

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF HINDU TEMPLES

Materiality, Social History and Practice

*Edited by Himanshu Prabha Ray,
Salila Kulshreshtha and Uthara Suvrathan*

First published 2023

ISBN: 978-0-367-56315-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-38022-3 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-09770-9 (ebk)

5

INTRODUCTION TO TEMPLES AND RITUALS

Salila Kulshreshtha

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003097709-8



ROUTLEDGE

Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

5

INTRODUCTION TO TEMPLES AND RITUALS

Salila Kulshreshtha

It is not so much faith that characterizes religion but kinds of practice.¹

The 'Introduction' to the previous section discussed how, in academic studies, temples have often been linked to dynasties and as agents of political legitimization. The chapters in the previous section provided a wider perspective of the dynamic interactions between the political elite and the communities with the temple, as also transformations in the temple structure itself as varied social groups undertook the task of refurbishing them. This section of the '*Handbook*' will examine the material context of the temple and its built space to study the kinds of rituals performed within the temple precinct.

Temple rituals have been discussed from various disciplinary perspectives: theological, historical, ethnographic, anthropological and so on; the central question, however, remains how one negotiates methodological challenges to study practices that took place in religious precincts in the past. Axel Michaels has compiled an exhaustive list of the scholarly material based on textual sources and ethnography, which have focused on the variety of local, regional and domestic; and temple, individual and community practices, which we understand as Hindu rituals.² The recent focus on ethnography and the present-day study of rituals, however, limits the long-term understanding of religious practices. Also significant to this discussion are two comprehensive papers, which have discussed temple rituals in the context of the North Indian temples³ and the South Indian temples,⁴ respectively – taking into account the inception of temple rituals, the earliest textual mention of temples, the 16 main rituals to be performed in temple spaces, the kinds of offerings made, temple festivals, ritual performers and so on. While constructing the semantics of rituals, the scholarly emphasis has so far been on religious texts rather than the practice, the written word rather than the temple itself.⁵

This Introductory chapter has been divided into different sections based on the variety of rituals which are of special interest in relation to the temple space and which underscore the importance of temples as living sites. This material has been organized into five broad themes, which look at the different aspects of ritual practices:

- i. Worship of temple icons and iconography
- ii. Temple festivals and celebrations

- iii. Worship of water and water bodies
- iv. Pilgrimage
- v. Funerary temples and commemorative spaces

I. Worship of temple icons and iconography

Michael Willis has discussed how the idea of the temple *puja* developed as a result of the transfer of Vedic rituals from the domestic setting to the temple environment in a public space.⁶ Scholars have argued that the focus on the central shrine and the *garbhagriha* or sanctum has blinded us to the other meanings that become evident when we look at the temple complex as a whole. A crucial ritual within the temple complex is the circumambulation or *pradakshina* of the sanctum or the exterior of the temple. In this process of circumambulation, while the sanctum remains at the centre of the circuit, the devotee also comes to experience the broader conceptual and architectural meanings of the temple and the role of the sculptures that grace its exterior. Temple worship is hence meant to be a multifaceted experience in which the temple's architectural form and sculptural decoration provide an overall cosmic experience and the body of the temple represents the heaven on earth.⁷ The sculptures on the temple walls have a cosmological function, which enables the devotee to visualize the manifested multiplicity of the divine.⁸

While the role and consecration of the icon in the *garbhagriha* has received much scholarly attention, the consecration of the temple itself has been subject to fewer discussions. Leslie Orr has argued that there is little inscriptional evidence, technical or ritual terminology relating to consecration and it is almost invariably used with reference to the establishment of temple images rather than of the temple itself.⁹ Anna Slaczka's work analyses this connection between textual prescriptions on temple building and the actual practise at ground level by focusing on three crucial temple-building rituals: placing of the consecration deposit, the laying of the first bricks and, finally, the crowning bricks of the temple structure.¹⁰ In an interesting study, Kumud Kanitkar has shown how the sculptures on the temple walls themselves provide illustrations of some of these rituals of consecration.¹¹

II. Temple festivals and celebrations

Temple festivals are understood as ritually auspicious times in the annual calendar of a temple to mark different life events in the mythology of the enshrined deity (such as birthdays and marriage) or occasions from the life of the patron or a saint. Inscriptional evidence from temple walls indicates that historically festivals were also occasions, which opened up access to the temple and the deities, and a wide range of people could participate in the life of the temple.¹² The use of perfume and incense, flowers, music and *alamkara* (adornment) of the deity is understood as means of imbuing the divine icon with form and strength.¹³ Temple festivals have been examined as royal feasts and occasions for the renewal of royal consecrations, marked by gifting activity between the royalty, the priests and the public.¹⁴ However, if one moves away from reading the idea of 'gifting' recorded in temple inscriptions as an economic relationship between the royalty and temple, the inscriptions also enumerate different kinds of patrons who gifted for a range of purposes. Leslie Orr has drawn out several instances, where names of particular patrons have now come to be established in the daily worship services in certain temples.¹⁵

Several narratives from the lives of the Tamil *bhakti* saints have been cited as evidence for the historical authenticity and antiquity of the tradition of temple festivals. For instance, the *Shaiva*

Siddhanta texts have been used to understand temple rituals and refer to at least five annual festivals of devotees (*bhaktotsava*) at which images of Shiva and Tamil saints were brought out to the streets and accompanied by devotees.¹⁶ While such descriptions of popular festivals reflect a widespread, general religious and devout orientation of the people, there has been little discussion of the use of the temple space itself during the festivals.

Temple performances – music, dance and drama

Recitations, storytelling, dancing, singing and playing musical instruments are considered to be some of the most outstanding expressions of devotion to the deity. The Vaishnava *bhakti* tradition focuses on complete surrender to God, and congregational worship and passionate singing called *kirtana*, as an important temple ritual.¹⁷

Some of the different ways of understanding these performative arts are by looking at temple sculptures, inscriptions and the arrangement of the different *mandapas*. Inscriptions of the Maitrakas in Gujarat, for instance, record that the land gifted to temples was meant to serve different articles, such as incense, fragrances, lamps and oil for performing rituals in front of the image of the God and for certain ceremonies which are part of the worship, such as singing, dance and music.¹⁸ Temple inscriptions from 8th- to 13th-century Karnataka have been used to provide data from various temples on the numbers of girls employed for various jobs, and these also indicate a simultaneous expansion of the temple structure with the addition of dance halls (*natyamandapa*) and music halls (*sabha mandapa*), to accommodate the elaborate rituals that went with dance and music.¹⁹ Similar references to dancing girls in the service of temples are available from the inscriptions from various temples of Orissa²⁰ as also from Tamil temple inscriptions.²¹

Sculptures of dancing *apsaras* and of *ganas* playing musical instruments are available as early as the 5th century on the base mouldings of the temple at Nachna. Rather than considering dance sculptures merely as decoration on the temple walls, it is important to interpret the context and meaning of dance imagery. Thomas Donaldson in his survey of Konark has discussed the relevance of the sculptures of swaying female dancers and musicians found on the vertical mouldings of the *nata mandapa* at Konark as suggesting rhythm and festivity.²² Connections have also been drawn between the ritual dance of *Maharis*, the traditional dance performed by temple dancers at Jagannath temple at Puri and the sculptures of dancers depicted on the walls of the temple, which are associated with the moves of the *Odissi* dance form.²³ Sculptures of female dancers have been discussed in the context of various temples – Lakshmana temple at Khajuraho,²⁴ Trilokesvara temple at Pattadakal²⁵ and Sangamesvara temple at Kudavelli,²⁶ where these are found on the tall base mouldings of the walls of the main shrine and at Halebid²⁷ and on the outer walls of several Hoysala temples in Karnataka.²⁸ Similar sculptures of musicians both male and female with different kinds of musical instruments are found from various temples suggesting that a wide variety of instruments were once used as part of temple rituals.²⁹ These include various kinds of drums, flutes, a pipe instrument known as *nagasvaram* and various string instruments.³⁰ An interesting group of sculptures to consider are the 108 *karana* sculptures found in five different temple complexes of South Indian dated between the 11th and the 17th centuries.³¹ These sculptures depict dancers in various poses and panels carved on the *gopura* and the *vimana* of the central shrines and it is important to note that these were carved on one single wall of the temples as a cohesive dance programme.

Specific spaces in the temple might have been used for such ritual performances, which were not just meant for the entertainment of the deity but also meant for social gathering of devotees. Chola inscriptions mention various *mandapas* for performance such as *niruththa mandapas* (hall of niruththa), *sathursaalais* (halls of dance), *naadakasaalai* (halls of plays) and *thiruvolakka maandapam*

(congregation hall).³² The dance *mandapa* has been discussed in the context of various temples – Konark,³³ Jagannath Puri³⁴ and Lingaraj temple in Odisha, the Chola temples and the Baroli temple complex in Rajasthan.³⁵ In her research on theatre in ancient India, Natalia Lidova has suggested that theatre belonged to the world of *pūja* and she has described the temple *mandapas* as the earliest stage of performance.³⁶

Food for the gods: culinary traditions at the temple

Food offerings or *naivedya* constitute one of the essential components of *pūja* and the preparation of food for the gods is by itself considered an act of worship. The food which is offered to the god is also consumed by the devotees as a palpable piece of divine grace and the blessings of the gods are internalized by eating the leftovers from the god's meal; the consumption of *prasada* is hence also a ritual act.³⁷ While various anthropological studies have focused on the relationship between food and contemporary ritual practise, there is a dearth of such research, which draws the connection between temple space and food rituals. In a first-ever study of its kind, the chapter by Andrea Gutiérrez in this section uses a corpus of medieval inscriptions from the 9th to 13th centuries to describe ritual food preparation in the context of the temple space. Gutiérrez has isolated dishes, reconstructed their recipes and contextualized them using contemporary literary texts, theology and ritual theory. She has further presented the dishes as case studies classified into daily, monthly, calendrical and festival ritual offerings and as an expression of material *bhakti* that physically confirmed a more abstract devotion to deities.

There is mention of temple kitchens and *bhoga mandapa* in the context of various temples such as at Konark,³⁸ Jagannath Puri and Tirupati, yet because of the restricted nature of these spaces, little information is available for their architectural arrangement, cooking rituals, etc.

Deities on the move: temple festivals

In the context of South Indian temples, the end of temple festivals is marked by elaborate processions in which the deities clad in colourful, silk garments, decorated with precious ornaments and flowers, armed with their royal insignia and sometimes accompanied by members of their mythical family leave the temple in processions to meet their devotees in palanquins or elaborate chariots.³⁹ Temple processions have been traced to as early as the 6th and 7th centuries CE, with the popularization of the *bhakti* ideology when the deity began to be visualized as assuming the persona of a ruling monarch. The large stone image of the sanctum, which was permanently installed and was too heavy to move, could not be carried to fulfil these functions (*achala pratima*).⁴⁰ This led to the production of smaller and lighter processional, bronze images (*chala pratima*) of the deity. In contrast to the traditional, art historical discussions of South Indian bronzes regarding identification and nomenclatures, style of craftsmanship and royal patronage,⁴¹ in recent years, there has been a shift in scholarly focus to greater attention on the ritual purpose, reception of bronze images in their temple setting and their visibility.⁴² Many large Shaiva temple complexes may have had multiple processional icons, where different manifestations of Shiva may have been used during different festivals.⁴³ For the daily and weekly processions, the gods emerged from their shrines and made their way to *mandapas* and altars within the temple compound.

The impression which comes from earlier times is one that is 'dominated by the inrushing of pilgrims and devotees, rather than the outward motion of the deity' which is the form of the processions in the present times.⁴⁴ Crispin Branfoot has argued that this pattern of processions might have changed by the 16th or 17th century when deities began to travel outside the

temple walls. He does this on the basis of the relationship between the growing complexity of temple festivals and their overlap with temple-building projects that created elaborate processional spaces – corridors, gateways and *mandapas* – within the temple compound.⁴⁵ Branfoot has also examined the systematic placement of 2-m-high sculptures of standing male figures in the corridors of the *mandapas* to identify these as processional routes and where the sculptures were placed at a height to greet the deities in processions.⁴⁶ Drawing upon the visibility and symbolic meaning of festivals, there have also been discussions around the ritual paraphernalia and functional objects used in processions such as the festival vehicles, motif lamps and the logistics of moving the festival images.⁴⁷

It can thus be established that temple rituals need not merely be understood as confined to the *garbhagriha* but are meant to be carried out in different parts of the temple precincts such as the *pradakshinapath*, the various *mandapas* and in ancillary structures and spaces, such as in the courtyards, tanks and water bodies.

III. Water and water bodies

The association of water with temple rituals and the presence of water bodies near temples and shrines are undeniable and have been widely discussed. Water plays an important role in the daily rituals of the temple, such as for bathing the deity, libations (*abhisheka*), for ritual ablutions and for the proverbial ‘washing away of sins’. The sacrality of water is also attested by its unique role in various myths of creation in the Epics and the *Puranas* as in the narratives of the churning of the ocean, descent of the Ganga and the *Varaha avatara* of Vishnu who recovered the earth from the depth of the oceans.⁴⁸ Of all the water bodies in India, the myths of the river Ganga abound, seen as the primordial link between the heavens and the earth and associated with the mythologies of both Shiva and Vishnu.⁴⁹ Steven Darian’s work highlights the cultural importance of the river in art, archaeology, religion and literature, describing the mythical origins of the Ganga, its cult and its depiction in iconography and temples.⁵⁰ In iconography, the presence of water is indicated not merely through the representations of the river goddesses but also through images of flora and fauna – lotuses, elephants, tortoises, ducks and the snake (or *nagas*) as attested from many Buddhist shrines as well.

One of the most dramatic representations of the Ganga is that of *Gangavtarana* or the descent of Ganga from the heavens to earth and frequently depicted in sculptures as the river cascading as a waterfall caught in Shiva’s matted locks. The ‘Descent of Ganga’ panel at Mahabalipuram, on the Tamil coast has been subject to frequent discussions for its graphic retelling of the myth and its fine artistic execution.⁵¹ This panel is dated to the 8th century, and in more recent scholarship has also been identified as ‘Arjuna’s Penance’. The *Gangadharamurti*, a similar retelling of the Ganga myth, shows Shiva seated with Parvati while the tumultuous Ganga rushes towards him to be caught in his locks of hair, thus representing the control of river waters. The *Gangadharamurti* finds representations in several 7th- to 8th-century temples at Pattadakal in Karnataka, at Elephanta island off the coast of Mumbai, at Ellora and at the Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur – with subtle differences in the modes of representation.⁵²

One of the earliest representations of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna as independent deities is in the *Varaha* panel at Udayagiri in central India.⁵³ The Ganga and Yamuna are depicted standing on their respective *vahanas*, the *makara* and the *kurma* or tortoise. Joanna Williams has suggested that the theme became prominent for reasons other than religious – as the principal rivers of the Gupta heartland, their appearance at Udayagiri was meant to serve as a reminder of the Gupta political power.⁵⁴ Life-size images of Ganga and Yamuna in terracotta, elegantly jewelled, holding a pot and standing on their *vahana* and holding a parasol, dated to the late

5th century, were recovered from archaeological excavations at Ahichhatra in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh.⁵⁵

By the middle of the first millennium CE, representations of Ganga and Yamuna personified as goddesses find representation on doorjambes of temples, to serve an ablutionary function and the line demarcating the sacred space of the shrine. The temple doorway has been discussed as the 'structural equivalent of a *tirtha*',⁵⁶ where the presence of Ganga at the thresholds allows the devotee to cross over. The pioneering work of the French art historian Odette Viennot on the representations of the Ganga and Yamuna at the entrance of the North Indian temples suggests a connection between the geographical core of the Gupta dynasty and placement of the river goddesses on the temple entrances as an acknowledgement of their suzerainty and after the fall of the Guptas as a symbol of power and a tool to seek political legitimacy.⁵⁷ Implicit in this argument is the association between the waters of the Ganga as symbolizing royalty and control over fluvial resources.

Heinrich von Stietencorn has argued that the iconographic placement of the river goddesses at the bottom of the doorjamb evolved through several stages and he has drawn a relationship between the iconographical depiction of river goddesses on temples with the association of river goddesses with territoriality, kingship and the growing Gupta empire.⁵⁸ More recently, Michael Willis's work reaffirms this relationship between water, iconography, sacred space and political control at the site of Udayagiri. Willis argues that Udayagiri was an important ritual site for the Guptas and, to fulfil the needs of coronation, bathing and anointing of images a complex water system was developed there, where water was directed to flow along a natural cleft in the rock to collect in a reservoir near a temple.⁵⁹ Interestingly, these rivers of North India also find representation as goddesses in the Deccan temples. The river goddesses are shown on doorjambes as also on relief images depicting the goddesses singly, accompanied only by their mounts, to multi-figure compositions featuring a number of attendants alongside the goddess, including *ganas*, flywhisk or parasol bearers, doorkeepers and *mithuna* couples.⁶⁰

What does the sacred landscape around the temples say about the incorporation of the water bodies and its use in temple rituals? From the 16th century onwards, the number of rituals and festivals in South Indian temples increased and the temple tank or *teppakulam* was integrated not only in temple architecture but also in the ritual calendar of the temple. In the context of temple festivals, Crispin Branfoot has argued that the annual festival of the temple came to include the Float Festival or the *teppa-tirunалу*, when the processional deity would be taken out in a float or barge on the tank to a pavilion in the centre of the tank termed the *nirali-mandapa*, where rituals would be performed during the festival.⁶¹ As discussed by Anila Verghese, the *vasanta-mandapa* developed as a unique feature of temples in Tamil Nadu in the 16th and 17th centuries, as a direct architectural response to the expansion of the festival ritual of *Vasantotsava*.⁶²

Studies have also focused on the elaborate stepwell systems of Gujarat and Rajasthan and the pre-eminence of water not only for rituals but also, as vital, for life in these parched landscapes. To represent the divine powers of the waters, religious images were frequently placed in tanks and rivers, as stated by Jutta Jain-Neubayer.⁶³ Stepwells were viewed as abodes of various spirits of life-giving powers, and if worshipped in the right manner, they bestowed progeny, fertility, growth and wealth. Kirit Mankodi's study of the Queen's Stepwell at Patan in Gujarat establishes the primacy of water in the desert, building techniques and the role of the stepwell as a commemorative monument.⁶⁴ Michael W. Meister has connected the growth of the temple complex at Osian, Rajasthan, in the 8th century with the presence of water, in the midst of the desert climate of Thar.⁶⁵

Julia Hegewald's work is significant in this respect, as she takes a holistic view of the water architecture of South Asia, presenting architectural data based on a survey and study of more

than 1000 water structures and water-related buildings and outlining common features existing in architectural structures relating to water, thereby interpreting the importance of water in South Asian architecture.⁶⁶ The cleansing properties of water also make it an important requirement in the death rituals or the *shraddha* as has been discussed by various scholars.⁶⁷ The chapter by Kirit Mankodi in this section argues that the creation of reservoirs, wells and stepped wells was one of the most important *danadharma* or ritual gift and the construction of stepwells involved elaborate rituals just as in the consecration of temples.

IV. Pilgrimage

Beginning from the 6th century CE, the divine presence in a particular temple and geographic location became the focus of local cults and the occasion for many local stories mostly dealing with the manifestations of Shiva, Vishnu or Devi. Compiled as adjuncts to the main corpus of *Puranas*, these texts known as *Mahatmyas* and *Sthala Puranas* explain how deities manifested themselves in a specific place within the human world. At the temples located at these pre-eminent places, the story, the images and the signs conspire with each other, as partners, and as an echo chamber for the locality of the temple and its god.⁶⁸

Diana Eck locates the idea of *tirtha* as ingrained within the natural landscape and the sacred geography of India through different layers of myths associated with different sites, sanctified by the deeds of gods and legendary heroes. She argues that the conception of certain spots as *tirthas* is in the 'cultus of the *genii loci* who reigned long before their places came to be called *tirtha* or came to be connected with Shiva, Vishnu etc.'⁶⁹ These places gradually came to form clusters interrelated through myths and landscapes, enacted in thousands of shrines and a culturally created mental map of India started to emerge much before the colonial cartography of the subcontinent.⁷⁰ Within this tradition of 'networks', there is a perceived connection between the local pilgrimage tradition and the development of a trans-local network tradition as examined by Ben Fleming with respect to the 12 *dyotirlingas*⁷¹ and James Preston's study connecting shrines within a nexus of social, economic and ritual activities.⁷²

More recently, scholarship has re-examined the idea of pilgrimage not only as a journey, a departure from daily life, but also as one which involves visiting a series of shrines and sacred landscapes which lead one to a central shrine.⁷³ In his work, *Western Himalayan Temple Records*, Mahesh Sharma has shifted the focus from temples associated with larger ruling dynasties and large temple complexes to smaller, local shrines.⁷⁴ Through the use of temple records, Sharma has been able to derive information about the temple festival cycle, the daily *puja*, the costume and ornaments used by the deities, types of food served, and the relationship between the deity and the devotee through distribution of food items, temple officials including cooks who had a 'duty roster'.⁷⁵ The chapter by Mahesh Sharma in this section of the '*Handbook*' discusses inscriptional data and *Pahari* miniature paintings to examine how temples evolved into social spaces, which facilitated people to perform different kinds of rituals and the opportunity for people of various castes and social groups to interact.

Also significant in this context is Nachiket Chanchani's work, which traces the emergence of the central Himalayas as a crucial sacred landscape and an 'enduring abode of the gods' as a result of the dynamic interaction between the mountains and the communities.⁷⁶ By analysing the forms, layouts and functions of temples, sculptures and inscriptions from the 7th to the 12th centuries in the region, Chanchani argues that the *tirthas*, favoured by the region's medieval residents and visitors, were locales which were particularly difficult to access such as fluvial confluences, sulphur springs, north-flowing rivulets and caverns. To validate these, they were given associations with events in the lives of deities, legendary sages and, occasionally, historical personages.

V. Funerary temples and commemorative spaces

Aside from the use of temples to worship the divine, there has also been academic discussion around funerary spaces used to commemorate the dead and the construction of a ritual landscape around it. More than 40 years ago, P. O. Sompura and M. A. Dhaky found literary evidence in the form of fragments from a medieval treatise written in Sanskrit, which laid down the rules of constructing a *Svargarohana Prasada* – a class of temples conceived of as vehicles for ascending to heaven, which throws light on certain types of temple perceived of as mortuary monuments.⁷⁷ We cannot determine if these funerary monuments were meant to commemorate the deceased or were sanctuaries built to accrue spiritual merit to the patron. Krishna Deva believes that the Lakshmana temple and the Matangesvara temple at Khajuraho and Shiva temple at Bhojpur were meant for this purpose.⁷⁸

Hans Bakker has identified at least five kinds of funerary monuments in India.⁷⁹ Bakker has argued that though the practice of creating funerary shrines was not popular in the Vedic tradition, the idea of such monuments was not unfamiliar in the context of South Asia where it was a common practice to worship the bodily remains of the deceased as popular in the Buddhist tradition. Bakker has identified two structures – one in Ahicchatra and the other in Manasar as possible funerary shrines.

With respect to South India, at least three Shiva temples, two in Tamil Nadu and one in Andhra Pradesh, built by the Chola rulers between the 10th and 11th centuries have been understood as monuments commemorating the dead, on the basis of epigraphic data.⁸⁰ Similar studies have also been undertaken in the case of the Hemakuta Hill at the sacred centre in Hampi from 600 to 1325 CE.⁸¹ Based on a survey of the ritual landscape and pre-Vijayanagara architecture at the site, it has been argued that the Hemakuta Hill area was a liminal river pilgrimage site associated with death rituals and folk deities and that it subsequently expanded to become the primary cult centre for Virupaksha. Worshippers at the site included devotees and mourners who engaged with different aspects of the landscape directed towards corporeal ritual experiences.⁸²

Cathleen A. Cummings in her analysis of the sculptural programme on the exterior walls of the 8th-century Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal has raised similar questions about the importance of the temple as a site for coronation, consecration and commemoration.⁸³ She argues that the Virupaksha temple was constructed by the Chalukya ruler Vikramaditya II's (733–45 CE) queen Lokamahadevi to commemorate her husband's military victories over arch-rivals, the Pallavas of Kanchipuram, and also showcase ideas of *rajadharma* (kingly duties and obligations) and *mokshadharmā* (liberation of the soul) through the temple's iconographic programme. The landscape around Badami has also been associated with the tradition of commemoration by the Chalukyas and their successors exemplified by the megaliths and subsequently into different forms of architecture – ranging from temples to miniature shrines.⁸⁴ Lisa Owen has examined a series of relief sculptures on a rock surface dated between the 6th and 8th centuries at Badami to argue that, while the focus has been on the study of temples at Badami, what has been missing from the discourse is the focus on the rituals at the sites. The rock-reliefs carved on the boulder near a water tank not only appear to commemorate individual deceased people, but they also demarcate this area near water as the physical space, with the rock-relief as a visual performance of rites for dead ancestors.⁸⁵

While the existence of these funerary temples is given, what are some of the ways in which we can think about these shrines? More recently, scholars have engaged with questions such as the role of these corporal monuments from the past and their continued presence and use in the present-day ritual landscapes.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Through the foregoing discussion, we have tried to explore that temples are not static buildings devoid of their ritual component. The rituals themselves change; for instance, it has been discussed how the routes of processions may be altered or pilgrim numbers may rise and fall. The architectural additions and modifications of the temple space may be indicative of such shifting of ritual requirements. The focus on the materiality of the temple rituals and the use of the temple space itself to understand rituals also help us conceptualize the sacred space as extending beyond the sanctum and taking into consideration the iconography on the walls, the gateways, the courtyards and the pavilions, and geographical features such as hills and water bodies. This in turn enhances the understanding of rituals as encompassing the entire landscape of the temple beyond the built structure.

Notes

- 1 Gavin Flood (ed.), *The Oxford History of Hinduism: Hindu Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 1.
- 2 Axel Michaels, 'Ritual in Hinduism', in *Hinduism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, <http://oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/view/document/obo-9780195399318/obo-9780195399318-0187.xml>.
- 3 Gayacharan Tripathi, 'Temple Rituals: North India', in Knut A. Jacobsen, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*, First published online 2018, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.nyu.edu/10.1163/2212-5019_BEH_COM_000378 (accessed on 26 July 2021).
- 4 Anna Slaczka, 'Temple Rituals: South India', in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online* (accessed on 26 July 2021).
- 5 Galvin Flood, 'Preface' to Himanshu Prabha Ray (ed.), *Archaeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. xiv.
- 6 Michael D. Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 111.
- 7 Phyllis Granoff in Vishakha N. Desai and Danielle Mason (eds.), *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Sculptures from North India AD 700–1200*, New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993, p. 30.
- 8 Vishakha Desai, 'Beyond the Temple Walls', in *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers*.
- 9 Leslie Orr, 'Temple: Form and Function', in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. II, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 495–510.
- 10 Anna Aleksandra Ślaczka, *Temple Consecration Rituals in Ancient India: Text and Archaeology*, vol. 26, Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- 11 Kumud Kanitkar, 'Sculptural Depictions on the Pillars of the Shiva Temple Ambernath', in *Archaeology and Text*, pp. 76–89.
- 12 Leslie C. Orr, 'Processions in the Medieval South Indian Temple: Sociology, Sovereignty and Soteriology', in Jean-Luc Chevillard and Eva Wilden (eds.), *South Indian Horizons*, Pondicherry: IFP & EFEO, 2004, pp. 437–470.
- 13 Richard Davis, 'Chola Bronzes in Procession', in Vidya Dehejia, Richard H. Davis, Irā Nācakāmi, R. Nagaswamy, and Karen Pechilis Prentiss (eds.), *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*, New York: American Federation of Arts; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002, pp. 47–63.
- 14 Arjun Appadurai and C.A. Breckenridge, 'The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 10(2), 1976, pp. 187–211.
- 15 Leslie C. Orr, 'Naming Rituals and Sharing Power in the Time and Space of the Tamil Temple', Henry Albery, Jens-Uwe Hartmann, and Himanshu Prabha Ray (eds.), *Power, Presence and Space: South Asian Rituals in Archaeological Context*, London and New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. 141–165.
- 16 Flood, *The Oxford History of Hinduism*, p. 256.
- 17 Edward C. Dimock, 'Bhakti', in *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers*. A.M. Gaston, *Krishna's Musicians: Musicians and Music Making in the Temples of Nathdvara, Rajasthan*, Delhi: Manohar, 1997. S. Thielemann, *Singing the Praises Divine: Music in the Hindu Tradition*, New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2000.

- 18 Susan Verma Mishra and Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Archaeology of Sacred Spaces: The Temple in Western India, 2nd Century BCE–8th Century CE*, London and New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 14.
- 19 A. Parasher and U. Naik, 'Temple Girls of Medieval Karnataka', *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 23(1), 1986, pp. 63–78.
- 20 D.B. Mishra, 'Performing Arts in Orissan Archaeology and Epigraphy', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 66, 2005–2006, pp. 1454–1461.
- 21 Leslie C. Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- 22 Thomas Donaldson, *Konark: Monumental Legacy*, New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 65, p. 70.
- 23 Kaustavi Sarkar, 'Mahari Out: Deconstructing Odissi', Electronic Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2017, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.
- 24 Devangana Desai, *The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho*, Volume 4 for the Project for Indian Cultural Studies, Mumbai: Franco-Indian Research, 1996.
- 25 V. Filliozat, 'A Few Rare Sculptures from the Trailokyeśvara Temple, Pattadakal', *South Asian Religions and Visual Forms in Their Archaeological Context*, 2016, pp. 467–482. Cathleen Cummings, *Decoding a Hindu Temple: Royalty and Religion in the Iconographic Programme of the Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal*, Woodland Hills, CA: South Asian Studies Association, 2014.
- 26 Carol R. Bolon, 'The Durga Temple, Aihole, and the Saṅgameśvara Temple, Kūḍavelli: A Sculptural Review', *Ars Orientalis*, 1985, pp. 47–64.
- 27 Y Fukuroi, 'Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples', *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 71, 2008, pp. 255–279.
- 28 J. Deloche, 'Musical Instruments in Hoysala Sculptures (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 77, 1988, pp. 57–68.
- 29 W. Skelton, 'The Nagaswarm and the South Indian Hindu Festival', *Asian Music*, 2(1), 1971, pp. 18–24. Y. Terada, 'Temple Music Traditions in Hindu South India: Periya Mēlam and Its Performance Practice', *Asian Music*, 39(2), 2008, pp. 108–151.
- 30 Terada, 'Temple Music Traditions in Hindu South India'.
- 31 Bindu S. Shankar, 'Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108-Karana Sculptures', Dissertation submitted to Graduate School of The Ohio State University, 2004. L.P. Bennink, K.R. Deekshithar, J.R. Deekshithar, and S.R. Deekshithar, 'Shiva's Karanas in the Temples of Tamil Nadu: The Natya Shastra in Stone', asianart.com, 2013, www.asianart.com/articles/karanas/index.html (accessed on 15 January 2022).
- 32 Mythilie Aruliah, 'Stages of Dance during Chola Period', *Languages of India*, 14(4), April 2014, www.languageinindia.com/april2014/mythiliecholandancers1.pdf (accessed on 15 January 2022).
- 33 Thomas Donaldson has described the now dilapidated *Nata Mandapa* at Konark as originally a platform with four rows of pillars, built on the *panchratha* plan with richly sculpted walls and dated to 13th century, later than the main structure of the temple; Thomas Donaldson, *Konark*, p. 60.
- 34 Ratnakar Mahapatra, 'Vimala Temple at Jagannath Temple Complex, Puri', *Orissa Review*, September–October, 2005.
- 35 T. Patel, Alfaro Angne, and P. Swaranjali, 'The Bodily and the Divine: Study of a 10th Century Hindu Temple in Rajasthan, India', *Journal of Interior Design*, 46(1), 2021, pp. 61–71.
- 36 Natalia Lidova, *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*, Performing Arts Series, vol. IV, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994. A.M. Gaston, *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996.
- 37 G. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi, 'Food for the Gods in South India: An Exposition of Data', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1978, pp. 86–108.
- 38 In the context of the temple complex of Konark he talks of the remains of a temple kitchen with areas for lighting of fire, cooking and washing platforms and drains; Thomas Donaldson, *Konark*.
- 39 Corinna Wessels-Mevissen, 'Festival Vehicles and Motif Lamps: Reflections on Visual Elements in South Indian Temple Ritual', in *Reflexivity, Media and Visuality*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, pp. 567–597.
- 40 Vidya Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred*.
- 41 T.A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Madras: The Law Printing House, 1914. J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, 2nd ed., Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1956. Karl Khan-dalavala, S. Gorakshankar, and Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Eastern Indian Bronzes*, New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1986.

- 42 Joanna Waghorne, 'Dressing the Body of God: South Indian Bronze Sculpture in Its Temple Setting', *Asian Art*, 5(3), 1992, pp. 9–33. Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. Vidya Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*.
- 43 Leslie Orr, 'Processions in the Medieval South Indian Temple'; and Crispin Branfoot, 'Power, Processions and the Festival Architecture of the Tamil Temple', in *Power, Presence and Space*, London and New York: Routledge, 2020, pp. 166–189.
- 44 For more on the change in the ritual and cult of temple processions see U. Hüsken, 'Gods and Goddesses in the Ritual Landscape of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century Kāñcipuram', in E. Nelson and J. Wrights (eds.), *Layered Landscapes: Early Modern Religious Space across Faiths and Cultures*, New York and London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 63–81.
- 45 Orr, 'Processions in the Medieval South Indian Temple'; Branfoot, 'Power, Processions and the Festival Architecture of the Tamil Temple'.
- 46 Crispin Branfoot, 'Royal Portrait Sculpture in the South Indian Temple', *South Asian Studies*, 16(1), 2000, pp. 11–36.
- 47 Wessels-Mevissen, 'Festival Vehicles and Motif Lamps'; Crispin Branfoot, 'Painting Processions: A Company Album from South India', *Orientalis*, 38(8), 2007, pp. 73–78.
- 48 The *Mahabharata*, the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagvata Purana*.
- 49 C. Sivaramamurti, *Ganga*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976.
- 50 S.G. Darian, *The Ganges in Myth and History*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001.
- 51 Padma Kaimal, 'Playful Ambiguity and Political Authority in the Large Relief at Māmallapuram', *Ars Orientalis*, 1994, pp. 1–27. M.D. Rabe and G.J. Samuel, *The Great Penance at Māmallapuram: Deciphering a Visual Text*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2001. H. Elgood, *Hinduism and the Religious Arts*, London: Cassell: 1999.
- 52 Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. Cummings, *Decoding a Hindu Temple*. Carmel Berkson, *Ellora, Concept and Style*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications 1992. C.D. Collins, *Iconography and Ritual of Siva at Elephanta*, New York: The SUNY Press, 1988. G. Michell, 'The Architecture of Elephanta: An Interpretation', in Carmel Berkson (ed.), *Elephanta: The Cave of Shiva*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 17.
- 53 Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Hindu Temple and Its Sacred Landscape*, OCHS – Mandala series (forthcoming).
- 54 Joanna Williams, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 62.
- 55 Ray, *The Hindu Temple and its Sacred Landscape*.
- 56 Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, p. 315.
- 57 Odette Viennot, *Les divinités fluviales Ganga et Yamuna*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964.
- 58 Heinrich von Stietencron and Mitch Cohen, *Gaṅgā and Yamunā: River Goddesses and Their Symbolism in Indian Temples*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010.
- 59 Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual*.
- 60 Subhashini Kaligotla, 'Shiva's Waterfront Temples: Reimagining the Sacred Architecture of India's Deccan Region', Dissertation submitted to Columbia University, 2015, p. 203.
- 61 Crispin Branfoot, 'Imperial Frontiers: Building Sacred Space in Sixteenth Century South India', *The Art Bulletin*, 90(2), 2008, pp. 171–194.
- 62 Anila Varghese, *Religious Traditions at Vijayanagara as Revealed Through Its Monuments*, New Delhi: Manohar: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1995, p. 106.
- 63 Jutta Jain-Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat in Art-Historical Perspective*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981. Morna Livingston, *Steps to Water: The Ancient Stepwells of India*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002.
- 64 Kirit Mankodi, *The Queen's Stepwell at Patan*, vol. 111, Bombay: Project for Indian Cultural Studies, 1991.
- 65 Michael W. Meister, 'Water in a Desert Landscape', in *South Asian Archaeology 2003*, Bonn: Deutsche Archäologische Institut 2005, pp. 577–584.
- 66 Julia Hagedewald, *Water Architecture in South Asia: A Study of Types, Development, and Meanings*, Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- 67 Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1978. Knut A. Jacobsen, 'Pilgrimage Rituals and Technological Change: Alterations in the Shraddha Ritual at Kapilashram in the Town of Siddhpur in Gujarat', in Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold

- (eds.), *Religion and Technology in India: Spaces, Practices and Authorities*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 130–145.
- 68 Orr, ‘Temple: Form and Function’.
- 69 Diana L. Eck, ‘India’s “tīrthas”: Crossings in Sacred Geography’, *History of Religions*, 20(4), 1981, pp. 323–344.
- 70 Diana L. Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*, New York: Harmony, 2012.
- 71 Ben J. Fleming, ‘Mapping Sacred Geography in Medieval India: The Case of the Twelve Jyotirlingas’, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 13(1), 2009, pp. 51–81.
- 72 James J. Preston, ‘Sacred Centers and Symbolic Networks in South Asia’, *Mankind Quarterly*, 20(3), 1980, p. 259.
- 73 Crispin Branfoot and Ruth Barnes, *Pilgrimage: The Sacred Journey*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2006.
- 74 Mahesh Sharma, *Western Himalayan Temple Records: State, Pilgrimage, Ritual and Legality in Chambā*, vol. 31, Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 76 Nachiket Chanchani, *Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains: Architecture, Religion, and Nature in the Central Himalayas*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019.
- 77 P.O. Sompura, Madhusudan Dhaky, Nachiket Chanchani (trans.), and Deven Patel (trans.), ‘A Temple for Ascending to Heaven’, *Art in Translation*, 2(1), 2010, pp. 79–85; First published in Gujarati and Sanskrit; P.O. Sompura and Madhusudan Dhaky, ‘Svargarohana Prasada’, *Svadhyaya*, 5(2), February 1968, pp. 191–195.
- 78 Deva Krishna, *Temples of Khajuraho*, 2 vols., New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1990.
- 79 Hans T. Bakker, ‘Monuments to the Dead in Ancient North India’, *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 50(1), 2007, pp. 11–47.
- 80 Pradeep Chakravathy, ‘Living Beyond Dead: Chola Sepulchers’, *Marg*, September 1, 2011.
- 81 Crispin Branfoot, ‘Regional Pasts, Imperial Present: Architecture and Memory in Vijayanagara-period Karnataka’, in Adam Hardy (ed.), *The Temple in South Asia*, London: Society for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007, pp. 105–125.
- 82 C.L. Haak, ‘Corporeal Experience and the Material World of the Vijayanagara Sacred Landscape: 600–1325 CE’, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, Canada, 2018.
- 83 Cummings, *Decoding a Hindu Temple*.
- 84 Srikumar M. Menon, ‘The Curious Case of the Galaganatha Dolmen: Possible Links Between Megalithic Monuments and Early Temples at Aihole’, *Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 2, 2015, pp. 54–73. Srikumar M. Menon, ‘Temples of Memory: The Bhutnath Temple Environs at Badami as a Commemorative Landscape’, *Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 5, 2017, pp. 576–605.
- 85 Lisa N. Owen, ‘Neither Cave Nor Temple: Creating and Commemorating “Place” in the Ritual Landscapes at Badami’, in *Power, Presence and Space*, India: Routledge, 2020, pp. 215–232.
- 86 Brian Hatcher, Abhishek S. Amar, and Mark McLaughlin, ‘Death Matters’, *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, 2021, pp. 1–7.