurattu Ilaiyanar (Subrahmanya of the gateway) is housed in a shrine built around the statue of Subrahmanya in a niche in the eastern face of the gateway to the fourth enclosure. The same process has been at work for the Kambattu Ilaiyanar (Subrahmanya of the pillar): the image of Subrahmanya on one pillar of a small pillared hall became the object of such devotion that an imposing shrine was built to shelter the pillar-deity and the priests who officiate there. In another example, the Komutti merchant community has become devoted to an isolated statue of Ganapati in the temple gardens, and built a shrine for it in recent years.

RITES

The very first ceremony in the temple, which takes place before sunrise, is the return of Ganga to the shrine. Accompanied by a torch-bearer, a flute-player, and a drummer, a priest riding an elephant fetches water in a vessel from a tank to the south of the town that is considered extremely pure, passing through the southern gateway, the Tirumanjana Gopura (Sanskrit: *majjana*, ablution or immersion). After circling the third courtyard the priest sprinkles water on the door of the gateway to the second enclosure, and pours the contents of the vessel on the threshold. The gates then open for the second ceremony, the awakening of the gods. The priest proceeds to the bedchamber where Shiva, in the form of a bronze mount Meru about thirty centimetres high, and Parvati have passed the night on a small swing. When the curtains are drawn back, the first thing that the gods should see can only be themselves, so a mirror, formerly held by a barber, is fixed opposite the sleeping-chamber. When the priest has removed the previous day's garlands from the deities, he offers them some sweetmeats before they return to their places in the antechambers of their respective shrines. Shiva-Merū leaves on an embroidered silk cushion, while Parvati is carried in the palanquin which also brings her to the bedchamber in the evening.

In the central shrine the first of the six pujas which punctuate the day from six o'clock in the morning until nine at night then begins. Apart from the "puja of protection in the evening" which is more elaborate, with, in particular, chanting of the *Yajur Veda*, all these ceremonies are similar. The first, the "dawn puja", is preceded by a ceremony in the square hall in front of the main shrine. First,



Arunachalesvara temple, devotees resting on the steps of the thousand-pillared hall.



Arunachalesvara temple, two western *gopuras* above the innermost enclosures.

worship is offered to the statue of Surya and then to Nandi; then, in the south-west corner, the sacrificial fire ritual takes place, ending with the consecration of two vessels of water which will be used for the final ablutions of the Shiva linga and the goddess during the dawn puja which follows. For this the priest enters the cella of the linga, and after the previous day's garlands have been removed and thrown towards the north-east, in the direction of Chandikeshvara, the linga undergoes a succession of ablutions with water and anointings with milk, oil, honey or other substances, after which it is clothed and adorned with fresh garlands. A brahmin assistant then brings the god's meal from the kitchens in a covered plate, whose lid he lifts slightly towards the god, to avoid it being seen by adverse powers. After the meal the various attributes are presented: mirror, parasol, fan, flag, emblem, and fly-whisk; then incense, lamps, and camphor are offered to the sound of bells and temple music. The entire puja is accompanied by the chants of invocation, dedication, and praise. The priest ends the ceremony by distributing sacred ash to the devotees present, and then leaves to perform the worship of the goddess in her shrine in the third enclosure.

The deities in the various enclosures receive only two simpler pujas, performed by priests of lesser rank. The morning puja consists of an ablution with water, adornment with a garland, food-offering, and the presentation of a lamp; in the evening puja there is only the lamp-offering. While the first worship in the morning is offered first to Surya and then to Nandi, during the two pujas for the enclosure deities this order is, understandably, reversed.

The three innermost enclosures are strictly controlled by the priests, to the extent that the doors of the third enclosure are kept closed when no religious activity is being performed, and a guard discreetly controls access to the third courtyard to eliminate undesirables. The fourth and fifth courtyards are more flexibly controlled: pilgrims may eat and sleep there, and interest in a particular image, especially in the gateways, may arouse popular enthusiasm and give rise to a new place of worship.

In the nineteenth century about two hundred people were permanently attached to the temple; today, with the disappearance of the *dasis*, or dancing-girls, the figure stands at about a hundred and fifty. The priests, divided into four hierarchical groups, number about twenty, not counting their family members who help them during the crowded festivals. The non-brahmin staff, some of whose services are mainly required at the festival periods, consist of musicians, singers, masters of ceremony, carpenters, potters, washermen, garland-makers, palanquin bearers, administrators, guards, and cleaners.

FESTIVALS

In its rituals and festivals, Tiruvannamalai, like every other holy place, displays a cyclic concept of time that is typical of Hinduism. In addition to the daily worship offered to the gods in their shrines or sub-shrines, there are many festivals marked by processions of one or more deities. The basic cycle of the Hindu calendar, the solar year from solstice to solstice, also observes certain moments such as the lunar

fortnights and certain astral conjunctions.

One of these moments which is particularly important in any temple, is the *brahmotsava*, the only festival at which the flag is raised, conceived as the close of a cycle (the end of a period of dissolution), and at the same time a fresh beginning, a re-creation. Over the course of the centuries the great holy sites have been enlarged and renovated, and acquired more and more numerous festivals. Thus Tiruvannamalai, in addition to its other festivals, has four *brahmotsavas* in the course of the year, each of ten days duration; the most famous of these is Karttigai, a celebration which inscriptions show to have lasted only one day in the Chola period. This Karttigai *brahmotsava*, and another festival known as "the holy quarrel", are the only ones during which the god circumambulates the mountain.

The Tiruvudal, or holy love-quarrel, which is mimed in the temples, derives from a well-known theme of ancient Tamil literature, the *udal*, the pretended quarrel between lovers supposed to enliven married life. This is normally a festival of Nataraja, culminating with the appearance of the constellation Ardra in December; but at Tiruvannamalai it is unusually celebrated at the end of the January *brahmotsava*, over two days. On the first morning three deities, Shiva in the form of Somaskanda, the goddess Parvati, and Sundarar, one of the sixty-three Shaivite saints who is well known for quarrelling with his two wives, are taken three times around the car-streets in procession. At Shiva's feet sit two priests, one with a turban representing Brahma, the other with a cylindrical tiara representing Vishnu, an image of the Trimurti (Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) which refers to the myth of the locality, according to which Shiva demonstrates his supremacy over Brahma and Vishnu. In the course of the procession hundreds of saris and dhotis offered by devotees are put around the necks of the deities.

In the afternoon the quarrel takes place in the south car-street, called Tiruvudal Teru. The god and goddess face each other at opposite ends of the street, and one of the temple singers, representing Sundarar, passes back and forth between them, singing the reproaches of the goddess and the god's unvarying excuse: the salvation of his devotees. The complaints of the goddess reflect the tension between life in the world and life outside it. She accuses Shiva of unfaithfulness: he has taken Ganga as a second wife, he seduces the wives of the sages, he visits dancing-girls. She also complains of his ascetic excesses: he dances in cremation grounds at night, he neglects her for his devotee Bhringi. When, after an apparent reconciliation, Parvati sees that the god does not follow her back into the temple as he had promised, she returns alone and orders the doors to be closed. Then Shiva begins a nocturnal circumambulation of the mountain; this is a circumambulation of himself, and therefore there is no worship in the temple during his absence.

On the other side of the mountain, a wild, deserted place associated with the myth of the world of asceticism, he grants liberation to Bhringi, the three-legged devotee occasionally represented on Chola images of Nataraja. There too, are stolen the jewels which he will then recover in an eastern village after circling the mountain. When he returns to the temple at the end of the morning Shiva dances, and the goddess, won over, declares herself ready for reconciliation, but requests the boon of occupying the left side of Shiva — which is fulfilled at the *brahmotsava*



Arunachaleswara temple, principal shrine in innermost enclosure.



Arunachaleswara temple, Ganesha sub-shrine.



Arunachalesvara temple, devotee prostrating at the entrance of the main shrine.

of Karttigai.

For each *brahmotsava*, the essential moment, the sacred bath on the last day, coincides with a particular relation of some constellation with the full moon. The commemoration of Shiva's appearance as the column of fire, a one-day festival in all temples that has become a ten-day *brahmotsava* at Tiruvannamalai, falls at the time of the conjunction of the constellation Krittika and the full moon; the sacred bath, or *tirthavari*, therefore, as an exception to the rule, takes place the day after.

Several rites precede a *brahmotsava*. First, the *pandalkalmuburtam*, or "the erection of the first pole of the *pandal* (a light pavilion) at an auspicious moment", which takes place several weeks before the *brahmotsava* because of the important preparations this requires, which can begin only after the pole has been erected. The pole is set up outside the temple, on the auspicious north-eastern corner, and recalls the solemn erection of the first post in the construction of the Vedic sacrificial pavilion. Shortly afterwards the great chariots (*ratha* or *ter*) are worshipped, after they have been inspected and, if necessary, repaired by the temple carpenters. Then there are various ceremonies of propitiation to protect the area. Usually the goddess Kali, as protectress of the place, is taken around the village before every *brahmotsava*. At Tiruvannamalai this rite has been elaborated: Durga, another form of Shakti, from the bazaar street is brought out three days before the *brahmotsava*, then Pidari from the third courtyard of the temple two days before, and Ganapati on the day before.

The real beginning of the festival, marked by the flag being raised on the staff in front of the main shrine, is preceded by worship of the flag in the sacrificial hall; this ritual is in fact called "worship of the bull" (*rishabha yaga*), because a bull representing Shiva appears on the flag, drawn on the cloth by a craftsman. The entire flag-raising ceremony, in which the long white cloth (Shiva), is entwined with a red cloth (the goddess), is accompanied by chanting, inviting all the gods to the festival. When, at the end of the *brahmotsava* the flag is lowered as farewells are chanted to the gods, the sprouts from seeds which have been set to germinate in the sacrificial hall during the last ten days are planted all around the flagstaff, a rite which recalls the symbolic fertility of the Vedic sacrificial post, of which it is said that abundant fruits arise from it.

Between the raising and the lowering of the flag, the temple is the scene of two types of activity during the day: each morning and evening the five deities, Shiva, the goddess, Subrahmanya, Ganapati, and Chandikeshvara, go around the car-streets in procession; before leaving, they present themselves in front of the sacrificial hall where the fire-ritual is performed twice a day, and receive on their foreheads a protective black spot made of ash mixed with ghee. On the seventh day the same deities, each on a huge wooden car, are led in turn around the four temple streets in a procession which lasts the whole day.

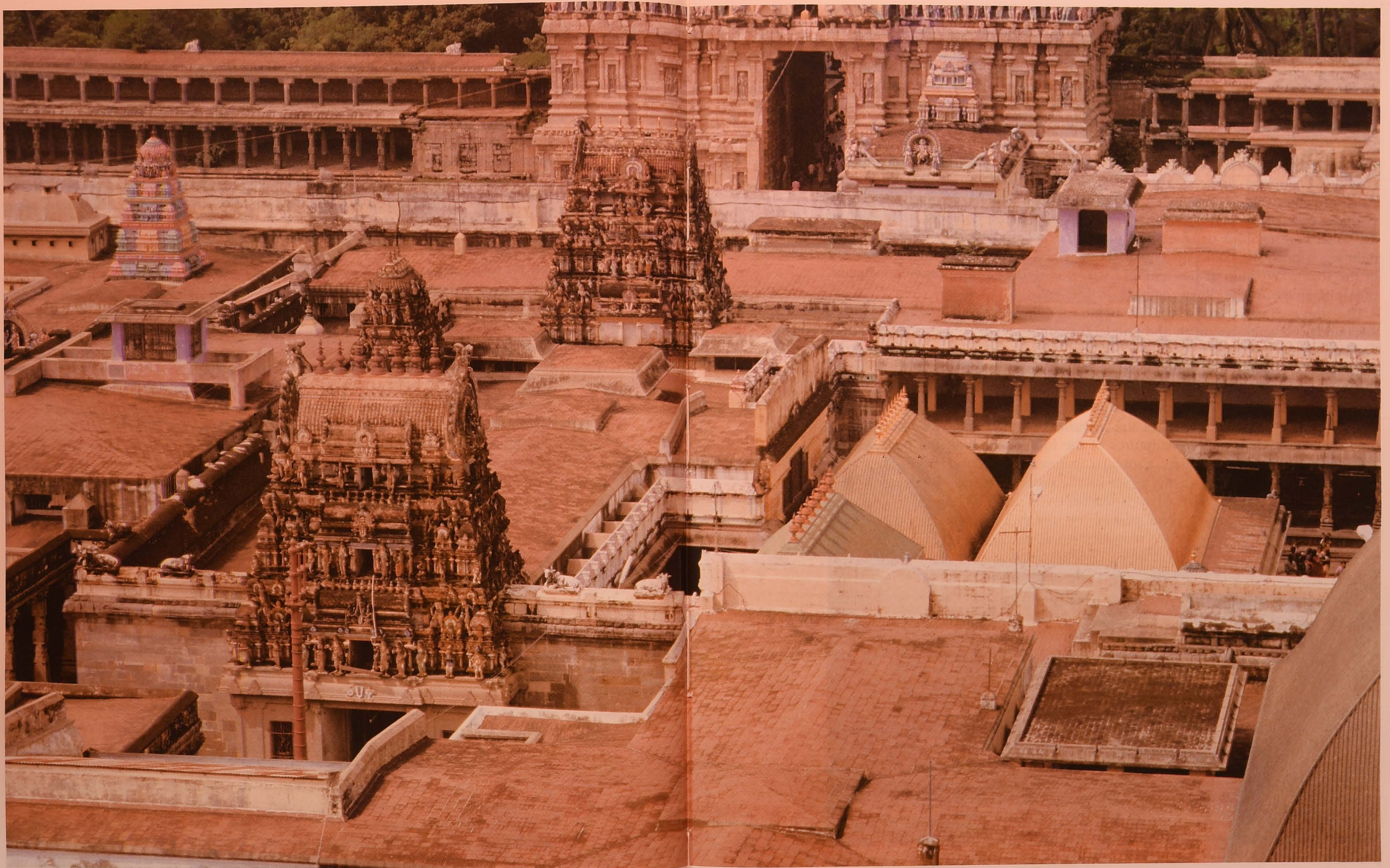
In the night of the ninth day the fire festival (Mahadipa) properly begins, as the moon passes from the constellation Bharani to that of Krittika. At the same time as a nocturnal puja to the linga, a fire sacrifice is performed before the statue of Surya in the hall in front of the main shrine; at dawn a small bowl of ghee lighted at this fire is used to light five other lamps representing the five aspects of Shiva. During the mid-morning, some fishermen solemnly carry a portion of this fire

inside a container of baked earth to the summit of the mountain, where a large copper brazier filled with ghee and pieces of cloth has been placed. As night falls, the five gods sit in their palanquins in the third courtyard amid a crowd of pilgrims who gradually fall silent in the intensity of their fervour; suddenly a light springs up on the mountain and Ardhanari appears dancing amidst the crowd. The fire burns all night, and even on subsequent nights if the ghee offerings of the pilgrims have been abundant.

After the crowd of pilgrims has paid homage to the five deities, the doors of the main shrine are closed and all worship ceases while Shiva, accompanied by his Shakti, the goddess, leaves to circumambulate the mountain—a journey which is both around himself, and around the manifested world, symbolized by the shrines to the cardinal points.

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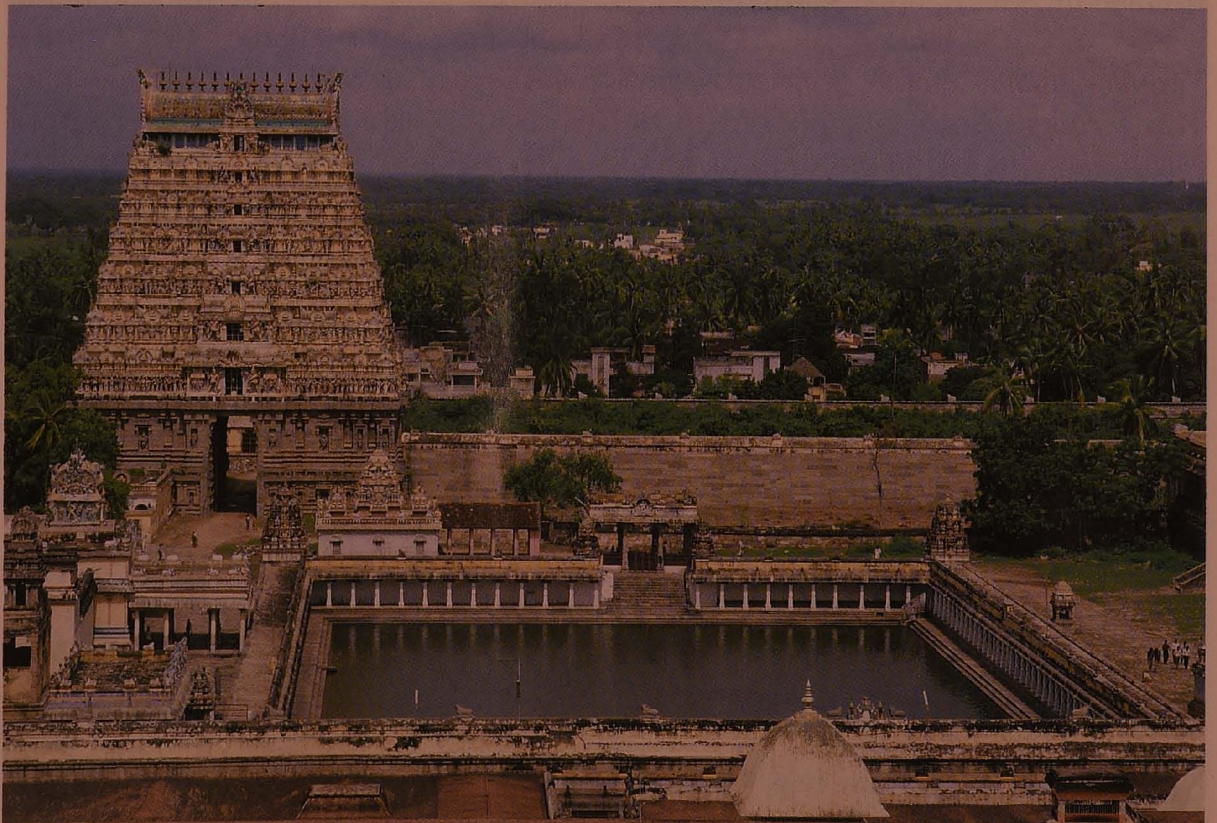
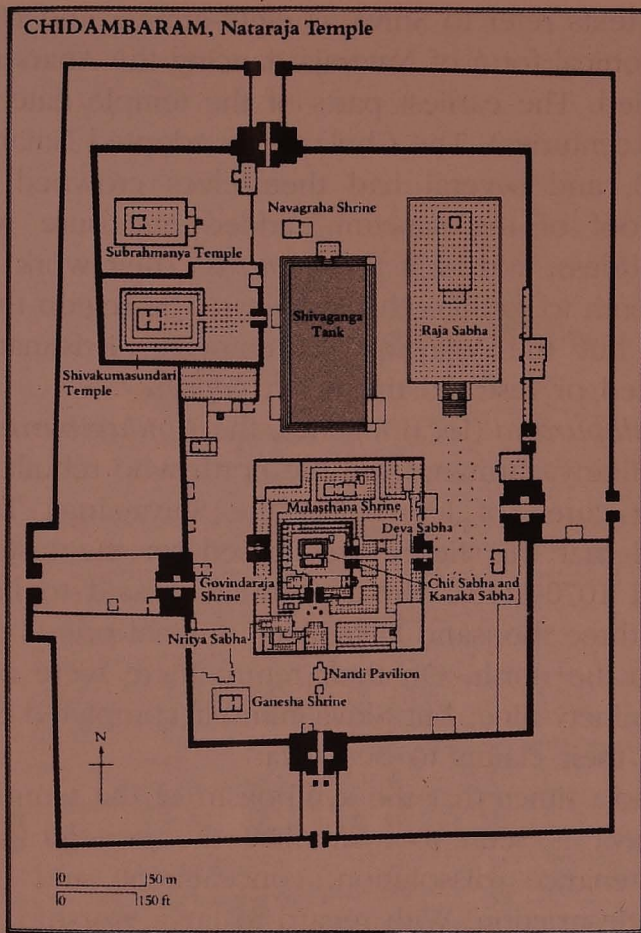
Nataraja temple, roof tops revealing hut-like forms of the central shrine.

IN South India the dance of Shiva has been of great importance since Pallava times, and Chidambaram has always been the centre for the worship of Nataraja (King of Dancers). Shiva's temple, the Nataraja or Sabhanayaka (Lord of the Sabha) temple, in Tamil Nadu is known to Shaivas simply as *koyil*, the temple. Its site has also other names: Tillai (since there was first a forest of *tillai*, *Excoecaria agallocha*, trees); Puliur (the place of the tiger-footed, Vyaghrapada), Chirrambalam (the little hall). According to myth, Shiva danced here to celebrate his victory over ritualist ascetics. Then in the present *kal* (world age) Vyaghrapada, and Patanjali, the incarnation of Vishnu's snake, worshipped lingas here, and Shiva favoured them by continuing to dance in the Chit Sabha (Chirrambalam, Chidambaram). A separate myth, perhaps originating in Tiruvalangadu, names Kali as the original inhabitant of the Tillai Forest; Shiva defeated her in a dance competition by kicking up his right leg, a pose she could not equal. He banished her to the northern boundary of the town. (Worship at her temple there is considered the proper conclusion of a pilgrimage to the Shiva temple.)

The three Tamil saints whose hymns comprise the *Tevaram*, Appar, Sambandar (seventh century), and Sundarar (eighth century), went into raptures on beholding the Dance of Shiva in this temple. Manikkavachakar (ninth century), the greatest of Tamil poets, devoted most of his poetry to Shiva in Chidambaram, where he attained salvation. There is a shrine to all four facing east to the south of the Vahana Mandapa where their respective days of *mukti* (salvation) are celebrated. Each of the *gopuras* (towered gateways) contains in the doorway modern plaster sculptures of the four poets, with the poet who is said to have entered by that particular gateway separated from the other three—Sambandar by the south, Appar by the west, Sundarar by the north, and Manikkavachakar by the east. Hymns from the *Tevaram* are sung by a layman during the *sayan kalam*, second prayers of the evening, and at other times. Following the practice in other temples, stone plaques of hymns from the *Tevaram* have been set up in various places during the last twenty years, notably around the north facing walls of the inner *prakara* (corridor); and the complete text of Manikkavachakar's *Tiruvachakam* is set out on the walls of the portico surrounding the temple tank.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was in Chidambaram, in a sealed room on the western side of the inner *prakara* that the Chola king Rajaraja I is said to have recovered the hymns of the *Tevaram*, and the singing of them thereafter became an established feature of Shaiva worship. In the reign of Kulottunga II, in the thousand-pillared hall, Sekkhilar composed and expounded his *Periya Puranam*, the final work of the Shaiva Tamil canon. As in all major Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu, the sixty-three Nayanmars (Shaiva saints) commemorated in the *Periya Puranam* have their images set out in one long row, against the north wall of the second *prakara*.



Nataraja temple, Shivaganga Tank and north *gopura* beyond.

In Pallava times, texts refer to Shiva as eight-armed; and it is only under the Cholas that the canonical form of Nataraja dancing the Ananda Tandava (Dance of Bliss) was codified. The earliest parts of the temple date from Chola times (ninth to thirteenth centuries). The Chola kings adopted Nataraja as their family deity (*kulanayaka*), and several had themselves crowned in Chidambaram. They gilded the roof of the sanctum, added enclosure walls, pavilions, a sanctum for the goddess, and built the *gopuras*. Their work was continued by the Pandyas (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries). The region then suffered under the Delhi armies, but the Vijayanagara emperor, Krishnadeva Raya (ruled 1509-1529) completed or restored the north *gopura*.

The temple's *sthalapurana* (local legend), the *Chidambaramahatmya*, tells of a legendary king, Hiranyavarman, from the north who rebuilt the temple out of gratitude for being cured of leprosy in the Shivaganga Tank. It has been plausibly suggested that this figure was based on the historical Chola king, Kulottunga I (ruled 1070-1118). Hiranyavarman is said to have brought back from the north the three thousand Dikshitaras, original priests of the temple who had earlier gone to the north. On their return there were only two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, but Shiva himself completed their number, thus supporting each of their claims to be Shiva.

It was also in Chola times that the symbolism of the temple was elaborated. The Ananda Tandava is seen to symbolize the *pancha krityas*, five divine acts—creation, sustenance, dissolution, concealment, and bestowal of grace rather than merely destruction. With regard to linga worship, the standard form of Shiva worship, it came to be held that each of the five elements constitutes a linga in South India: earth in the Ekambareshvara temple in Kanchipuram, water in the Jambukeshvara temple outside Tiruchirapalli, fire at the Tiruvannamalai temple, wind at Kalahasti, and space (*akasha*) at Chidambaram. This formless linga is supposed to be in the Chit Sabha beside the image of Nataraja; and this infinite form is clearly the most significant of the five, considered the heart of the world. This formlessness in a small space is held to be the Daharavidya of the great Upanishads.

It was entirely appropriate that in the supreme monument of Chola art, Rajaraja I's great temple at Thanjavur, a Chola painting in the circumambulatory path of the *garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum) shows the king worshipping Nataraja in the Chit Sabha at Chidambaram.

URBAN LAYOUT

Chidambaram is two hundred and thirty-five kilometres south of Madras, on the Madras-Thanjavur National Highway; Thanjavur, formerly the centre of Chola power, lies one hundred and seven kilometres away. In 1971 Chidambaram extended over an area of nearly five square kilometres, with a population of less than fifty thousand. In Chola times Chidambaram was a municipal district (*taniyur*) and its boundaries were extensive. They are defined, for instance, in Umapati Shivacharya's poem in praise of Dancing Shiva's lifted foot, the



Nataraja temple, north *gopura* completed by Krishnadeva Raya.

Kunchitanghristava (circa 1300) and in a deed of sale of a house in 1804, as the Vellar River to the north, the Kollidam River to the south, the Viranam Tank to the west, and the sea to the east.

The region was originally a forest of Tillai trees, hence the name Tillai, and the town clearly developed around the temple, beginning with the four car streets eighteen metres in width abutting the temple. The Dikshitaras continue to live just outside the temple in these streets. Further to the east and also in the rich new suburb of Kanakaisabhar Nagar to the south live mainly Vellalars. To the immediate west of West Car Street live the Chettiars (merchants) and this is the main area of business activity. The earliest development of the town seems to have been on the western side, for in addition to the early Anantishvara temple there are the principal minor temples: the Ilamayakkinar temple, where Vyaghrapada worshipped the linga, the Gayatri Amman temple, and the Kodandarama temple. The *matha* (monastery) of Aghorashivacharya (whose ritual manual, written in 1157, has been followed by most Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu other than the Sabhanayaka) was beside the Anantishvara temple. Again, the western *gopura* has a late Chola Ganesha (first son of Shiva and Parvati) shrine attached on its outer south side (where Umapati Shivacharya worshipped around 1300), and a late Chola Subrahmanya (second son of Shiva and Parvati) shrine on its inner north side, these accretions demonstrate the early popularity of entrance from the west.

The town continues to be a pilgrim centre, though attendance at festivals is said to have declined in recent decades. It once boasted no less than fifty-five *mathas*, or monastic establishments, but few of them are now active. New life has been infused by the Annamalai University, founded in 1929, situated to the east of the town.

Chidambaram is said to have ten *tirthas*, holy bathing places. One of these is the sea, and two (the Shivaganga Tank and the Paramananda Kupa, Well of Supreme Bliss), are within the temple. Of the others, the most famous is the Tirupparkkadal Tank, the Tank of Divine Milk, to the north, west of the Tillai Kali temple; this was filled with milk by Shiva to feed Vyaghrapada's son Upamanyu. Adjoining is a *matha* on the site where Manikkavachakar is said to have written his poems. Also noteworthy is the tank of the Ilamaiyakkinar temple, where the potter Nilakantha and his estranged wife, both Shiva *bbaktas* (devotees), bathed in their old age, each holding the end of a stick to avoid touching; blessed by Shiva, both regained their youth. Another *tirtha* is the Chamundi Tank of the Tillai Kali temple, which is said to have been excavated by the goddess herself in expiation of engaging Shiva in the dance competition.

ARCHITECTURE AND ART

The Sabhanayaka temple has as its sanctum the Chit Sabha principally containing a bronze image of Nataraja. This shrine faces south. Immediately in front of it and serving as a *mandapa* (hall) is the Kanaka Sabha. Facing east and at right angles to the Chit Sabha is the Vishnu shrine. These are the

principal structures of the innermost enclosure, or *prakara*. In the second *prakara* on the axis of the Chit Sabha is the Nritta Sabha (dance hall). North of the Chit Sabha in the second *prakara* is the Mulasthana (where the deity is consecrated). The original linga shrine faces east as normal; this linga is said to have been worshipped by Vyaghrapada and Patanjali prior to Shiva dancing in the Chit Sabha. To the east is the Deva Sabha (hall of the gods). In the third enclosure are found the Shivaganga Tank, the Shivakamasundari (Parvati) shrine, the hundred-pillared hall, the thousand-pillared hall, the Pandya Nayaka Subrahmanya shrine, and a Vinayaka (Ganesha) temple. These are the principal structures of the temple, other than the *gopuras*. In the fourth enclosure, beyond the *gopuras*, are coconut groves and flower gardens.

The four *gopuras* are each forty-two metres high, with bases of granite, and the superstructures of brick and mortar. Of the four, only the southern *gopura* has an exact and obvious alignment, being directly in line with Nataraja in the Chit Sabha—not with the centre of the Chit Sabha, but with Nataraja, who is about one metre to the east of the centre. The priority of the southern *gopura* is signalled by the two saffron flags flying from it; these are changed twice a year at the two main festivals. This southern alignment is a feature also of the hundred-pillared hall, the thousand-pillared hall, and the Deva Sabha; and yet the southern *gopura*, and the large Nandi (Shiva's bull) and two *bali pithas* (sacrificial pits) onto which it opens are confronted with the closed wall of the second enclosure! Such puzzling anomalies are a result of the great age of the site and its varied development.

The west and east *gopuras* were completed around 1250. The south *gopura* was entirely built at some time between 1248 and 1272, though some decorative detail and bas-relief figures have been left unfinished. The north *gopura* was probably begun around the same time as the south—Umapati Shivacharya around 1300 mentions the temple's four *gopuras*—but was completed (or repaired) in the first half of the sixteenth century by Krishnadeva Raya, whose effigy it contains.

The first tier of all the *gopuras* is crowded with divinities other than Shiva, the second tier rises up grandly and spaciously, and is devoted to forms of Shiva. It is noteworthy that the dominant niche on each side of the long façades contains one of four images, Somaskanda, Kalyanasundara, Bhikshatana, or Kankala. The four images form two pairs. Bhikshatana, the mendicant, differs very little from Kankala; the former is naked, the latter is clothed. Kalyanasundara represents the marriage of Shiva and Parvati; Somaskanda shows the married couple seated side by side, with their son Skanda at their feet. The contrast between the pairs is stark: the lonely wandering ascetic as opposed to the married man and his family. In the case of the east and west *gopuras*, both inner and outer tiers have one married and one ascetic image. In the south and north, both tiers do not have the opposition: two ascetics, or two married forms. In both south and north the ascetic forms face south, and the married forms face north. The immediate origin of the Dance of Bliss, the Ananda Tandava, is Shiva's victory as Bhikshatana over the married ascetics in the Daruka Forest; within the temple he enjoys domestic bliss with Parvati. The

Ananda Tandava pose is not found on the *gopuras* since it is reserved for the Chit Sabha alone.

Dance poses from the *Natya Shastra* are illustrated in the doorways of each of the *gopuras*, with labels in Grantha script in the east and west *gopuras*. Dancing girls and musicians form friezes on the bottom of the plinth of the thousand-pillared hall, and on the *prakara* of the Shivakamasundari shrine; also around the base of the Nritta Sabha. Live dance performances have recently returned to the temple in the form of a festival held every January.

Much of the temple is difficult to date, but the oldest surviving structure in the inner two *prakaras* seems to be the Nritta Sabha, which faces north, in axial line with the Chit Sabha. On the eastern and western sides were two stone wheels fronted by galloping horses; in the 1955 Kumbhabhisheka (consecration ceremony), they were concreted over except for the top of the head of the eastern horse and the top of the western wheel.

The Sabha contains a shrine to Urdhvatandava Shiva, and it has been suggested that this is the Edirambalam, or shrine opposite the Chit Sabha, which in an inscription is ascribed to the time of Kulottunga I; but it is more likely that the present structure was built in the reign of Kulottunga III (ruled 1178-1216). Here Shiva defeated Kali in the dance competition by raising his leg. A small image of dancing Kali is on the floor beside the Urdhvatandava *murti* (image). However, the walls of this shrine are clearly an addition to the original structure, the fine pillars being partly concealed within plain stonework. The shrine has its own wood-framed copper-plated roof, as does an open area before it of some forty-nine square metres, the rest of the structure having a flat roof. It should also be noted that the south-west corner of the shrine has a north facing Sharadheshvara shrine, seemingly an addition to the original structure.

Descriptions of the Nritta Sabha state that there are fifty-six pillars; however, only some forty-six are visible. The eastern side of the base of the Sabha is cut sheer away, and the only steps are cut into the side. On the north-west corner are two *mandapikas*, one facing north with a Bhikshatana image, the other, smaller, facing west housing a Vrishabhantika image, standing Shiva and Parvati with Shiva leaning on his bull. The rest of the western side is abutted by the *yagashala* (place where Vedic sacrifices are held) of the Vishnu temple. The Nritta Sabha has clearly suffered a diminution of its original beauty; above all, perhaps there is a lack of an original stairway.

The Nritta Sabha is similar to the *ratha mandapas*, or stone chariot pavilions, of Tribhuvanam, Palaiyarai, and elsewhere. The most notable example is in the Surya temple at Konarak, which would seem chronologically to be due to southern influence, but a chariot is entirely appropriate to the logic of the iconography of Surya, whilst there is no connection in the southern shrines with the Tripurari form of Shiva which is the only form of whose iconography may include a chariot. The generally held view is that in Tamil Nadu such stone chariots represent wooden temple carts; a stone version of *ratha* (chariot) is particularly appropriate in Chidambaram where a mobile image is the chief *murti*. Another parallel with Orissa is that it is common there to have a dance



Nataraja temple, passageway of the east *gopura* depicting dance poses according to the *Natya Shastra*.

pavilion on the same axis as the sanctum. A parallel has also been drawn with the painting at Tiuppudaimarudar (near Tirunelveli) of a dancing girl in a similarly situated dance pavilion. The open area in the Nritta Sabha mentioned above, of seven by seven metres, is in accordance with the normal space now considered necessary for Bharatanatyam.

At the centre of the temple are the twin Chit and Kanaka Sabhas. These adjoining edifices, of almost identical rectangular plan, share a plinth with the usual Chola-style mouldings; the Chit Sabha is raised a further one metre. A hall one and a half metres wide links the Sabhas, flanked by steps set against the plinth to the east and west. Within the hall five silver-plated steps lead from the Kanaka Sabha to the higher level of the Chit Sabha, though the first silver step is on the same level as the Kanaka Sabha. The decoration of the vertical panels of these steps include forward-facing squatting lions of the Vijayanagara period, which are also found on the doors of the Kanaka Sabha. The five steps are held to represent the five syllables of the Shiva mantra, *namah shivaya*. The steps were plated in silver in the eighteenth century by Manali Mudaliar.

Within the Chit Sabha is a further stone plinth set about one metre; beneath Nataraja and Shivakamasundari, to his left, this plinth is fronted with gilt panelling, the two *murtis* rising above. On the floor before Nataraja holding votive lamps stand silver images of Muthiah Chettiar and Meenatchee Achee, benefactors of the temple and parents of the founder of the Annamalai University. To Nataraja's right is the Chidambaram Rahasya (secret), where several strings of golden *bilva* leaves hang in front of a curtain. Behind the curtain is now said to be empty space, the *akasha* linga, the linga of space. The curtain is one and a half metres high and three and a half metres long, extending behind Nataraja as well as covering the Chidambaram Rahasya. It is made of two layers, the inner one red, the outer one black: enlightenment inside, illusion outside. It is renewed twice a year, on the tenth day of the main festivals, the discarded curtains being preserved in the Deva Sabha.

In addition to Nataraja, Shivakamasundari, and the curtain of the Chidambaram Rahasya, the Chit Sabha contains a *mukhalinga*, representing the head of Brahma that Shiva cut off; Shiva's *padukas*, golden sandals set in a plinth and mounted on a *pitha* (seat); Balinayaka, a form of Chandrashekhara, taken round the second *prakara* during food offerings to the various deities; Svarnakarshana Bhairava, occasionally worshipped in the Kanaka Sabha, and said formerly to have turned copper into gold for the Dikshitaras; and, worshipped daily in the Kanaka Sabha, the ruby Nataraja and the crystal linga known as Chandramaulishvara said to be formed by Shiva for the Dikshitaras from the light of the crescent moon on his head.

The Chit Sabha has wooden walls, made up of sections of four planks, each thirty-five centimetres wide, set between wooden pillars of the same width; the southern wall has window grills and wooden doors, and is covered in silver plates. The roof is said to be supported by twenty-eight free-standing wooden pillars; and the roof of the Kanaka Sabha by eighteen wooden pillars. Copper-plated wooden doors are fixed between the pillars. The two roofs of wood are both rectangular with curvilinear roofs resembling the roof of the



Nataraja temple, distant view of the west *gopura*.



Nataraja temple, pillared entrance to the Shivakamasundari shrine.



Nataraja temple, Shivakamasundari shrine, painted ceiling panel, depicting the story of Bhikshatana.

Draupadi Ratha at Mamallapuram. (The same shaped roof is found on all the Sabhas, and also over the sanctums of the other shrines.) The Chit Sabha has copper tiles plated in gold, the Kanaka Sabha, despite its name, has copper tiles. The exterior of the Chit Sabha has a double colonnade of round columns of highly polished black stone; this colonnade is narrower on the eastern side, to allow passage round the Chandikeshvara (one who keeps accounts) shrine, though this too is not old. The ceiling of this colonnade has paintings retelling the *sthalapurana* dating back perhaps to the beginning of the century. The plinths of both Sabhas have been recently faced with white tiles interspersed with narrower columns of green tiles.

Adjoining the eastern side of the Kanaka Sabha is a recent *mandapa* which consists of a copper roof of a similar design supported by round wooden pillars similar to those around the outside of the Chit Sabha. Under this roof worshippers gather to watch the lamp worship of the Ratnasabhapati, the ruby Nataraja. In the north-west corner of the inner *prakara* is Shiva's bedroom (*palliarai*), which was recently faced with black marble. Here the god, represented by his sandals (*padukas*), spends the night with the goddess.

The present Vishnu shrine, known as Govindaraja, is not old. The rectangular *garbhagriha* has a barrel-vaulted roof, and has an *ardhamandapa* (outer hall) and a *pradakshina patha* (circumambulatory path). A few Vaikhanasa priests are in charge of this shrine. In the past there have been disputes with the Dikshitaras, and the ownership of the hundred-pillared hall in the third *prakara* remains in dispute. The Mulasthanam, site of the original linga of the temple worshipped by Vyaghrapada prior to Shiva's performance of the Ananda Tandava, is perhaps Chola; the *pranala* (spout) of the *garbhagriha* is on a lower level, suggesting the existence of the shrine earlier than the construction of the plinth. The Deva Sabha lies between the eastern gateways of the second and first *prakaras*. It is a spacious rectangular hall nineteen and a half metres high, walled on all sides; its base is now buried among the surrounding platforms. Here more than one hundred bronzes are housed, and pujas to the festival images performed before they are taken out. Kulottunga II is said to have gilded the Deva Sabha. Placed against the north-west exterior is Alagar, the custodian of the keys of the temple. The Dikshitaras congregate in front of this hall, and hold their meetings within.

The largest building of the temple is the Raja Sabha, the thousand-pillared hall, fifty-nine metres wide, hundred and one metres long. Huge pillars nearly five metres high stand on a massive plinth four and a half metres high. The rear half has a further plinth approximately one metre high. In each half the central space has two rows of pillars omitted, and is roofed with a brick vault formed of radiating arches, in imitation of the wooden roofs of the other Sabhas. Between the two halves and at the far rear, are further open spaces with similar vaults, oriented at right angles to the main areas. Openings at the base of the vaults allow light to enter. The effect is quite different from any other structure of the temple, and the sense of space is reminiscent of a mosque or church. The principal use of this Sabha is for the *abhisheka* (anointing ceremony) of Nataraja and Shivakamasundari as the culminating session of the two great

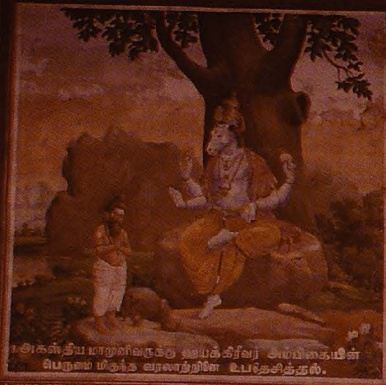
festivals, the *mahotsavas*.

RITUAL PRACTICES AND FESTIVALS

The main ritual begins in the morning with a palanquin collecting Shiva in the form of his *padukas* from the bedroom to the accompaniment of reed horns and drums. The *padukas* are taken to the Chit Sabha. After they are removed from the palanquin several worshippers eagerly touch and revere the cushion on which the *padukas* had been placed. The doors of the Kanaka Sabha are closed while the deity is offered a breakfast of milk. An hour-and-a-half later the Homa or Fire Sacrifice begins. Twelve silver pots filled with water, *kusha* grass, and *bilva* leaves are placed on top and Vedic mantras are chanted into the water so that the pots are believed to hold the power of the mantras. The mantra is recited by an Aiyar brahman, a member of one of the three families currently authorized by the Dikshitaras to act for them. The Dikshitar in charge for the day puts *kusha* grass, wood, and ghee onto the fire. When this is completed he bathes the Chandramaulishvara, the crystal linga. The *abbisheka* over, it is returned to the Chit Sabha, and the doors are closed while the deity is fed. Food is offered on the large *bali pitha* behind the *dvajastambha* (flag-pole), and then the Balinayaka image of Shiva, which stands at the eastern side of the Nataraja, is carried on the palanquin round the second *prakara* and food offered at the shrines there. The morning worship concludes about half-past nine with the waving of lamps. The priest stands in the Kanaka Sabha with a multiple lamp, and then in the Chit Sabha with various smaller lamps in turn. This first session of worship finally closes with the priest going to the Rahasya, the wall to the west of Nataraja screened by a curtain, and opening the curtain three times while chanting the *Panchakshara*.

About a quarter to eleven in the morning the second session takes place, with the second *abbisheka* of the crystal linga; this is followed by the bathing of Ratnasabhapati, the ruby Nataraja about fifteen centimetres high. The camphor lamp is moved five times behind the ruby, to shine through it. The third session, at half-past twelve in the afternoon, comprises the *abbisheka* of the crystal linga and the waving of lamps. Thereafter the temple doors are locked, to be reopened for the fourth session at five o'clock in the evening, which attracts the largest number of worshippers. Large bells are rung during the waving of the lamps, after the bathing of the crystal linga. The fifth session, around seven o'clock in the evening, after the crystal linga *abbisheka*, interrupts the waving of lamps for ten minutes with one or two laymen singing hymns from the *Tevaram*. No men of the Otuvar or singing caste are currently available for this. In the final session, around half-past nine at night, supper is served to the deity and after the waving of lamps the *padukas* are removed to the bedroom.

Only portions of Shiva are said to be present at other shrines in India; at Chidambaram he is fully present; and it is widely held among worshippers that with other temples closing earlier than Chidambaram, all the gods then come here to worship.



1. HAYAGREEVAR TELLS THE GREAT GLORIES OF AMBIKA TO AGASTHYA MUNIVAR.



2. BENU MALLIKAPATI TO NIVAHA BHARATA, RECITATES UPON PRASADAVIVARA, THEY CAN WITNESS WITH THEIR OWN EYES.



3. NIVAHA BHARATA THINKS WITH ANANDAVILASA TO HAVE GOT THE SUBSTANCE OF NIVAHA BHARATA'S LALITHA.



4. NIVAHA BHARATA, RECITATES UPON PRASADAVIVARA, THEY CAN WITNESS WITH THEIR OWN EYES.

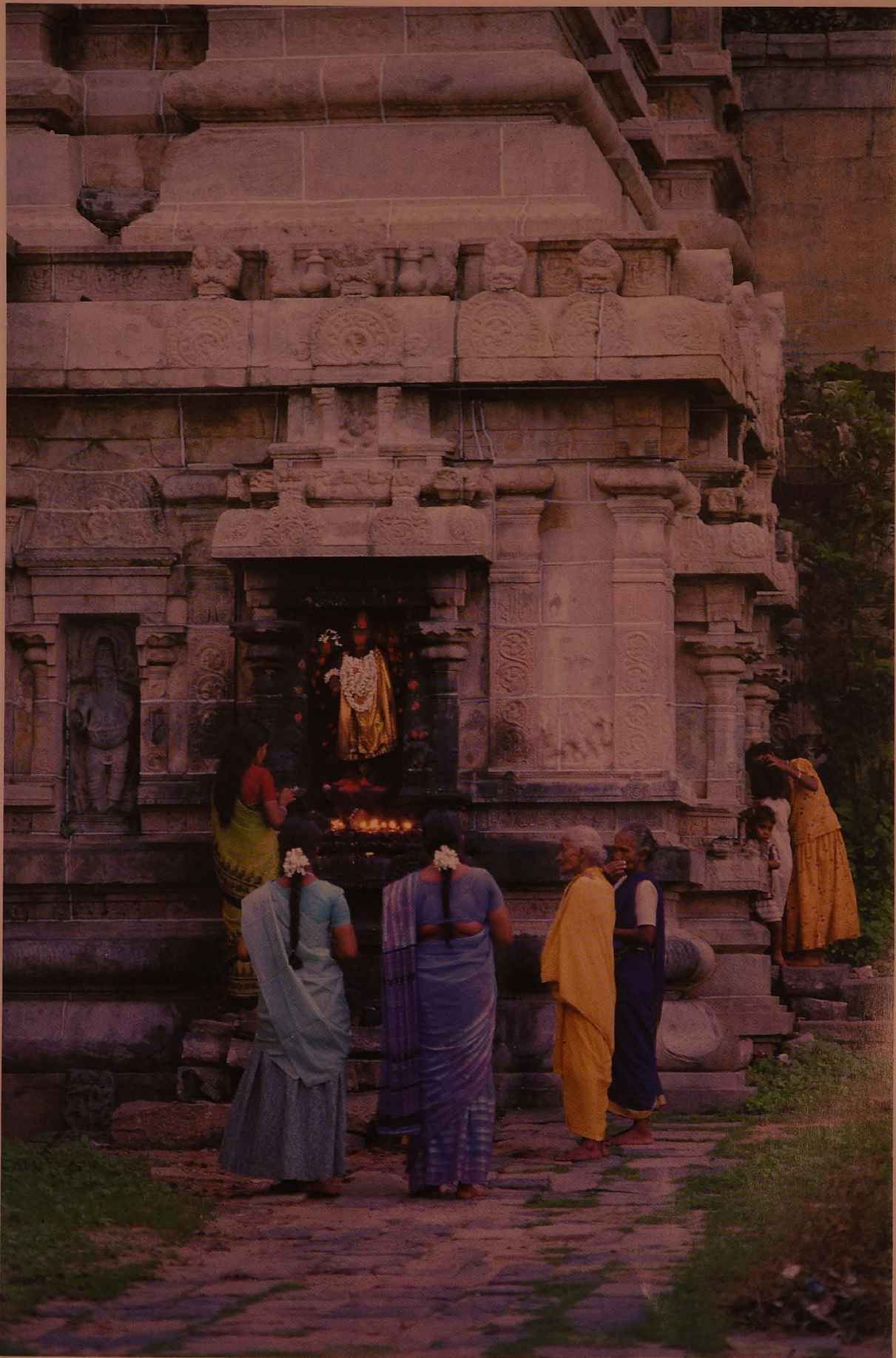


5. NIVAHA BHARATA, RECITATES UPON PRASADAVIVARA, THEY CAN WITNESS WITH THEIR OWN EYES.



6. BRAHMA-VISHNU AND RUDRA COME TO HAVE DARSHAN OF DEVI.

Nataraja temple, Shivakamasundari shrine, recent paintings illustrating Kamasundari's story.



Nataraja temple, worshippers revering image on the *gopura*.

It must be remembered that the Dikshitaras are supposed to have come from the north. The rituals follow not the Shaiva *Agamas* of the southern temples but the unique ritual manual credited to the sage Patanjali, with mantras from the correct *Vedas*. An important feature of the worship is the respect paid to the Shri Chakra (the *yantra* or diagram of nine interlaced triangles), and the Chidambaram version of it which has Nataraja and Shivakamasundari visualized within it. The fourteenth-century poem, *Kunchitanghristava*, as well as the perhaps earlier ritual texts make it plain that the Shri Chakra was in the Chit Sabha on the right side of Nataraja, where the Chidambaram Rahasya curtain now hangs. Its connection with Nataraja is clearly shown in the modern painting on the ceiling before the Kanaka Sabha, where the Shri Chakra is shown above Nataraja. The Shri Chakra is also associated with the Shivakamasundari shrine, where a modern painting shows Shuka revealing it to Adishankara, and where a south facing Shri Chakra was recently installed in the north *prakara* wall.

Many festivals are celebrated in the temple. The two grand festivals for Nataraja take place in Margali (December-January) and Ani (June-July). Up to the eighth day of these festivals, the festival *murtis* of Somaskanda, Shivananda Nayaki, Vinayaka, Subrahmanya, and Chandeshvara are taken round the four car streets, then the Nataraja, and Shivakamasundari from the Chit Sabha are taken round before receiving *abbisheka* in the thousand-pillared hall. Carried there by temple servants, devotees carry them back to the Chit Sabha, and a feature of this return is that first Shiva then Parvati leads the way, the alternation being repeated twice more; this sequence is called *darshana* of the Ananda Tandava.

The portrayal of the *sthalapurana* on the north side of the *mandapa* of the Shivakamasundari shrine (Nayaka period) concludes with paintings of the temple festival as performed in the seventeenth century. The temple cars then were lower and the wheels smaller than are found in extant *rathas*, but the superstructures were very similar. One of the paintings shows Somaskanda mounted on the elephant as on the sixth evening of the festival today, preceded by a fantastic fireworks display; another probably shows the fifth evening, when Somaskanda, Parvati, and Subrahmanya are mounted within a huge car representing Mount Kailasa.

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LINE DRAWING

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NOTE

Conservation of Angkor Vat: An In Depth Study

B. N. Tandon

The great temple complex known as Angkor Vat in Cambodia, which was originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, was raised in the twelfth century by King Suryavarman II. It marks the culmination of the structural art of the Khmers.

The temple is also famous for its sculptural treasures depicting episodes from Indian epics and mythology besides Khmer expeditions. A quadrangle on plan, the temple rises in three terraced stages with a cluster of five towered sanctuaries in the centre. In addition to the main shrine, central gates, and galleries, there are six grand structures known as the libraries. The whole complex is surrounded with a moat, and a causeway on the west provides access to the complex. Angkor Vat is built of fine and coarse-grained sandstone with laterite at the core used up to the plinth level.

The design of Angkor Vat, although largely Khmer in artistic manipulation, seems to be a highly developed form of terraced temples, the prototypes of which would be located in simpler terraced shrines such as those at Ahicchatra, and Sarnath in India, as well as Paharpur in Bangladesh, which are dated to the fifth-sixth centuries.

Angkor Vat was unknown to the outside world till it was visited by a French missionary in 1850, and thereafter studied and the findings published by a number of scholars. The French experts contributed much to the conservation and preservation of this monument from time to time till about 1970.

INDIA'S EFFORTS

In 1980, a team of Indian archaeological experts was sent to assess the status of the temple in respect of its structural and chemical needs for conservation.

Then, in 1982 a team of Indian archaeological experts was deputed to prepare a project feasibility report as well as carry out some experimental work in the temple complex.

In 1986 yet another team, of the Archaeological Survey of India, visited Angkor Vat to furnish a reappraisal of the project report and revise the previous estimate in the light of cost escalations. This report envisaged the work

to be completed in six phases.

As a result of a bilateral cultural agreement between India and Cambodia signed in 1986, the preservation and conservation of the Angkor Vat temple was entrusted to the Archaeological Survey of India which had deputed seven teams so far (the seventh is still working).

PROBLEMS AND CONDITION OF THE MONUMENT

The temple complex sprawls on a rectangular piece of land with an area of 1.6 square kilometres enclosed with a moat. In accordance with the prevalent international practice and norms, a systematic study to identify the causes of deterioration of materials as well as to know the micro and macro climatic conditions of the structure is necessary before any conservation is initiated. A systematic analysis of weathered, semi-weathered, and non-weathered samples of sandstone was accordingly undertaken, identifying the chemical composition of rock ingredients, while simultaneously determining the physical characteristics such as porosity, permeability, and density. The colour texture varied from light ash to buff to pink. Laterites have also been used up to plinth levels and the outer veneers of sandstone of the fine-grained variety.

The factors responsible for deterioration were thus isolated:

- 1) The loss of the soluble part by leaching of alkalis and soluble silica of the feldspar which is the main component of these sandstones.
- 2) The growth over these areas of the microbiological types which secrete organic acids resulting in further damage.
- 3) The leakage present at many places resulting in dissolution of soluble ingredients in the stones.
- 4) Subsidence of the foundation.
- 5) The growth of vegetation, leading to mechanical-chemical action.
- 6) The damage caused as a result of the excreta of bats and birds.

All these factors act alone or in a cumulative fashion to bring about the phenomenon of hydrolysis, leaching out of the ingredients, kaolinization, carbonation, and oxidation, resulting in the dissolution of the silica, thus producing more voids and pores. This ultimately leads to the weakening of the stone matrix. Thus, both physical and chemical deterioration occur.



1. General view of Angkor Vat.

APPROACH IN PRESENT CONSERVATION

The main idea behind conservation plans is to prolong the life of this monument with the least intervention. This includes prevention of deterioration, preservation of the existing state, consolidation of the fabric and restoration according to the original.

The conservation undertaken till now includes the following:

STRUCTURAL REPAIRS

Phases I and II (1986-1987 and 1987-1988)

These include work such as dismantling and resetting of the vaulted roof, brackets, and pillars, grouting of cracks, resetting of the dislodged plinth and walls, providing necessary drainage, and so forth. Stone masonry steps leading to the moat on the left of the main causeway of the temple (northern embankment) have been removed and reset. Further repairs to the western gateway of the temple have also been attended to by way of grouting, pointing and water-tightening of roots and towers.

The libraries on the north and south situated between the third and fourth enclosures were also taken up for conservation work. With a view to conserving the libraries, the plinth of the porches was dismantled and reset.

New stones were provided at missing places. The stones of the sunken floors of the porches were reset and the top dressed up. The roofs and walls were restored by putting the stones in their original positions including pointing and so forth. In the northern library, pillars in the porches which had gone out of plumb were removed and reset in their correct positions.

The impressive esplanade which is a broad platform and cruciform in plan is guarded by

lions, lined with a Naga balustrade and supported by round fluted pillars from the ground level. This esplanade was perhaps used for music and dance performances in the past. Due to the widening of joints, stones were dislodged, floors had sunk, and pillars gone out of plumb. This caused the seepage of rain water into the body of the entire structure. Thus, the dismantling and resetting of the affected portions was attempted. New stones were provided at missing places after filling the gaps by grouting with suitable mortar. One corner pillar which was missing was re-erected, other broken ones mended and new stone beams provided. Dislodged portions of walls were dismantled and reset. The two-tier plinth portion was also reset. Relaying of depressed flooring was attended to as well.

The Samudra Manthan Scene Gallery and the pavilion on either side were dismantled by the Angkor Conservancy during 1969-1970 and a plinth of the same kind reconstructed after providing a suitable foundation and drains. The dismantled architectural members of the gallery, lying scattered on the ground nearby for more than eighteen years, have been taken up for reconstruction of both the pavilions and the gallery. The rebuilding of the south-east pavilion was one up to a height of five metres from all sides up to the lintel levels. In this respect the earlier photographs were of great value.

PHASE III (1988-1989)

In the third phase the conservation of the southern library between the third and fourth enclosures began.

Stones were reset on the northern gallery and the porches and steps on the western gallery of the third enclosure were also dismantled and



2. *Apsara* in the second enclosure before treatment.



3. *Apsara* in the second enclosure after treatment.

reset. In the same enclosure repairs to the roof and filling of cracks was taken up along with the water-tightening. Reconstruction of the missing roof of the southern half of the fourth enclosure was carried out. A concrete apron was provided around the northern and southern library situated between the third and fourth enclosures. In the Samudra Manthan Gallery on the east, the semi-vaulted roof of the gallery was relaid with original stones.

PHASE IV (1989-1990)

During this phase further conservation work on the embankment of the moat on the eastern side was done.

The six porches on the northern, eastern, and southern galleries of the third enclosure were conserved scientifically. Loose stones were reset, the broken RCC beams were replaced with new ones.

In the Samudra Manthan Gallery on the eastern side of the third enclosure, the semi-vaulted roof which was dismantled earlier by the French was relaid. The old pillars which were totally weathered could not be re-used and have been replaced with pillars cast in RCC and suitably tinted to match the original pillars. Due to the weathering of structural members lying exposed to the sun and rain over a long period the re-erection of the semi-vaulted roof posed several difficulties. The stone joints of the vaulted roofs have been pointed in mortar suitably tinted to match the original. The work of the semi-vaulted roof in the Samudra Manthan Gallery is yet to be completed.

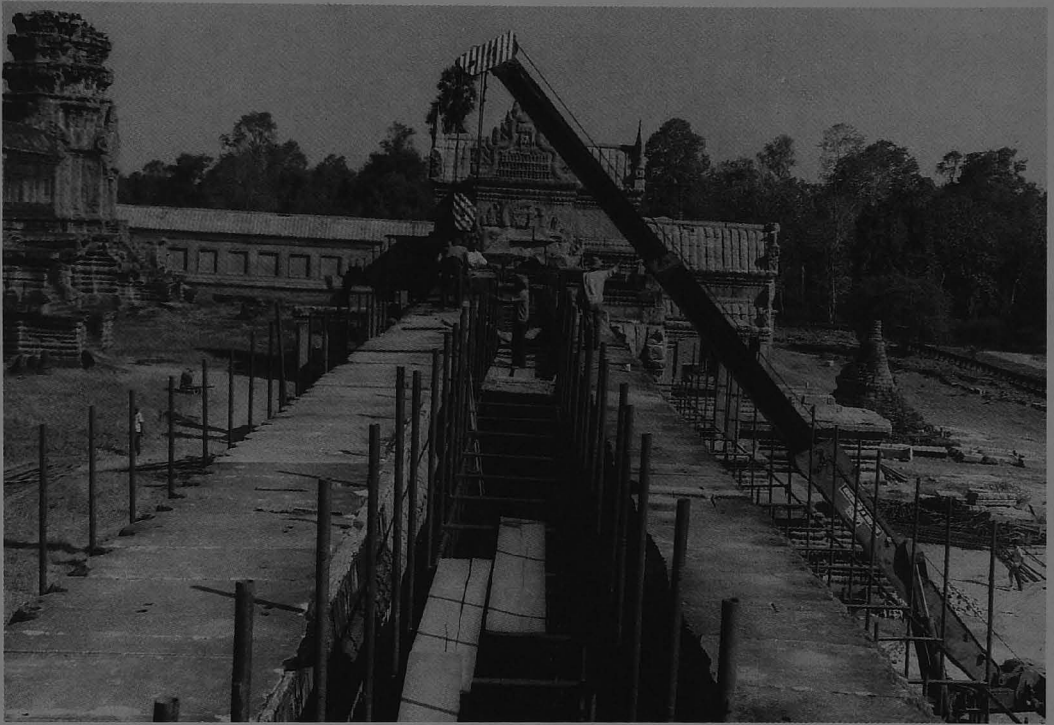
PERIOD: 1990-1991

- i) Reconstruction of Samudra Manthan Gallery.
- ii) Reconstruction of entrance north of Samudra Manthan Gallery.
- iii) Reconstruction of porch of the main entrance to the east.
- iv) Reconstruction of dismantled railing of the third enclosure.
- v) Reconstruction of stepped embankment of the moat on the west.

PHASE V (1990-1991)

This included work on the following:

- i) Entire first enclosure including five towers and exterior and interior walls.
- ii) Samudra Manthan Gallery including exterior and interior of the structure.



4. Samudra Manthan Gallery before conservation.



5. Samudra Manthan Gallery after conservation.



6. Gateway in second enclosure before treatment.



7. Gateway in second enclosure after treatment.

- iii) Recleaning and preserving western wall of third enclosure.
- iv) Entrance south of Samudra Manthan Gallery.
- v) Applying preservative coat to an area of 80,000 square metres.

PHASE VI (1991-1992)

The following repairs were executed during this phase:

- i) Eastern embankment and steps of moat north of main causeway.
- ii) Completion of the work of resetting and pointing of the northern and southern libraries.
- iii) Grouting and water-tightening of the towers and galleries of the second enclosure.

PHASE VII' (1992-1993)

Now for this phase the team is already there to complete the remaining work according to schedule.

CHEMICAL PRESERVATION

The principal agency of decay was rain water. The second potent cause of deterioration is the extensive micro-growth vegetation, such as

moss, lichen, and algae, all over the surface of the monument.

In view of the size of the monument the work has been taken up in a phased manner.

During the first two phases the chemical preservation work was confined to the western gateway and the northern and southern libraries between the third and fourth enclosures, the western corridor of the enclosure, and the esplanade.

During the third phase chemical preservation was confined to the exterior and interior of the northern corridor of the third enclosure. The work was also carried out on the northern-southern wing of the western corridor.

The fourth phase of chemical preservation was carried out on the vaulted roofs and walls of the eastern gallery of the third enclosure. Similarly, the vaulted roof and other structural members in the southern gallery were also treated by chemical preservation.

During the fifth phase chemical preservation of the galleries and towers of the second enclosure was undertaken.

It has been a privilege for India to have been responsible for carrying out conservation and

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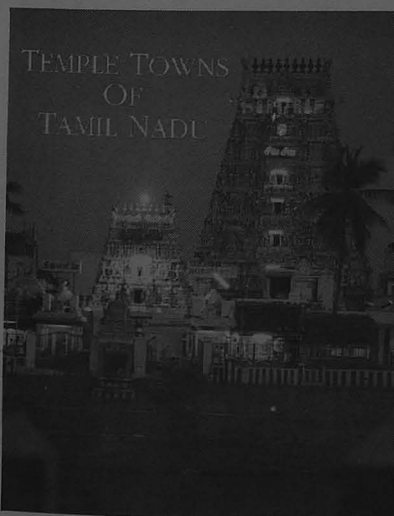
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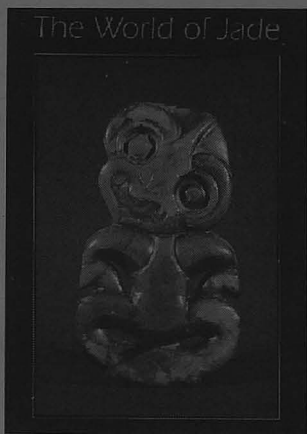
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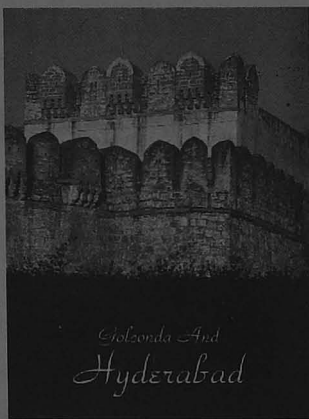
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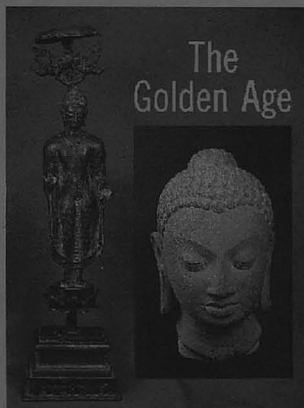
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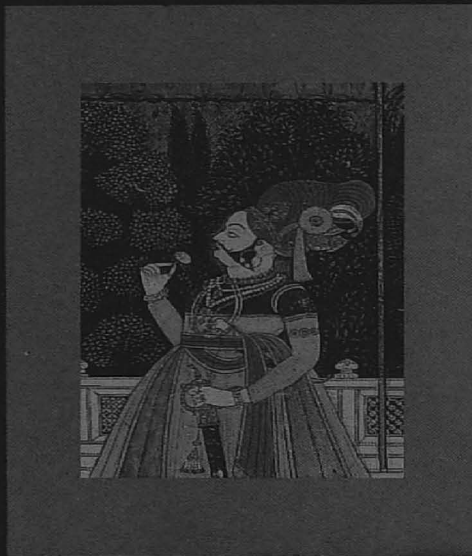
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preservation work at Angkor Vat. Inspired by the cultural ties of friendship with Cambodia, one hopes this rapport will continue in the future.

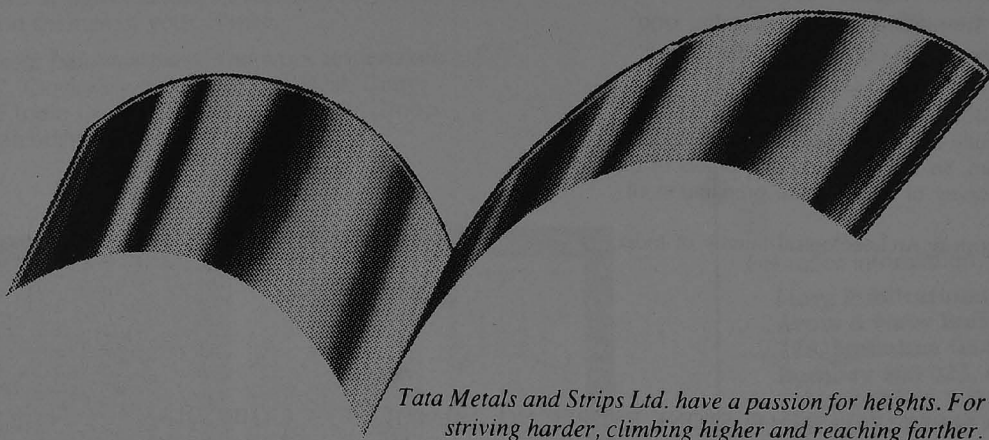
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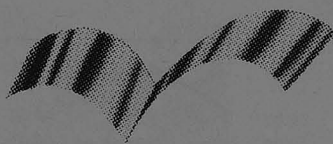
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Porosity	Density	Hardness	Sample No.	Loss on Evaporation	Loss on Ignition	SiO ₂	R ₂ O ₃	CaO	Mgo	Total		
11.8	2.40	4 to 5	182/90(1)	.19	3.08	71.74	17.36	3.85	.69	96.91	Chloride and Carbonate present in traces	
12.29	2.42	4 to 5	182/90(2)	.14	2.93	70.92	20.68	3.25	.76	98.68		
10.80	2.51	3 to 4	182/90(3)	.18	2.65	68.90	23.10	3.35	.63	98.81	—do—	
19.49	2.15	5 to 6	182/90(4)	1.12	2.27	65.60	24.81	4.49	.80	99.09	Chloride present in traces	
17.50	2.51	3 to 4	182/90(1)	.93	3.05	74.55	15.21	4.01	.72	98.47	Chloride and Carbonate present in traces	
16.30	2.44	3 to 4	182/90(2)	.93	3.48	69.00	19.85	3.76	.82	97.84	—do—	
—	—	—	182/90(3)	.60	4.12	71.96	18.32	3.46	.72	99.18	—do—	
—	—	—	182/90(4)	.64	4.33	69.16	19.00	3.67	.91	97.71	—do—	
21.6	2.30	5 to 6	182/90(5)	1.22	2.95	66.40	21.49	4.10	.86	97.02	—do—	
12.20	1.62	3 to 4	182/90(6)	.75	2.79	70.90	19.53	4.26	.75	98.98	—do—	
16.90	2.15	4 to 5	182/90(7)	.70	2.22	68.94	21.62	3.90	.83	98.21	—do—	



Tata Metals and Strips Ltd. have a passion for heights. For striving harder, climbing higher and reaching farther. Because, we believe, that the higher you go, the better you see things, and the wider your vision is. A holistic vision that, today, bears mute testimony to our soaring success.



How TMSL thrives on an upwardly mobile flight

Whether it be in manufacturing the highest quality of hot and cold rolled strips, or in extracting exacting standards in manufacturing processes.

Whether it be in meeting clockwork schedules for delivery, or treating each individual specification as a customised package.

We've consistently aimed for, and stopped at, nothing but the best.

Not content to rest on our considerable laurels, we are on the threshold of expanding our horizons. To meet growing requirements of evolving times, and impeccable demands for precision. We've adopted a futuristic perspective, which helps us anticipate a need, prepare for and fulfill it.

All our endeavours are spearheaded by the skills and spirited attitudes of our people, who are continuously encouraged to better themselves.

They are the ones who have taken TMSL so far. And will take it farther. To open new avenues for exploration, to pursue newer challenges and goals, to conquer higher peaks and to add our bit in taking the country further on the path of progress.

Heights, we believe, do have an enlightening, invigorating effect. At TMSL, we've thrived on them.



TATA METALS AND STRIPS LIMITED

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24, Homi Mody Street,
Bombay 400 001.

Avishkar/TMSL/1002



IPITATA SPONGE IRON LIMITED

XLRI CAMPUS, CIRCUIT HOUSE AREA, JAMSHEDPUR 831 001.

Phone: (0657) 28793 & 28766, Gram: IPITAT

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KUMARDHUBI METAL CASTING AND ENGINEERING LIMITED

A Joint Venture Undertaking of the Bihar State Industrial
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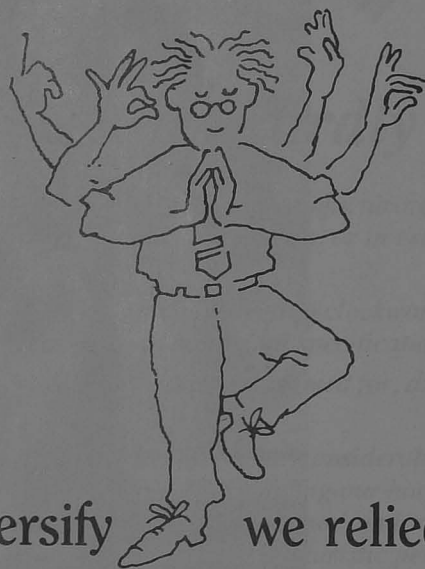
Regd. Office } XLRI CAMPUS, CIRCUIT HOUSE AREA,
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Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Ravana.



Gangaikondacholapuram, Brihadishvara temple, Shiva.



To expand and diversify we relied on our single-minded perseverance



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(A Subsidiary of TATA STEEL)

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Telex: 11-700 10 SSLB IN.
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This step ensured that control over inputs could be strictly kept under check.

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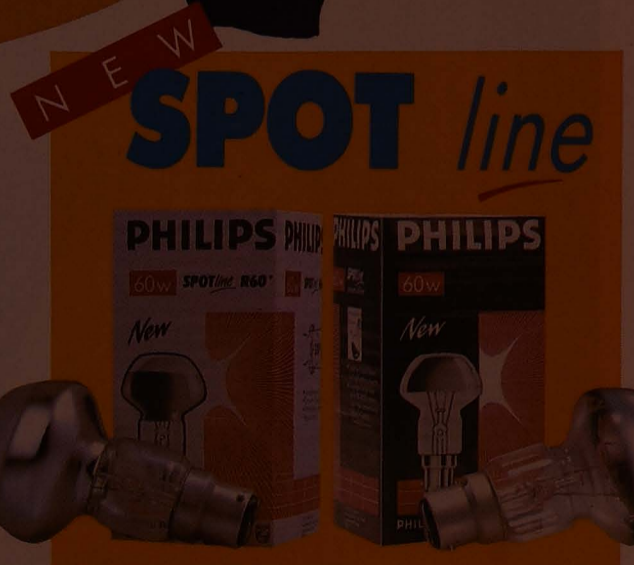
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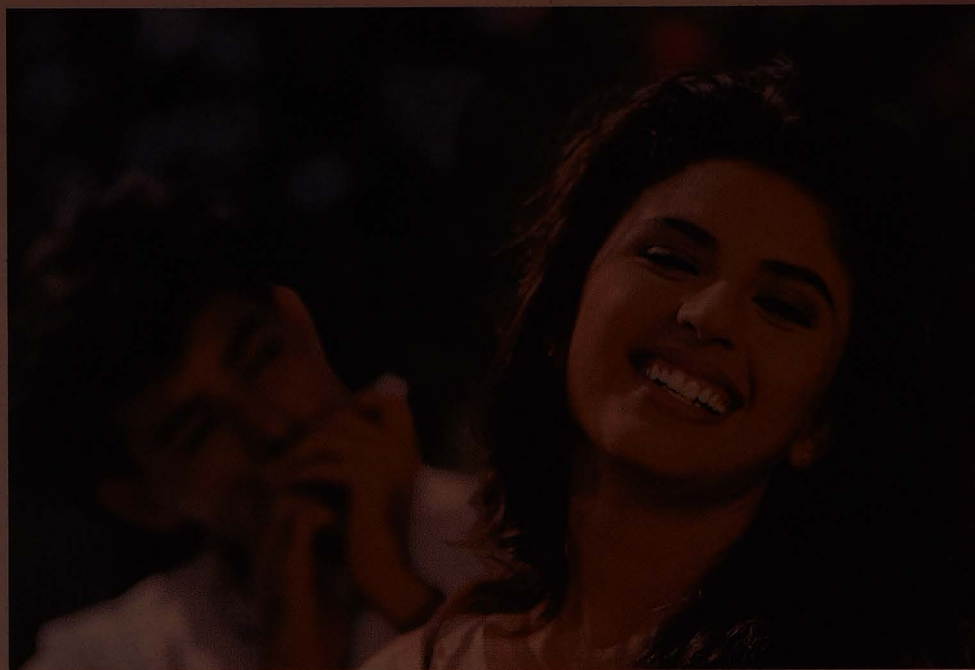
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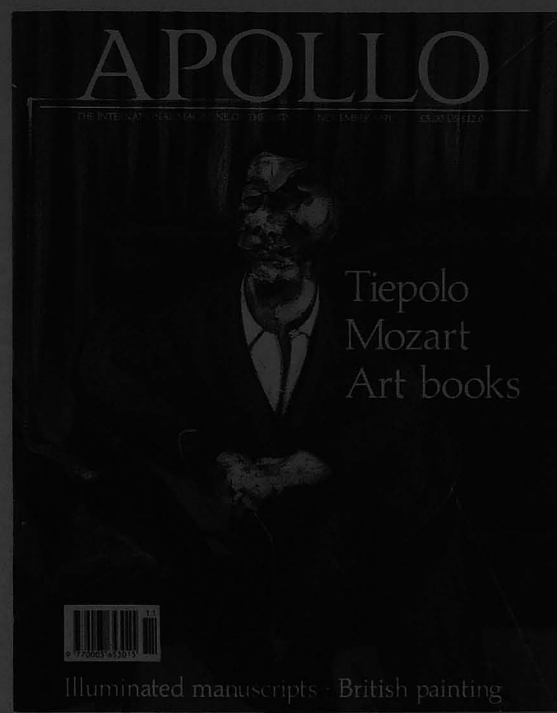
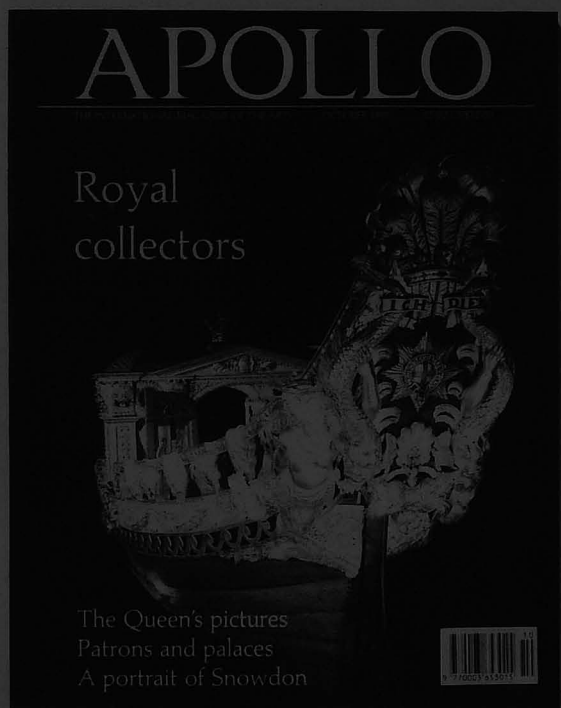
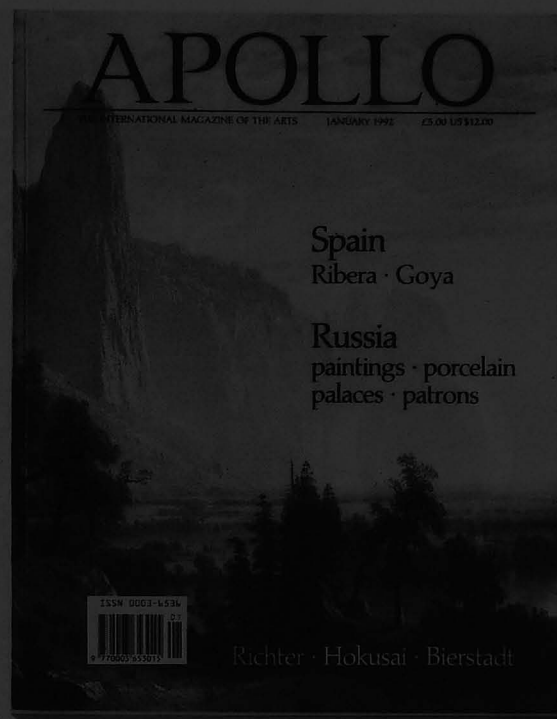
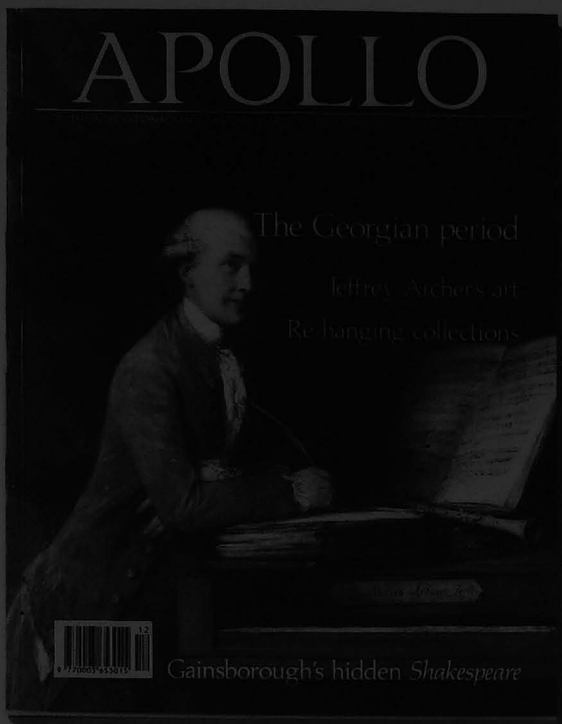


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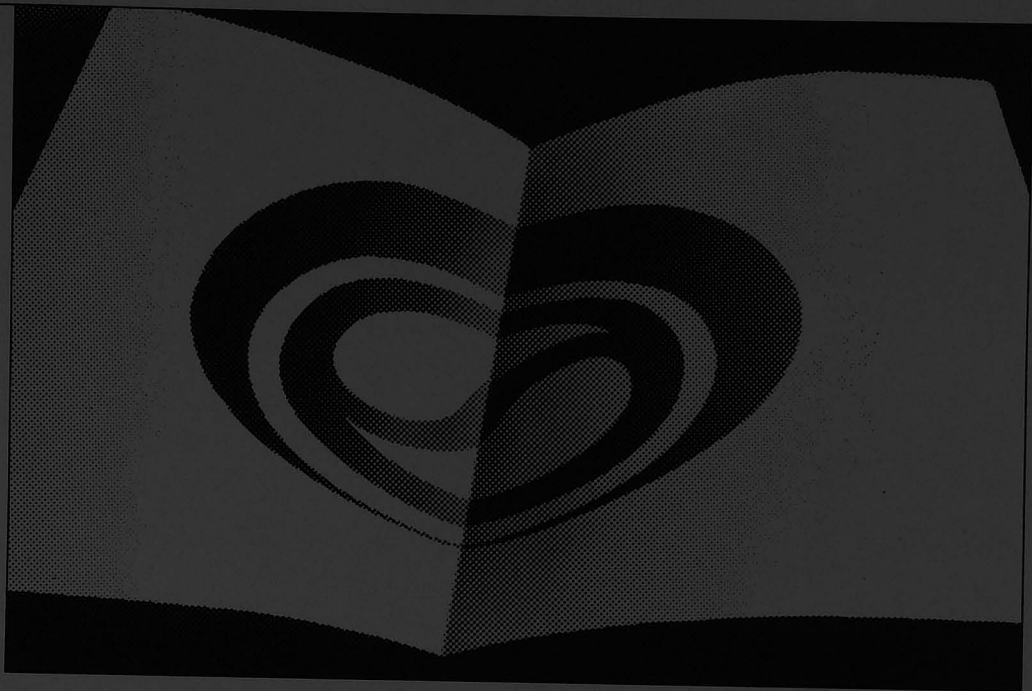
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| 3. Editorial Panel | : | Mr. Karl Khandalavala
Mr. Sadashiv Gorakshkar |
| Nationality | : | Indians |
| Address | : | Army & Navy Building,
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023. |
| 4. Name of Publisher | : | Mr. J. J. Bhabha |
| Nationality | : | Indian |
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| Nationality | : | Indian |
| Address | : | Tata Press Limited,
414, Veer Savarkar Marg, Bombay 400 025. |
| 6. Name and address of the individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital | : | National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay House,
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