

MAHABALIPURAM STUDIES

Mahabalipuram Studies



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PREFACE

This collection of studies on Mahabalipuram (and related matters in the history and art of the Pallavas) originates from the many hours spent "in the field" by my colleagues, Dr Gift Siromoney and Mr P. Dayanandan, and myself—and from innumerable discussions we have had together. Theories and counter-theories were put forward by each of us and criticized vigorously by the others until we felt relatively secure in the new ideas we were developing.

The studies themselves and the papers on which they are based were all written by me, with the exception of the sixth study ("Thondaimandalam: Costumes and Jewellery") which was written by Dr. Siromoney. The appendix was prepared by him also. The photographs are mine.

I must acknowledge the help of Mr A Vishnu Bhat, without whose assistance in Sanskrit, the third study, "Pallava Ganga-dhara", could not have been carried out

Tambaram

MICHAEL LOCKWOOD



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Plate 1. ARJUNA RATHA, ONE OF THE MONOLITHIC SHRINES, MAHABALIPURAM
(See page 4)

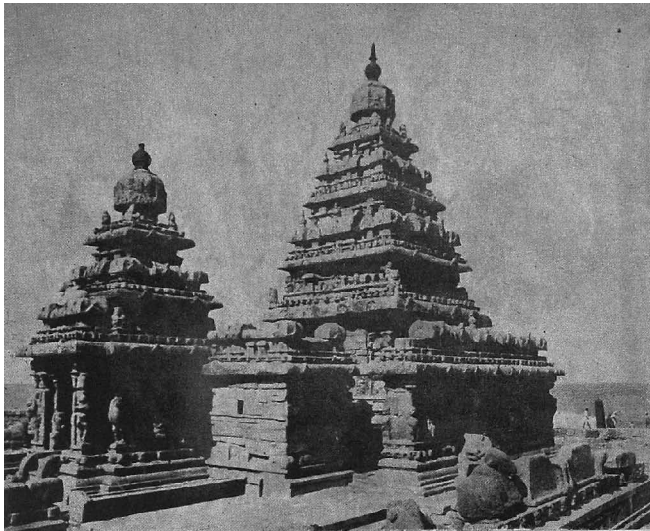


Plate 2. SHORE TEMPLE, MAHABALIPURAM (See page 4)

INTRODUCTION

On the coast, almost sixty kilometres south of the city of Madras, at a place called Mahabalipuram, there are some of the most famous ancient monuments in India. They are appealing to the casual visitor. And to the student of South Indian art and architecture, they are of fundamental importance.

In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., kings of the Pallava dynasty created cave-temples, monolithic shrines, structural stone temples, and expansive relief panels carved on the open rock-face of the hillsides. These monuments are important because they were the first major artistic monuments to be fashioned out of hard rock in South India. One thousand two hundred years have come and gone, and yet these works are still fresh before our eyes. The structures of all other temples of those days and earlier times have long ago vanished because they were made of relatively perishable material.

Although these monuments and their figures are all carved out of stone, yet every inch would have been covered by the artisans with a thin layer of fine, white plaster and then painted so as to simulate the materials and colour of ordinary temples. All of the human and animal figures would have been painted so as to impart a startling realism to them. The paint, of course, has disappeared except for traces ¹

Mahabalipuram has more than 14 cave-temples, 9 monolithic shrines, 3 structural stone temples, and 4 relief sculptured rock panels. All of these were created by the Pallavas in the seventh and early eighth centuries A.D.

The structural temples imitate in the hard medium of stone blocks the traditional temples which were built with brick, mortar and wood.

The monolithic shrines are whole temples carved out of a single mass of rock. They are sculptured replicas "in the round", so to say.

In their cave-temples, the Pallavas have reproduced the interior aspect of shrines along with their porch-like pillared

mandapams by scooping and carving into the solid rock of the hillsides. Since the frontal *mandapam* with its pillars is visually the most prominent feature of the cave-temple, these temples are often called simply "mandapams".

The most unusual and impressive sight at Mahabalipuram must surely be the so-called "Penance" panel. Popularly it is believed to be an artistic representation of Arjuna's penance. However, certain scholars have persuasively shown it to represent Bhageeratha's penance and the descent of the river Ganga.² In this huge "open air" relief carving with its multitude of figures (animal,³ human and divine), the Pallava artists have used for their canvas the sheer rock which rises perpendicularly on one side of the hill.

The story of Bhageeratha's penance is given, among other places, in the epic of the *Ramayana*. Bhageeratha wished to sanctify the ashes of his heroic ancestors with the holy water of the Ganga. This divine river was at that time confined to the heavenly realm. In order to bring her down to earth, Bhageeratha practised severe penance. Brahma finally agreed to grant his request, but warned Bhageeratha that in the mighty rush of her descent, the Ganga would devastate the earth. Therefore Bhageeratha continued his penance in order to win Siva's protection against her terrible onslaught. For a whole year Bhageeratha remained standing on one foot with his arms upraised, his body becoming emaciated. Siva, pleased by Bhageeratha's austerities, appeared and granted him his boon. It is this moment which is portrayed in the Mahabalipuram panel, to the upper left of the central cleft in the rock which divides it into two sections.

The water which the Pallava engineers planned to have cascade down the cleft into a pool⁴ below would represent the Ganga reaching the earth. All the figures, human and divine, are thus shown gravitating towards the central cleft to behold this glorious miracle of the Ganga's descent.

Between the point in the *Ramayana's* account where Siva grants the boon to Bhageeratha and the part in which the Ganga

reaches the earth, there is the scene of Siva's carrying out Bhageeratha's request—an act which is not depicted in this panel, though it is a favourite of the Pallavas and appears twice elsewhere in Mahabalipuram. It is the "Gangadhara" theme in which Siva controls the fury of the descending Ganga by holding her captive in the locks of his hair until she flows gently to earth. The oldest Pallava representation of the Gangadhara theme (even pre-dating by one generation the Mahabalipuram Penance panel) is the Gangadhara panel in a cave-temple in Tiruchirappalli. The significance of the Tiruchi panel in relation to the art of the Pallavas at Mahabalipuram will be discussed in the third and fourth studies in this book.

The Mahishamardini Cave is one of the most remarkable of the cave-temples at Mahabalipuram. It takes its name from the Mahishamardini panel carved on the right wall of its *mandapam*. On the wall opposite there is a panel cut in deep relief, depicting Vishnu in trance-like sleep reclining on the great serpent, Sesa. These panels represent two scenes described in the *Devi-Mahatmya*, an episode in the *Markandeya Purana*. Particularly effective is the striking contrast achieved by the artists between the calm potency of the Reclining Vishnu panel and the vigorous action in the other panel which depicts Durga waging her victorious battle against the buffalo demon, Mahisha.

There are three cells or sanctums cut into the rear wall of the *mandapam* of this cave-temple. At the back of the central sanctum there is a large carved panel representing Siva together with his consort Uma, and their little son Skanda. All three are shown seated together on a royal throne. This image is called "Somaskanda." The very earliest Somaskanda panel was a creation of the Pallava king Paramesvara I, in the latter half of the seventh century. In the first study of this book, we discuss the Somaskanda panel of the Mahishamardini Cave and try to show that it is an addition which was executed at a date distinctly later than that of the Vishnu and Mahishamardini panels of this same cave-temple.

The Shore Temple is the most important structural temple at

Mahabalipuram. Built by the Pallava king Rajasimha in the early eighth century, it is picturesquely situated on the edge of a promontory jutting into the ocean. There are actually three separate shrines which comprise the Shore Temple complex. The eastern and western shrines which have high towers are dedicated to the god Siva. In between them is one dedicated to Vishnu. On the back, inner walls of the two Saivite shrines there are Somaskanda panels.

Our second study is devoted to an analysis of the stylistic development of the Somaskanda panel during the successive reigns of several Pallava kings. In their art it is by far the most often repeated image. More than 40 Pallava Somaskanda panels remain to this day, providing thus an important key to the problems of the chronology of Pallava monuments.

The finest examples of monolithic shrines at Mahabalipuram are found in the group popularly called the "Five Rathas". The word "ratha" which means "chariot" or "vehicle" has been imaginatively applied to these temples. Of these five, the so-called Draupadi Ratha is actually a small shrine for the goddess Durga. Her image is carved in relief on the back wall of the sanctum. Two devotees are shown kneeling at her feet. One of them is in the act of making the supreme sacrifice of cutting off his own head! That this practice actually existed in Tamilnad is revealed elsewhere both by inscription and in literature.

The great importance of the five shrines to the study of the development of temple architecture in South India lies in the fact that each one of them has a different form. The Draupadi Ratha is the simplest. The Dharmaraja Ratha is the largest and most elaborate. It is pyramid-like in form, with three stories. On the top level there is a small sanctum scooped out of the solid rock. On the back wall of this cell is carved the oldest extant Somaskanda panel. There is an inscription outside claiming that this is the Isvara (Siva) shrine of the Pallava king called "Atyantakama". There are many other inscriptions on the walls of this temple.

The fifth study in this book considers the evidence provided

by these inscriptions, plus evidence from several other sources, in an attempt to throw light on the problem of the authorship of the monuments of Mahabalipuram.

In dealing with various problems of the history and art of the Pallavas, our studies have generally emphasized the importance of stylistic analyses of the dress and ornaments depicted in the sculpted figures. The sixth study in this book takes a broad look at the development of costumes and ornaments in the art and literature of Thondaimandalam (the "Pallava country"), the region in Tamilnad with Kanchipuram as its capital. This sixth study traces the stylistic development in that region from the Pallava period (and even earlier) up to the time of the Vijayanagar kings. It will be seen that over the centuries the creative genius of the Pallavas has exercised an extraordinary influence on South Indian art.

NOTES

¹ In a letter to the editor of *The Hindu* which appeared in the issue dated January 18, 1970, we made the following observations about the painting of Mahabalipuram (only a part of the letter is quoted here):

A group of small school children found it most amusing that we three adults should be craning our necks and peering so intently at the upper reaches of the "Rathas". And we were quite ready to smile back at them because, on the basis of a little detective work, we were enjoying in our mind's eye a view of the monuments of Mahabalipuram which they did not see. Imagine the "Rathas" completely covered outside and in with bright colours of paint. Imagine the many graceful figures which people the niches of these temples rendered in life-like colour, their bright jewels and gold ornaments glittering, the stone pillars which they lean against (pillars imitating structurally the earlier style of wood) painted in an imitating maroon. Imagine further the great panel of "Arjuna's Penance" alive with colour! I say imagine because as any visitor to Mahabalipuram knows, we see everywhere only the uniform grey-brown hue of the carved granite rock. Everywhere that is, unless you look as intently as we three were doing to perceive the unmistakable traces of plaster and paint which have survived perhaps more than a thousand years of weathering. On the "Arjuna" Panel, traces of plaster and paint can be seen easily (especially with binoculars) under the upraised and joined hands of the ascetic practising austerities. And there are many other places on the Panel where plaster and paint are quite evident.

² First advanced by V. Goloubew in 1914, this view has been ably supported later by G. Jouveau-Dubreuil and the archaeological evidence noted by

A H Longhurst. The point which is absolutely fatal to the "Arjuna's penance" interpretation is the fact that some of the heavenly beings depicted in the panel actually have their backs to Siva as he grants the boon to the ascetic who is supposedly Arjuna. The problem vanishes if it is the descent of the Ganga which is the centre of attention (the boon granted to Bhageeratha).

³ Some 150 animals representing 16 different species.

⁴ Longhurst describes the discovery of the stone-lined pool at the foot of the Penance Panel (*Pallava Architecture*, Part II). This pool was very likely a royal bath at the time of the Pallavas. There is also archaeological evidence of a storage tank for water on top of the hill just above the central cleft. Thus, at special times of celebration, water could be let out of this tank by the Pallavas so as to produce an artificial waterfall down the central cleft and thus simulate the Ganga descending to earth. It would have been quite a spectacle even by our modern standards.¹

ONE

PALLAVA DVARAPALAS AND THE MAHISHAMARDINI CAVE ¹

The Tamil word for "temple" ("kovil") can also mean "palace". Usually, the temples of the gods are shown with guardians posted at the entrance to the sanctum. This only imitates the practice of the king in his palace with guards protecting the royal chamber.

Our study would establish for the first time the fact that the carved guardians or door-keepers in many Pallava temples are really anthropomorphic representations of weapons or emblems peculiar to the god enshrined within. In Sanskrit such "weapon-men" are called "ayudhapurushas" In Pallava temples, the particular weapon or other emblem which a guardian represents is usually shown on his head-dress.

The second part of this study is devoted to a comparative analysis of carved panels. The purpose of such an analysis is to help discover the chronological development in Pallava art. It is concerned with details of the dress and ornaments depicted on figures of people and gods. Fortunately for our study, Mahabalipuram has an impressive population of stone figures. Gods and goddesses are represented in idealized human form. Also shown are many of the lesser divinities. Most of these are also depicted in human form, though some are part animal. Of great interest is the number of ordinary humans who have been sculpted. Common people are seen tending cattle and carrying children. Hunters are shown in their forest habitat. There are ascetics and holy men with beards. Even kings and queens have been portrayed.

It is important to note that in the sculpture of this period, very little difference is seen between the dress and ornaments of

divine beings and those of humans. The one really distinguishing feature of the gods is the addition of extra arms, with their hands exhibiting symbolic gestures or holding identifying emblems. The lesser divinities have only two arms, but they can be distinguished easily when they are shown flying through the upper regions—a feat not possible for ordinary mortals! Other semi-divine beings are half human and half animal. The upper half is usually human. The lower half may be of a bird, or snake, or some such creature.

Our analysis of stylistic development together with the significance of the discovery that Pallava temple guardians are “ayudhapurushas” has been used by us in this study to show that the Mahishamardini Cave has had an erratic history of development (it still remains unfinished)—and that there are reasonable grounds to suppose that what was originally planned as a Vishnu temple was transformed into a Saivite one during the reign of Paramesvara I, a Pallava ruler in the latter part of the seventh century.

Scholars have long been aware of the fact that there was a period in Mahabalipuram's history (some would say, the 13th century) when Vaishnavite sectarians took possession of Saivite temples there. This “take-over” has been signified by their engraving the emblems of Vishnu (the conch shell and the discus) on the walls of these appropriated temples. Our study, however, would for the first time show that much earlier there was an appropriation of a Vishnu cave-temple by Saivites, undoubtedly on the direct order of king Paramesvara himself

The curious horns on some of the dvarapalas (door guardians) in early Pallava temples gave us the clue to the surprising conclusion that in the Mahishamardini Cave at Mahabalipuram, the main sanctum was originally planned for Vishnu, not for the Somaskanda panel which we see today.

In regard to the horns on the dvarapalas, there are several conflicting views among scholars as to their significance. One



*Plate 3. 'HORNED' DVARAPALA, VALLAM CAVE-TEMPLE
(See page 9)*



Plate 4. DVARAPALA WITH AXE-BLADE ON HEAD-DRESS, VALLAM
(See page 9)

view would have it that they are a kind of mutation of the early Buddhist motif of Nagaraja as dvarapala. That is, the multi-headed snake hood of Nagaraja develops into two horns.² A second theory is that the horns of the dvarapalas can be explained with reference to the practice of wearing horns by such primitive tribes as the Nagas and the Gonds. Still a third explanation is that the horned dvarapalas represent a humanised form of the bull, Nandi.³

While photographing a dvarapala in the upper cave at Vallam (two miles east of Chingleput town), we were struck by the similarity between the horns of this dvarapala and the outer prongs of the trident or trisula as represented in Pallava sculpture elsewhere. These horns and the outer prongs of the trisula have the same peculiar compound curve at their base. Further, the so-called horns in the Vallam example are not shown attached to the head or head-dress in a very realistic manner. We concluded, therefore, that the horns of the dvarapala along with his elongated makuta (as the central prong) did, in fact, represent the trisula, a Saivite emblem.

At Vallam, only the dvarapala to the proper right of the entrance has horns. However, we soon discovered that, although the dvarapala to the left did not have horns, he did have an axe-blade projecting edge-forward from the front of his head-dress. The axe is another Saivite emblem. The trisula "horns" and the axe-blade, then, can be clearly recognized as Saivite symbols which, along with certain other characteristics such as the snake-entwined club, go to indicate quite unambiguously that these dvarapalas are guarding a Saivite shrine.

Other examples of dvarapalas with "horns" and axe-blades on their head-dress are to be found in the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram, at the Atiranachandesvara cave-temple at Saluvankuppam, and at various shrines at Mahabalipuram. In most of these cases, a knowledge of the significance of the trisula horns or the presence of the axe-blade is not necessary for an identification of the shrines as Saivite because within the shrines there is a linga. However, consider the shrine on the western

side of the second level of the Dharmaraja Ratha at Mahabalipuram. This sanctum is empty and unfinished, and there is nothing inside it now that would indicate which god it was fashioned for. Therefore it is the horned guardian to the proper right of this shrine which reveals it was intended as Saivite.

The practice of showing the emblems of the deity on his guardian's head-dress is applied by the Pallavas to Vaishnavite shrines as well as Saivite. A clear example of this is found in the Varaha Cave at Mahabalipuram: the dvarapala immediately to the right (proper) of the sanctum's entrance has a discus represented edge-forward at the very top of his head-dress. The dvarapala to the left has a conch placed at the top of his head-dress. The discus and conch are Vishnu's emblems. That this Varaha Cave is a Vaishnavite temple is undisputed, and we find there the Varaha, Trivikrama, and Gajalakshmi panels which are all Vaishnavite themes. But the discus and conch emblems on the head-dress of the dvarapalas give additional confirmation that the (now empty) sanctum was for Vishnu.

Another important example of Vaishnavite emblems on the head-dress of dvarapalas is to be found in the Adivaraha cave-temple at Mahabalipuram. Here the Varaha figure in the central shrine is under worship. The modern walls which enclose the front of this shrine hide parts of the dvarapalas. However, one is still able to see the discus at the top of the head-dress of the right dvarapala and the conch similarly placed on the left dvarapala.

We must also mention that the guardians of king Mahendra's Vishnu cave-temple at Mahendravadi also have the discus and conch on their head-dress.

In the case of the goddess Durga, the female guards in her shrines at Mahabalipuram are shown with a sword in hand (right guard) and with a bow (left guard). There are two Durga shrines at Mahabalipuram: the Draupadi Ratha and Kotikal Mandapam. The two young fighting women accompanying the goddess in the Durga panel of the Adivaraha Cave are similarly

armed and provide an analogous example, though, strictly speaking, they are not guarding a door here.

Our main conclusion so far, then, is that dvarapalas are often shown with emblems or weapons which are characteristic of the deity they guard. They are, in effect, *ayudhapurushas*. In the case of many Saivite shrines, one dvarapala has horns and the other an axe-head shown on the head-dress, and both may have clubs with snakes encircling. In the case of Vaishnavite shrines, we find the following arrangement: one dvarapala has a discus represented on his head-dress, and the other, a conch.

With these facts in mind, let us turn to the famous Mahishamardini Cave at Mahabalipuram. There are three sanctums in this cave-temple, and one naturally thinks of the many Pallava cave-temples created for the Hindu Trinity. The central sanctum of this cave is given special prominence by having before it a raised porch with two lion pillars in front. But considering first the right (southern) sanctum, one finds that the dvarapala to its proper right has horns. The dvarapala to the left has a single axe-blade projecting edge-forward above his forehead. The right dvarapala has a club with a snake around it. We conclude from these facts that the right sanctum is clearly Saivite.

Considering next the left (northern) sanctum, one does not find any of the above Saivite emblems. Further, both the dvarapalas wear the long dress and the *uttarya* which are uncharacteristic of Saivite dvarapalas. We conclude that the left sanctum of the Mahishamardini Cave is distinctly non-Saivite.

With a clearly Saivite sanctum to the right, with a distinctly non-Saivite sanctum (undoubtedly for Brahma) to the left, and, further, with a large panel on the right wall depicting Vishnu reclining, one would naturally expect the main central sanctum to be for Vishnu. But surprisingly, one finds instead a large Somaskanda panel on the back wall of this main sanctum.

This led us to examine with care the dvarapalas of the central sanctum. At first glance, both dvarapalas seem to be Saivite: they both have clubs—the club of the proper right dvarapala being

encircled by a three-headed snake. The dvarapala to the right has horns (in light relief), and the dvarapala to the left has a triple-bladed axe-head represented on the head-dress above his forehead.

But there are several puzzling aspects about the way in which these two dvarapalas have been sculpted. In fact, it looks as though these niches may have been originally intended for dvarapalas without clubs—the kind of dvarapalas one would expect to be guarding a shrine for Vishnu. The reason we say this is that the clubs seem like an afterthought. The clubs are carved where the pilasters should be, and completely break the orderly boundary of the rectangular niches. It would be interesting to know whether there is a single other example in Pallava sculpture of such an extreme disregard of the rectangular boundaries of the niche.

It is possible that work had begun on these niches at a time when the main sanctum was intended for Vishnu. At that time, the boundaries of the niches and the general pose of the dvarapalas were established. For one reason or another, the work was not completed. At a later date, when Saivism was in the ascendancy, the details of the dvarapalas were finished as Saivite, including the horns in very shallow relief on one guard and an axe-head on the other's head-dress. The clubs had to be added in a most unusual place: where the pilasters normally would come. To accomplish this addition of the clubs, the rock area for the pilasters and all the rest of the architectural ornamentation of the main shrine's facade had to be removed. This refacing of the rock has left only a plain surface around the niches for us to see today.⁴

This evidence of re-working led us to note, first, the obvious fact that the Somaskanda panel of the central sanctum is different stylistically from the other two panels (of Vishnu and Durga) in this temple; and, secondly, that there is a striking similarity between this Somaskanda panel and like panels found in the eighth century Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram.

We therefore began to feel certain that the Somaskanda

panel in this cave-temple was a later addition, transforming what was originally planned as a Vaishnavite main shrine into a Saivite shrine.

Speaking generally of Mahabalipuram, one can observe a marked difference in style, as shown in the dress and ornaments of the sculptured figures. Just as fashion changes today, so it must have changed in the time of the Pallavas. This change, naturally, is reflected in their sculptural art and thus provides us with a means of dating the monuments.

As we have noted, even in one and the same cave-temple one finds distinctly different styles. To help us date the panels of the Mahishamardini Cave, we examine them in detail with regard to the style of dress and ornaments of the figures portrayed. As a basis for our argument, we mention certain general observations we have made⁵ about the dress and ornaments of Pallava-sculpted figures.

(i) *Early Pallava Characteristics*

In early Pallava sculpture (roughly, around the period of the great Penance Panel and the Five Rathas which are usually ascribed to king Narasimhavarman I in the seventh century A.D.), men do not wear any leg ornaments and are shown with only one diagonal band (sacred thread, etc⁶) across the body. In the early period, women do not wear any diagonal band and have only single anklets on each leg

(ii) *Later Pallava Characteristics*

In the later Pallava sculpture (eighth century, around the time the Kailasanatha and Shore temples were built), we notice that men now sometimes have leg ornaments and often have more than one diagonal band. Leg ornaments as a common feature for men appear to have been introduced gradually for the first time in Indian art by the Pallava sculptors of the early 8th century. In the whole sweep of art-history from Bharhut in the centuries B.C., through Amaravati and the earlier phases of Ajanta up till the end of the 7th century A.D.,

men do not wear leg ornaments. The very few exceptions to this claim will certainly prove the general rule

In the later period of Pallava sculpture, women are seen wearing the diagonal band; they frequently have multiple ornaments on each leg; shoulder straps for the breast-band are introduced; and the head-dress which looks like a turban around the base of a crown develops two distinctive characteristics—the turban-like portion is slightly pinched in the front, and the crown-like portion is unusually tall.

It is on the basis of these general observations that we have analyzed the panels of the Mahishamardini cave-temple and have concluded that the Somaskanda panel was done at a distinctly later time than the other two panels in this cave.

(iii) *The Somaskanda Panel*

To establish that the Somaskanda panel of the cave-temple has the characteristics of the later (8th century, Kailasanatha) period, we mention some of the close similarities between the figures of the Somaskanda panel of this cave-temple and the figures of like panels in the Kailasanatha temple—in particular, the Somaskandas of the two sub-shrines centrally located on the northern and southern sides of the main sanctum of the Kailasanatha temple. In both the Mahishamardini Cave Somaskanda and the Kailasanatha examples, one finds these characteristics of the later period. Uma has a diagonal band, multiple anklets, and the characteristic late-period head-dress. Siva has multiple diagonal bands.

Next, to show that the Somaskanda panel of the Mahishamardini cave-temple is quite different stylistically from the early Somaskanda panel of the Dharmaraja Ratha, it should be noted that the following characteristics of the later period, all of which are found in the Cave panel, are absent in the Ratha panel: Uma's characteristic late-period head-dress, diagonal band, and multiple anklets, and Siva's multiple diagonal bands. In addition, Uma's profile pose in the Ratha panel is absolutely unique; whereas in the Cave panel she

strikes the oft-repeated pose found at the Kailasanatha, Shore temples, etc. Further, in regard to the small Vishnu figure appearing in the Cave's Somaskanda panel, above and behind Siva's throne, the discus and conch are depicted with flames (generally accepted as a later characteristic); whereas the discus and conch have no flames in the Ratha's depiction of Vishnu in an adjoining side panel to the Somaskanda proper.

Thus the Somaskanda panel of the Mahishamardini Cave has much in common, stylistically, with Somaskanda panels of the later, Kailasanatha period; and is significantly different from the earlier Somaskanda panel of the Dharmaraja Ratha. It would seem, therefore, that the Somaskanda panel of the cave-temple was executed much closer to the period in which the Kailasanatha temple was built than were the other panels.

Finally, it must be shown that the other two panels of the Mahishamardini Cave (the Reclining Vishnu and the Mahishamardini panels) were done during an earlier period—in the 7th century

(iv) *The Reclining Vishnu Panel*

Considering first the Reclining Vishnu panel in this cave-temple, one finds these early characteristics: no man wears more than one diagonal band, and none has any leg ornament; the women have no diagonal bands, only single anklets, no characteristic late-period head-dress, and the breast-band is depicted without shoulder straps

On the other hand, the Reclining Vishnu panel of this cave-temple (as an early example) contrasts with the little-known, and much smaller Reclining Vishnu panel of the Kailasanatha temple (as a later example). This latter panel is found directly above the entrance to the Somaskanda sub-shrine centrally located on the northern side of the main sanctum. The patchy coating of plaster on this panel makes any job of detailed study risky guesswork. However, mention may be made of the following later characteristics of it which are free of plaster covering: the woman kneeling at Vishnu's feet wears shoulder

straps on her breast-band and she has the characteristic late-period head-dress; and the five heads of the great serpent on which Vishnu reclines are ornately carved as horned yali-heads (which contrasts with the more naturalistic treatment of these heads in the Cave panel)

(v) *The Mahishamardini Panel*

Considering, finally the Mahishamardini panel of the cave-temple, it contrasts (as an early work) with the Saluvankuppam and Kailasanatha Mahishamardini panels (as later works): in the Cave panel there are these early characteristics:—Durga has no distinctive late-period head-dress, no diagonal band, no shoulder straps on her breast-band, and only single anklets; whereas in the Kailasanatha and Saluvankuppam panels, one finds the later characteristics. Again, in the Cave panel, the buffalo demon has only one diagonal band and no leg ornaments, whereas in the Saluvankuppam panel he wears two diagonal bands and has prominent anklets.

(vi) *Summary*

Let us summarize our stylistic analysis. The Somaskanda panel of the Mahishamardini cave-temple is a relatively later Pallava work as it *compares* with similar panels of the 8th century Kailasanatha period, and *contrasts* with the 7th century Somaskanda panel of the Dharmaraja Ratha. The other two panels of the Cave are earlier, 7th century works as they have the early characteristics, and *contrast* with panels of the same themes created in the Kailasanatha period.

The conclusion that the Somaskanda panel of the Mahishamardini Cave is a decidedly later work than the other two panels of the same cave strengthens the claim we have made earlier (on the basis of an examination of the Cave's dvarapalas) that there are reasonable grounds to suppose that the main, central shrine was originally planned for Vishnu.

NOTES

¹ This first study is based on "Pallava Dvarapalaks and the Mahishasuramardini Cave at Mahabalipuram", by Michael Lockwood and Gift Siromoney, a paper read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of South India, April 4, 1970, and on its modified version which appeared in *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, in two parts "Guardians of Pallava cave temples," (February 14, 1971) and "Changing fashions in Pallava art" (February 28, 1971).

² P. R. Srinivasan, "Beginnings of the Traditions of South Indian Temple Architecture", a Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, New Series—General Section, Vol VII, No 4, 1959, p. 34.

³ K. R. Srinivasan, *Cave-Temples of the Pallavas*, Architectural Survey of Temples, Series No 1, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1964, p. 36.

⁴ Surprisingly, the facades of the other two shrines seem to have been re-faced in a similar way. In doing this job of recessing the walls, the feet of the dvarapalas of the left shrine have been sheared off. In the case of the right dvarapala of the right shrine, his right foot remains projecting out beyond the wall's surface in a most unusual manner. While refacing the wall, a portion of the rock was left underneath this foot to give some sort of support to it.

We must mention, in passing, two other puzzling aspects. (1) the dvarapalas of the main, central sanctum are noticeably *smaller* than the dvarapalas of the other two sanctums; (2) the entrances of the two side shrines are in poor alignment with the stairways provided with them.

⁵ Some of these observations have been discussed in "Mahabalipuram - Costumes and Jewellery", by Gift Siromoney, *M C C. Magazine*, 1970.

⁶ As there is much confusion in the application to early sculpture of the term "sacred thread", we have deliberately coined the more general term "diagonal band" which we intend to include the sacred thread as well as other similarly worn items.

TWO

PALLAVA SOMASKANDA¹

The Somaskanda images of the Pallavas are carved stone panels which portray Siva and his consort Uma, seated together on a royal throne with their little son, Skanda, between them. Of all the Pallava images which have survived to the present, the Somaskanda panels are by far the most numerous. There are more than forty of them. They thus offer an extremely important key to the solution of several thorny problems in the history of the development of Pallava art.

The Somaskanda image was most probably the creation of the Pallava king Paramesvara I. However, there are only four extant Somaskanda panels (plus one which has been effaced) which can be attributed to his reign. Fortunately, almost forty Somaskanda panels survive from the period of his son, king Rajasimha.

The Somaskanda image continued to be popular with later Pallava kings. For instance, there is a fine example at Kanchipuram in the sanctum of the Muktesvara temple which was built around the 28th regnal year of the Pallava king Nandivarman II (during the latter half of the eighth century). The Somaskanda was also very common in the Chola period, especially in the medium of bronze casting. Its popularity with South Indian artists continued into the modern period.

We give below a list of the Pallava temples which have the Somaskanda panel on the inner back wall of their sanctum.

PRE-RAJASIMHA STYLE

Mahabalipuram ;

1. Dharmaraja Ratha (3rd level shrine)
2. Ramanuja Mandapam (main shrine)

RAJASIMHA STYLE

Mahabalipuram :

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 3. <i>Kshatryasimhesvara</i> | } <i>Shore Temple(s)</i> |
| 4. <i>Rajasimhesvara</i> | |
| 5. <i>Mahishamardini Cave (main sanctum)</i> | |
| 6. <i>Mukundanayanar</i> | |

Saluvankuppam :

- 7.
- Atiranachandesvara (main + 2)*

Tirukkalukkunram :

- 8.
- Vedagirisvara (main + 1)*

Kanchipuram :

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 9. <i>Mahendravarmesvara—Kailasanatha (1$\frac{1}{2}$ + 28)</i> | |
| 10. <i>Piravatanesvara</i> | 11. <i>Iravatanesvara</i> |
| 12. <i>Amavesvara</i> | 13. <i>Airavatesvara</i> |
| 14. <i>Muktesvara</i> | 15. <i>Matangesvara</i> |

Panamalai :

- 16.
- Talagirisvara*

The Somaskanda theme originated when the Pallava kings of the seventh and eighth centuries A D. made a distinct effort to integrate the worship of Siva with the Devi cult and the Murugan cult. In the Somaskanda panels carved in relief on stone, and in later Somaskanda bronzes, these three deities are shown as a family group. Siva and Uma are portrayed sitting on a throne with their son, Murugan, in the form of the young child, Skanda, between them. The term "Somaskanda" (sa-Uma-Skanda), translated into English, literally means, "with Uma and Skanda".

Ordinarily, in Saivite temples, where the main object of worship is the linga, no anthropomorphic form of the deity, either in painting or in carving, appears in the sanctum. However, in the Pallava period the custom was different. The carved Somaskanda panel is commonly found on the back inner wall of the sanctums of their Saivite temples. This practice was not continued by later dynasties. So as a rule of thumb, we can say

that if a Saivite temple has a sculptured panel in its sanctum, almost certainly it is a temple of the Pallava period.

In our first study, we have, on the basis of an analysis of the dress and ornaments of sculpted figures, established two distinct styles for the Pallava Somaskanda panels. The earlier style we call "pre-Rajasimha" and the later style, "Rajasimha" after the eighth century Pallava ruler whose identified temples have a total of around forty Somaskanda panels in them.

We know of only two examples of the pre-Rajasimha style Somaskanda. One of them is found in the third-level sanctum of the Dharmaraja Ratha, at Mahabalipuram. The other, which is on the back wall of the central cell of the Ramanuja Mandapam cave-temple, of the same place, has been destroyed. Only a rough outline of the figures remains.

Dharmaraja Ratha, Mahabalipuram

The Somaskanda panel in the third-level shrine of the Dharmaraja Ratha, therefore, is unique in that it is the only well-preserved Somaskanda which is of a distinctly pre-Rajasimha style. It is thus the earliest extant Somaskanda.

There are some interesting details of the Ratha's Somaskanda. In this panel, Siva, as indicated by his attitude, is imparting words of wisdom, and Uma is bending the tip of her right ear with her fore-finger so as to catch every word. There is a figure of a bird which is carved in light relief immediately above Siva's upper left hand. This is most probably the cock standard of Skanda, but the details are indistinct.

In our first study, we have noted those characteristics of the dress and ornaments which distinguish the Rajasimha-style from the pre-Rajasimha style in Pallava works of art. Such an analysis of dress and ornaments, we argued there, shows that the Ratha's Somaskanda belongs to the pre-Rajasimha period. With regard to our present comparison between the pre-Rajasimha style Somaskanda (Dharmaraja Ratha) and any of the numerous

Rajasimha-style Somaskandas, we note here the following points of contrast.

*Pre-Rajasimha Style
Somaskanda Panel
(Dharmaraja Ratha)*

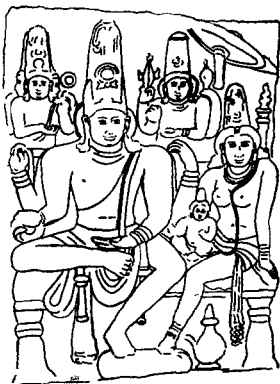
- 1 Uma is seated in profile.
2. Uma's back abuts the niche's edge.
- 3 Uma's left hand is in front clasping Skanda's waist.
- 4 Siva's lower left hand rests clenched on his left knee.
5. Siva's right leg only is down.
- 6 Siva's lower right forearm is held vertically close to his chest ('chin' mudra)
- 7 Two ganas with fly-whisks hover above Siva and Uma in corners of the panel Brahma and Vishnu stand on either side in adjoining niches.

*Rajasimha Style
(Shore Temple and
40 + other examples)*

- 1 Her torso is *always* turned front.
- 2 Because of her frontal posture, her back *never* abuts niche's edge.
- 3 Her left arm is *always* on her left side supporting her body.
4. His lower left hand *always* rests on his right ankle in dhyana mudra
- 5 *Always* only his left leg is down.
- 6 His lower right forearm is held horizontally away from his body.
7. *Never* any hovering ganas above. They are replaced by Brahma and Vishnu standing directly behind the throne just above Siva's upper arms.



“ Pre-Rajasimha Somaskanda,
Dharmaraja Ratha ”



“ Rajasimha Style Somaskanda,
Shore Temple ”

Ramanuja Mandapam, Mahabalipuram

As we have said, the Ratha's panel is the earliest *preserved* Somaskanda. We would maintain, however, that the smashed Somaskanda panel of the Ramanuja Mandapam, Mahabalipuram, is also pre-Rajasimha style. Another table of characteristics will show why we take the Ramanuja panel to be pre-Rajasimha :

Dharmaraja Ratha	<i>Pre-Rajasimha Style</i> Ramanuja Mandapam	<i>Rajasimha Style</i> Shore Temple & 40 + Others
1. Uma in profile.	1. also in profile.	1. <i>never</i> in profile
2. Uma's back abuts niche	2 also abuts niche.	2. <i>never</i> abuts niche.
3 Siva's lower left hand rests on left thigh.	3 lower left hand also on thigh (certainly not dhyana mudra)	3 lower left hand <i>always</i> in dhyana mudra.
4 Two ganas hover above Siva and Uma No Brahma and Vishnu in panel	4. also two hovering ganas and no Brahma and Vishnu.	4 <i>never</i> any hovering ganas. Instead, Brahma and Vishnu are behind throne of Siva

The Ramanuja Mandapam's Somaskanda relief has been chiselled and levelled off. However, the outline of figures remains, and the outline is enough to allow one to deduce the characteristics which are listed above.

It should be added that the details which are discernible in the smashed Durga panel of the Ramanuja Mandapam are similar to those of the Durga panel in the Adivaraha cave-temple of Mahabalipuram. These observations, taken together with an acknowledgement of the early architectural characteristics of this cave-temple, all go to support a pre-Rajasimha style.

Five more Temples, Mahabalipuram

Mahabalipuram has five more temples whose Somaskanda panels are in the Rajasimha-style. They are. (1) the Kshatriya-simhesvara, (2) Rajasimhesvara, (3) Mahishamardini Cave, (4) Mukundanayanar, and (5) Atranachandesvara. We include the Atranachandesvara cave-temple in the list since it is only a short distance away from the town of Mahabalipuram.

The Shore Temple actually has two Saivite temples each of which has a Somaskanda in its sanctum. The Atranachandesvara cave-temple has, in addition to the Somaskanda in its sanctum, two other Somaskandas carved on the rear wall of its *mandapam*.

The Mahishamardini Cave and the Mukundanayanar structural temple each has a Somaskanda in its sanctum sanctorum.

All of these Somaskanda panels are of the Rajasimha-style, as a summary of their characteristics will indicate. The following characteristics are common to *all* of these Somaskanda panels. Indeed, these characteristics are common to practically *all* of the Rajasimha-style Somaskandas. We therefore shall call it the

STANDARD TABLE OF CHARACTERISTICS OF RAJASIMHA-STYLE SOMASKANDAS

SIVA :

1. left leg only down.
2. four arms

upper right	holding snake's tail
lower right .	"chin" mudra.
upper left :	gnana mudra
lower left	ardha-dhyana mudra
3. lower right forearm held horizontally away from his body
4. ear ornaments are both makara kundalas.

UMA :

- 1 left leg only down
- 2 torso turned to the front (non-profile).
3. two arms
4. leaning on her left arm
- 5 peculiar head-dress a turban-like portion which is pinched in the middle and a tall crown-like portion.
- 6 ear ornaments are both patra kundalas.

SKANDA .

- 1 has same peculiar type of head-dress that Uma has.

GENERAL

1. no ganas in upper part of panel.
- 2 Brahma and Vishnu in panel immediately above Siva's upper hands (Brahma always to proper right, Vishnu to proper left)
3. umbrella above Uma.
- 4 asana is a royal throne

Vedagirisvara, Tirukkalukkunram

In addition to the Dharmaraja Ratha and Ramanuja Mandapam, the only other temple we could think of which might boast of a pre-Rajasimha style Somaskanda was the famous Vedagiris-

vara structural shrine on top of the hill at Tirukkalukunram. It was with great interest, therefore, that we visited it some time ago and had a look at the three carved stone slabs which form a major part of the inner back and side walls of the sanctum sanctorum.

The inner structure of the sanctum probably dates from the time of the Pallava king, Paramesvaravarman I, the father of Rajasimha. It is not generally appreciated that this ancient Pallava shrine is completely encased within a later Chola vimana. It is a temple within a temple.

From the outside only the Chola structure can be seen. The inner shrine belonging to Paramesvara's reign, therefore, is the oldest structural temple under worship in South India. There is another temple of Paramesvara's time at Kuram, but only the basement of the original structure remains and no regular worship is conducted there.

It must be said right away that the various descriptions of these relief carvings inside the sanctum, beginning with those of the *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* of 1909 (pp. 76-77), were based on mere hearsay. That information, unfortunately, was over-imaginative. The *Report* claims, for example, that

- (1) Markandeya appears in the Somaskanda panel (he does not);
- (2) two rishis appear in the northern panel (they do not); and
- (3) Nandikesvara and Chandikesvara appear in the southern panel (a puzzling way of describing Ardhanari seated on the bull, Nandi)

On the *Report's* authority, these misleading descriptions were repeated ²

Our own report follows. On the back inner wall of the sanctum which faces east is a typical Rajasimha-style stone Somaskanda panel of impressive dimensions. The pilasters framing the panel and the portion of the wall above it are clearly brick, *not stone*. On the inner side wall, facing north, is an equally large relief of Siva Ardhanari. Ardhanari, holding a veena

and other emblems, is seated on the bull, Nandi. To the upper right (proper) of Ardhanari in this panel is a small bust of Brahma with three of his faces showing. To the upper left (proper) is a small bust of Vishnu, wearing krita makuta.

On the inner side wall facing south is a panel showing a four-armed figure seated by itself on a royal throne, in almost the same pose and regalia which Siva has in the Somaskanda panel. We shall call this figure "Rajamurti". In this panel of Rajamurti, above and behind his throne, on either side, are two ladies of royal appearance in anjali mudra. There are no other figures.

On the outer sides of the sanctum walls, in deeply-recessed niches, there are similar but slightly smaller and very badly worn panels.³ The unusual depth of the niches is due to the fact that the Pallava shrine with its panels is encased within the later Chola structure. These outer panels duplicate the inner ones. That is, on the back wall of the sanctum, outside, facing west, is a second Somaskanda panel; on the southern wall, facing south, is a second Ardhanari; and on the northern wall, facing north, is a second Rajamurti flanked behind by two ladies in anjali mudra.

The two Somaskanda panels of this temple agree completely with all of the characteristics listed in the STANDARD TABLE (Rajasimha-style) given earlier in this study.

We give further details of the two Somaskandas below :

	<u>Inner Somaskanda</u>	<u>Outer Somaskanda</u>
SIVA :		
1. leg ornaments	none	none
2. diagonal bands over right arm ?	two (at least) no	one (visible) no
UMA		
1. leg ornaments	4 + 1	undeterminable (worn)
2. diagonal band between breasts ?	one (strands of pearls) yes	one no : down her left side
GENERAL.		
1. Vishnu's emblems :		
(a) flames ?	no	undeterminable (worn)
(b) valampuri ?	no	undeterminable (worn)
2. moon	yes : disc raised and crescent raised further	no
3. Nandi below	no	no
4. attendants below	one (as in Mahish Cave Somaskanda panel)	none
5. vessel below	yes. water pot type	yes: wide-mouth bowl
6. throne legs	non-animal	non-animal

We also give a detailed analysis of the Ardhanari and Rajamurti panels found in the same sanctum of the Vedagirisvara temple :

	<u>Inner Ardha- nari</u>	<u>Outer Ardha- nari</u>	<u>Inner Raja- murti</u>	<u>Outer Raja- murti</u>
THE GOD .				
1. leg ornaments	$\frac{1}{2}$ Siva : none $\frac{1}{2}$ Uma : none	$\frac{1}{2}$ S . undet. $\frac{1}{2}$ U : silambu	none	none
2. diagonal bands over right arm ?	two no	undeter. no	two no	I visible no
3. ear ornaments	$\frac{1}{2}$ S : makara $\frac{1}{2}$ U : patra	$\frac{1}{2}$ S . undet. $\frac{1}{2}$ U : undet.	both makara	both makara
4. leg position	left down	left down	left down	left down
5. four arms .				
upper right .	trisula shaft	undeter.	snake tail	undeter
lower right	snake staff	undeter	abhaya	abhaya.
upper left	veena neck	undeter	chin mudra	undeter
lower left .	veena neck	undeter.	ardha dhyana	ardha dhyana
GENERAL				
1 figures above	Brahma & V	nobody	two ladies	two ladies
2 asana .	Nandi	Nandi	throne	throne
(a) throne legs :	—	—	non-animal	non-animal
(b) ends of lateral back-rest :	—	—	makara head above rampant lion	makara head above rampant lion
3 figures below	none	none	none	none
4 yoga patta	on right knee, narrow	undeter	no	no

We add a few comments on the inner panel facing south with the figure we have called "Rajamurti". The *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* of 1909 describes this panel as representing Yoga-Dakshinamurti and two rishis R Nagaswamy has said that it represents Medha-Dakshinamurti and two female chauri-bearers⁴ It is difficult to see how a kingly figure seated on a royal throne, flanked by two ladies in anjali mudra (they do

not have chauris) can be Dakshinamurti. There are no sages, no tree, nor any of the other characteristics which usually go along with the Dakshinamurti theme. The figure is certainly not seated out in the forest, and as mentioned before, he has almost the same pose and regalia which Siva has in the Somaskanda panel.

It may be interesting to note that in the courtyard of the Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram, there is a stone block which has panels carved in relief on its four sides, two of which are similar Ardhanari and Rajamurti panels. These panels, much more modest in size and execution, and with variations of emblems and asanas, nevertheless reflect the style we see in the earlier and bigger panels of the Vedagirisvara temple.

Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram

The visits to the Vedagirisvara temple had roused our curiosity concerning the Somaskanda panels in the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi—that fountainhead, as it were, of Rajasimha's art. We soon found an opportunity to go there. Examining first the Somaskanda in the sanctum of the smaller temple, the Mahendravarmesvara, we found a panel which in every respect was typically Rajasimha in style. It agrees in every detail with the characteristics listed in the STANDARD TABLE (Rajasimha style).

We were stunned, therefore, when we saw next the Somaskanda in the main sanctum of the Rajasimhesvara: a diminutive panel which in no way can be considered the work of Rajasimha's period. It is certainly a later addition.

Anyone who has first seen the large and magnificent Somaskanda panel of the Vedagirisvara temple (whose sanctum is of modest dimensions—187 cm. length by 170 cm. breadth, approx.), would naturally expect an even more imposing panel in the Kailasanatha temple (whose main sanctum is 265 cm. in length and 273 cm. in breadth, approx.). But this is not the case. The Vedagirisvara panel is roughly 160 cm. high and

122 cm. broad (a vertical format). Whereas the Rajasimhesvara panel is only 94 cm. high and 115 cm. broad (a horizontal format).

But it is not just the small size of this panel which is unexpected. The details of the figures themselves are completely at variance with the usual Rajasimha style of Somaskanda (of which there are 29 such examples in this temple alone). In particular, the main sanctum's aberrant panel has :

1. Siva's *right* leg is down.
2. Siva has an *axe* in his upper right hand and a *deer* in his upper left.
3. Siva's lower right forearm is not held horizontally away with the 'chin' mudra (his lower left arm, unfortunately, seems to be broken off).
4. Brahma and Vishnu are not included in the panel.
5. There are no ganas above, either.
6. Nor any umbrella.
7. Uma is seated with *both* legs drawn up on the asana.
8. The asana has lost any resemblance to a royal throne.
9. Skanda is *standing* on the asana (between Uma and Siva).

Further analysis of details in dress and ornaments is impossible because the panel has a thick coating of plaster on it.

One more anomaly is that whereas the panel in the Mahendravarnesvara sanctum shows Siva and his family seated on a throne *in the facade of a shrine or pavilion* which is carved in relief with side pillars and kapota, there is no indication of such a facade in the Rajasimhesvara sanctum. However, such a facade is found framing the Somaskanda panels of Rajasimha-style in *all* of the structural temples—in the sanctums sanctorum. The only possible exception is the Vedagirisvara sanctum where the side pillars framing the panel are distinctive in both form and material (brick) and where there is no kapota.

Where, then, is the original Somaskanda? Hidden behind an added wall and this later panel? Removed as a war trophy many centuries ago, by the Chalukyas, for example? We feel, however, that the answer to this change in Somaskandas lies in a study of the evolution of linga cult in these early Pallava temples. The fourth study in this book pursues this question of linga cult

There are fragments of painted (not carved) Somaskanda panels which have been uncovered in a couple of the enclosure shrines of the Kailasanatha temple.⁵ Although little remains of the complete scene, there are some interesting details which add to our knowledge of the carved Somaskanda panels. For instance, in shrine #41, the three separate loops of Siva's diagonal bands are clearly shown in the painting. The large (and thick) diagonal band is made of many strands of pearls. The other two narrow diagonal bands seem to be strips of cloth: the shorter loop passing around his chest rather high on the right side; the longer loop falling almost vertically downward and disappearing beneath his belt and waist garments

Two side loops of the waist-bands are each weighted down by a heavy ring (with ornamental knob and tassel) through which they pass. The waistband, itself, is a long strip of folded or pleated cloth which is striped with transverse bars of colour

The glimpse one gets of Uma's bust, in the painting of shrine #23, is a perfect illustration of one of the ways in which girls used to paint their breasts in the early period. In the Kailasanatha painting the red colour of her breasts contrasts with the normal flesh colour of her stomach. Some art historians have long been attempting to clothe the heavenly maidens of the famous Sigrīya frescoes in Sri Lanka with diaphanous blouses. But it is quite clear in this Kailasanatha painting that the colourful, but otherwise invisible, "blouses" are merely applications of sandal paste.

Questions have been raised about the age of the fragments of painting found in the Kailasanatha temple. It is true that one can find several layers of plaster and paint—one on top of

the other. We have observed up to three layers of plaster and paint. But it is natural, in the absence of any contrary evidence, to take the layer of plaster and paint nearest the stone's surface to be the original. And when the paintings themselves (for example, in shrines #41 and #23) not only parallel the details of the sculptured panels, but actually make clear certain points which are otherwise obscure, then we are inclined to believe that the lowest layer of paint in these cases is coeval with the original construction of the temple.

The eastern and western enclosure shrines contain sculpted Somaskanda panels in typical Rajasimha style. In several cases, Brahma and Vishnu have been completely hidden by plaster during renovation.

On the wall between the shrines appear panels representing the king and a queen—they very closely resemble Siva and Uma in the Somaskandas. The king, of course, has only two arms. At the back, stand two chauri bearers.

It is interesting to note that the *Silparatnam* prescribes that Siva "must be like Rajaraja". Other works prescribe "Rajogunam" for Siva. Thus, the tradition of Siva being represented as the king continues even into the post-Rajasimha period.

Six Pallava Temples, Kanchipuram

Having seen the thirty Somaskanda panels of the Kailasanatha temple, we next turned our attention to six minor Pallava shrines—all of them also in Kanchipuram. In 1971 we visited all six of them and made a detailed comparison. All six of the Somaskanda panels in their sanctum exhibit the characteristics listed in the *Standard Table* (Rajasimha-style) with the following exceptions:

Siva, in the Iravatanesvara, Amaresvara, Muktesvara, and Matangesvara, has his lower right hand in abhaya mudra. And in the Muktesvara, Siva's upper hands hold an axe (right hand) and deer (left). It must be emphasized here that the Amaresvara, Airavatesvara, and Muktesvara temples all have Soma-

skaanda panels which are heavily plastered. So heavily so that even the details of emblems are conjectural. For instance, we find in the Muktesvara Somaskanda that Siva has the axe and deer emblems in his upper hands, a post-Rajasimha characteristic. But it is anybody's guess whether these stucco emblems truly represent the stone carving beneath.

Additional details are these :

	<u>Pirá-</u> <u>vatana</u>	<u>Irá-</u> <u>vatana</u>	<u>Amar-</u> <u>ésvara</u>	<u>Airá-</u> <u>vatesvara</u>	<u>Mukt-</u> <u>ésvara</u>	<u>Matang-</u> <u>ésvara</u>
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GENERAL :

1. ganas below .	3	3	none	1	none	1
2. vessels below	none	none	wide-mouth	?	none	none
3 throne legs :	lion	plain	plain	?	lion	lion
4 sanctum sides	carved	plain	plain	carved	carved	carved

Talagirisvara, Panamalai

There remained one major temple for us to see, and in August, 1971, we visited it the Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai. The Somaskanda in the sanctum is of the expected Rajasimha-style. Unfortunately it is rather thickly plastered over. What is unusual is that the Somaskanda panel is framed by a complete shrine (carved in relief) which rises high above to a second level which is topped by a barrel vaulted roof with kudu arches and two stupis.

The Somaskanda panel of this temple conforms to every one of the characteristics listed in the *Standard Table* (Rajasimha-style)

Additional details are these :

General :

1. The throne has a lateral back rest which ends in makara heads with rampant lions directly below them; the throne legs are non-animal.

2. No ganas or attendants below.
3. But two vessels: one pot with spout; and one wide-mouth bowl.
4. The sanctum's side (inner) walls are plain
5. There is a torch on a standard to the proper left of Uma's head—as is also found in a Shore Temple Somaskanda panel (Rajasimhesvara).

Siva has no leg ornaments. Uma has silambu and a diagonal band which passes between her breasts. Nothing can be said of Siva's diagonal bands, as there is a thick covering of plaster on his chest

Post-Rajasimha Style Somaskandas

The Somaskanda theme continued to be popular in the bronzes of Tamilnad for several hundred years. The later Somaskandas are distinctly different from the Rajasimha-style

Instead of dealing with individual Somaskandas of the later period, we shall contrast some of the characteristics of Somaskanda as laid down by the *Silparatinam* with those of the Rajasimha-style Somaskanda :

Rajasimha-Style Somaskanda

Silparatinam Somaskanda⁶

SIVA .

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. left leg only down | 1. right leg only down |
| 2. four arms | 2. four arms . |
| UR holding snake's tail | UR axe |
| LR "chin" mudra | LR abhaya |
| UL . gnana mudra | UL . spotted deer |
| LL ardha dhyana mudra | LL . kadaga or simhakarna |
| 3. ear ornaments both makara kundalas | 3. right ear: makara or simha
left ear patra kundala
or
both ears patra |

UMA :

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. peculiar head-dress turban-like portion pinched in the middle, tall crown-like portion. | 1. krita-shaped makuta |
|--|------------------------|

SKANDA :

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. always sitting. | 1. standing, sitting or dancing. |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|

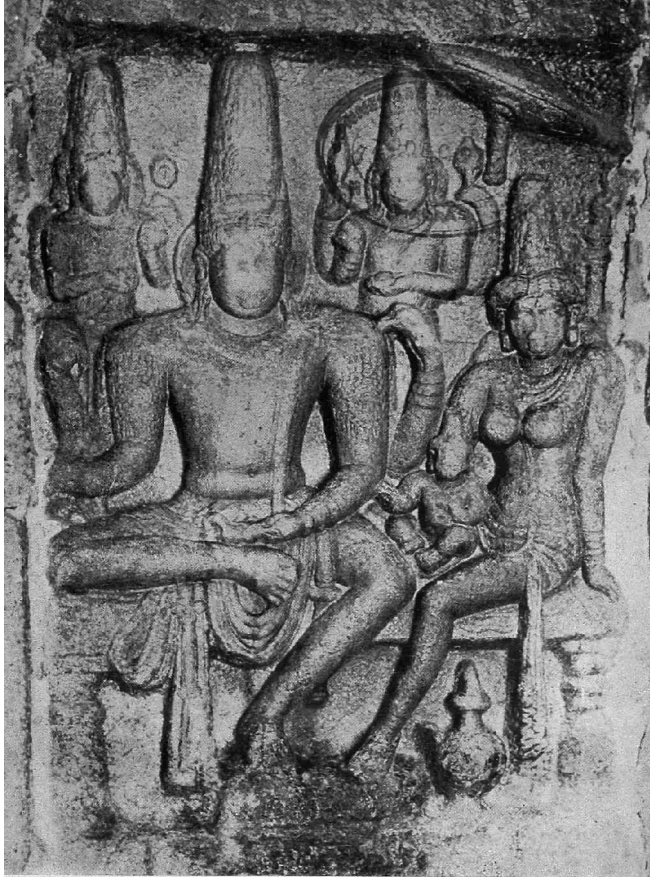


Plate 5. SOMASKANDA, RAJASIMHA-STYLE, SHORE TEMPLE (See page 21)



Plate 6. SOMASKANDA, POST-RAJASIMHA STYLE, TRISULAM TEMPLE, PALLAVARAM
(*See page 32*)

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to say that there are enough uniformities in all of the panels which we have examined to establish a Rajasimha-style for most of them. We have listed these common characteristics in the *Standard Table* (Rajasimha-style). We have called it "Rajasimha" because his authorship of several temples which contain the majority of this type of Somaskanda is clearly established by inscriptions. In our fourth study we shall argue, however, that it was his father, Parmesvaravarman I, who actually initiated the "Rajasimha" style and who was the author of some of these monuments.

In two cases, the Muktesvara and Matangesvara temples, inscriptions indicate that they were built after Rajasimha's reign, even though their Somaskanda panels continue in the Rajasimha-style.

In the Appendix, we have applied the techniques of numerical taxonomy to an analysis of stylistic differences in various Somaskanda panels

NOTES

¹ This second study is based on "Pallava Somaskanda", by Michael Lockwood, P. Dayanandan, and Gift Siromoney, a paper read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of South India, September 9, 1971, and on its modified version which appeared in two parts in *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, on the 19th and 26th of November, 1972

² For instance, see Longhurst's work, *Pallava Architecture* (Archaeological Survey of India, Memoir # 17, 1928), Pt. I, p 21. It is not until 1966 that one gets anything like an accurate description of the Vedagirisvara carvings. This description comes in the form of a note written by R. Nagaswamy which is appended to chapter eleven of S. R. Balasubrahmanyam's *Early Chola Art. Part I* (pp 251-52)

³ The "outer sides" of the main sanctum are nevertheless protected within the enclosing verandah walls and roofed over. Therefore, in the darkness, a light of some sort is necessary to see the panels in the outer niches.

⁴ See Nagaswamy's note, pp. 251-52, *Early Chola Art. Part I*.

⁵ In the enclosure shrine # 44, a carved panel of Siva and Uma has been inserted some nine inches in front of the back wall—which may still have the original painting intact.

⁶ Tanjore, 1961, ch. 22.

THREE

PALLAVA GANGADHARA¹

In the Introduction to our studies, we have briefly noted the story of Bhageeratha and the descent of the river Ganga which is narrated in the Ramayana. The point we would like to emphasize here is that the goddess Ganga was enraged when Siva commanded her to descend to earth :

*“ He calls me,” in her wrath she cried,
“ And all my flood shall sweep
And whirl him in o’erwhelming tide
To hell’s profoundest deep.”*

(After Griffiths’ Ramayana, 1. 190.)

But in the ensuing trial of strength, Siva proved his superiority by capturing the descending Ganga in the locks of his hair! There she stayed until her temper cooled down, when at last she flowed into the Vindu lake, the source of the seven sacred rivers of India.

It may be of interest to note here that the “ terrific ” aspect of Siva’s tussle with the goddess is clearly emphasized in the major Gangadhara panel of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchipuram, built in the early eighth century by the Pallava king, Rajasimha. This panel which forms the inner back wall of the central western sub-shrine of the main tower shows Siva with a fearsome expression. His mouth is slightly open, his teeth are bared, with two elongated fangs curving downward. These are details on the original sandstone carving.

In this same panel, Parvati stands on Siva’s left. As a matter of fact, Parvati appears for the very first time in any Pallava Gangadhara when she appears in the Gangadhara panels of this temple.

The Gangadhara theme is repeated on the facades of two of the enclosure shrines of the Kailasanatha temple. And what is extremely significant for the debate over the Penance Panel at Mahabalipuram (the question whether it is Bhageeratha's or Arjuna's penance) is the fact that one of the sub-shrine panels (sub-shrine # 50) actually shows Bhageeratha standing next to Siva in the same tortuous stance as is found in the Mahabalipuram Penance Panel. There is no parallel example in the whole range of Pallava art which thus portrays Siva and the penitent Arjuna.

The Gangadhara theme can be considered both as a terrific form as well as a grace-bestowing form of Siva. It is terrific in its aspect of portraying his contest with Ganga. It is grace-bestowing in its showing the god as fulfilling the fervent prayer of Bhageeratha. This double aspect is emphasized in the Kailasanatha temple by the Gangadhara theme appearing both in the southern row of enclosure shrines (which portray terrific forms of Siva) as well as the northern row of enclosure shrines (which portray grace-bestowing forms of the god).

It is the much earlier Gangadhara panel of king Mahendra's in his cave-temple at Tiruchirappalli which is the subject of the following study. This particular panel would seem to emphasize the grace-bestowing aspect of the theme.

The new contribution which this study seeks to make to Indian art history is the realization that an Indian king had an image of a god carved, which image was at the same time a portrait or representation of the king himself. That king was Mahendra I, and the image is the Tiruchi Gangadhara. Historians know that the practice of making 'God-king' images was common in the eastern colonies of India. But in the following study, we would not only establish that this practice existed in India, we would also suggest that it most probably originated here.



Gangadhara Panel, Tiruchirappalli.

Near the summit of the Rock Fort Hill at Tiruchirappalli, there is a cave-temple created in the seventh century A.D. by the Pallava king Mahendra I. His craftsmen carved a large panel representing Siva Gangadhara on the living rock which forms the western wall of the cave-temple. In the art history of the Tamil country, this carving marks the very earliest extant, large stone-sculptured panel representing a deity.

On the two pillars—actually, pilasters—which frame this imposing carving, there is a famous inscription of king Mahendra. This inscription was translated as far back as 1890 by

Dr. E. Hultzsch in the first volume of *South Indian Inscriptions*. His interpretation has, more or less, been followed by scholars up to the present day. However, we wish to present a fresh translation of this inscription which is radically different at three key points

First, Hultzsch, in his translation says, that king Mahendra "placed" an image of Siva in the cave-temple. The English word "placed" is utterly misleading here, and Hultzsch and others have concluded that a separate piece of sculpture was brought from somewhere and "placed" in the cave-temple. But, in fact, the image referred to in the inscription is the obvious one: the figure of Gangadhara in the relief panel itself which was carved *in situ*. The Sanskrit word "*nidhaya*" may be translated quite fairly as "made (*in situ*)" and therefore we have freely used the word "carved" in this sense..

Secondly, when king Mahendra had the figure of Siva Gangadhara carved in anthropomorphic form, it was given the human form of the king himself. That is, when we look at the Gangadhara panel, we are actually seeing a figure of Siva which is at the same time a portrait of king Mahendra. This is the significance of the passage in the inscription which claims that in the making of the image of Siva, the king "became himself immortal together with Siva before the eyes of the world." We probably see in this figure of Gangadhara not only the bodily and facial likeness of the king, but also his royal dress and ornaments. If this appears vainglorious on the part of the king, one ought to remember that in Saivism, as in other faiths, the human person, itself, has been taken as a true temple or house of God. This is certainly the idea conveyed in the inscription when it speaks of God being immanent in the king.

Thirdly, in the inscription, the title "Daughter of the Mountain" was taken by Hultzsch, and by everyone else since his day, to refer to Parvati. But we wish to submit that in the context of the Gangadhara theme, the "Daughter of the Mountain" is none other than Ganga. Ganga, as well as

Parvati, is referred to in literature as the Daughter of the Mountain. And it is extremely significant that in the story of Bhageeratha, in the *Ramayana*, where the theme of Siva Gangadhara occurs (the very same theme of the carved panel), Ganga is referred to as the elder daughter of the king of the Himalaya mountains, Himavan. The Sanskrit passage reads :

*iyam haimavati jyestha Ganga Himavatah suta.*²

When these three points of reinterpretation are kept in mind, then the full relevance of the inscription to the Gangadhara panel becomes immediately apparent.

Mahendra's Inscription

The inscription begins on the northern pilaster :

When king Gunabhara (Mahendra) carved a stone figure (Gangadhara) in the wonderful stone temple on top of the most splendid of mountains, this king, entitled "*Vidhi*" (the Creator), made "*Sthanu*" (Siva) true to its meaning (stationary), and became himself "*sthanu*" (fixed, immortal) together with him (Siva) before the eyes of the world.

The Lord of this earthly realm, Satrumalla (Mahendra), made on this mountain a temple for the "Lord of Mountains" (Siva), the husband of (Ganga) the "Daughter of the King of Mountains", in order to make the name "*Girisa*" true to its meaning.

When Hara (Siva) politely asked him: "How could I, while remaining in a temple on earth, see the great land of the Cholas or the river Kaveri?", king Gunabhara, whose empire rivals the empire of Manu, assigned to him (Siva) this mountain-temple which kisses the clouds.

Having joyfully made this figure of Hara which has no equal, and having made it on top of the mountain, this Purushottama (Mahendra), who (like the mountain) bore "on his head" (that is, incarnate in his features and in his

mind) God immanent, thus made the mountain worthy of its loftiness.

The inscription continues on the southern pilaster :

Being afraid that the God who is fond of rivers (Siva), having seen the Kaveri, whose waters please the eye, who wears a garland of gardens, and who possesses lovely qualities, might fall in love with her (also), the Daughter of the Mountain (Ganga) has left her father's family to reside, I reckon, permanently on this mountain, calling this river (Kaveri) the beloved (wife) of the Pallava (king)

As the king called Gunabhara has (assumed in this manner) the form (of Siva), let this form (the figure of Gangadhara, together with its great fame) forever spread throughout the world the faith which has turned its back on hostile conduct (towards the truth of Saivism)!

This mountain is, as it were, the diadem of the Chola province, this temple of Hara its chief jewel, and the splendour of Sankara (Siva) its splendour.

By the stone-chisel a material body (figure)³ of Satyasandha (Mahendra) was executed, and by the same chisel an eternal embodiment of his fame was produced.

By excavating (this) mountain (temple), Gunabhara's devotion was (thus) given permanent expression.

As we have mentioned above, the Gangadhara panel is framed by two pilasters, and it is on these two pilasters that the inscription is engraved.

If one were to find an inscription on the pedestal of a statue, it would be most natural to expect some intimate relation between the statue and the inscription. The same thing should be expected here in the case of the Gangadhara panel. The inscription refers to the panel itself, and to the figures therein, and not to some supposed separate pieces of carving which would have been "placed" at the opposite end of the cave-temple (far away from the inscription).

It has long been known that from a very early period in "Greater India", there existed the practice of creating images of gods which were at the same time portraits of royal persons. In R. C. Majumdar's work on "Champa.", there is an ancient inscription which explicitly and unequivocally mentions this custom. It is the "Hoa-Que stela^s inscription" of Bhadravarman III. The relevant passage is translated thus :

[Ugradevi's] brothers, being of one mind and with the permission of their mother, have erected in the middle of their native place, in the saka year denoted by "*gagana-dvi-mangala*" (820), an image of Sri Maharudradeva, out of devotion to, and in imitation of the features of their father, named Ajna Sarthavaha, brother of the chief queen of king Sri Indravarman.

To the north of this they erected, in their native place, in the saka year denoted by "*kha-vahni-tanu*" (830), an image of Bhagavati, out of devotion to and in imitation of the features of their mother named Pu Pov ku Rudrapura, who had issued from a family, pure from time immemorial, and who had herself established in the saka year denoted by "*Chandra-Agni-tanu*"—(831), the images of Devi, Ganesa and Kumara .⁴

Since the brothers made an image of a goddess in the likeness of their mother's features in the saka year 830, and we learn from the inscription that the mother was herself alive and active in the following year (Saka 831), we have a record of the practice of making an image of a god in the likeness of a living person⁵.

Ananda K Coomaraswamy in his book, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, speaking of the cult of deifying royal ancestors, says that the custom existed in Java, and he mentions in particular the portrait of king Erlanga as Vishnu. Coomaraswamy further adds, however, that in

India, royal images were indeed often set up in temples, but so far as we know always in human form.⁶



Plate 7. DESCENT OF THE GANGA, MAHABALIPURAM (See page 35)



Plate 8. SIVA GANGADHARA, ADIVARAHIA CAVE-TEMPLE, MAHABALIPURAM

Mahendra's Tiruchirappalli cave-temple inscription reveals, then, that contrary to Coomaraswamy's supposition, the custom of making an anthropomorphic image of a god, which was at the same time a portrait of a person, was practised in the "Mother Land", and has been documented in the early seventh century A.D. We may reasonably assume from this that "Greater India" was only following a custom which had developed at some earlier period in India itself.

NOTES

¹ This third study is based on "Pallava Gangadhara", by Michael Lockwood and A. Vishnu Bhat, a paper read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of South India, March 20, 1973, and subsequently published under the same title in the *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*, Vol. XXVIII, Parts 3-4 (July-October, 1972), pp. 159-166. A modified version of this paper appeared in *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, on April 22, 1973.

² *The Ramayana*, Balakanda, Chapter 42, Sloka 23 (Sanskrit edition published by Jalana Motilal, Gorakhpur, p. 82).

³ This figure is simply the Gangadhara image in its aspect of being also a portrait of king Mahendra.

⁴ R. C. Majumdar, *Champa*, Vol. I, Book II of *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East* (Lahore: The Punjab Sanskrit Book Depot, 1927), p. 120.

⁵ It must be admitted, however, that the grammatical structure of the passage throws doubt on the correctness of the reading of the dates.

⁶ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965—first published by Karl W. Hiersemann in 1927), p. 185.

FOUR

GOD-KING IMAGES AND CULT WORSHIP ¹

There has been a difference of opinion among scholars over the question of a linga cult in early Pallava Saivite temples. Linga worship was a common practice in many parts of India during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., and it was perhaps only natural to suppose that the Pallavas followed the same practice in their Saivite temples. But some scholars have tried to argue that the linga was not the object of worship in any Pallava temple until a date later than the construction of Rajasimha's temples in the early part of the eighth century.

Our fourth study goes against this view and supports the opinion that the consecrated object of worship in Rajasimha's temples was indeed the linga, and that the same was true of Mahendra's cave-temple at Tiruchi.

We are not claiming that every Saivite temple of the early Pallavas originally had a linga in its sanctum. The central sanctum of the Trimurti cave-temple at Mahabalipuram, for instance, did not. The object of worship there was the relief image of Siva in anthropomorphic form carved on the back wall of the sanctum.

However, we are arguing for an original linga cult specifically with regard to Mahendra's Tiruchi cave-temple and all of Rajasimha's structural temples.

The subject matter of our third study, "Pallava Gangadhara", especially the famous inscription of the Tiruchi cave-temple, provides supporting evidence for an early Pallava linga cult. And the practice of making God-king images, which is introduced there, is developed further in the present study.

Two major problems are dealt with in this paper. One of them is the question of the God-king relationship expressed in

the art of the Pallavas. The other problem is the question of whether there was linga worship in the early Pallava Saivite temples.

These two problems are indirectly related, and we have tried to draw upon the evidence in one field for enlightenment in the other.

1. Pallava Linga Worship

Mr. K. R. Srinivasan in his *Sankara Parvati Endowment Lectures*, 1959-60, advanced the following thesis :

... the sanctums in the early Pallava cave-temples dating upto 730 A.D. in Tondaimandalam and dedicated to Siva were devoid of a "linga" of Pallava origin. Even in the structural temples of Rajasimha with the Somaskanda relief on the hind wall of the sanctum, forming the primary object of worship, the installation of the "lingas" was an afterthought, as the *in situ* evidences would indicate.²

The evidence put forward in the above lectures was developed and augmented by Mr. K. V. Soundara Rajan in his 1964 paper, " 'Cult' in the Pallava Temples".³ In this paper he points out that during the Mahendra, Mahamalla, and Paramesvara reigns :

There was no provision for any "linga" to be fixed in the centre of the shrine chamber. . . .⁴

And a little later in the same paper :

Although "lingas" are found in most of the temples of Rajasimha, as we see them today, there are strong grounds in favour of their being later insertions.⁵

Some of these arguments are based on the observation that the arrangements for abhiseka in early Pallava temples follow no rational plan and betray a make-shift workmanship and crude improvisation—a crudeness which is not in keeping with the care and precision shown in the plan and the construction of the temples themselves.

The abhiseka arrangements which appear crude are as follows. First, the channel on the floor for removing the abhiseka water is often crudely cut, and the spout on the outside appears improvised—and in some cases was not even provided. Secondly, some of the linga pithas are oversize for the sanctum and have therefore required assembly in parts. Thirdly, in the Saivite cave-temples of the early period which now have lingas, these lingas are sometimes not truly centred in the cells. The ‘Cult’ article concludes that the “use of regular pranala [spout, with properly oriented channel] came into ritual use by about the end of the eighth century A.D.”⁶

Now, let us grant the contention of these two scholars that the present lingas and pithas are later additions (on the basis of their sound observations). One can, nevertheless, still maintain the thesis that an earlier form of linga was the central object of worship in many of these very same early Saivite temples, especially those of Rajasimha.

For instance, the abhiseka ritual, itself, might have been only of a token nature, and therefore would not have required any channel or spout. If these original lingas were anything like the one pictured in the bas-relief panel of the Airavatesvara (Pallava) temple, Kanchipuram, this could have been the case. Such a linga has a square base with miniature rampant lion pilasters at its corners and an elaborately carved padmabandha on the linga’s shaft. This linga has no apparent arrangement whatsoever for the abhiseka ritual as practised today. Further, such a form of the linga (especially if it were carved out of a single block of stone) might not have required any special provision for being fixed in the centre of the shrine’s chamber.

Or again, another possibility, in case there was abhiseka water flowing off these earlier type lingas, is that the abhiseka water was collected in a container placed in the cella, itself, and therefore the channel and spout outside were not originally required.

But there is still another argument which has been used to back up the thesis that lingas represent a later development in the ritual of these temples. According to K. V. Soundara Rajan,

some of the foundation inscriptions of these temples actually state explicitly that Siva in the Somaskanda form was the main object of worship in many early Pallava Saivite temples. In his book, *Indian Temple Styles*, he says :

For Rajasimha's explicit reference to Somaskanda as the consecrated God in his temples, we must refer to the inscriptions found in the cave-temple of his at Saluvankuppam near Mahabalipuram.⁷

The reference here is to the fifth sloka of the Atiranachandesvara inscription. This sloka may be translated as follows :

(King) Atiranachanda, the lord of the rulers of the earth, is the cause of the making of this temple (called) Atiranachandesvara. May Pasupati (Siva), together with the " Daughter of the Mountain " (Parvati or Uma), Guha (Skanda), and his retinue of ganas, always be happy here

At face value, this passage would seem to support the claim that Somaskanda was indeed the consecrated object of worship in this cave-temple. And there is, in fact, a Somaskanda panel carved in bas-relief on the rear wall of its sanctum.

But the famous inscription of the Pallava king, Mahendra I, in his cave-temple, Tiruchi, provides evidence for an alternate interpretation.

There is a much disputed passage in this inscription which has crucial significance for our study. It reads as follows :

Gunabhara namani rajany anena lingena lingini jnanam
prathan chiraya loke vipaksha vritteh paravrittam.

Dr. E. Hultzsch, in the first volume (p. 29) of *South Indian Inscriptions* (1890), translated this passage as follows :

While the king called Gunabhara is a worshipper of the *linga*, let the knowledge which has turned back from hostile (*vipaksha*) conduct, be spread for a long time in the world by this *linga*!

If this translation were to be accepted as a correct reading of the Sanskrit, it would naturally provide almost conclusive evidence that the *linga* was an object of worship in Mahendra's kingdom—and most probably in this Tiruchī cave-temple, itself.

But there is more than one way of interpreting the above passage, and at least two scholars have taken exception to Hultzsch's interpretation. In the *Cave-Temples of the Pallavas*, K. R. Srinivasan says of this cave-temple of Mahendra's:

The temple is called *silā-bhavana* ("the wonderful stone house") and the installed object is referred to as *sailitanu* (stone body or form), which seems to suggest a stone image or *sakala linga* and not perhaps a symbol or *nishkala linga*.⁸

Thus on his interpretation, the consecrated object of worship which was placed in the shrine's chamber would have been an anthropomorphic image of Śiva and not a symbolic *linga*. The author then explains the use of the expression "*lingena lingini*" in the inscription:

In the context of the preceding verses *linga* would denote only the entire work (excavation of the cave-temple and the installation therein) of the *lingin* viz. king Gunabhara.⁹

In the article, " 'Cult' in the Pallava Temples ", K. V. Soundara Rajan gives the following comment on the Sanskrit passage under discussion:

To begin with, "*linga*" as well as "*lingin*" used by the royal author of the epigraph should at once put us wise about the *gudhartha* rather than the *vyakta* character of the nomenclature. If Mahendra meant a physical *linga*—the object of worship—he would have certainly been more explicit and less pedantic. That he did not imply the material *linga* is also borne out by the rest of the sentence, which also indulges in denominational jargon of "*vipakṣa vṛtti*" etc.¹⁰

Now I fully agree with these two scholars when they claim that in the Tiruchī inscription the primary meaning of "*linga*"

refers to the anthropomorphic form of Siva. But I must disagree with them in their assumption that the anthropomorphic image of Siva referred to in the inscription was an image installed in the sanctum of the cave-temple, which image is now missing.

In our third study, we have tried to establish three points vital to the proper interpretation of this Tiruchi inscription :

(1) the Sanskrit word "*nidhaya*" in this inscription does not mean "placed" or "installed", but rather "created (*in situ*)"—and the anthropomorphic image of Siva referred to by the inscription is therefore none other than Gangadhara, carved on the living rock of the western wall of the mandapam of the cave-temple ;

(2) the Gangadhara figure is, at one and the same time, both an anthropomorphic image of Siva as well as a portrait of king Mahendra ; and

(3) the title " Daughter of the Mountain " refers to Ganga, who is depicted anthropomorphically in the Gangadhara panel and does not refer to Parvati (supposedly an installed figure which is now missing).

On our interpretation, the *entire* inscription (which is found on the two pilasters framing the Gangadhara panel) refers in its primary meaning to the contents and figures of this panel.

The significance of our interpretation is this : the words " *anena lingena lingini* " do refer in their primary meaning to the anthropomorphic form of Siva—specifically to Siva in the Gangadhara panel. But the expression " *lingena lingini* " is an unusual one, to say the least, and the poet must surely be punning here. Thus the secondary meaning of " *lingena lingini* " should be understood in the sense in which Hultzsch has translated it : that king Gunabhara (Mahendra) was a worshipper of the linga (the aniconic form of Siva).

That the poet is punning here is quite in keeping with the general style of this inscription. For instance, in the very first sloka he puns repeatedly on the word " *sthanu* ".¹¹

The outcome of this line of reasoning is the conclusion that Mahendra's inscription definitely refers (though in a secondary meaning) to linga worship.

Our translation¹² of the disputed passage, giving its primary meaning, is as follows .

As the king called Gunabhara has (assumed in this manner) the form (of Siva), let this form (the figure of Gangadhara, together with its great fame) forever spread throughout the world the faith which has turned its back on hostile conduct (towards the truth of Saivism) !

The same passage, giving its secondary meaning, would be :

As the king called Gunabhara is a worshipper of the linga, let this linga forever spread throughout the world the faith which has turned its back on hostile conduct (towards the truth of Saivism) !

Now let us return to the claim, in the book, *Indian Temple Styles* (p 105), that a Pallava king made explicit reference to Somaskanda (and not to the linga) as the consecrated God in his Saluvankuppam cave-temple. It seems to me that the Tiruchi inscription of Mahendra provides grounds for an alternate interpretation which could challenge the above claim.

The Tiruchi inscription repeatedly declares that king Mahendra made the cave-temple there for Siva. And throughout the inscription the *explicit* reference to the God is *only to his anthropomorphic form* ! Take for example the following sloka .

When Hara (Siva) politely asked him (the king): "How could I while remaining in a temple on earth, see the great land of the Cholas or the river Kaveri?", king Gunabhara (Mahendra) whose empire rivals the empire of Manu, assigned to him (Siva) this mountain-temple which kisses the clouds

And yet we have seen that the anthropomorphic form of Siva referred to by the inscription was not any consecrated image installed in the sanctum, but rather the figure of Gangadhara in the panel carved on the wall opposite the shrine's chamber

Further, we have seen that the secondary meaning of the words "lingena lingini" is that king Mahendra worshipped the linga, and thus the linga should have actually been the con-

secrated form of Siva worshipped in the sanctum of this particular cave-temple.

We may conclude, on this interpretation, that God was One for the poet—whether in the anthropomorphic form of Siva Gangadhara, or the form of the consecrated linga, or the Spirit indwelling in the king's consciousness—God immanent. That the poet chose to speak *explicitly* of Siva in the anthropomorphic form rather than in the form of the symbolic linga, should not surprise us. The magnificent panel of Gangadhara, which was also a portrait in stone of king Mahendra, was there for all to gaze upon and admire.

2. Image of Deity and King

The Tiruchi Gangadhara is the earliest known example in India where the artist has combined in one anthropomorphic figure both an image of a deity as well as a royal portrait. Was this artistic synthesis of the divine with the human continued in the art of the Pallavas? I suggest that the Somaskanda image represents just such a combination. Only, that in the Somaskanda panels there are three figures which represent both divine beings as well as royal persons. A well-known inscription of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchipuram, outlines such a parallelism in poetic language:

Just as Guha (also called Subrahmanya or Kumara) took birth from the Supreme Lord (Siva), the destroyer of the warlike (demon) Pura, thus from the supreme Lord Ugradanda (king Paramesvara I), who was born in the race of these (viz., the Pallavas), the prince (subrahmanya, kumarah), the illustrious Atyantakama (i.e., king Rajasimha), the chief of the Pallavas . . .¹³

In this sloka, king Rajasimha and his royal father (king Paramesvara I) are compared to the divine Skanda and his father, Lord Paramesvara (Siva). It is significant that the Somaskanda panel (showing Siva, his consort Uma, and their infant son

Skanda, all seated on a royal throne) is repeated more than 28 times in the Kailasanatha temple built by king Rajasimha.

The same comparison between kings and gods is drawn in the Panamalai inscription of king Rajasimha :

From the lord Ekamalla (king Paramesvara I) . . . was born, like Guha (i.e., Skanda) from the great Isvara (Siva), he . . . who was well-known as (king) Rajasimha . . .¹⁴

Or, again, to return to the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi, there is the famous "Rangapataka" inscription¹⁵ which likens the queen Rangapataka to Uma (Parvati) and compares her husband, the king, to Paramesvara (Siva) :

(She), who (was) the dearly beloved wife of (her) husband, (king) Paramesvara, whose fame was widespread (under the title) 'Kalakala' on account of his meritorious deeds, and whose bow's power was made manifest in the destruction of cities,

just as (Parvati or Uma) the "Daughter of the Mountain" was of (Siva) the "Bull-bannered One", (i.e., the dearly beloved of Paramesvara—the Supreme Lord, whose fame was widespread as Kalakala—the Destroyer of Death, and whose power was made manifest in the destruction of cities—as Tripurantaka),

that (queen) Rangapataka . . . was the cause of this beautiful temple being built . . .

Scholars have unanimously believed queen Rangapataka to be the wife of king Rajasimha. But this is not so. Rangapataka was the wife of king Paramesvara I, the father of Rajasimha

Scholars have followed Hultzsch in this matter, but Hultzsch was misled in his own translation of the "Rangapataka" inscription when he mixed up the verses found on the front and back of the little shrine¹⁶. There are two lines of verse on the front of the shrine (one below the other¹⁷), and one line on the rear of the shrine. Hultzsch has taken the single verse at the back of the shrine and wrongly sandwiched it between the first (upper)

line and the second (lower) line which are inscribed on the front of the shrine.

The proper order, however, is to read the two front verses together, and read the verse on the back separately

Once the proper order of verses is established, then it is easy to note that the two lines of verse on the front of the shrine are definitely cast in the *past* tense, whereas the single line of verse inscribed on the back of the shrine is just as definitely put in the *present* tense. It is positively incorrect grammar to mix them up!

The two lines of verse on the front refer to the deceased king, Paramesvara I, and to his surviving queen, the widow, Rangapataka. Naturally, the past tense is suitable.

The single line of verse in the rear refers to the then reigning king, Narasimhavishnu (Rajasimha), and to his chief queen (who is unnamed). Naturally, the present tense is suitable.

(While king) Narasimhavishnu, true to his holy vow, is protecting the encircling world, (and) tearing out the hearts of his enemies (just as the god Narasimhavishnu did), his favourite queen shines with surpassing splendour, subduing, as it were, (even) the pride of Pushkaradevata (i.e., Lakshmi, the consort of god Narasimhavishnu).

On the inner back wall of the sanctum of the "Rangapataka" shrine is a stone bas-relief Somaskanda panel - We may conclude from our analysis above of the two lines of verse on the front of this shrine that the comparison between gods and royal persons is maintained :

king Paramesvara I = Paramesvara (Siva)
 queen Rangapataka = Uma (or Parvati)

This comparison fits in with the other two inscriptions already mentioned which made the following comparison

king Paramesvara I = Paramesvara (Isvara or Siva)
 king Rajasimha = Guha (Skanda)

Now, besides this parallelism between poetic comparison and sculptured panel, is there any further evidence to support my claim that the Somaskanda figures originally possessed an aspect of royal representation? Fortunately, there is a Pallava temple which provides substantial support for my theory. It is the Vedagirisvara shrine at Tirukkalukunram.

In the paper, " 'Cult' in the Pallava Temples ", there is the following statement :

... according to religious canons, normally only *one* exclusive object of worship is to be installed ¹⁸

The import of such religious canons for the main thesis of the "Cult" article is this : since one finds the Somaskanda panel on the inner back wall of most of the temple sanctums belonging to king Rajasimha, then one ought to conclude that the Somaskanda was originally the exclusive, consecrated object of worship—not the linga which, though perhaps the chief object of veneration today, represents nevertheless a later intrusion.

The Vedagirisvara sanctum presents a serious blow to this line of reasoning. There are no less than three equally large carved panels of deities which fill up most of the space of the inner walls of the sanctum of this temple.¹⁹ On the inner back wall is a superb Somaskanda panel. On the inner wall facing north is an equally imposing panel depicting a four-armed Siva Ardhanari holding a veena and trident, and seated on the bull, Nandi. On the inner wall facing south is a third panel which depicts a royal-looking figure with four arms. This king-like figure is seated on a throne which is identical with the type of royal throne found in the Somaskanda panel. Standing in back of this king-like figure, just behind his upraised left and right hands, are two queen-like ladies with their hands in *anjali mudra*.

With these three equal-size panels of deities in the sanctum, it would be difficult to maintain that only one of them was the consecrated object of worship.

But what is one to make of the seated king-like figure (which in a previous study we have called "Rajamurti") in the

panel facing south, who has two queen-like ladies in attendance? It is specifically this figure which reveals to us most clearly that behind these works of art depicting deities, there is also a positive aspect of royal representation, if not portraiture.

Others have seen in this Rajamurti panel a type of Dakshina-murti.²⁰ But frankly, the only thing in common, here, would be the aspect of meditation (indicated by the Rajamurti's ardha-dhyana mudra of the lower left hand) and wisdom (indicated by his chin mudra of the upper left hand).

A more significant comparison can be made between this figure of Rajamurti and figures in the *earlier*²¹ panels of the Adivaraha cave-temple and the Dharmaraja Ratha, both of Mahabalipuram.

The figure we wish to draw attention to in the Adivaraha cave-temple is the portrait of king "Simhavishnu". The figure of Rajamurti and the portrait of Simhavishnu have the following characteristics in common:

- (1) both have the bearing and full regalia of kingship;
- (2) both are seated majestically on a royal throne;
- (3) both figures have a hand in chin mudra (indicating great spiritual wisdom); and
- (4) both are attended by two consorts (queens) who are standing respectfully either to the side of the throne (Adivaraha) or behind the throne (Vedagirisvara).

Again, the portrait relief sculpture of king Simhavishnu in the Adivaraha temple may very well be taken as the model for Siva in the early Somaskanda panel in the third level sanctum of the Dharmaraja Ratha.²² Both figures (the portrait of Simhavishnu and the Ratha's Siva) are very similar in their general posture, and have the following characteristics in common:

- (1) both have right hand (Siva's lower right) in chin mudra;
- (2) both have left hand (Siva's lower left) clenched in a fist and placed on the left thigh;

- (3) both are seated on a royal throne (Siva's is unfinished, though).

The line of evolution can thus be traced as follows :

- (1) first, the figure of Siva Gangadhara, Tiruchi, which is also a portrait of king Mahendra (clearly establishing for us the God-king synthesis in Pallava art) ,
- (2) second, the straight portrait of king Simhaviṣṇu in the Adivaraha temple of Mamalla's period ;
- (3) third, the similar looking representation of Siva (God-king) in the "pre-Rajasimha"-style Somaskanda panel of the Dharmaraja Ratha ;²³ and
- (4) finally, the transformation of the "pre-Rajasimha"-style Somaskanda into the "Rajasimha"-style Somaskanda, and its widespread repetition in the many shrines of king Rajasimha—more than 40 such Somaskanda panels have survived

Even considering only the "Rajasimha"-style Somaskanda panels, there is discernible among them a definite evolutionary trend. I would hold that those Somaskanda panels which tend to fill up the entire back wall of the sanctum are the earliest. Specific examples of such early panels would be the huge Somaskanda of the Mahiṣamardini cave-temple at Mahabalipuram, and the inner Somaskanda of the Vedagirisvara temple at Tirukkalukkunram

In filling up the back wall of the sanctum, these examples only follow the practice obtaining in the early temples of Mahabalipuram, such as the Draupadi Ratha, the third-level shrine of the Dharmaraja Ratha, the central shrine of the Ramanuja Mandapam cave-temple, and all three cells of the Trimurti cave-temple.

Further, another aspect of the evolution of the Somaskanda panels which should be kept in mind is that the God-king equation in them is most appropriate and flattering to the earlier king, Paramesvara I, since the parallel is between himself and

Lord Paramesvara (Siva), the head of the divine family. The God-king relationship is not as flattering to his son, king Rajasimha, since the parallel would be between Rajasimha and the infant Skanda, who as an infant is outranked by Siva, his father, and, iconographically speaking, even by his mother, Uma.

Let us then postulate the following: the Vedagirisvara Somaskanda and the Mahishamardini cave Somaskanda are the works²⁴ of king Paramesvara I.

Now when we compare the Somaskanda panels in the established temple of Rajasimha with the above two panels, we note several things. First the relative size of the Rajasimha panels (when compared to the dimensions of the sanctum's back wall) is drastically reduced. The panels are small. They occupy just a fraction of the space on the back wall. Secondly, the relative size of the three main figures (Siva, Uma, and Skanda) in relation to each other become more stylized. For instance, in the Rajasimha temple panels, Uma is distinctly smaller in relation to Siva than she is in the Mahishamardini cave Somaskanda panel. The relation of size between Siva and Uma in the Mahishamardini cave panel is far closer to what would be the case between an actual human male and female. In other words, the Mahishamardini cave Somaskanda is closer to actual royal portraiture than is any of the Somaskanda panels in Rajasimha's temples.

This obvious departure by Rajasimha's panels from the physical norms of relative figure size, together with the reduction of overall panel size is quite in keeping with the process of ritual formalization going on during Rajasimha's reign and with the fact that the parallelism between king Rajasimha and the *infant* Skanda is less appropriate. Should we not, then, expect that the actual consecrated objects of worship in the sanctums of Rajasimha's temples were lingas and not the Somaskanda panels?

In further support of this conjecture, I wish to point out a fact which is otherwise extremely hard to understand. In two out of the seven subordinate *lateral shrines* of the Kailasanatha-

temple Kanchi, there are huge carved Somaskanda panels which fill not only the back wall of the shrines but spill over into the side walls also. It seems clear that no lingas were planned for these subordinate lateral shrines.²⁵ Now, if one believes that the Somaskanda panel was the exclusive consecrated object of worship in the main sanctum, one has to answer this question: How is it possible that the Somaskanda panels in the *main* sanctums of the Kailasanatha (both the Rajasimhesvara and the Mahendravar- mesvara) are very much *smaller* than those in the *subordinate* lateral shrines of the Rajasimhesvara? It seems to me that the proponents of the thesis that the Somaskanda panel was the exclusive object of worship in the sanctum sanctorum have no adequate answer to this paradox.

But there is no paradox when one supposes that there *was* a linga as the consecrated object of worship in the sanctum sanctorum from the very beginning, but no lingas in the subordinate lateral shrines. In this case, the Somaskanda panel in the sanctum would be only of secondary importance, and understandably small, whereas, in the subordinate lateral shrines, the Somaskanda carving would be the *exclusive* object of veneration, and thus understandably large.

I must point out one more paradox which is created by the insistence that the Somaskanda panel was the exclusive consecrated object of worship in the sanctums of Rajasimha's temples. In the sanctum of Rajasimha's Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai, we see very clearly that the Somaskanda panel is placed within the sculptured *relief* of a full pavilion-like shrine. This image of a shrine is complete with roof *surmounted by two stupis* (all in bas-relief, of course). Now, if the Somaskanda panel were really the consecrated object of worship, then the actual *vimana* of the Talagirisvara temple would be its shrine, and not a mere bas-relief image of a shrine. The actual *stupi* on top of the Talagirisvara temple would be the ritually placed part consecrating the object of worship within. What then would be the significance of the two stupis on top of the relief-sculptured shrine on the back wall? They would be absolutely redundant!

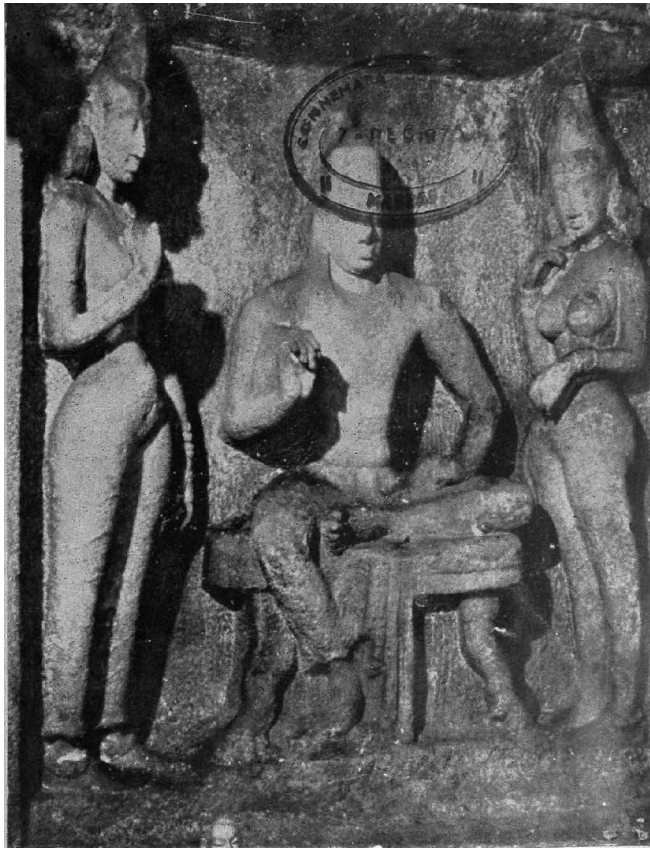


Plate 9. KING SIMHAVISHNU AND HIS TWO QUEENS, ADIVARAHA CAVE-TEMPLE,
MAHABALIPURAM (See page 53)



*Plate 10. SOMASKANDA, PRE-RAJASIMHA STYLE, DHARMAKARAJA RATHA,
MAHABALIPURAM (See page 53)*

In concluding the arguments advanced by me to show that the Somaskanda panel in Rajasimha's sanctums sanctorum was not the primary object of worship, it should be noted that these panels are raised a significant distance above the floor level of the chamber. For example, in the Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai, the bottom edge of the Somaskanda panel is 188 cm. above floor level—that is, more than 6 feet! This elevation provides ample visual clearance above the prismatic linga which is there now, and would have undoubtedly done so with the original linga. On the other hand, this elevation of more than six feet would be hard to explain on the view that the Somaskanda panel was the *exclusive* object of worship.

The "Cult" article has shown us that in the Pallava art of Rajasimha's period, we have an example of a sculptured panel in which *both* the linga and the anthropomorphic form of Siva are shown together.²⁶ In this panel an eight-armed deity is shown offering worship (flowers) to an elaborately designed *linga*. That the anthropomorphic image of Siva in the same panel is *subordinate* to the linga is proved by the fact that Siva in his anthropomorphic form is on a distinctly smaller scale than the eight-armed figure who is offering flowers to the linga in worship. It should also be noted that the anthropomorphic form of Siva (together with Uma) appears in the panel *above the linga*! This example shows that the Pallavas were perfectly familiar with the *simultaneous* representation of Siva in his iconic and aniconic forms—and familiar with a representation in which the worship being offered to the aniconic form is given unequivocal primacy! We may conclude then that this panel mirrors the actual set-up inside the sanctums of Rajasimha's temples.

The article, "'Cult' in the Pallava Temples", also mentions the figure of Lingodbhavamurti found on the outer side of the main shrine of the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi. It is thus admitted that this representation of Siva which combines both his iconic and aniconic forms was propagated by Rajasimha himself. But the article has overlooked still other examples of the Lingodbhavamurti in the Kailasanatha temple complex.

For example, there is a Lingodbhavamurti panel on the facade of the enclosure shrine #49. Again, it is found on no less than three of the eight shrines in front of the main precincts of the Kailasanatha temple :

- (1) in the southern niche of the second shrine to the right of the entrance to the main precincts ;
- (2) in the northern niche of the fourth shrine to the right ; and
- (3) in the northern niche of the fifth shrine to the right.

Is not this five-fold repetition of the Lingodbhavamurti panel at the Kailasanatha temple good evidence to support the claim (based on other grounds) that linga worship was original to this temple ?

Five of the six shrines to the right of the entrance of the Kailasanatha have lingas in them now. It must be granted, however, that these particular lingas are later replacements—and thus not original. Yet, it seems that scholars have failed to notice a unique *square* sandstone linga pitha in the fourth shrine to the right. Further, the peculiar, indented sides of this pitha are duplicated almost exactly in the rectangular foot-rest for Siva in the Somaskanda panel which is directly in back of the pitha. It would thus seem that this unique pitha is an original one, whereas the circular pithas in the other shrines are admittedly later substitutions. In passing, it should be noted that the very fact the square pitha is made of friable, unpolished sandstone (and would thus require a suitable coating of plaster over the rough surface) provides additional evidence against an original ritual of full-fledged abhiseka.

Finally, in *all* the representations of lingas in the panels of these Pallava temples, not one of them is shown faceted in the manner so common to the lingas found presently in these temples. We may infer from this that the lingas which were original to Rajasimha's temples would have had *square* pithas and smooth,

cylindrical shafts with smoothly rounded crests—very much like the linga depicted in the Airavatesvara panel.

“Rangapataka” Shrine Inscriptions

On the front of the shrine .

Line 1: Adoration to Siva !

(She), who (was) the dearly beloved wife of (her) husband, (king) Paramesvara, whose fame was widespread as “Kalakala” on account of his meritorious deeds, and whose bow’s power was made manifest in the destruction of cities,

just as (Parvati) the “Daughter of the Mountain” was of (Siva) the “Bull-bannered One”,²⁷ (i.e., the dearly beloved of Paramesvara—the Supreme Lord, whose fame was widespread as Kalakala—the Destroyer of Death, and whose power was made manifest in the Destruction of cities—as Tripurantaka),

Line 2 .

that (queen) Rangapataka, the banner of women,²⁸ was the cause of this beautiful abode being made for (Siva) the One whose crest-jewel is the crescent moon.

On the back of the shrine :

(While king) Narasimhavishnu, true to his holy vow, is protecting the encircling world, (and) tearing out the hearts of his enemies (just as the god Narasimhavishnu did), his favourite queen shines with surpassing splendour, subduing, as it were, (even) the pride of Pushkaradevata (i.e., Lakshmi, the consort of god Narasimhavishnu)²⁹

NOTES

¹ This fourth study is based on “Some Thoughts on the Early Temples of Tondaimandalam” by Michael Lockwood, a paper read at a seminar organized by the Archaeological Society of South India, October 14, 1973

² K. R. Srinivasan's *Lectures*, published as, *Some Aspects of Religion as Revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South* (Madras University of Madras, 1960), p 61

³ K. V Soundara Rajan, " 'Cult' in the Pallava Temples ", *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India* 1962-65 (Madras . Archaeological Society of South India, 1969).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 154

⁷ K. V. Soundara Rajan, *Indian Temple Styles* (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972), p 105

⁸ K. R. Srinivasan, *Cave-Temples of the Pallavas*, Architectural Survey of Temples Series, No. 1 (New Delhi Archaeological Survey of India, 1964), p. 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88

¹⁰ *Transactions* 1962-65, p 150

¹¹ This sloka reads "When king Gunabhara (Mahendra) carved a stone figure (Gangadhara) in the wonderful stone temple on the top of the most splendid of mountains, this king, entitled 'Vidhi' (the Creator), made 'Sthanu' (Siva) true to its meaning (stationary), and became himself 'sthanu' (fixed, immortal) together with him (Siva) before the eyes of the world."

¹² I am indebted to Mr A Vishnu Bhat and his brother, Mr Subraya Bhat, for their aid in all matters Sanskrit.

¹³ The full inscription and translation are given by Hultzsch in *South Indian Inscriptions*, I, pp. 12-14.

¹⁴ See *Epigraphia Indica*, XIX, pp 113-115

¹⁵ The full translation of the "Rangapataka" inscription is given at the end of this study.

¹⁶ *South Indian Inscriptions*, I, pp 23-24

¹⁷ It is very unfortunate that the lower line of verse in the front (inscribed on the sandstone base) has been covered by plaster in recent times. Thus, it may be lost permanently to posterity. This is doubly tragic in that the facsimile of the "Rangapataka" inscription has never been published, as far as I know.

¹⁸ *Transactions* 1962-65, p 156

¹⁹ These panels have been described in detail in our second study, "Pallava Somaskanda"

²⁰ *The Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy of 1909*, pp 76-77; Longhurst, *Pallava Architecture* (Archaeological Survey of India, *Memoir* # 17, 1928), Pt I, p 21, and a note written by R. Nagaswamy which is appended to chapter eleven of S. R. Balasubrahmanyam's *Early Chola Art : Part I*, pp 251-52

²¹ The clear priority of these Mahabalipuram panels has been shown in (or would be evident from) our study, "Pallava Somaskanda".

²² And the model also for the destroyed Somaskanda panel in the Ramanuja Mandapam. See our study, "Pallava Somaskanda"

²³ And also the Somaskanda of the Ramanuja Mandapam.

²⁴ These panels, nevertheless, as far as *style* is concerned, have been classified by us in the study "Pallava Somaskanda" as belonging to the Rajasimha-style group.

²⁵ This fact is evident from the presence of a granite plinth-like altar at the foot of the Somaskanda in the north-central lateral shrine (and in some of the other lateral shrines, also). The altar is actually a sandwich of a sandstone slab between two granite slabs.

²⁶ This panel in the Aravatesvara temple, Kanchipuram, has been described and illustrated in the article, " 'Cult' in the Pallava Temples "

²⁷ The bull was the emblem of the Pallava banner, and thus this title is appropriate to king Paramesvara also.

²⁸ This expression is a pun on the queen's name, Rangapataka.

²⁹ In another inscription, on the main temple, king Narasimha (Rajasimha) is praised as one who is both the "storehouse of prosperity" (Sribhara) and deeply learned (in Saiva siddhanta). His chief queen consort would thus excel Lakshmi (who is traditionally at odds with the qualities of learning) in this manner.

FIVE

AUTHORSHIP OF MAHABALIPURAM'S MONUMENTS¹

One of the outstanding problems concerning Mahabalipuram has been to determine who exactly it was that created the monuments there. After centuries had wiped away the memory of those early days, a variety of answers to this question have been forthcoming. In the early eighteenth century, one observer even suggested a Chinese influence. Later guesses included the Siamese and Roman! However, scholarly historical research in the nineteenth century has satisfactorily fixed the authorship on the Pallavas. In the twentieth century, then, the chief problem has been to determine which particular kings of this dynasty were responsible for the monuments. The research of such scholars as Messrs. G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, A. H. Longhurst, and K. R. Srinivasan began to bring about a consensus of opinion that several Pallava kings were consecutively responsible for the great monuments of Mahabalipuram, and that one king in particular had created the majority of them in the seventh century, that king being Narasimhavarman I, otherwise known as "Mahamalla".

*However, in recent years a dissenting view would move forward to the eighth century the building of all the monuments of Mahabalipuram. Mr. T. N. Subramaniam, in his book, *The Pallavas of Kanchi in South-East Asia*, and Mr. R. Nagaswamy, in a research paper, have proposed that the Pallava king Rajasimha (Narasimhavarman II) was the sole author of all the Pallava monuments at Mahabalipuram.*

According to this latter view, Rajasimha was the greatest Pallava king, and his title "Atyantakama" indicates his ability to have created the "unlimited variety" of monuments and sculpture at Mahabalipuram.

At the time this debate was developing over the authorship of the monuments, no statistical analysis was made of the problem of stylistic variations. However, there are, today, scientific tools which can be used to attack general problems of "variation".

It is a plain fact that the monuments of Mahabalipuram reveal a great variety of architectural and sculptural styles. The more widely accepted view on the chronology of the monuments takes this variety as evidence of an evolutionary development during the reigns of several Pallava kings. However, the opposing view would have it that only one king was responsible for all the variety we find at Mahabalipuram.

Now the scientific study of variation is not new. The problem of variation is of great importance to many scientific disciplines, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and psychology, to mention only three. The scientific tool which is common to them in such a study is the statistical analysis of variance or variation.

Let us consider, for example, an agricultural experiment involving two different varieties of paddy. Let each variety be grown in 10 plots of equal area. Suppose that the total yield of the first variety works out to an average 1000 gms. per plot, and that that of the second variety, to 1500 gms. per plot. Nevertheless, if the plots are considered one by one, it will be seen that in the 10 plots of the first variety of paddy there is bound to be a certain amount of variation from plot to plot. Thus, one particular plot may yield 900 gms., while another yields 1100 gms. Whereas, in the 10 plots of the second variety, there may be a variation between different plots ranging from, say, 1200 gms. to 1700 gms.

When one is confronted with the variations in yield between all 20 of the plots, it is possible, therefore, to separate out the variation due to differences between the two varieties and the variation within the two varieties. When the difference between varieties is significantly higher than the difference within varieties, we say that the two varieties of paddy give significantly different yields.

The same kind of statistical analysis can be applied to stylistic variations found in art and architecture. Such an analysis was basic to our study, "Pallava Somaskanda". It is also fundamental to a full understanding of several sections in the following study.

In February, 1962, Mr. R. Nagaswamy read a paper before the Archaeological Society of South India, entitled "New Light on Mamallapuram".² This paper radically challenged the accepted position developed by such outstanding students of the subject as G. Jouveau-Dubreuil,³ A. H. Longhurst,⁴ and K. R. Srinivasan,⁵ who held that several Pallava kings were consecutively responsible for the great monuments of Mamallapuram, and that one king in particular had created the majority of them, that king being Narasimhavarman I, "Mahamalla". As against their position, Nagaswamy's thesis was that Rajasimha (Narasimhavarman II) was the sole author of "all the Mamallapuram monuments and inscriptions."⁶

Eleven years have passed since Nagaswamy's paper was presented, and there is still no general agreement on this issue. There are many who, on reading Nagaswamy's work, take it for granted that his position has been indisputably established. On the other hand, those who support the traditional view seem to continue confident in their own position, paying but slight attention to Nagaswamy's challenge. To our knowledge, no scholar has yet subjected Nagaswamy's thesis to a detailed, critical analysis. This kind of analysis is what we shall attempt in what follows. We shall argue that the traditional view is quite right in asserting multiple authorship. Our main point, however, will be negative: Rajasimha was not the *sole* author of Mahabalipuram's monuments. And therefore we shall not attempt, in this paper, the positive, and much more difficult, task of establishing a comprehensive chronology of the monuments.

The supporters of the traditional view might ask us what value there is in trying to argue a point which (from their point of view) is so obviously true: that Rajasimha was not the sole

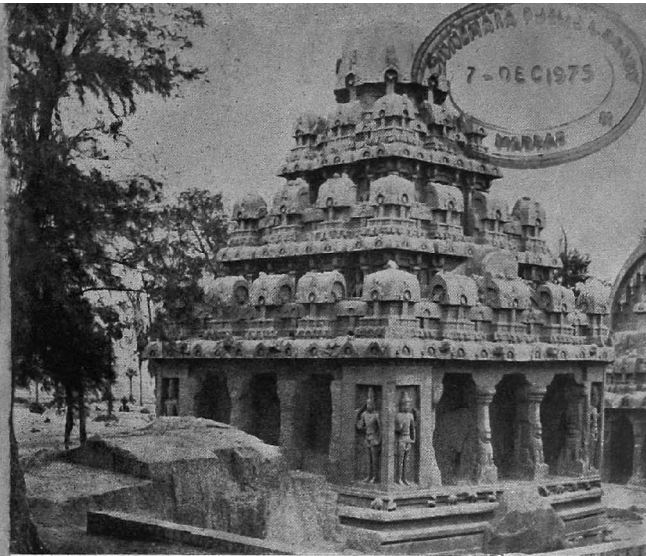


Plate 11. DHARMARAJA RATHA, MAHABALIPURAM (See page 75)



Plate 12. SIVA ARDHANARI AND HARIHARA FIGURES ON THE DHARMARAJA RATHA

author of Mahabalipuram's monuments. However, we suggest there is value in marshalling the various types of evidence so as to have an overall, systematic view of the problem. Further, this kind of preliminary effort may serve as the basis for that positive task of establishing a comprehensive chronology of the monuments which will eventually earn general agreement. Therefore, although we take issue with Nagaswamy, we nevertheless feel that he has done a good service to scholarship on Mahabalipuram by presenting his bold challenge to the traditional view.

Summarizing the position he wants to attack, Nagaswamy says that the supporters of the traditional view held that,

Mahendra introduced the rock cut technique to South India for the first time and that before him, all the temples were built of brick, mortar and other perishable materials. His caves were characterised by simplicity in plan and in the treatment of pillars which were square [in cross-section] at the top and bottom and octagonal at the middle. His son Narasimha also known as Mamalla continued the rock cut caves and for the first time conceived the idea of cutting the huge boulders into monolithic temples, familiarly known as rathas. He also introduced the sedant lion at the base of the pillars and bulbous capitals with *palaka* at the top. Paramesvaravarman-I who succeeded Narasimha-I, continued the monoliths Rajasimha who succeeded Paramesvara-I was a great builder of structural shrines as evidenced from the Kaliasanatha temple of Kanchi and the Sea-shore temple at Mamallapuram. Except the stray example of Saluvankuppam cave, excavated by Rajasimha, there are no other caves, which could be ascribed to him. Rajasimha for the first time introduced the rampant lions at the base of the pillars.⁷

Now, according to Nagaswamy, the above hypothetical framework suggested by the supporters of the traditional view runs into several serious difficulties which would ultimately force them

to give up their position altogether. These difficulties would include (1) the lack of LITERARY evidence concerning the authorship of Mamallapuram; and confusion involving (2) PALEOGRAPHIC evidence, (3) evidence derived from a study of the evolution of temple ARCHITECTURE and (4) evidence from INSCRIPTIONS.

1. Literature

Concerning evidence from literary sources, Nagaswamy says : "No light is thrown on the subject by literature, for there are very few references to Mamallapuram"⁸ Without giving any reason, he discounts the references to the Vishnu sea-shore temple in the *Avantisundarikatha*. But the evidence in Dandin's *Avantisundarikatha* and its abstract, *Avantisundarikathasara*, is extremely important and should not be summarily dismissed without specific reasons being given. Obviously, at the time Dandin was writing, king Rajasimha had not yet built the Shore Temple as we see it today. Only the Vishnu shrine existed, with the "waves brushing the feet of the image." And Dandin, who must have been writing during the reign of Paramesvara I, speaks of the Vishnu image as a work of the great *ancient* architects. Since Paramesvara was the father of Rajasimha, the term "ancient" must take the origin of the Vishnu shrine back to a time long before Rajasimha's reign.

2. Paleography

Concerning the evidence provided by a paleographic study of the scripts found on the monuments of Mamallapuram, Nagaswamy holds that it will be of little value in providing any support for the traditional position. Nagaswamy points out that in the recording of more than 200 royal titles of Rajasimha in the Kailasanatha temple (Kanchi), several different forms of alphabet were used. On the basis of these differences, some scholars (Hultzsch, in particular) had supposed that these inscriptions

belonged to successive rulers of Kanchi and thus represented an evolutionary development of the script.⁹ The same view was held regarding the two epigraphs of the Atiranachandesvara cave-temple at Saluvankuppam. In this cave, several verses praising the king "Atyantakama" have been inscribed on one wall in one script and then the same verses on another wall in a second script. The theory was that one inscription was a later copy of the other.

This theory, according to Nagaswamy, has been discarded :

It was only in later times that the suggestion of successive engravers was discarded and [it was] rightly noted that since the inscriptions on the south and north wall are identical verses, they were written by the same king Rajasimha. In the same vein it was [rightly] concluded that the inscriptions in four different alphabets, found at the Kailasanatha temple, which were the repetitions of the same titles of the corresponding tiers, were all inscribed by Rajasimha himself to exhibit varieties. Thus . . . paleography [will certainly fail] in determining the age of the monuments of Mamallapuram.¹⁰

Our Comments

First, we think it should be noted in passing that the inscriptions of the Atiranachandesvara cave-temple are assigned to Rajasimha by scholars on the assumption that the title Atranchanda refers to Rajasimha.

Secondly, it should be noted that it was Dubreuil, in 1916, who clearly sounded the warning about using the forms of the alphabets as conclusive evidence concerning chronology :

. . . we have come to the conclusion [from a paleographic study of the inscriptions of Rajasimha] that the form of the alphabet is not an absolute test of the age of antiquities and that inscriptions which, by their alphabet, seem to belong to different epochs, can, in reality, be contemporaneous.¹¹

Yet even this awareness of the pitfalls in drawing chronological conclusions from paleography does not in the least weaken the evolutionary theory, a fact which can be seen from Dubreuil's own pioneering work.

3. Architecture

Turning next to the evidence for multiple authorship of Mahabalipuram's monuments provided by a study of the evolution of architectural style, Nagaswamy also rejects such evidence.

(1) *Pillar Styles*

Speaking of one of the key elements in the traditional argument—the evolution of pillar styles—Nagaswamy says :

We all owe a great deal to Prof. Jouveau-Dubreuil for his illuminating study of South Indian architecture The evolution of pillar [styles] as shown by Dubreuil was perhaps the best study from which we were able to arrive at some tangible conclusions . . . Dubreuil suggested that beginning from the Mandagapattu cave, the pillars of Mahendra are plain ; Narasimha I introduced the sedant lion [-based pillar] and Rajasimha introduced the rampant lion motif [as pillar base]. But I am afraid that Dubreuil made [a] fundamental mistake and scholars subsequent to him, followed suit without pausing to question the suggestion. In my opinion the evolution of architecture as suggested by Dubreuil is of little help for our study as we shall presently notice.¹²

A little later in the same paper, Nagaswamy outlines the method he will use in his attempt to discredit the architectural evolutionary theory as applied to the monuments of Mahabalipuram :

I shall now proceed to prove that the study of architecture falls short of expectation If it is proved that during

the rule of one and the same king the architectural details exhibit great variety, then the evolutionary theory which is based on the conviction that with one king only one form of architecture prevailed and each king introduced a novel theme will certainly fall short of any satisfactory [confirmation] ¹³

We hold that it is Nagaswamy who, at this point, has fundamentally mistaken what is at issue. Dubreuil in his *Pallava Antiquities*, never makes such a claim that "with one king, only one form of architecture prevailed." After all, just because each king may have introduced a novel architectural feature, this would not necessarily mean that he gave up entirely the features established by his predecessors.

Be that as it may, let us continue with Nagaswamy's attempt at proof:

The rock cut cave of Saluvankuppam excavated by Rajasimha has very simple and plain pillars very much like the Mahendra pillars. Therefore Saluvankuppam cave posed a great problem for scholars in placing it in the evolutionary [framework] . . . let us take the case of [the] Vayalur inscription of the same king. The inscription is engraved on a pillar itself, which is plain and is in the so-called Mahendra style. The huge *Nandi Mandapa* in front of the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram has four pillars with sedant lions at the base. The small cells running along the outer walls of the same temple, also have pillars with sedant lions at the base. ¹⁴

Continuing with a consideration of the Konerimandapa and the Adivaraha cave (unfortunately his description of these cave-temples is mixed up), Nagaswamy concludes:

Thus the theory that with one king only [one] form of architecture prevailed will not hold good. . . . Thus it is quite evident, the evolution of architectural motifs fails with reference to our present study ¹⁵

(ii) Our Comment

Let us be perfectly clear about our criticism of Nagaswamy's methodology. In attacking the claim of "one king, only one form of architecture," Nagaswamy is attacking a position which certainly Dubreuil and K. R. Srinivasan never held!

(iii) Variety

But it is not just evidence based on the evolution of pillar styles which is discredited in Nagaswamy's eyes. He compares the three major temples which are now unanimously assigned to Rajasimha (the Kailasanatha, Talagirisvara, and Shore temples) and finds such a "bewildering variety in their architectural details," that had

Rajasimha not left his inscriptions in these temples, certainly these monuments would have been ascribed to various monarchs and would have been ascribed to various centuries.¹⁶

What are these variations in architectural details which lead Nagaswamy to the above conclusion? They are variations in (1) ground plans, (2) shapes of vimana superstructures, (3) variation as to whether the temple walls are plain or relief-sculptured, and (4) whether lingas are present or absent in lateral shrines (of the Kailasanatha and Talagirisvara temples).

(iv) Our Comments

Now, interesting as these variations may be, Nagaswamy has chosen to deal with features which do not provide *in themselves* the most adequate basis for either establishing or challenging a given chronology of evolutionary development. During the earliest development of structural stone temples in the Tamil country, it is not at all surprising that a great deal of experimenting was done with regard to ground plans, shapes of the vimana, and such details as whether to have "plain" walls (that is, walls with only paintings of figures on them) or "sculptured" walls (that is, walls with paintings which are enhanced by the

tri-dimensionality of relief carvings) In regard to this latter variation, it cannot be over-emphasized that it is the art of painting which is absolutely fundamental. Painted sculptural reliefs are primarily paintings, and only secondarily carvings! Thus, the "plain" walls of the Talagirisvara temple side-shrines with their paintings (now almost irretrievably lost due to centuries of deterioration) and the "sculptured" walls of the Kailasanatha temple (which have also lost their original cover-paintings) do not represent a variation which significantly challenges or weakens the evolutionary analysis of the development of Pallava architecture.

What then (we may be asked) *are* the significant features for such an evolutionary analysis?

First, and most important, would be a minute and exhaustive study of variations in the dress and ornaments of figures in sculpted panels Charles Fabri has rightly expressed the importance of such a study:

Dress, as must be obvious to anyone interested in humanity, is a marked characteristic of any culture . . . [The] tastes and tendencies of an age are clearly indicated by the type of clothes a period fancies. . . Because fashions change, a careful observation of these changes is one of the most powerful tools in the hands of an art historian For it is possible to date paintings and sculpture within a generation when no other data, such as inscriptions, are available, by an accurate attention to the clothes worn by the human figures depicted ¹⁷

Secondly, even details of sculpture which are not connected with human dress and ornaments may be quite significant To mention one example as illustration, Nagaswamy has tried to show that any argument supporting a given chronology which is based on a supposed evolution of pillar styles is worthless. According to Nagaswamy, the existence of all three types of pillars (plain "Mahendra", sedant-lion-based "Mamalla", and rampant-lion-based "Rajasimha") in Rajasimha's

Kailāsanātha temple is enough to prove the worthlessness of such an analysis. However, we suggest that a detailed and careful study of the features and characteristics of the carved lions, themselves, which form the base of the pillars of the "Mamalla" type and the "Rajasimha" type would enable one to distinguish easily a sedant-lion-based pillar carved in the time of Rajasimha from a sedant-lion-based pillar carved in an earlier king's reign.¹⁸

Thus, if we avoid the over-simplification involved in the belief that with one king only one form of architecture prevailed, then the study of pillar style evolution will surely continue to be one of the most important elements in any effort to establish a chronological development of early Pallava temples.

Another detail of sculpture which underwent an evolutionary development, and which was noted by Dubreuil in his *Pallava Antiquities*, is the "tiruvatchi" (Dubreuil's term for the ornamental arch spanning the top of a niche and issuing on both sides from the mouths of *makaras*). Dubreuil had noted that in Mahendra's time (for instance, on the facade of the Dalavanur cave-temple), the *tiruvatchi* is double-arched. In all of the undisputed temples of Rajasimha, the *tiruvatchi* is single-arched. It is therefore significant that on the Draupadi Ratha and the Trimurti cave-temple at Mahabalipuram, the *tiruvatchi* is double-arched.

Finally, K. V. Soundara Rajan has pointed out certain other features which seem to be significant for an evolutionary analysis. About one, he says

An important compositional feature of the free-standing monoliths of Mamallapuram is that almost all of the series . . . show the *hara* of *karnakutas* and *bhadra salas* in each of the *talas*, including the topmost. [A] significant modification of this rule is the ending of the last *tala* of the *vimana* with a *kapota* and *prastara* above, but without the *ksudra alpa sikhara* above them in their respective places along the

periphery of that *tala*. This [modification] becomes the norm in all the structural temples of post-Mamalla period which further show a secondary variation by replacing the *hara* of miniature *sikharas* by the *nandis* placed in the corner¹⁹

Another significant architectural change, according to Soundara Rajan,

was the dropping of the *hara* in almost all Rajasimha temples around the lowest *tala* as well, except on the *mukhamandapa* roof.²⁰

But let us return to Nagaswamy's paper. Having attempted to disprove the evolutionists' position by linking it with the untenable claim of "one king, only one architectural form," Nagaswamy turns, finally, to the evidence available from inscriptions.

4. Inscriptions

Speaking of the various kinds of evidence examined by him so far, and considering their failure in establishing the chronology of the various monuments of Mamallapuram, Nagaswamy has this to say (and we paraphrase him):

Neither literature nor paleography nor for that matter architecture helps us in determining the age of the monuments. We find ourselves on no better ground when we turn to the inscriptions of Mamallapuram. The reason for this predicament is that many kings are said to have assumed the same names and titles, and with respect to Mamallapuram's monuments, where we have only titles, the difficulty is all the greater²¹

(1) Nagaswamy's Hypothesis

In the very next paragraph following the above quotation Nagaswamy says:

When thus, all our tangible sources fail how are we to arrive at a conclusion? My answer will be that the clue to our problem lies in the very failure of all these sources.

Paradoxical it may seem, when I say that all these evidences do not fail us when we reverse our process of enquiry by first taking inscriptions, applying it to architecture and applying both to paleography. We arrive at a solution which is quite convincing.²²

What Nagaswamy means, of course, is that if one proceeds on his hypothesis (that is, that Rajasimha was the sole author of all the monuments and inscriptions at Mamallapuram), then one may, according to Nagaswamy, arrive at a convincing solution by the route he outlines (examining first inscriptions, then architecture, and finally paleography). It must be noted, however, that in fact he never did go beyond a discussion of inscriptions.

First, Nagaswamy notes that "Atiranachanda" is given as one of the many titles of king Rajasimha in his Kailasanatha temple inscriptions. There is also a cave-temple at Saluvankuppam, near Mahabalipuram, which has foundation inscriptions clearly stating that "Atiranachanda made this (temple called) Atiranachandesvara" Therefore, assuming that the same titles refer to the same king (Rajasimha), Nagaswamy says :

The same king Atiranachanda has excavated the Saluvankuppam cave and left his inscriptions. . . . But strange indeed, [some of] the same verses are found [in inscriptions] in the Dharmarajamandapa, Ramanujamandapa and Ganesa ratha! Verse for verse, word for word and syllable for syllable they are identical. . . .²³

This concordance of verses is enough to convince Nagaswamy that the author of the Dharmarajamandapa, Ramanujamandapa, and the Ganesa Ratha was also king Rajasimha.

Secondly, the king who caused the Atiranachandesvara cave-temple to be made at Saluvankuppam also had the title "Atyantakama". The same title, "Atyantakama" appears on the Dharmaraja Ratha, and Nagaswamy points out that the Dharmaraja Ratha also bears the label "Atyantakama

Pallavesvaragriham". And thus Nagaswamy adds the Dharmaraja Ratha to his list of Rajasimha's monuments.

Of course, one of the key assumptions upon which Nagaswamy's argument is based is that the titles "Atiranachanda" and "Atyantakama" were titles *not* shared by other Pallava kings. But we do have one clear-cut example where the same title is shared by two kings (father and son). In the Kailasanatha temple inscriptions, the title "Ugradanda" is given both to king Rajasimha (it is one of his *birudas* found on enclosure shrine #30) and to his father, Paramesvara (in the inscription around the outside of the Rajasimhesvara shrine) :

Just as Guha . . took birth from the Supreme Lord (Siva), . . thus from the supreme lord Ugradanda (king Paramesvara) there took birth a very pious prince . . the illustrious Atyantakama (king Rajasimha) . .

Thus, the title "Ugradanda" was not only borrowed from his father by king Rajasimha, it was applied to both kings by Rajasimha, himself, in inscriptions of his own Kailasanatha temple. It is therefore untenable to insist that "Atiranachanda" and "Atyantakama" were titles exclusive to king Rajasimha. We must emphasize the fact, here, that there simply is no sound method available to Nagaswamy or anybody else to *prove* that a given title belongs *exclusively* to one king. Using Nagaswamy's methodology, one might as well argue that because Mahendra had the title "Avanibhajana", and that title appears on the Kailasanatha temple, therefore Mahendra built that monument! Or, vice versa, because Rajasimha had the title "Avanibhajana", and we find this same title on several cave-temples commonly ascribed to Mahendra, we must conclude that these cave-temples were really built by Rajasimha!

(ii) *Concordance of Titles on Dharmaraja Ratha and Kailasanatha*

Nagaswamy makes the following claim .

Of the thirty titles inscribed [on the] Dharmarajaratha, over fifteen titles are found in Kanchi inscriptions of Rajasimha ²⁴

The list of royal titles which he says are common to both the Kailasanatha temple and the Dharmaraja Ratha are given below in the left-hand column. We give our comments and the niche numbers of the Kailasanatha (where a given title is found) to the right:

1. Narasimha ("Narasimhavishnu" on the Rangapataka shrine)
2. Sribhara (3-3)
3. Bhuvanabhajana (23-1)
4. Srimegha (4-1)
5. Trailokyavardhana [only "Trilokyanatha" (16-3) at Kanchi]
6. Atyantakama (1-2)
7. Kamalalita (not at Kailasanatha)
8. Nayanamanohara (42-4)
9. Sarvatobhadra (14-1)
10. Srinidhi (not at Kailasanatha)
11. Niruttara (not at Kailasanatha)
12. Paravara (essentially the same title as #14, see below)
13. Ranajaya (1-3)
14. Parapara (20-1)
15. Mahamalla (22-2)
16. Apratihatasasana [only "Apratihata" (28-2) at Kanchi]

It can be seen from our analysis that of the 29 different titles (not 30) inscribed on the Dharmaraja Ratha, only 12 are identical (or very similar) titles found at Kailasanatha. That is, only 41% of the Dharmaraja Ratha titles are duplicates (even approximately) of titles found in Kanchi.²⁵

(iii) *Our First Point*

Nagaswamy thinks that this fact (that nearly half of the titles on the Dharmaraja Ratha are found in Kanchi) provides significant support for his hypothesis that Rajasimha built the Dharmaraja Ratha. But we are of the opposite opinion that

this fact actually goes against his hypothesis. There are over 250 different titles given to Rajasimha in his Kailasanatha inscriptions. How is it, we ask, that with this exceedingly large collection of titles available to Rajasimha, only 41% of the Dharmaraja Ratha titles are titles which are also found in the Kailasanatha inscriptions? On the other hand, this low percentage is quite understandable if the Dharmaraja Ratha inscriptions are by predecessors of Rajasimha.

(iv) *Our Second Point*

Of the 252 different royal titles which are engraved in the niches surrounding the Kailasanatha temple, only 2 titles appear twice (that is only 2 titles are repeated on a given level). But of the 29 different titles engraved on the Dharmaraja Ratha, 7 appear twice on this ratha, and 1 title ('Vidhi') appears 3 times. Why are the titles on the Dharmaraja Ratha so repetitious?

(v) *Our Third Point*

"Rajasimha" is a title not found on the Dharmaraja Ratha!—though it is found on all of Rajasimha's undisputed temples: the Kailasanatha, Talagirisvara, and Shore temples

(vi) *Our Fourth Point*

In fact, except at the Shore Temple, the title "Rajasimha" does not appear at all at Mahabalipuram!

(vii) *Our Fifth Point*

"Rajasimha" is the very first title one meets when circumambulating the Kailasanatha temple. Similarly, "Narasimha" is the first title one meets when circumambulating, at ground level, the Dharmaraja Ratha. And to take an even earlier example, "Mahendravikrama" is the first title given in the Pallavaram cave-temple inscription of Mahendra I. Isn't there some significance in these "first-place" titles? It should be noted in this connection that the title "Narasimha" is *not* one of the 252

titles engraved on the shrines surrounding the Kailasanatha temple. Isn't there some significance in this omission, which surely must have been deliberate. The name "Narasimhavishnu" appears only in the Rangapataka shrine inscription, outside of the main precincts of the Kailasanatha temple. As we have noted above, the title "Rajasimha" does not appear at all on the Dharmaraja Ratha. Finally, it should be noted that in Rajasimha's Vayalur inscription, it is "Rajasimha" (not "Narasimha") which is the title given the king, whereas, in the same inscription, "Narasimhavarman" is the given name of his great-grandfather. We may therefore assume that though "Narasimha" was Rajasimha's coronation name, yet he preferred "Rajasimha," or other titles, so as to distinguish himself from his illustrious great-grandfather, Vatapi Konda Narasimhavarman.

(viii) *The Saivite Curse*

Nagaswamy notes that the last verse of the Ganesa Ratha and the Dharmaraja Mandapam inscription (a curse) is found repeated at the Ramanuja Mandapam and the Adivaraha cave-temple. This verse has been rendered thus :

Six times cursed be those in whose hearts does not dwell Rudra (Siva), the deliverer from the walking on the evil path.²⁶

The concordance of this verse, together with a concordance of other verses, leads Nagaswamy to add the Adivaraha cave-temple to the Ramanuja Mandapam, the Dharmaraja Mandapam, the Ganesa Ratha and the Atiranachandesvara cave-temple, as monuments built by Rajasimha. However, there are a few points we would like to make concerning this Saivite curse which are in opposition to Nagaswamy's thesis.

(ix) *Our First Point*

The Saivite curse does not appear on any of the monuments which are indisputably assigned to Rajasimha (the Kailasanatha, Talagirisvara, and Shore temples).

(x) Our Second Point

The curse, by itself, appears on the floor of the Adivaraha cave-temple (a Vishnu temple still under worship today) It is extremely unlikely, to say the least, that the builder of this structure would have put a Saivite curse on the floor of his own temple dedicated to Vishnu! If this reasoning is sound, then the following logical deductions may be made.

Let the author of the curse = x ;

Then the author of the Adivaraha temple is an ancestor of " x " ;

If x is Rajasimha, then builder of this temple was Paramesvara I and/or previous ancestors ;

If x is Paramesvara I, then the builder was Mamalla and/or previous ancestors.

(xi) A Final General Observation on Inscriptions

We should like to emphasize the fact that not one of the following monuments at Mahabalipuram has any foundation inscription: The Five Rathas, the Adivaraha and Varaha-II cave-temples, the Kotikal-, Ramanuja-, and Mahishamardini mandapams. This is unlike Rajasimha's practice in those temples which are ascribed to him by scholars.

So much for stone inscriptions, admittedly an area in which there seems to be no proof positive, one way or the other, on the issue of the authorship of Mahabalipuram. However, we hope that we have raised enough points to indicate the serious problems for anyone trying to use inscriptions to confirm the hypothesis that Rajasimha was the sole author of the monuments and inscriptions at Mahabalipuram.

5. Paleography

In regard to the *form* of the script employed for the titles engraved on the Dharmaraja Ratha, we must point out the fact that it is closer to the Badami stone inscription of Vatapi Konda

Narasimhavarman and some of the inscriptions of Mahendra I than it is to any one of the several forms of script used by Rajasimha in the temples indisputably assigned to him.

But there are two label inscriptions found on the third level of the Dharmaraja Ratha which are distinctly different in form of script from the other titles on the same monuments. These two label inscriptions read: "Atyantakama Pallavesvaragriham", and they are written in a form of script quite similar to the one belonging to Rajasimha which is found on the base of the main shrine of the Kailasanatha, Kanchi.

Now it has been suggested by some who support the traditional view that Paramesvara I continued work on the Five Rathas, which monuments were begun by his grandfather, Mamalla. Nagaswamy, however, disagrees with this supposition:

The view that the monuments were [finished and] consecrated by Paramesvara-I is untenable since most of the monuments at Mamallapuram are unfinished and were never consecrated.²⁷

We agree with Nagaswamy with regard to the work done on the Five Rathas. It seems to us that work on them was started and came to a premature halt in a relatively short span of time. In any case, there seems to be no stylistic evidence which would indicate that there were two or more extensive stages of work on them. Where we disagree with Nagaswamy is concerning the labels: "Atyantakama Pallavesvaragriham". These labels we suggest, represent an appropriation by the king Atyantakama of the unfinished Dharmaraja Ratha (with special reference to the third-level cell with its Somaskanda panel on the back wall). In suggesting this we go along with the traditional view that this particular Atyantakama was certainly not Mamalla, but a later king.

6. Dress and Ornaments

Our first study, "Pallava Dvarapalas and the Mahishamardini Cave", provided overwhelming evidence that in one cave-temple there were at least two distinct stages of work. The most obvious evidence is the fact that stylistically speaking, the Somaskanda panel on the back wall of the central sanctum of the Mahishamardini cave-temple is quite different, in many points of dress and ornaments of the figures depicted, when compared with the Reclining Vishnu and Mahishamardini panels on either side of the rock-cut *mandapam* of the *same temple*.

Further, the evidence from a study of the figures of guardians carved on the sides of the entrances to the three sanctums of this cave-temple indicated that the main sanctum was originally intended for Vishnu, but that it was converted at a later date into a Saivite sanctum with the Somaskanda panel on its rear wall.

In regard to our stylistic analysis of the three panels of the Mahishamardini Cave, we demonstrated in the earlier study the following relationships. The Somaskanda panel of the Cave is a relatively later Pallava work as it *compares* with similar panels of the eighth century Kailasanatha period, and *contrasts* with the seventh century Somaskanda panel of the Dharmaraja Ratha. The other two panels of the Cave are earlier seventh century works as they have the early characteristics, and *contrast* with panels of the same theme created in the Kailasanatha period.

It is therefore difficult to believe that one king, Rajasimha, created all the monuments at Mahabalipuram when in this cave-temple there is such a change in the style of panels, and when there is evidence for a shift in the dedication of the main sanctum of the Cave from Vishnu to Siva Somaskanda!

7 Size of Ear Ornaments

One of the most important characteristics in an evolutionary study of dress and ornaments of Pallava-period sculpture is the

relative size of ear ornaments. In particular, the circular patra kundala is easy to measure and compare. Now, the figures in Mahendra's cave-temples (mostly dvarapalas) have enormous ear ornaments; extending well below shoulder level. But in all of the temples unanimously attributed to Rajasimha, the figures have very much smaller ear ornaments. The patra kundalas in the Rajasimha period often do not even touch the shoulder.

What then is the relative size of ear ornaments of figures belonging to the Mahabalipuram monuments under dispute? Well, the ear ornaments of figures in the Adivaraha cave-temple, the Kotikal Mandapam, and the Krishna Mandapam are very large—approaching the relative enormousness of the Mahendra period! And the ear ornaments of figures on the Five Rathas, the Penance Panel, Varaha-II, and Trimurti cave-temples are of a size intermediate between the Mahendra and Rajasimha periods (There is no question, however, that they are distinctly larger than those of the Rajasimha period.)

Now an interesting point arises. According to Nagaswamy Rajasimha created all of the (Pallava) monuments at Mahabalipuram. But the Five Rathas are incomplete. So are many of the cave-temples and both Penance Panels. Nagaswamy's chronology, then, would have Rajasimha completing all of his known structural temples, but leaving unfinished the monuments listed above. That is, the Five Rathas, many of the cave-temples, and both Penance Panels are the very latest monuments to have been attempted by Rajasimha, but he was unable to complete them. We feel that this is a very strange order of events. And our study of the evolution of ear ornament size would provide clear evidence against such an order.

8. Rajasimha and Variety

As mentioned earlier, Nagaswamy has tried to argue that Rajasimha was the greatest Pallava king and quite capable of creating all of the various styles found at Mahabalipuram.

Nagaswamy has equated Rajasimha with king 'Atyantakama' and interpreted this *biruda* as meaning a king capable of creating "unlimited variety" We, of course, feel that this is stretching too far the meaning of "Atyantakama"

Now, fortunately, because the Somaskanda panel was almost a trade mark of Rajasimha, we were able to make a detailed study of the degree of variety this king was capable of in all of his known temples In the Kailasanatha temple alone there are thirty Somaskanda panels! In the Shore Temple, there are two Somaskandas In the Talagirisvara temple, one. In our second study we have shown that a detailed comparative study of Somaskanda panels will provide overwhelming evidence against Nagaswamy's contention about Rajasimha's creative capacity. The Rajasimha-style Somaskanda repeats itself more than 46 times—almost monotonously, when one carries out such an overall comparison!

9. The "Great Gap"

There is a general observation which we would like to stress at this point. If, on Nagaswamy's view, all of the monuments at Mahabalipuram are to be assigned to the reign of Rajasimha, there is then a perplexing gap of rock-cut architectural and sculptural inactivity between the time of Mahendra I and the time of Rajasimha. Mahendra created more than 20 cave-temples And Mahabalipuram is a show-case of many different types of stone monuments. But if the monuments of Mahabalipuram are all assigned to Rajasimha, then what were all the workmen and sculptors doing during the reigns of the great Mamalla, his son (Mahendra II), and Parameshvara I? Was there really a gap of some 70 years when no rock-cut caves or temples were being created? *Prima facie*, this seems highly unlikely, indeed.

10. A Last Word from Inscriptions

Dr. N. Ramesan has edited two copper plate grants in a publication of the Government of Andhra Pradesh.²⁸ One of these grants, the "Chitrur" copper plates of the Pallava king Nrpatunga, gives us information about a Vishnu temple built on the sea-shore by king Narasimha. Since this information is given in the genealogical account of king Nrpatunga, it is clear that this Narasimha is "Mahamalla" (Narasimhavarmam-I).

The relevant Sanskrit passage actually reads: "YAHA SHAY-YAGRIHAM ASHMABHIH JALANIDHAU CHAKRE MAHACHCHAKRINAH." This passage may be translated into English as follows. It speaks of king Narasimha :

who built out of stones, on the ocean, the temple (for) the one who possesses the mighty discus (Vishnu) to recline in

The reference, unquestionably, seems to be to the Vishnu shrine belonging to the Shore Temple complex at Mahabalipuram.²⁹

Some objections have been raised concerning the genuineness of the Chitrur grant. And even if it were genuine, the fact that it is removed some eight generations from the days of king Narasimha-I would not allow us to accept all of its statements blindly.

Nevertheless, until some specific arguments falsify it, the statement stands as a clear contradiction of the hypothesis that Rajasimha built all the monuments at Mahabalipuram

NOTES

¹ This fifth study is based on a paper entitled, "On the Authorship of Mahabalipuram's Monuments", by Michael Lockwood and Gift Siromoney, which was read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of South India, March 20, 1973

² Published in the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India* 1960-62 (Madras: The Archaeological Society of South India, 1962), pp. 1-50.

³ *Pallava Antiquities*, Vol I (London : 1916).

⁴ *Pallava Architecture*, 3 Parts, being *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, nos. 17, 33, and 40 (The Archaeological Survey of India, Simla, 1924, and Calcutta, 1928 and 1930)

⁵ *Cave-Temples of the Pallavas*, Architectural Survey of Temples Series, No. 1 (New Delhi : Archaeological Survey of India, 1964).

⁶ Nagaswamy, *Transactions* . 1960-62, p 34.

⁷ *Ibid* , p 2.

⁸ *Ibid* , p 5.

⁹ See *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. I (Madras . The Archaeological Survey of India, 1890), p 10.

¹⁰ Nagaswamy, pp 6-7

¹¹ *Pallava Antiquities*, Vol I, p 74 See pages 20-23 of this book for the specific arguments given by Dubreuil

¹² Nagaswamy, p. 7

¹³ *Ibid* , p 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 11-12.

¹⁵ *Ibid* , p. 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid* , p 11

¹⁷ Charles Fabri, *A History of Indian Dress* (Calcutta · Orient Longmans, 1960), p 1.

¹⁸ For instance, lions of the pre-Rajasimha style often have the hair of their mane and head arranged in circular whorls, and their "canine" teeth are only moderate in length. But in the lions of Rajasimha's time, there are no whorls, and the canine teeth are extraordinarily long—almost half again as long as those of the earlier lions

¹⁹ K. V. Soundara Rajan, "Rajasimha's Temples", *Transactions* : 1962-65, pp 173-4.

²⁰ *Ibid* , p 176

²¹ A paraphrase of a passage from page 12 of Nagaswamy's article

²² Nagaswamy, p 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, p 14

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Whereas, with Rajasimha's 34 titles given in the Shore Temple inscription (No 18A, Vol XIX, *Ep Ind*), 65% are duplicates of the Kanchi titles ; of his 9 titles given in the Vayalur inscription, 67% are duplicates , and of his 16 titles given in the Tirupporur pillar inscription, 63% are duplicates

²⁶ See the 11th verse of Inscription No 18, *S I.I* , Vol. I

²⁷ Nagaswamy, p 25

²⁸ N Ramesan, *Studies in Medieval Deccan History (Late Pallava and Telugu Chola Period)* being *Copper Plate Inscriptions of the State Museum*, Vol III, Archaeological Series No 29 (Hyderabad . The Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1972).

²⁹ In his work on the Chittrur plates, Ramesan at first jumped to the conclusion that Mahamalla built the Shore Temple complex as we see it today (see his article, "New Light on Shore Temple", *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, November 12, 1967). But to try to maintain such a theory in the face of all the evidence to the contrary would be futile. As any close study of the Shore Temple complex would reveal, the present superstructure of the Vishnu shrine is obviously of the later Rajasimha style. So are the two Saivite shrines. But the base of the Vishnu shrine, which together with the image inside are carved out of the living rock, has a plinth moulding which is clearly of a pre-Rajasimha style. The proper interpretation, then, in the light of the Chittrur plates and the architectural and inscriptive evidence at hand, is that Mahamalla built the original shrine for the reclining Vishnu, and that Rajasimha in his reign rebuilt its superstructure and added two new shrines dedicated to Siva. Ramesan accepts this position in the final publication of the Chittrur plates in his *Studies*, 1972.

THONDAIMANDALAM : COSTUMES AND JEWELLERY¹

Our first five studies have focussed on various problems of Pallava art history during the period between the early seventh and early eighth centuries A.D. This period witnessed an extraordinary bursting forth of artistic creativity. Of course, some of the forms (such as the Trivikrama panel of the Varaha-II cave-temple, Mahabalipuram) can be traced to similar earlier examples found in other parts of India. But there appears to have been much which was unique, such as the Great Penance Panel, or the Mahishamardini Panel (both found at Mahabalipuram). During this same period, also, there was the birth of structural stone temples in the Tamil country.

After this century of tremendous innovation, there was a gradual traditionalizing process which set in. And even though the Cholas were to transform the temple vimana into colossal, massively high structures, and later dynasties were to do the same with the temple gateways, yet the later Pallava and post-Pallava periods in South India never matched the Pallavas of the seventh and early eighth centuries in their art forms found in sculptured stone panels.

In our earlier studies, we have emphasized the importance of stylistic analyses of the dress and ornaments depicted on the sculpted figures. The sixth study, which follows, takes a broad look at the development of costumes and ornaments in the art and literature of Thondaimandalam (the "Pallava country"), the region in Tamilnad with Kanchipuram as its capital. This sixth study traces the stylistic development in costumes and ornaments in that region from the days of the Pallava king Mahendra I (and even earlier) up to the time of the Vijayanagar kings.

The region in which Kanchipuram is situated is generally known as Thondaimandalam or the Pallava country. The area includes Chingleput district and parts of the districts of Chittore, North Arcot and South Arcot. The *thondai* creeper (*Capparis zeylanica*) after which the region is named is commonly found in the jungle areas. It produces spectacular flowers in March, and bright red globular fruits later. The flowers were used by the Pallava monarchs in their garlands, and the fruits were compared to the red lips of pretty women by the Tamil poets.

1. Pre-Pallava Period

People of Thondaimandalam had much in common with the rest of Tamilnad in matters of dress and ornaments. The antiquity of Kanchi goes back to the megalithic period; and the megalithic culture was spread over a vast area in South India. Excavations at these megalithic sites have yielded large quantities of shell bangles.

The *sangam* literature contains many descriptions of women wearing shell bangles. *Perumbaanaatrupadai*, composed on king Thondaimaan Ilamtirayan, describes the people of Kanchi and Thondaimaadu, in general. Ornaments referred to in the work include bangles (*valai, thodi*), golden ear ornaments (*kuzhai*), golden leg ornaments (*silambu*), and an ornament on the forehead (*suravu vaai amaitha surumbu soozh sudar nuthal*). All the above ornaments were worn by women. The ornaments gifted to men (minstrels) are generally referred to as *poon*. Women are described as wearing a thin cloth at the waist (*nun tuhil*). The minstrel (male) was presented with a costume made of fine thread (*aavi anna avir nool kalingam*). Both men and women are described as wearing flowers in their hair. And in one passage, a woman (minstrel's wife) is presented with a garland of gold, or necklace (*ponnin thodai amai maalai*).

One can get indirect evidence on dress and ornaments from other *sangam* poems, even though they may not specifically deal

with the Thondai region. For example, one may assume the wearing of bangles or spirals around the upper arm (they used the word "thōl" which now refers to the shoulders) Women used to decorate their waist with leaves, picked from the jungle.² Young men used to wear flowers above the ears as part of their self-adornment.³ Both men and women used to paint their bodies with sandalwood paste. Maid-servants attending on queens used to wear a breast-band (vambu).⁴

Apart from literary sources, one can turn to archaeological evidence. Excavations at Kanchi have revealed terracotta bangles, beads, and pendants.⁵ Excavations at Arukamedu⁶ near Pondicherry have produced terracotta figures, some of which are heavily draped in the form of a saree. These figures can be examined at the Government Library at Pondicherry. Dr T V. Mahalingam, discussing the social conditions of this early period in the Chola country, has gone to the extent of claiming that the womenfolk wore nicely woven sarrees and blouses.⁷ A small panel in the Nagarjunakonda region unmistakably shows a saree-like single piece costume on a female figure of the rustic type. However, one does not come across anything like a saree depicted in later day sculpture and paintings till about the sixteenth century.

2. Pallava Period

Even though the Pallavas ruled from Kanchi from the fourth century onwards, we shall mainly deal with the period of the Pallavas of the Simhavishnu line, starting from the later part of the sixth century A.D. For the first time in this part of the country, stone temples were created from the early seventh century by Mahendra and his son, Mamalla Narasimha. A large number of sculptures depicting various kinds of costumes and jewellery are available for systematic study from the Pallava period.⁸ Many of the ornaments of the Chola and Vijayanagar periods owe their origin to the Pallava period. And the cos-

tunes and jewellery of the Pallava period truly represent the costumes and jewellery of Thondaimandalam.

A study of the ornaments reveals a clear change and evolution of fashion in the courts of the Pallava rulers, and is potentially a powerful tool of the art historian with which to date the monuments to within a few decades

We shall divide the Pallava era into three periods. First, the Mahendra-Narasimha period; second, the Rajasimha period; and third, the late Pallava period. Obviously there is a gap between the first and the second as well as between the second and third, but we are mainly interested in the difference in style between the three periods.

(1) *Mahendra-Narasimha Period (600 to 670 A.D.)*

The first period is represented by the cave-temples of Mahendra (with large, square-sectioned pillars), cave-temples of Narasimha (with lion- and vyala-based pillars), the Great Penance Panel, and monoliths of Narasimha (the Five Rathas). Whether Narasimha built any structural temples at all has been a matter of dispute

We shall assume that the dress and ornaments depicted on the sculptures actually existed and were in common use. The change of fashion in the Pallava court at Kanchi would thus be reflected in the change of style in sculpture.

The characteristic costumes and jewellery of the period are the large patra kundalas (with an average diameter of 8 angulas, compared to 12 angulas' height of the face), moderately high makutas (less than 24 angulas), thick single diagonal band across the chest for men, and absence of leg ornaments for men. For women, the breast-band (when present) is broad, they wear a brief bikini-like garment (often without any other dress), and single leg ornament on each leg, and they wear no diagonal band. Both male and female figures are depicted often with a makara kundala on one ear and a patra kundala on the other.

There are about six different kinds of crowns or makutas depicted in this period. The short krita makuta found on

Mahendra and Narasimha in the Adivaraha cave is also found on the maids-in-waiting of Gajalakshmi in the same temple. Usually Vishnu is decked with the cylindrical *krita makuta*, but the reclining Vishnu in the Shore Temple complex appears to be unique in having *jatamakuta*. (Is Vishnu depicted as sleeping after having removed his *krita makuta*?) Siva and the rishis (in the Great Penance Panel) are shown with *jata makuta*. It is a way of gathering up the thick locks of hair in the form of a *makuta*. Jewels and flowers are added to this arrangement. One also finds the *karanda makuta* in the shape of inverted pots depicted on many figures in the Great Penance Panel and Krishna Mandapam. Like the *jata makuta*, and unlike the *krita makuta*, the *karanda makuta* is a form of arrangement of hair. On the *kritas* are tied side plaques studded with pearls and coloured stones. The crowns, especially the *krita makuta*, are kept secure on the head with a *patta* (going over the forehead) tightened at the back with a circular buckle called the *siras chakra* (found, among other places, on the figures of the Dharmaraja Ratha).

About ten different varieties of *kundalas* can be noted in Mahabalipuram. Some of the varieties such as those found on the royal portraits in the Adivaraha cave are not met with outside of Mahabalipuram. There are also other tiny ear ornaments worn on parts of the upper ear. On the Dharmaraja Ratha there are figures of men (gods) with flowers tucked above the ears.

The peculiar *kundalas* of the Adivaraha cave are also found in the Kotikal Mandapam and in the Great Penance Panel. The *kundala* on the *dvarapali* in the Kotikal Mandapam is similar to the one on king Mahendra. A large *kundala* with four circular petals, found on a queen of Mahendra, is also found on one of the celestial figures in the Great Penance Panel. Both male and female figures are shown wearing contrasting kinds of *kundalas* on different ears.

Some of the *kundalas* were probably terracotta pieces. Such *kundalas* have actually been discovered in excavations. Some people must have worn leaves and flowers in the place of *kunda-*

las of precious metals. Such people can be seen in the pastoral scene in the Krishna Mandapam. With a single exception of the figure of the minstrel carved on an upper storey of the Dharmaraja Ratha, all human and divine figures have their ears pierced. In a few cases figures are shown without kundalas, but with long ear-lobes, and sometimes with tiny ornaments on the lobe.

The ratna kundala which is common in medieval sculptures is not found in this period. No nose ornament is found either in the Pallava or early Chola period.

Necklaces and garlands went under the name of *maalai* in Tamil. Necklaces often without a pendant (*thooku*) are depicted on both male and female figures. There are similarities between necklaces depicted in Mahabalipuram and in the caves of Ajanta. For example, a short necklace with a cylindrical centre piece flanked by globular pieces, depicted on many male figures on the Dharmaraja Ratha, is very similar to the pearl necklace with a blue central piece worn by Bodhisattva Padmapani of the Ajanta murals. The necklace with large globular pieces found on the royal portrait on the southern side of the Dharmaraja Ratha must be identified as a necklace of large pearls and not as a rudraksha mala, as is often made out. The short necklace worn high up on the neck is conspicuously absent. Flower garlands are worn across the chest as a diagonal band by the dvarapalas and ganas, but the details on these are not as clear as in the Chola period. The yagnopavita, or the diagonal band, is thick, and it may or may not go over the right arm. Many of the dvarapalas of the Mahendra caves are shown with the band going over the arm in some cases and not going over the arm in other cases (in the same temple!) A long *maalai* going diagonally across the chest in both directions is called the *veera sangili*, or *swarnakshaka*, and is found on many figures. There are many varieties of such an ornament.

Men, especially the dvarapalas and chauri-bearers, are often shown with a stomach belt called the *udarabandha*, worn above the navel. However, many of the deities are shown without the *udarabandha*.

Women are sometimes depicted with a breast-band (*kachu*). These breast-bands are without any shoulder straps. Neither Parvati (*Uma*) nor Lakshmi nor Bhudevi is depicted with the breast-band. But female guardians, the goddess Durga, and celestial nymphs (the Great Penance Panel) have it. The queens of Mahendra and Narasimha are depicted bare above the waist, but their bodies would have been painted with kunkum, sandal paste, and chunnam.

There are three main types of bands worn on the upper arm, viz., the arm bangle (*thōl vaḷai*), the simple spiral (the early form of *paapu surul*) and the *keyura* (with elaborate decorations of pearls and gems) and different kinds of bangles. Women are occasionally depicted with a large number of bangles, but men always with only a few on each arm. The contrast is brought out in the *Ardhanari* figure on the Dharmaraja Ratha. At Mahabalipuram the figures of this period are not depicted with rings on the fingers.

The garments worn by the people are very simple. The long *veshti* is found mainly on Vishnu and the rishis. Some men are shown wearing a garment which resembles a pair of modern close-fitting shorts, and some much shorter briefs, and some others with a narrow loin cloth (*kōvana aadai*). Many male figures are shown with a long sash which is often worn around the waist with a semi-circular loop hanging in front. This sash (*uttariya*) is also shown as tied across the stomach in the case of some ganas and the royal figure of Mahendra in the *Adivaraha* cave. Most of the female figures are shown with just a single piece of garment worn in the shape of a panty. It may have been a Y-shaped piece of cloth tied at the back with the loose ends hanging down for a couple of feet or so. In the bathing Lakshmi scene (*Varaha-II* cave), the sculptors have tried to convey the transparent effect of wet cloth. This short garment for women is very typical of this period. There are two examples where a woman is shown with the *veshti* without any folds. Women are not shown with any other kind of long garment. Occasionally women are also shown in "shorts" (*vattudai*). One is a queen of

Mahendra. The sash is also shown worn around the waist on female figures. In a few cases strings of pearls are shown on the waist (mekala), but this is not common. No elaborate belt is shown either on the male or female figures.

Men are shown without leg ornaments. Women are shown with a single anklet on each leg (silambu, and sometimes kinkini). Some of the shepherd women depicted in the Krishna Mandapam are shown without any leg ornament.

(ii) *Rajasimha Period (690-725)*

Sculptures of the Rajasimha period are well-preserved in the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchi, and in some portions of the Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram. Most of the Kailasanatha sculptures are in sandstone, a material easily available in Kanchi itself. The makutas of this period are very tall (many are more than 24 angulas—twice the face height) for men. For women a peculiar garland-like hair style above the forehead, pinched in the middle, is found at the base of the tall crown-like portion. People tend to wear the same kind of kundala on both ears; and the size of the patra kundala is reduced to a diameter of about 3 angulas. For the first time, in the painted panels and sculptures of the Kailasanatha temple, one can see the original colours of the costumes. The *siraschakra* is shown as a large circle at the back of Siva's head in the Somaskanda panels. The *siraschakra* is much larger here than the ones found on the later bronzes attributed to the end of the Pallava period.

Women are represented with a diagonal band of pearls which may or may not go between the breasts. The tight necklace high up on the neck (choker) appears for the first time. In some instances, the diagonal band for men divides into three strands: one goes down vertically through the veshti, another which is broad drops down then passes around the right side of the body, and the third (composed of threads) goes round the lower chest on the right. This arrangement of the diagonal band becomes very common in the Chola period.

The breast-band shown on Durga and maids-in-waiting has vertical shoulder straps. (The vertical straps disappear in the late Vijayanagar period) The tight-fitting saree (without the upper portion) worn in the fashion of the Bharatanatya dancer, going round each leg, comes into fashion. On the ankles many ornaments of different types are worn at the same time.

Men are depicted with anklets for the first time, though these anklets are found mainly on the dvarapalas and the dancing forms of Siva. Such anklets are made up of small globular bells. Rings are shown on fingers and toes. In general there is more elaborate ornamentation in this period, a fact which perhaps reflects the prosperity of the times.

The two emblems of Vishnu, the chank and chakra, appear with flames for the first time.

(iii) *Late Pallava Period (750-900)*

This period may be treated as a time of gradual decadence in Pallava art. The crowns get shorter, and the figures become more formalized. Most of the sculptures must have been based on a canon and a formula. The kundalas are relatively small. The patra kundala is often turned so as to show the full circle. The diagonal band for women continues. The shoulder straps for the breast-band sometimes have the shape of inverted Y's where they join the breast-band. The "lion-face" buckle for the belt appears. Perhaps the earliest example of this buckle in Thondaimandalam can be seen at the Vaikunthaperumal temple, Kanchi. The brief bikini-like garment gradually disappears and is replaced by the saree (without the top). Depiction of a single leg ornament becomes common. The leg ornament is found on practically every male figure, towards the end of this period.

3. Applications

One may ask how useful this exercise is of studying in detail the variations in the style of dress and ornaments. We shall cite as examples three cases where the application of such a detailed study leads to significant results.

(i) *Manimangalam Pillars*

The differences in style between the three Pallava periods are not only found in matters of costumes and jewellery, but also in motifs such as the lion and vyalas. All the Narasimha type lions found at Mahabalipuram have canine teeth curved backward along the mouth. The lions forming the base of pillars have hair which is represented in whorls in the form of spirals. For the vyalas, the hair is depicted in tufts having a "mango"-shape. These animals do not have any garlands or other ornaments. Neither are they depicted with human-like breasts (as in the later periods).

In the Rajasimha period the lions and vyalas have large canine teeth jutting more or less vertically downwards out of the mouth, which has many other teeth. The mane is represented in a ribbon-like fashion, and not in spirals. There is also a garland design around the face. The Rajasimha animals sport a diagonal band of bells. One sees the outline of circular, human-like breasts on them. Their eyes bulge more noticeably. In the third period (Vaikunthaperumal temple, Kanchi) the characteristics of the second period are shown more pronounced. The eyes bulge even more—in the vyalas their eyes are shown as jutting out from the base of their horns. There are more than one garland on these animals in some instances. Their hair is shown in wavy lines. Their breasts are more clearly shown as circular and woman-like (even though in other parts of their bodies they are obviously shown as male).

With these general observations in mind, if one examines the two remarkable granite "lion" pillars in the vicinity of the Vaikunthaperumal temple of *Manimangalam*, one can date the pillars on stylistic grounds. Both pillars have torus mouldings. One has a sedant lion and the other a sedant vyalas at the base. They have all the characteristics of the Narasimha period, and none of the Rajasimha period, or the later Pallava characteristics. In addition, each animal is depicted with a patta tightened at the back with a *siraschakra*. There is no doubt that



Plate 13. VISHNU FIGURE, VAIKUNTHA PERUMAL TEMPLE, KANCHIPURAM
(See page 95)



Plate 14. LION-FACE BELT BUCKLE, DETAIL OF VISHNU FIGURE
(*See page 95*)

these pillars originally belonged to a structure of Mamalla⁹ who defeated Pulakesin-II at Manimangalam. The structure must have remained intact at least till the Chola period, as is attested by the presence of Rajendra's inscription on certain other Pallava period pillars lying near the temple. The presence of these granite pillars at Manimangalam would provide evidence that Mamalla's sculptors were capable of quarrying large granite pillars for structural temples.

(ii) *Chamundi*

As a second example, let us look at the group of the seven virgins kept on a mound on the eastern side of Mahabalipuram. The central figure is larger than the other figures and represents Chamundi.¹⁰ This figure wears as a garment the bikini-like dress so typical of the Narasimha period. It does not have any ornament or belt on the waist. It has different kundalas on either ear. The patra kundala in its left ear is enormous. There is a single ornament on each leg. All of these characteristics fix it in the Narasimha period. Consequently one has to revise the prevalent view that Pallava worship of the seven virgins, including Chamundi, only started in the eighth century.

(iii) *Authorship of Mahabalipuram*

As a third example, one may take up the case of the authorship of Mahabalipuram's monuments (the subject of our fifth study). The kundalas depicted on the figures of the Krishna Mandapam and the Great Penance Panel, the Adivaraha cave, and the Five Rathas, are often as large as the kundalas represented in Mahendra's cave-temples, and never as small as the ones represented on Rajasimha's Kailasanatha and Shore temples. We can see clearly the difference in the depiction of the makutas, kundalas, yagnopavita, breast-band, and leg ornaments. The study of dress and ornaments enables one to reaffirm Mamalla's authorship of most of the monuments of Mahabalipuram. In

the light of the study of dress and ornaments, the theory that Rajasimha himself built all the monuments of Mahabalipuram, including the Rathas and the Penance Panel can no longer be sustained.

(iv) *Memorial Stones of the Chengam Area*

During the recent past a number of memorial stones with Vatteluthu characters have been brought to light.¹¹ Even though the stones are found in rather inaccessible places, one can study the photographs of the estampages taken from the stone slabs. They include flat reliefs of the slain soldiers which have been carved on the stone slabs. The hero stones date from the Simhavishnu period to the Vijayanagar period. A study of dress and weaponry shows that some of the stones are contemporaneous with Mahabalipuram's monuments.

Two kinds of soldiers are depicted in the Pallava period—one with a sword, shield, and dagger, and the other with bow and dagger. At Mahabalipuram there are three sets of female guardians for the goddess Durga—one set at the Kotikal Mandapam, another at the Adivaraha cave, and the third at the Draupadi Ratha. In all three cases, one guard has shield and sword, and the other the bow. The broad, curved sword is represented in all the three cases mentioned above, with long (slightly curved) rectangular shield. We do not often see at Mahabalipuram the large circular shield. In the hero stones, the large curved sword is depicted in the Simhavishnu and late Mahendra (39th year) period (1971/35). The rectangular shield is seen in the late Mahendra (39th year) period (1971/35). The dagger with the top of the handle turning away from the point, seen on a hero stone (1971/68), is very similar to the ones found at Mahabalipuram (for example, the one on the soldier woman in the Mahishamardini scene). It is significant that the hair-style of the heroes from the Simhavishnu to Mamalla periods resembles the hair-style of the Mahabalipuram Chamundi, with its small "crown" at the top. This hair-style is similar to the jatabhara style. In addition to the knee-length veshti, the long sash with

loops in front is represented on the hero stones of the Pallava period.

In the Chola period, the hero figures are mainly represented with a "sword" and a bow, with the enemies' arrows piercing their bodies. The "sword" is a large version of the early dagger, and is held in the fashion of holding a dagger. The jatabhara is replaced by a hair-style with a bun either at the back of the head or at the top of the head. The hero does not wear the long sash—a characteristic reflected in Chola bronzes where Siva is often depicted without the sash. A triangular piece, an end of the garment, is worn in front at the waist and can be seen in the hero stones as well as on early Chola bronzes.

4. Chola and Vijayanagar Periods

From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, the Cholas held sway over Thondaimandalam, and the latest Chola inscription is found at Pammal, near Pallavaram.¹² There was an interregnum of Telugu Choda rule along with strong Pandya influences in the 13th and early 14th centuries. After a brief period of uncertainty due to Malkafur's invasion, the Vijayanagar influence came to stay. It is clear that the post-Pallava period exhibited a mixture of the different influences of kingdoms of the powerful neighbouring kings who ruled over Thondaimandalam, and the Pallava influence gradually weakened. The depiction of the long diagonal band going over the right arm (nivitha fashion) became rare. In the Chola period a small band of pearls becomes common on the upper arm, just above the elbow. The udarabandha generally used by men was also worn by women occasionally¹³

5 The Evolution of Certain Images

To demonstrate the evolution of style in dress and ornaments, we shall trace the changes in the depiction of dvarapalas, and the Somaskanda and Gajalakshmi themes.

(i) *Dvarapalas through the Ages*

The early Mahendra dvarapalas are huge, fierce-looking (especially in Siva temples), and facing front and highly flexed. In some Siva shrines, one door-keeper is shown with a pair of horns (part of the trisula) and the other with an axe-blade in front of his makuta. Sometimes snakes take the place of the diagonal band (Vallam). In Vishnu shrines, one door-keeper often has the *chank* and the other the *chakra* (with edge towards the observer) at the top of the makuta (Mahendravadi Adiyaraha, and Varaha-II caves). They have no leg ornaments.

During the Rajasimha period the Saivite door-keepers have either the "horns" or triple bladed axe-heads on the makuta. The part of their body below the waist is turned towards the sanctum, whereas their torsos are twisted and they face away from the sanctum. They wear garlands of bells, and have anklets of bells. They continue to have only a single pair of arms. In the late Chola period, the dvarapalas are represented with four arms, the upper hands usually holding the weapons associated with their respective deities. At the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjore, the dvarapalas are huge figures with the trisula at the top of their makuta. The *chank* and *chakra* of Vaishnavite door-keepers have flames. The *chakra* is seen as a full circle facing the observer. One of the Chola kings brought back a stone statue of a dvarapala as a war trophy from the western Chalukya capital¹⁴. Are the two-armed dvarapalas at the entrance of the Varadaraja temple at Kanchi also war trophies? Of the two dvarapalas, one has a *chank* and the other the *chakra* (both with flames) on the makuta, and the full *chakra* is facing the observer, unlike the Pallava style where the edge faces the observer.

(ii) *Somaskanda*

The Somaskanda theme synthesising the Siva, Skanda, and Sakti cults, originated during a pre-Rajasimha period and became very popular during the Rajasimha period. For the worshippers of Murugan, a temple with the Somaskanda image represented

the presence of Murugan (Guhaalaya¹⁵). In the Narasimha period (Dharmaraja Ratha, top shrine) the figures of the Somaskanda have the typical ornaments of the Mahendra-Narasimha period. During the Rajasimha period, in addition to the change of the costumes, Brahma and Vishnu are depicted at the back of the throne. Siva and Uma are represented in postures (mainly leg and hand postures) different from the Narasimha period and the later Chola period. In the Rajasimha period, Siva has neither the udarabandha nor anklets (an exception is found in the Mukundanayanar temple where Siva is shown with anklets) and does not hold the axe and antelope in his upper hands. Uma is half turned towards the viewer, whereas in the Narasimha period she is shown in profile, and in the Chola period fully turned towards the worshipper. Even in the Rajasimha period, some canon must have been strictly followed for the representation of the Somaskanda, as can be seen from the uniform repetition of the theme in thirty or more cases at the Kailasanatha temple. This canon must have been quite different from the texts followed by the Cholas. In the Chola period, the ornaments change and Uma is shown with either the diagonal band (poon) or the cross-band. Skanda may be sitting, standing, or dancing between Siva and Uma on the pedestal or at the foot of the pedestal. The pattern of wearing different kundalas on the different ears gets standardised in the case of Siva, who is required to wear the *patra* kundala on the left ear.¹⁶ The crown gets more conical and less cylindrical. Siva is now represented with the udarabandha and with anklets. In many bronzes, the Skanda figure is found missing or broken off, and this fact may reflect the religious rivalry between the Skanda and the Virasajiva cults.

During the the earliest period, the Somaskanda panel at the back of the sanctum may have been the principal object of worship. During the Rajasimha period the linga was present in the sanctum in addition to the Somaskanda panel. During the post-Rajasimha period, the panel is moved out of the sanctum. At Tiruttani (Veerataanesvara temple) one finds the panel on this

vimana without Skanda. In the Vijayanagar period, Somaskanda is also called Thyagaraja (Tiruvaarur).

(iii) *Gajalakshmi*

The earliest Gajalakshmi is the one found at the Adivaraha cave (though this priority is not universally accepted) and the next is at Varaha cave II, and both belong to the Narasimha period. The krita has a conical top and a broad base. The cross-bands are short and go close to the body of Lakshmi in the Adivaraha cave; whereas the cross-bands are longer and go over the arms in the Varaha cave II. The Gajalakshmi of Rajasimha's period found near the entrance of the Kailasanatha temple wears much longer cross-bands. The attending maids wear breast-bands with shoulder straps, and on their legs a large number of ornaments in the style typical of the Rajasimha-period. In the Mahendra-Narasimha period, Lakshmi is never portrayed as consort of Vishnu. In the Rajasimha period, Vishnu as well as Brahma are shown with consorts, as can be seen from the Shore Temple and Kailasanatha temple. From the Rajasimha period, the elephants of the panel are depicted in a symmetric fashion. In the post-Rajasimha period, the Gajalakshmi theme is shown in a conventionalized form where the image of Lakshmi is represented in a highly symbolic manner (as seen at the Visalesvara temple near Ramakrishna Maharajpet, not far from Tiruttani). Lakshmi is also portrayed as one of the Saptamatrikas. In spite of these variations, the Gajalakshmi theme in its more classical form does continue into the late periods.

6 Some General Observations

Many generalizations have been made on the costumes and jewellery of the Pallava period based mainly on bronze images,¹⁷ but some of these generalizations do not hold good for the Pallava period as a whole, since none of the so-called Pallava

bronzes belongs to the Narasimha or Rajasimha periods. According to C Sivaramamurti, the ornament siraschakra evolved from the idea of a halo decorating the head of a deity, and it became rather diminutive in the Pallava period and not visible from the front. As a matter of fact, the siraschakra is a development of the functional ornament used as a buckle to secure the krita to the head with the patta. The siraschakra is rather small in the Narasimha period, but gets larger in the Rajasimha period and is visible from the front as worn by Siva in all the Somaskanda panels. It is even larger in the late Pallava period (Saptamatrikas, Tiruttani). It does not have just eight petals, but more. It is not worn by just deities, as can be seen from the siraschakras worn by the lions of the Manimangalam pillars.

The karanda makuta of the Pallava period is believed to be diminutive (according to Sivaramamurti), but this is true only of the post-Rajasimha period, and does not hold good for the entire Pallava period. Flower decorations on the ear and other small ear ornaments are noticed in the bronzes of the Chola period, but we find earlier examples on the figures of the Dharmaraja Ratha in the Narasimha period, and also in the Rajasimha period. In the bronzes, the patra kundala is observed in the late Pallava and early Chola period, but much earlier it is depicted on the Mahabalipuram stone Chamundi of the Mahendra-Narasimha period. The breast-band is almost totally absent (according to Sivaramamurti) in Pallava bronzes, except for Durga. But we can trace the evolution, more generally, of the breast-band from the Narasimha period to the post-Rajasimha period.

There are some interesting questions on costumes and jewellery which elude satisfactory answers. We know, for instance, that all the monuments of Mahabalipuram were once painted all over. The Somaskanda panels of the side shrines of the Kailasanatha temple have revealed coats of paint at the time of cleaning. We find traces of paint on the Trimurti cave and Arjuna Ratha, and Krishna Mandapam. We do not find rings on

the fingers and toes in Mahabalipuram sculptures of the Mamalla period, but we do find them on figures in the Kailasanatha temple of Rajasimha. Was the wearing of rings a common practice which was discontinued during the Mamalla period, or did the sculptors just paint the rings on at the time of finishing the work?

Another mystery is why the weapon *vel* is not represented in Mahabalipuram. We find it in Amaravati, and also at the Vaikunthaperumal temple of Kanchi of the post-Rajasimha period. Why is *kazhal*, the leg ornament on men as described in the sangam literature, not found at Mahabalipuram? Is it because the Pallavas did not follow the local practice of men wearing anklets till the time of Rajasimha? Why is Parvati (Uma) always represented without a breast-band, whereas Lakshmi acquires one in the Chola period? If women wore sarees in the pre-Pallava period, if the terracotta figures can be taken as evidence, why did the practice disappear only to reappear around the sixteenth century?

NOTES

¹ This sixth study is based on "Thondaimandalam: Costumes and Jewellery", by Gift Siromoney, a paper read at a seminar organized by the Archaeological Society of South India, October 14, 1973

² Kurinjapaatu, 101-102.

³ *Ibid*, 119

⁴ Nedunal vaadai, 150.

⁵ R. Subrahmanyam and K. V. Raman, "Terracotta figurines and other objects from Kanchi excavations, 1962", *Journal of Indian History*, xlv, August 1967.

⁶ *Ancient India*, July 1946, p. 102.

⁷ T V Mahalingam, "Excavations in the lower Kavery Valley", University of Madras, 1970.

⁸ Gift Siromoney, "Mahabalipuram . costumes and jewellery", *M.C.C. Magazine*, xxxix, April 1970, 76-83; and *Weekly Mail*, January 16, 1971.

⁹ Using the same criteria one may assign the "lion throne" at Mahabalipuram to the Mahendra-Narasimha period.

¹⁰ Michael Lockwood and Gift Sirooney, "A unique image of Chamundi", *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, October 1, 1972

¹¹ R. Nagaswamy (ed), "Chengam nadukarkal" (Tamil), Madras, 1972

¹² Gift Sirooney and Michael Lockwood, "New inscriptions from Tambaram area", *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, February 4, 1973.

¹³ Raja Raja Cholan Ulaa, 366.

¹⁴ The Daraswaram dvarapala now exhibited at the Tanjore Art Gallery.

¹⁵ *Avantisundarikathaasaara*, III, vv. 37-38.

¹⁶ *Kasyapa Silpa Sastra*, 1960, Tanjore, p. 258.

¹⁷ C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes* (New Delhi : Lalit Kala Akademi, 1963).

APPENDIX

A NUMERICAL TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS SOMASKANDAS

Taxonomy is the study of the principles of classification. With the advent of electronic computers there has been a considerable development in a new field called numerical taxonomy. We have applied the methods of numerical taxonomy to our study of the Somaskanda panels. The results more or less confirm our main findings presented in the body of our second study.

Numerical taxonomists recommend a large number of characters (say from 40 to 100) to be selected for study. We have chosen 40 characters as given in Table I. When a particular character is present, it is coded with a plus (+), when it is absent, a minus (-), and when it is not possible to determine the presence or absence of the character, a zero (0). For example, we may use the presence of a leg ornament as a character. If a leg ornament is present, we mark " + " against the character; if the leg ornament is absent, we use " - ". In some cases, the leg may be covered with a thick coating of plaster so that it is impossible to determine the presence or absence of the leg ornament. Then the corresponding code given is " 0 "

We have listed characters for 15 panels. However, only the first 10 panels have been used by us in our numerical taxonomic analysis. They are the Somaskanda panels of the Dharmaraja Ratha, Mahishamardini Cave; the Vedagirisvara, Talagirisvara, Rajasimhesvara (Shore), Kaulasanatha (facade panel of shrine #51), Mukundanayanar, and Matangesvara temples; the east gopuram of the Nataraja temple of Chidambaram; and a bronze from Nidur (see Fig 189 in P. R. Srinivasan's book on *Bronzes of South India*). We have

not included the panel from the main sanctum of the Kailasanatha temple because many of the characters cannot be determined due to the thick coating of plaster on it.

We compare these ten panels two at a time, and calculate a similarity coefficient (S) for each pair. If two panels were to have 30 characters in common out of a total of 40 characters, then the similarity coefficient would be 75. If all characters agree, then S is 100. And if no characters agree, then S is 0. If the number of characters which the panels have in common is 18, and 4 out of the 40 characters are undeterminable (allowing, then, 36 pairs of character comparison), then S is 50.

Since we have taken 10 panels for study, we have had to make 45 different comparisons. (If more panels or more characters were to be studied, a computer could be pressed into service to do the numerical work.) A similarity table for the 10 panels is given in Table II

Each value in the similarity matrix (table) is represented by a square, in Fig. 1—each square being shaded, the depth of shading varying in proportion to the similarity index. Figure 1 also represents the stage of cluster analysis, where the similarity matrix is shown rearranged so as to bring together into clusters those panels which have the greatest mutual similarity.

In conclusion, Fig. 1 shows clearly that the Dharmaraja Ratha panel (A) stands by itself. The two late Somaskandas, one from Chidambaram (I) and the other, the Nidur bronze (J), stand together, but at the same time differ from the rest of the panels.

The remaining panels, with the exception of the Matangesvara's, stand together in a group and share high levels of similarity (89 and above). They are all panels which exhibit what we have called the 'Rajasimha style' those of the Mahishamardini Cave (B), the Vedagirisvara (C), Talagirisvara (D), Rajasimhesvara (Shore) (E), and Mukundanayanar (F) temples, and shrine #51 of the Kailasanatha (G).

The Mantangesvara Somaskanda when compared with the panels of this group yields values of similarity ranging from

76 to 86. Thus, even though this Somaskanda (H) is close to the panels of the BCDEFG group, yet it stands significantly apart from them.

We hope that this experiment in the application of numerical taxonomy to iconography may lead the way to wider and more intensive studies using this method.

KEY TO THE PANELS LISTED IN TABLE I

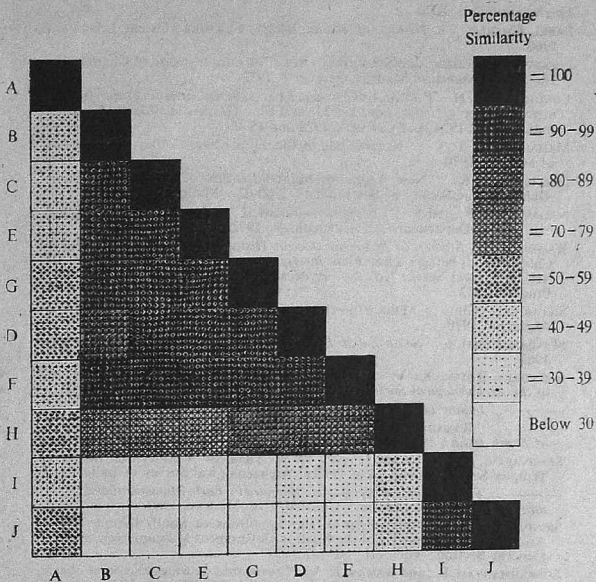
- (A) *Dharmaraja Ratha* (Mahabalipuram)
- (B) *Mahishamardini Cave* (Mahabalipuram)
- (C) *Vedagirisvara* (Tirukkalukkunram)
- (D) *Talagirisvara* (Panamalai)
- (E) *Rajasimhesvara* (Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram)
- (F) *Mukundanayanar* (Mahabalipuram)
- (G) *Shrine 51* (Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram)
- (H) *Matangesvara* (Kanchipuram)
- (I) *Nataraja Temple* (Chidambaram)
- (J) *Nidur Bronze* (P.R.S., Fig. 189)
- (K) *Peryaveumani* (Chingleput Dist.)
- (L) *Trisulam* (Pallavaram)
- (M) *Tirupparankkunram* (Madurai)
- (N) *Takkolam* (Chingleput Dist.)
- (O) *Tirupanjili* (Tiruchi Dist.)

TABLE I: CODED DATA

(Panels):	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
SIVA															
1 right leg down	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
2. left leg down	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
3 leg ornament present	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	O	+	-
4. waist band loops down	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	O	+	-
5. two + diagonal bands	-	+	+	O	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	O	-	-
6 forearm horiz LR.	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 UR snake tail	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8 UR . axe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
9. LR : chin mudra	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
10. LR . abhaya	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-
11. UL gnana mudra	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12. UL : deer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-
13 LL . dhyana mudra	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
14. LL . fist on thigh	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
15 LL . chin mudra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
16 left ear : makara k.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
17. right ear : makara k.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
18. makuta short (-1½)	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
19 udarabandha present	-	-	-	O	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	O	+	+
UMA															
20. left leg down	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
21. waist band sash down	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	O	O	-	-
22 long diagonal band	-	+	+	O	+	+	O	O	-	-	O	-	O	+	+
23 torso profile	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
24 leaning on left arm	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
25 right hand touching ear	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
26. right ear: patra kundala	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	O	-
27. left ear : patra kundala	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	O	-	+	+	-	O	+
28 'large' patra kundala	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	O	+
29. 'pinch in middle' (hair)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	O	-	-
30 crown short (-1½)	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
31. crown conical	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SKANDA															
32. seated	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
GENERAL															
33 ganas above (in panel)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
34. Brahma & V above	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35. umbrella above	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
36 royal throne	O	+	+	+	+	+	O	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+
37. makara torana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
38. attendants below	-	+	+	-	-	-	O	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
39 vessel(s) below	-	-	+	+	+	-	O	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40. Siva & Uma close	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	+

FIG. 1

MATRIX REARRANGED ACCORDING TO CLUSTER ANALYSIS



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