

## **Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms**

# **Dependency and Slavery Studies**



Edited by  
Jeannine Bischoff and Stephan Conermann

**Volume 5**

# Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms



Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia

Edited by  
Julia A.B. Hegewald

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IN MEMORY OF  
JOHN C. HUNTINGTON  
6.04.1937 – 28.11.2021



# Preface

This collection of papers is a result of the interdisciplinary and transregional Cluster of Excellence ‘Beyond Slavery and Freedom: Asymmetrical Dependencies in Pre-Modern Societies’, which was established at the University of Bonn in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Within this Cluster, scholars from a large number of disciplines, including history, law, theology, Asian languages, literature, anthropology, archaeology, art history and others, conduct research over a seven-year period on slavery and other forms of extreme dependency. Our aim is to overcome the broad Western conceptional opposites of ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’, which are heavily ideologically charged terms. Instead, we intend to examine situations of ‘asymmetrical dependency’ more generally.<sup>2</sup>

Questions of dependency have so far not been a major focus of enquiry in the area of Asian art history. A number of scholars, who were approached and asked to participate in the conference and resulting edited volume, could at first not see any connection to their own research work and found it difficult to think about dependencies at all. So it was even more fascinating to see with which creative and often unforeseen ideas and topics they came up in their abstracts and proposals, and how intense were the ensuing discussions about the conference, across regional borders and disciplinary limitations. In the end, fifteen scholars from a number of European countries, such as Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, together with specialists from India and the US, presented aspects of their research focusing on strong asymmetrical dependencies in Asian art. The conference bore the same title as this publication, ‘Embodied Dependencies and Freedoms: Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia.’ The conference papers also included material from the literary field in China and from the area of film studies in Japan. Unfortunately, these two scholars did not submit their essays for inclusion in the final volume. However, the regional remit of the contributions still includes South Asia (India and Nepal), Tibet, material from the Silk Routes and from mainland China – with ample references to Europe and South America. In the spirit of the Cluster,

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2006, so-called excellence or top universities have been selected by the German Council of Sciences and Humanities (WR) and the German Research Foundation (DFG) in a national competition. During the last German Excellence Strategy in 2019, ten universities and one consortium were elected. Amongst these, also the University of Bonn was awarded the title German University of Excellence (EXU). As part of this election, six Clusters of Excellence were established as collaborative research foci, fostering cooperations between different faculties and departments of the university. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) is the only humanities cluster in Bonn.

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the webpage of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en> [accessed 14.02.2022]. This information is also based on the unpublished Application for the Cluster of Excellency, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn (2021).

academics at various stages of their career development – full professors, independent scholars, lecturers and doctoral students – were invited to take part in the event.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the conference, which had originally been scheduled for April 2021, was postponed to October 2021. Even at the later date, it could still not be held in person. It was therefore delivered as a two-day digital event with both speakers and the audience participating via Zoom.

This edited volume brings together chapters by authors from a variety of subject areas. Most are historians of art and architecture or archaeologists, others are restorers, museum curators and architects; yet others come from a background of language or religious studies. Some are based at universities, while others work independently or at museums. Reflecting the standards of their respective fields, they adopted various spellings of specialist terms. In order to retain the individuality of the texts and the conventions of different disciplines, the chapters have been adapted to the de Gruyter house style but not been strictly standardised otherwise. However, as this edition combines chapters employing Sanskrit and Hindi terminology, the symbol ‘ṛ’ has been used for the transliteration of the Sanskrit letter ‘ठ [ri]’ in order to differentiate it from Hindi retroflex ‘ṛ.’ Opinions expressed by the authors in their individual chapters are their own personal views and do not necessarily reflect the thoughts of the editor or publishers. As the papers compiled in this volume combine expertise from a broad range of different geographic and linguistic zones as well as from a wide field of subject areas, we include a comprehensive glossary at the end of the volume to explain terms and concepts which might be unfamiliar to readers from outside the diverse regional, religious or disciplinary backgrounds. The publication concludes with short biographical notes of all individual contributors.

Due to the digital nature of the conference, fewer people were involved in the organisation of the event than is usually the case. However, those who supported the event must be thanked wholeheartedly. First and foremost, I am grateful to the presenters who actively participated in the conference by sharing their material and interpretations and by contributing to the very lively debates. In alphabetical order, these were Professor Dr Gudrun Bühnemann, Kanika Gupta (who also presented for Professor Deepak Kannal), Professor Dr Adam Hardy, Professor Dr Julia A.B. Hegewald, Dr Amy Heller, Dr Jennifer Howes, Dr Tiziana Leucci, Professor Dr Tiziana Lorenzetti, Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, Dr Elisabeth Scherer, Sandra Jasmin Schlage, Birgit Angelika Schmidt, Professor Pratyush Shankar together with Snigdha Srivastava, Professor Dr Peter Sturman and Dr Daniel Suebsman. I am especially obliged to those thirteen speakers, who submitted their reworked and extended papers for publication. I would also like to express my gratitude to the very perceptive and engaged audience on the two days of the conference, who actively joined in to the animated debates. Thanks are also due to the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) team, Event Coordinator Jan Hörber and the Team Assistant, Astrid Lehmberg. I am grateful to the Speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, Professor Dr Stefan Conermann, the managing director, Jeanine Bischoff – and to her 2022 maternity cover, Dr Abdelkader Al Ghouz –, and to the

Steering Committee of the Cluster of Excellence for funding this book. Finally, at the stage of publication, the support of the publications manager, Dr Janico Albrecht, in editing this volume and of the translator and academic editor, Imogen Herrad, for checking the English in the chapters submitted by non-native speakers, are acknowledged with greatest thanks. In my own department, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratefulness to Sabine Haessler, who meticulously checked through all the papers repeatedly when they were submitted and who was a treasured support during the entire process of editing this collection of research papers. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to Sandra Jasmin Schlage, for support with the glossary.

This book is dedicated to Professor Dr John C. Huntington, a greatly respected, highly erudite meticulous scholar, especially in the fields of Himalayan and Tibetan art, and a cherished friend. He passed away after an extended illness during the time when this publication was in the process of being edited. John had still been invited in March of the same year to participate in and contribute a paper to the conference, but was already too unwell to accept. He passed away in November 2021, aged eighty-four, one month after the conference. John will live on through his many valued publications, the photographs he took together with his wife Susan L. Huntington on their numerous academic field trips to Asia, and in the memory of all those who were fortunate enough to have met him.

Bonn, April 2022

Julia A.B. Hegewald



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Julia A.B. Hegewald

## Chapter 1

# Introduction: Embodiments of Dependencies and Freedoms in Asian Art

## 1 Introduction

An embodiment is a visible and often also tangible form given to an abstract idea, concept, relation or feeling. In the context of embodiments in art and architecture, the drawings, paintings, objects and buildings act as visible expressions of different kinds of dependency.<sup>1</sup> This can be very immediate representations, such as painted or sculpted scenes depicting slavery, subjugation and other asymmetrical forms of dependencies.<sup>2</sup> These can take place between people, between humans and animals, human and divine beings or humans and inanimate objects or materials.<sup>3</sup> However, such very

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1 By choosing the term ‘embodiment’, I clearly wish to go beyond the approach of considering material artefacts merely as ‘mediators’ in dependency relations, as was suggested in the joint paper by Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “On Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 13.

2 Asymmetrical relations are characterised by inequality, with one side having more power or resources of any kind than the other. For a more detailed definition, cf. Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “On Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 2–3, 8.

3 Some investigations in dependency studies only focus on dependent relations between people, or one or several individuals and human groups, juridical persons, organisations and governments or states. These leave out dependency connections between humans and either immaterial objects or non-human actors, such as (super-human) deities. This is, for instance, the case in Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 3, 4, 8. Such an approach may be perceived as an essentially Western and secular way of thinking. Contrasting with this, the chapters in this book also examine dependences involving materials, environmental circumstances and divinities. The rationale in omitting these in other studies is, according to Christoph Antweiler, that he considers non-human causal agents or actors ‘to be behaving but not acting’. Further, he says, ‘I only regard people as actors, if an action – in distinction from a mere *behavior* – contains intention.’ (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 4, 8). The publication by Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “On Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 1–38 discusses the significance of material objects and spirits and gods in situations of dependences but also ultimately excludes them from their dependency considerations. See in particular their pages 1 and 12–14. However, for an architect it does not make any difference whether he has only mud at his disposal to build with because this is the only available construction resource due to an environmental situation, or whether it is a ruler or other human being who with intent consciously forbids him to employ any other material. Equally, most religious devotees are convinced that the divinities they believe in have the

immediate depictions are reasonably rare in an Asian context. This might have to do with the belief in the South Asian concept of *karma*. According to this, rebirth into a modest and dependent position, such as a caste which is considered of lower ranking, is deemed to reveal the status of spiritual advancement and religious purity of that person. As such, situations or positions of strong dependency are portrayed as retributions for one's own deeds in a previous life and consequently as reflections of one's own responsibility.<sup>4</sup> As such, most depictions in South Asian art focus on exalted, high-ranking and so-called 'purer' members of society, who act as moral models and are considered worth portraying, and even more strongly on gods and stories from the eternal epics and myths associated with them. In order to go beyond studying only very obvious forms of slavery and dependency,<sup>5</sup> less direct representations of dependent situations have also been included in this volume. These are, for example, allegorical images or material artefacts, such as destroyed, annexed or adapted statues or spaces (Plate 1.1), which dominant groups absorbed from dependant people and which indicate asymmetrical power relations. Even less immediate in terms of visual expression are the examination of dependencies in which artists find themselves. Artist communities producing objects and architecture are, for instance, dependent on the environment they live in, whether this be the climate or the availability of resources. They are further contingent on the cultural, social and religious context and the need to gain an income through the artefacts they produce.

Which relations are to be characterised as 'strong' or 'extreme' forms of dependency and which not, it is difficult to define.<sup>6</sup> However, questions of scale are not of utmost concern for this publication. With regards to the forms of dependency analysed here we aim to be inclusive rather than exclusive and show variety and diversity. However, all are life-changing for the people involved, especially for those at the dependent level. Furthermore, the forms of extreme dependence outlined in this collection persist for substantial

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capability to think, reach decisions and act consciously, just like a human being or other actor could. Therefore, this seemingly arbitrary differentiation has not been adopted in this volume. In this, I follow the approach taken by Bruno Latour in his actor-network theory, who assigns the status of actors at least to 'things'. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> For further details, cf. Karel Werner, *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994): 86, and Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Oxford: New World, 1999): 95.

<sup>5</sup> This is one of the main aims of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) in the context of which this edited volume has been compiled.

<sup>6</sup> According to Bethany Walker, 'Strong dependencies emerge when one actor cannot exit without the other'. Furthermore, she states that the relationship between the two actors or sides has to be 'heavily unequal' (Bethany J. Walker, "Peasant Dependencies in Medieval Islam: Whose Agency in Food Production and Migration?" *Working Paper 3*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 2). This illustrates how difficult it is to apply unambiguous criteria and standards in such situations. On this issue, see also the discussion in Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 8.



**Plate 1.1:** Cave site at Rayadurg, Andhra Pradesh. The previously Jaina sacred area was taken over and adapted by Hindu followers.

amounts of time, inviting a *longue durée* approach, and many are life-long relations (e.g. status, ethnicity). For instance, traditionally, social affiliation to a caste or social group, belonging to an artists' group or guild, as well as affiliation with a religion, all were inherited qualities, closely connected with certain inequalities and dependencies obtained through birth. Taken all together, the examples presented in this volume illustrate the wide distribution and the huge variety of embodied dependencies that we encounter in the study of Asian art.

## 2 Dependencies and Art

Before concentrating on the region of Asia, which forms the focus of this publication, I would like to adopt a broader approach and reflect on dependencies in the visual arts more generally. All around the world, art and architecture have been created and developed at all times out of situations of dependency, or rather out of a dialogue between dependencies and freedoms.<sup>7</sup> The original 'art pour l'art', in English 'art for art's sake', is a

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<sup>7</sup> In actual fact one can go even further and assert that there is a universal inevitability of dependency within human relations more generally. On this issue, see Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian

modern concept and reflects a largely twentieth-century and Western self-understanding of the artist, not known during earlier periods. Before this time, art was largely religious in nature and existed only because it had a religious function to fulfil and been commissioned by religious authorities or pious lay-people. Even Palaeolithic cave paintings and art objects have cultic meanings, in addition to possibly representing illustrations for the identification of animals and hunting techniques. This continued during the Neolithic age, and can be observed in the Classical era and in Egyptian art. Dependencies on religious authorities are especially apparent in Christian medieval art, where – just like in Asia – people producing art were considered artisans or craftspeople and not artists in our modern understanding. They were judged to be artisans, as they were undertaking contract work, commissioned, directed and paid for by the church or by affluent devotees. Just like in Asia, they were organised in guilds and their personal names have rarely been transmitted, as the individuality of the artist was considered of no significance.<sup>8</sup> In Europe, this situation started to change very slowly during the Renaissance with a transition towards a more civic and feudal society. This gradually led to new subject matters entering into the painters' and sculptors' repertoire, which then included also an interest in humans and a realistic representation of their surroundings, for instance, through the technique of perspective. At this time, it became more common for the names of recognised individuals in the trade to be transmitted, although we know that they worked in groups and that no single artist was responsible for an entire painting. All the same, it can generally be said that at least until the start of the eighteenth century, those creating art were not permitted primarily to follow their own imagination, genius and self-expression, but worked on order. Only during the second half of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century did the question of the 'freedom' of the artist become a more prominent issue. As a result, the subject matter changed further, as artists started to depict not only religious, mythological and regal topics, but also their ordinary, everyday surroundings. This included representations of more commonplace and mundane subjects, such as street views and cafe scenes, depictions of workers and of industrialisation. Not until the twentieth century did art for the first time exist more clearly for its own sake. Besides the church and wealthy individuals, art started to be bought and collected by ordinary people. This led to a division between the so called 'high arts' and the 'applied arts', of which the latter remained more strongly in functional dependencies. However, did art really free itself completely, by breaking with the church and by idealising the genius of a named artist who produced art objects usually without commission? Even today, artists are dependent on donors, collectors, galleries and the art market more generally. Artists are free to produce whatever they want in whatever size, however, they usually need to

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Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Kanika Gupta debates this issue in a South Asian context in Chapter 12 in this book.

self-finance in advance and to sell at least some of their works, in order to survive. These constraints still influence what is created or continues to be fashioned over longer periods. Besides the art market, modern artists are – at least to some extent – also reliant on trends, fashions and what we might call the zeitgeist. Although some artists might consciously work against such vogues, their works, too, express at least an indirect dependency on movements and fashions by being diametrically opposed to them.

In Asia, the dependence of art producers on religious authorities, rules and conventions has continued for even longer than in the West. With the early twentieth century modern artists also commenced to express themselves more strongly as individuals and to fashion works of art with clearly mundane subjects.<sup>9</sup> However, it is striking how frequently modern and contemporary artists still select religious topics (Plate 1.2) and vehemently stress the ability of their paintings still to function as sacred icons in a ritual context.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the field of Asian history of art and architecture is especially rich and rewarding in studying dependencies. A general impression might prevail that due to the often still quite strong religious nature of the arts, the continued treatment of traditional artists as artisans in many contexts and the sustained application of religio-philosophical texts for art production, the arts in Asia are more dependant and less free than in the West. However, it is fascinating to observe that despite sustained dependences – just as in the West – Asian artisans, artists and builders have at all times, in the past just as much as today, found liberties in their practice. The fact that in Asian art, conventions and dependencies – at least in certain areas – are even greater than in much of Western art today, makes the tension between the extreme points of dependence and freedom even stronger, but at the same time shows the enormous breadth of intermediary forms and the many choices and nonconformities that artists found in highly dependent environments. Before we penetrate deeper into the area of embodiments of dependencies in Asian art, we have to clarify some terminologies.

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<sup>9</sup> On this issue, see Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007). There were even earlier tendencies to include more worldly subjects, such as in the later Pahāri and Rājput paintings from about the mid-eighteenth century onwards. This was due to the movement of painters trained in the Mughal ateliers, who with the gradual decline of the Mughal empire moved from Islamic centres to provincial Hindu courts to take up employment. However, this was only a limited regional and temporal development.

<sup>10</sup> Amongst contemporary artists in Nepal, for instance, the majority do still also depict religious subjects, whether this is Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Shashi Shah, Manuj Babu Mishra, Buddhi Thapa, Kiran Manandhar or Shashi Kala Tiwari. It is noticeable how often these artists create variations on the theme of the *maṅḍala*. However, in terms of more figural and less abstract themes there is also continuity in that gods and goddesses are regularly depicted.



**Plate 1.2:** Contemporary linocut print by Nepali artist Batsa Gopal Vaidya, depicting a modern interpretation of the Hindu god Gaṇeśa.

### 3 Dependencies, Dependences and Freedoms

Studies focusing on theoretical frameworks, analytical issues and terminologies in slavery and the emerging field of dependency studies, distinguish between ‘dependence’ and ‘dependency’.<sup>11</sup> According to this differentiation, ‘dependence’ is descriptive of

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance the recent publication by Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 1–16. I agree with Antweiler, who points out that “the concept of slavery may be problematic in scientific terms to describe many of the forms we study, as it is only one case of asymmetrical dependency,

short-term developments and spatially confined contexts of asymmetrical relations, i.e. specific defined cases on a reasonably small scale. In contrast, ‘dependency’ (*dependencia*) has to a greater extent to do with longer-term trajectories in larger, often global contexts. It describes a formalised, instituted or systemic practice, often supported through an established system. This means that it is generally more stable, unchanging, long-lasting and permanent. In addition, it usually involves or affects larger numbers of people.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the two concepts are intimately linked and customs which generate or nurture situations of strong asymmetrical dependence can gather and accumulate over time to create larger entities of dependency. In fact, the differentiation is reasonably well-defined in theory. In practice, however, it is often not so straightforward to set the two clearly apart. Whilst most phenomena discussed in the present volume function on a relative micro-level and are less concerned with macro-oriented dependency theory and global phenomena, one might ask whether the age-old caste system<sup>13</sup> and the faith groups of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, with their sacred ritual and theoretical texts which influence the lives of people in the entire vast region of South Asia till today,<sup>14</sup> should not be classified as larger-scale and long-term motors that power social, societal and religious ‘dependencies.’ Equally, despite some recent changes to weather patterns through global warming, the general difference in climate between the dry Deccan plateau and the wet coastal belt of western India,<sup>15</sup> which depends on the longstanding monsoon rains that impact in fact the whole Asiatic region, would then be a climatic dependency and not simply a dependence.

This analytical differentiation between the two terms, set up by some theoreticians, has not been addressed or implemented in the contributions of the authors who participated in the conference or who contributed to this edited volume. In the different individual chapters, the terms ‘dependence’ and ‘dependency’ are used synonymously, as is

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and an extreme one at that.’ (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 10). As this text by Christoph Antweiler came out as one of the central theoretical texts of the Bonn research Cluster just before the manuscript of this volume was submitted to the publisher, the introduction makes regular reference to his concept paper. This is in order to show the many overlaps but also divergences in opinion and approach in the compilation and intention behind the current edited volume and in order to stimulate further debate about these central topics.

**12** Cf. Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 2, 4.

**13** Christoph Antweiler stresses that ‘Structures are by definition characterized by a certain measure of durability, which distinguishes them from processes or dynamics.’ He also points out that practices can take on more organised outlines when they last for long periods and become very prevalent, such as ritual practices (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 6). On the same page, he also talks about the ‘institutionalization’, ‘canalization’ and ‘fossilization’ of social relations.

**14** On this, refer back to the discussion of how contemporary art practices in Nepal are still connected today to traditional motives and expectations, such as the ritualistic properties of art.

**15** The comparison and contrast between these two regions forms the focus of Chapter 3.



usually done in ordinary, non-specialised speech. The thirteen papers in this collection do not focus on abstract theories or terminologies. They introduce specific practical examples, case studies and microhistories, which reflect asymmetrical relations of dependence taken from the wider region of Asia. None of the authors, nor the editor, are specialists in the areas of slavery and dependency studies. Nevertheless, the contributions all outline clear cases of severe forms of asymmetrical dependence from the contributors' own day-to-day research work. All together, these case studies succeed in shedding light on and giving tangible form to a large number of dependency phenomena.

In addition, the papers collected in this volume do not stop at just describing dependences or dependencies. An even more important question for the authors was how artisans, artists, master builders and architects managed to overcome both more temporal and local dependences and longer-term and wider-ranging dependencies. It is fascinating to observe that however robust and durable the constraints were (and are) with which visual artists found themselves confronted, all of them found means to express their creative energy and imagination. In this context, then, the questions posed by Christoph Antweiler are helpful: 'Who is involved in relations of dependence? Who is acting, and who is being acted upon? How much freedom is there to act as desired (agency)?'<sup>16</sup> However, we have to bear in mind that in this publication, we take a wider approach to dependences and also include constraints posed by the availability of building materials and the spiritual reliance on religious cults, their teachers and divine beings. Therefore, the question, 'Who is acting?' might in our context be enlarged to, 'Who or what is acting or influencing?' In our context of material culture, the concept of freedom might be equated with liberty or autonomy of choice, creative inventiveness or agency,<sup>17</sup> levels of free expression and non-conformity, but less with wholesale independence or sovereignty.

## 4 Artistic Communities and Patronage in Asia

Dependences are often characterised by unequal human social relationships. For this reason, the issue of 'communities' figures strongly in the title as well as in the papers in this publication. The focus is less on named individuals, as the names of artist and builders were rarely known at the time of their creation and have not

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<sup>16</sup> Christoph Antweiler, "On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn," *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 7.

<sup>17</sup> The BCDSS understands 'agency' as an 'opportunity to act within relations of asymmetrical dependency' (Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2021]: 6). For further details on understanding the concept of 'agency' as a fundamentally social activity, a dynamic relationship of societal interdependency which could be equated with 'interagency' or 'co-activity', see page 11 of the same publication.



preserved.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, our focus is more on supra-personal units, such as artistic groups, communities and societies. Often these belong to a specific societal group or sub-caste.<sup>19</sup>

Generally, artists and artisans in South Asia belong to the Vaiśya caste, which in a system of four castes ranks at second lowest level in the socio-religious societal structure.<sup>20</sup> In India, there is, for instance, a sub-caste of painters (*citrakār*) or stone masons and sculptors (*śilpi*).<sup>21</sup> The rigidity and natal placement of each individual into a certain caste and sub-caste causes social tensions and dependencies. When I conducted research with contemporary Nepali painters in the Kathmandu Valley in the mid- and late-1990s, young artists, who had chosen to be painters as their profession and gone to art college in India or Nepal, still had to marry within the caste of the *citrakārs*, even if they were born into what was perceived as a higher caste. In Japan, too, which has a similar strict social order, actors traditionally belonged to a specific social stratum. C. Andrew Gerstle writes, ‘Kabuki actors have traditionally formed a segregated, relatively closed social group, clannish and guild-like.’<sup>22</sup> Whilst these actors were not considered part of a high-ranking class, on stage they were permitted more freedoms in what they wore or how they behaved than those considered high-ranking members of society. As a result, a socially dependent and to a certain extent subjugated group gained certain freedoms during their artistic performances, which were not available to other sections of society at the time.

In addition to societal dependences, addressed above, this publication also analyses other than purely inter-human dependences. Included are examples indicating strong and enduring dependencies on the climate, on natural resources needed for sculpting and buildings, on religious traditions, whether transmitted orally or in writing, and

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**18** This issue has already been discussed in section 2 of this introduction. See also the contribution by Kanika Gupta in this collection of papers.

**19** Indian society has traditionally been grouped into four classes (*catur varṇa*). The *varṇas* are further subdivided into large numbers of so-called ‘birth-groups’ or sub-castes (*jātis*). For further details, cf. Karel Werner, *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994): 50–51, and Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Oxford: New World, 1999): 48, 174.

**20** Additional information can be found in Karel Werner, *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994): 50–51, 168, as well as in Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Oxford: New World, 1999): 196.

**21** For further details on the *citrakārs*, especially in Nepal, cf. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, ‘Elements of Newar Social Structure,’ *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 86 (1956): 21–23, Susanne von der Heide, ‘From ‘British Naturalism’ to Abstract Modern Painting in Nepal,’ in *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalayas*, ed. Charles Ramble and Martin Brauen (Zürich: Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zürich, 1993): 94, 97, and Julia A.B. Hegewald, ‘“Our Studio is Nature”: The Work of the New Art Circle in Nepal,’ *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 10 (1996): 96. On *śilpis*, see C. Sivaramamurti, *The Painter in Ancient India* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978): 3.

**22** C. Andrew Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage 1780–1830* (London: British Museum Press, 2005): 12.

strong and asymmetrical dependencies on superordinate actors, such as rulers and patrons. To introduce readers to a wide variety of different forms of dependencies in Asian art, information on the individual chapters in this publication, has been grouped into four thematic categories. These will now be discussed, together with a short summary of each chapter.

## 5 Thirteen Case Studies of Dependencies and Freedoms in Asian Art

In slavery and dependency studies, the emphasis so far has been on slavery and slavery-like relations in the context of the trans-Atlantic and the ancient Mediterranean slave trade. In the newly evolving and wider field of dependency studies, other regions and periods will also be explored.<sup>23</sup> This book contributes to readdressing this imbalance by not focussing on mainstream slavery. The chapters included here come from cultural studies and acquaint the reader with the art and architecture from different geographic and temporal backgrounds throughout the wider region of Asia. Regionally, they include case studies from all over India, from Nepal, Tibet, the area of the Silk Routes and from mainland China. In keeping with the Cluster's main emphasis, they focus on the pre-modern age, ranging in date from the early centuries BCE, via medieval to colonial art and architecture. Some even go slightly beyond this by including contemporary artistic expressions mirroring dependency patterns. Whilst mono-theistic religions have figured most strongly in existing studies of dependency,<sup>24</sup> the authors in this volume examine mainly Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina and more local religious expressions especially in South Asia, all of which display a rich pantheon of gods and goddesses. There is also great variety in terms of the arts under discussion. Whilst some look at cave excavations or structural architecture, others focus on sculpture or painting, on porcelain and coins, but also on religious ceremonies and dance performances. Most importantly for the focus of this volume though, they introduce different types of dependence, in which artisans, artists, architects and master builders have found and often still find themselves today. To conclude their investigations, whatever constraints we are dealing with, all papers also highlight the freedoms which the artists found and continue to uncover within the limitations set by their

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<sup>23</sup> This has been discussed in Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 3.

<sup>24</sup> On this, see Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, "On Asymmetrical Dependency," *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2021]: 3).

belief, social group, by their environmental surroundings, accessible materials, textual and oral prescriptions and the conventions of their profession.

## 5.1 Climatic and Resource Dependences

First and foremost, all art objects and buildings are produced within a specific setting. In many ways, this is shaped by the local climate and by the availability of resources for building and art production. This again depends on soil conditions, geomorphology and geography. Buildings have to withstand the climate and provide shelter for humans, animals or sacred ceremonies and gods. Edifices have to be shaped differently if they have been raised on steep slopes, constructed in dense forests, flood plains or in deserts. With regards to resources, for instance, in desert regions wood is rare and precious. If on the other hand it has been employed in edifices and objects it usually preserves well and endures for long periods, due to a generally very low humidity. In arid regions, simple mud or clay-rich soils are frequently used for building and the modelling of statues, as rain and dampness, which would dissolve the mud, pose little risk to the durability of constructions and earthen objects.<sup>25</sup> In areas where firm stone is available, this is usually preferred for sculpting statues and assembling architectural structures, as it is resistant both to rain and fire and is an expensive and highly-regarded building resource. In comparatively wet regions, botanical construction materials such as wood, thatch, reeds or bamboo, often dominate as readily available, sustainable and low-cost alternatives.<sup>26</sup> Frequently, natural fibres have been combined with stone basements for damp proofing. In addition, they have also been combined with mud in some form of timber framing.<sup>27</sup> Mud can also be fired and used as burnt tiles, especially in the upper levels of edifices, such as the roofs. This illustrates the close connection between climate and building resources and the limitations and dependencies posed by the weather and by locally available construction sources. In larger cities and at well-connected places, the reliance on only regional products can at times be broadened through imported supplies. However, the dominance and dependence on the climate remains usually very strong.

The more extreme the climatic conditions and the more remote an area is, the more did local artists and builders have to rely on regionally available products. This is exemplified by the wall paintings, clay statues and rock caves that were created along the northern Silk Route, discussed in Chapter 2 by Birgit Angelika Schmidt. The

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<sup>25</sup> This can, for instance be seen in regions of northern India, such as Ladakh, on the Tibetan high plateau but equally in the north of Africa.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, the art of building on the west coast of India, in Bangladesh, the Andaman Islands, Myanmar or in littoral South East Asia more generally.

<sup>27</sup> In South Asia, timber lacing is particularly widespread in the regions of Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir, but also in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan.

Buddhist monastic caves were excavated from steeply sloping rocky cliffs, which offered shelter against the summer heat and the cold during the winter months. The region under discussion lies in the extremely arid Taklamakan Desert in Central Asia and is bordered by high mountain ranges. Owing to the presence of loess soils, clay is the main building material. Due to the aridity of the climate, it does not need to be fired but can be employed in the form of rammed earth or sun-dried bricks.<sup>28</sup> According to Schmidt, however, the climate was more temperate in the past and allowed – at least to a certain degree – the cultivation of trees, grasses and other vegetation. Wood and plant fibres were employed as roof coverings, decorations and in order to stabilise buildings and statues. The shape of the caves illustrates a severe dependency on the climate, which demanded enclosed building forms as shelters against heat and cold alike. The different shapes, however, also show a playful creative handling of these severe climatic constraints. In addition, pigments for murals and colouring clay statues, too, were derived from regional minerals and plant products. As such, all building and artistic materials were available in the vicinity of the caves. Due to the remote location of the site, the torturous journey through deserts and mountains and the inhospitable climate, it appears that materials did not reach the area from outside, illustrating a severe dependency on local resources for artistic productions. However, phrased more positively, it exemplifies a perfect adaptation of the people to the regional, geological and topographical conditions. Despite the sparseness of their surroundings, the artisans found there all necessary materials to create a rich and enduring heritage. In this, they succeeded in finding wide artistic freedoms and reached perfection in the use of these limited resources.

Whilst in the first case study a severe dependency on an extremely arid setting was the prevailing situation, the following chapter by Julia A.B. Hegewald illustrates the dependencies and freedoms established in a predominantly humid building environment. The main focus of examination in Chapter 3 is the temple architecture of the Jaina religious group<sup>29</sup> along the west coast of the modern state of Karnataka in South India. The local weather conditions are characterised by heavy monsoon rains and a generally high level of humidity. This climate has led to the growth of dense forests and the ample availability of wood for building. Usually, timber lacing, combining wooden structural elements with mud infill, have been employed. Illustrating the dependence on this climate

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28 Very similar building techniques can also be found on the dry Tibetan high plateau as well as in the art of building in northern Africa. Furthermore, as Schmidt shows in this publication, in addition to mud naturally occurring gypsum could be also harvested locally on the northern Silk Route. This was utilised in the surface finishings of statues in particular.

29 Jainism is as old as Buddhism and was formed in the same region of Eastern India. Further details on the Jaina religion can be found in Chapter 3 in this publication and in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009).

of strong precipitations, steeply slanting and widely projecting, at times also multiple, pyramidal roofs were employed (Plate 1.3). These protect the earthen walls against the rain-fall. The precipitous roofs are usually covered with fired terracotta tiles. Even when more intense quarrying and improved access routes made hard stone for building more accessible and popular in the region, the same form of protective roofs were fashioned out of the new material. This happened largely from about the fifteenth century onwards. As stone is much heavier, the amount of loadbearing pillars supporting the roofs from below had substantially to be increased. This amplified and reinforced a local aesthetic already present in the largely wooden constructions. Furthermore, it illustrates a certain freedom from purely local material dependencies but at the same time a stylistic dependence on previous building traditions. In order to emphasise the unusual nature of building activities typical of the littorals, these are also contrasted with architecture fashioned on the bordering Deccan high plateau. This shows vast differences in terms of geographical location, naturally available resources and building styles within the state of Karnataka. Both regions illustrate a strong dependence on and a clear adaptation to the local climate and the naturally available resources. Whereas the introduction of new building materials, such as stone – and in the twentieth century also concrete as a more ‘global’ resource – provided some leverage with regards to materials, the dependence on the local climate, especially when this is extreme (dry or wet), cannot easily be circumvented. This illuminates an extreme dependency of traditional building patterns on climatic conditions.



**Plate 1.3:** Mudabidri, coastal Karnataka. Reflecting a strong dependency on the climate of strong monsoon rains, the temples have multiple slanting and projecting roofs.

Third in this section on weather dependencies and resource restrictions comes the chapter by Daniel Suebsman. This demonstrates the interdependence on a largely imported and not a mainly locally available good. In the case of Chapter 4, this material is silver. Another peculiarity in this contribution is that people did not depend on this product itself for the creation of art objects, but that Chinese porcelain, precious silks and other artistic material artefacts were exchanged against silver. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), silver became the most important means of payment in China, when local deposits did not suffice to satisfy its needs. As a result, China became heavily dependent on silver imports from abroad. European silver appears to have reached China as early as the fifteenth century, and Japanese silver from the sixteenth century. At this time silver was mined in large quantities in South America as well. The chapter focusses on Chinese export porcelain during the Ming Dynasty, and its dependence on foreign, predominantly Spanish colonial, silver. Especially during the seventeenth century, this entered China in the form of ingots or silver coins, which were used as payment for export ceramics, largely blue and white wares. Interesting with regards to the more general topic of slavery and extreme forms of dependency, Suebsman describes that from the late Ming dynasty, between 1522 and 1619, a currency and tax reform made silver the official main currency. As a result, tax obligations had to be paid in silver instead of goods or forced labour. He stresses that, '[a]fter more than 2,000 years, the traditional form of land tax payment and labour service was abolished.' This further increased the need for and deepened the dependency on foreign silver imports. Furthermore, it also inflated the price of silver in China and made exports of silks and porcelain reasonably cheap for foreign traders.

## 5.2 Religious and Social Dependencies

As the section above has shown, human life is strongly determined by the climate in which people live and in terms of building shelters and producing objects, may these be artistic or practical, by the materials available to them. Besides this, the human environment is also intensely governed by cultural, societal and religious determinants. As we have seen, for instance, in connection with the South Asian caste system, these are often tightly interconnected and can at times not be disentangled. Such religious and social dependencies are often visualised in ritual activities, which stress asymmetrical power relations between humans as well as between humans and gods.

Whilst believers of any religion find themselves in some kind of dependency on their chosen deity, Chapter 5 by Tiziana Lorenzetti deals with a special situation. Her study focuses on Śaiva devotionism in the modern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, which can involve extremely severe dependencies. In this context, the worshippers consider themselves to be 'slaves of god' and are willing to mutilate their own bodies, either to restore what is believed to be the injured body of the god Śiva, or to produce a worthy offering to be made to him. Lorenzetti shows that

some Śaiva devotees were even willing to sacrifice their own lives, by cutting off their own heads, in order to honour Śiva and to prove their piety and love towards him.<sup>30</sup> This is considered a kind of ‘violent devotion.’ Lorenzetti reminds us that self-sacrifice and self-oblation have often been closely linked to military activities and that such deeds are interpreted as forms of bravery, vigour and heroism. It is also an act of total submission to a divinity. In a form of total dependency in spirit, soldiers give their life for their ruler or even vow to take their own life should he die. This, too, often involves self-decapitations. Due to the close connection in Indian thought between kings and gods, the same ritual was also conducted in front of religious statues. Depictions of such self-beheadings have been preserved in temples and on hero memorial stones, typical of South India. The prevailing belief was that somebody brave enough to sever his own head and to offer it to the deity would have it reinstated by the divinity and also be rewarded with supernatural powers and invulnerability. This made the practice so attractive to warriors. Detailed reports, also from European travellers, of such ritual self-beheadings seem to indicate that these self-sacrificial ceremonies were not to be understood simply as metaphorical interpretations, but as actual occurrences involving razor-sharp, half-moon-shaped blades. Initially, such acts were used to intimidate opponents, by accentuating the deep dedication, enslavement and subordination of one’s own life to a chosen god or religious path as well as the strength – and in extension freedoms and influence – gained from it. Subsequently, they served to completely subordinate frightened rivals in an act of victory.

The following chapter by Tiziana Leucci also focusses on South India, but, by contrast, mainly on the region of Tamil Nadu. Whilst in the previous contribution we encountered mostly heroic and militant male believers, Chapter 6 introduces the tradition of the *devadāsīs* and the *rājadāsīs*. Until the 1940s, these were female performing artists and courtesans, who were bestowed on Hindu temples and royal courts before reaching adolescence.<sup>31</sup> The women were considered ‘servants’ or ‘slaves’ of a deity or a sovereign (god-servants, king-servants) and found themselves in a position of severe submission and bondage. However, their level of education and sophistication differentiated them from ordinary sex workers and conferred a superior societal status onto them. As Leucci shows, the act of serving a highly respected person – monarch or divinity – by surrendering one’s life and body to them was not considered a derogatory or humiliating

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<sup>30</sup> The god is not described as acting and telling the believers directly what to do. However, the expectation of the divinity and the community, and the promised gain in terms of religious merit, are perceived as common knowledge or a worldview. In abstract terms this issue has been discussed in the joint chapter by Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “On Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 8–10. As such one can argue that the deities have control and influence over the devotee sacrificing himself. For this point see also page 12 of that paper. This appears to go beyond the concept of ‘mediation’, which is discussed on page 13.

<sup>31</sup> This further emphasises the aforementioned intimate connection between kings and gods, which is prevalent in Hindu culture.

action, but a voluntary act and a privilege. The voluntary ‘servants’ received the honourable title of ‘slave’ as a sign of respect, as a blessing and a gift. Furthermore, they obtained certain rights and forms of remunerations, were often quite wealthy and influential and able to make generous donations to temple institutions. This illustrates a strongly hierarchical and a symbolic relation of respect and surrender, which demonstrates a connection of severe dependency as well as one of simultaneous social and religious freedoms.<sup>32</sup>

The third paper in this section also deals with material from South India, in this case, the coastal region of northern Kerala, known as Malabar. Chapter 7 by Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali examines extreme forms of dependency in a Hindu ritual dance form known as *teyyāṭṭam* (dance of god). During the ritual performances, the lower-caste male performer embodies the spirit of the god, goddess or divinised hero or heroine, and temporarily becomes the venerated being. This form of ceremony is related to spirit possessions practiced in Tamil Nadu.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to so-called high, classical or Sanskritik (*brāhmanical*) Hinduism, the divine ritual tradition (*teyyam*) of northern Kerala has largely been characterised as folkish, indigenous and vernacular, although it is patronised by all caste groups. It is against the background of this dichotomy of a perceived ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture or caste, and Sanskritik versus popular religion, that Pokkanali focuses on embodied human and nonhuman dependencies. In *teyyam* performances, the conflict between these two social groups or religious strata becomes ritualised and as a result, the asymmetrical dependency is legitimised. In order to redress a crisis between two social sections, a lower-caste hero contests the principles of caste differentiation. Through this, the weaker and marginalised group is temporarily exalted in the ritual drama.<sup>34</sup> This acts as a catharsis, as the subjugated culture is given the opportunity to express itself in a ritualised framework.<sup>35</sup> Following this, the

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32 Contrary to married Hindu women, the temple dancers were, for instance, permitted to interact with male dancers and musicians and to choose freely one or more lovers without attracting shame. Leucci shows that later Christian missionaries only saw the dependency aspect and denied the prestige and status the women held within their own society and social-religious system.

33 Both include the veneration of deified ancestors, martyrs and heroes and the offering of alcohol and blood sacrifices, which generally, outside a religious ceremonial context, are considered to be polluting substances.

34 The enactment of a situation in a performance which is not perceived as normal life is a case also discussed by Christoph Antweiler (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 10). In addition, on the subject of competing, multi-faceted worldviews, see also the discussion in Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “On Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Concept Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2021): 9.

35 Outlining similar occurrences in more theoretical terms, Christoph Antweiler writes: ‘For societies in which asymmetrical dependency is a widespread (or even normalized) form of relationship, a dissenting heterodox position is one that questions this normality, while an orthodox position affirms this form of relationship.’ (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 10).



overbearing Sanskrit order of the higher castes is reinstated and reinforced, and the social structure and its unity are strengthened. As such, the *teyyam* performances embody and visualise severe dependencies but also temporarily overcome these in a ritual context.

Chapter 8 by Gudrun Bühnemann analyses dependencies between religious groups in the Himalayas. In her paper she disproves the prevailing misperception that Buddhist art generally is meditational, peaceful and concerned with enlightenment only. The statues of Tantric divinities from Nepal which she analyses clearly subjugate Hindu deities and show them in a heavily dependent position. Bühnemann identifies three types of images which demonstrate extreme forms of dependency in a context of religious conflict. In the first pattern, which is the most widespread, one or several major deities of the Hindu pantheon are shown crushed underneath the feet of a powerful and much larger standing Tantric Buddhist figure in a warlike stance.<sup>36</sup> This is a very explicitly triumphant posture, indicating superiority and legitimising the power of the figure in militant stance. In her chapter, Bühnemann characterises this as ‘part of the iconography of power’. The defeated gods lose their status, become dependent and the slaves of the dominant Buddhist figure.<sup>37</sup> In the second pattern, found in the Tantric art of Nepal, a Buddhist character rides on a Hindu divinity. In this instance, dependency and subservience are shown by the triumphant Buddhist character being carried on the back of the conquered Hindu divinity, indicating hierarchy. In the last design, a Buddhist individual, usually the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, is depicted emanating seven to fifteen Hindu gods and goddesses from his own body. Having seemingly ‘created’ the Hindu gods, the Buddhist figure assigns them their duties, expressing their unequal position and heavy dependence on the central Buddhist representation. The latter theme became especially widespread in Nepal during the eighteenth century. As such, these icons, which in the past were often read as allegorical images,<sup>38</sup> do in fact illuminate religious rivalries illustrated through the depiction of strong forms of asymmetrical dependency.

### 5.3 Dependences on Oral and Written Traditions

In the previous section, we discussed religious and social constraints. Frequently, these have been recorded and fixed in sacred texts, which delineate the essential ideas and

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<sup>36</sup> These forms are already known from later Indian Buddhist art.

<sup>37</sup> At times, the Buddhist character is also shown with his female consort.

<sup>38</sup> The figures under the feet of dominant Buddhist figures were in the past frequently interpreted as representations of evil forces or negative emotions, such as anger, greed or arrogance, which practitioners have to overcome in their quest for liberation. Whilst this explanation might still be correct in certain contexts, the background of individual statues needs to be evaluated more closely in the future to provide a more nuanced understanding. Bühnemann points out that representations showing sectarian rivalries were especially meaningful to recent converts to Buddhism who knew the Hindu pantheon well.

convictions but also the regulations for behaviour and religious or artistic practices. It is typical of Asian traditions that artistic customs for the production of religious paintings and sculpture, religious dances and ceremonies, and the construction of sacred edifices, have been codified in the form of manuals. They are particularly widespread in South Asia, where they were first composed in Sanskrit verse and later translated into vernacular languages. From the early centuries of the Common Era, these sacred canonical texts multiplied throughout India. These writings that embody the rules of a subject are in general known as *śāstras*. Those dealing with building, sites for building and with the art of sculpting more specifically, are known as *vāstuśāstras* or *śilpaśāstras*.<sup>39</sup> However, as some of the chapters in this section will show, the knowledge and rules applying to some disciplines were not always primarily handed down in writing, and artists always found ways to circumvent restrictive regulations.

Adam Hardy, in Chapter 9, asks to what extent the architects of temple buildings in India were controlled, confined or restricted by such canonical texts. The general prevailing impression is that prescriptive texts could hamper or inhibit creative thought processes and artistic development. Hardy shows that the builders strongly depended on these texts and that the *śāstras* provide plain typologies and clear rules for a creative framework. However, he stresses that they offer freedoms, too. In his contribution, he argues that '[i]f temples can be considered an art form, then a particular form of temple is analogous to, say, a sonnet in poetry, where creating something new within the given pattern is the whole point, and to stray too far from it is no longer to write a sonnet.' He also shows that existing temple types were blended to create new design possibilities, thus retaining the old but evolving it through creative processes. Hardy outlines a development where at the start of textual traditions, in the seventh to ninth centuries, there were more temples than texts. This indicates that the tradition must have started with practice and then been written down, not *prescribing*, but initially documenting and *describing* an evolving tradition. This then became codified by being fixed in writing to a certain extent. Whilst these manuals provided a framework, they still allowed for innovations and were expanded and added to over time. Some texts even 'think ahead', as Hardy puts it, and present us with forms and designs which have yet to be transformed into stone in the future. In this sense, the religious written compositions on architecture allow freedom for expression; some might even be more open, progressive and in this sense more modern than practice has yet allowed for.<sup>40</sup>

The following paper, Chapter 10 by Sandra Jasmin Schlage, continues this debate by evaluating the importance of written and unwritten sources and conventions for

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<sup>39</sup> In Sanskrit, '*vāstu*' is 'the ground' or 'a site' but also a building and '*śilpa*' is an artistic work and any manual art or craft. It also means 'form' or 'shape' more generally.

<sup>40</sup> This shows a fascinating tension or creative dialogue between construction conventions and what is being preserved as tradition on the one hand, and texts on building practice on the other. Either writings and practice can at times be more restrictive or limited by conventions than the other.

the depiction of dance scenes in relief carvings and paintings. Although most of her examples come from a Hindu context and have been taken from Tamil Nadu, the chapter also discusses evidence from other regions and religious groups. These range from the early centuries CE to the present day. Schlage argues that artists appear to have been more dependent on orally transmitted visual markers, such as the position of the legs, and other understood stylistic conventions of representing dance movements and postures, than on strictly formulated written texts, such as the *śāstras*. A close examination of dance panels shows that often the notion of dance was created by combining a limited number of postures of arms, hands and legs, in the form of regulated principles, which were also not necessarily derived from actual practice. Whilst such conventions were formed and formalised during the earlier southern dynasties, they had reached a level of standardisation during the Cōla Period (c. the ninth to thirteenth centuries). Schlage states

However, within a few centuries what started as a creative innovation seems to have developed into a set of unwritten rules [. . .] The combination of stylistic perfection and an almost static appearance of the dancers creates the impression that artists were almost slaves to these norms.

Whilst some creative solutions were found for more unusual forms, such as stick dances, most practices which had developed over time were applied strictly. This approach appears to continue on many levels into the present, as artists seek to place their art in a line of highly valued religious imagery. It is difficult to determine how much this is a voluntary observance of and loyalty towards a valued tradition, and how much a slavish adherence to fixed rules. This shows that dance depictions exhibit a fascinating mixture of stylistic dependencies and freedoms, which have not been derived from written texts, but are instead based on accepted norms and conventions.

After the temple-building tradition, rooted to a large extent in written sources, and the sculptural dance relief custom, based more on unwritten standards, we encounter another situation in Chapter 11 by Amy Heller. This paper looks at restoration practices throughout the Himalayas. In this area, restorers have neither official texts nor necessarily accepted existing traditions to base their work on. Even so, they encounter strong tangible and intangible restrictions in their work. In actual fact we re-encounter the *śāstras*, which were translated into Tibetan and provide iconographic, iconometric and colour conventions for the delineation of divinities as well as local religious authorities dictating designs. On the other hand there are contemporary international standards created by Western conservation specialists, which include, for instance, the practice of not filling in the lost sections of a painting in order to preserve its authenticity, under the heading of ‘minimal interventionism.’ However, in a ritual context it is essential for a venerated representation to be intact. Therefore, Buddhist communities throughout the Himalayas have tended to retouch or repaint in order to recover lost sections of murals, based on spiritual aspirations. Furthermore, the use of predominantly regional, natural and traditional materials over modern synthetic products developed in the West appears to be a constraint accepted by

local conservators. Whilst the *śāstras* do not provide information on how to repair damaged paintings and Western conventions are at least partially rejected, religious ideas and a wish to adhere to an existing local material tradition have created contemporary unwritten rules that direct and to a certain extent restrict restoration practices throughout the Himalayan region. How this works in practice is shown in the chapter through three case studies of conservation projects connected with living Buddhist sanctuaries in Tibet, Mustang (Nepal) and Ladakh (North India).

## 5.4 Dependence on Rulers, Patrons and Markets

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, artists all around the world and at all times have, beyond other constraints, been dependent on the patronage and support of benefactors who act as employers. These may be powerful rulers, private individuals, groups of people (e.g. the Buddhist *saṅgha*) or institutions. In modern times, their number can also include ordinary individuals who collect art, or the art market as a whole on which artists depend. Art has been used as a political and power influencer to manipulate the people and other political players, for instance, in the form of idealised portraits, the depiction of historical victorious battle scenes, or in our days in political advertising, election posters and video clips. Artists depended and still depend on the pay they receive for their commissions. This inevitably places them in an unequal and hierarchical relation to their donors or sponsors, who in the past and still today exercise control over them. These sponsors or customers also regulate and manipulate what is being produced, at least to a certain extent. These relations may be referred to as asymmetries of power, including control, dominance and coercion. New rulers have also annexed and sometimes even converted important religious art objects or sacred spaces,<sup>41</sup> to signal their might, to terminate a previous cult or take control over the sacredness of objects and sites (Plate 1.4). As such, the topic of patron-client relations is particularly fruitful when researching extreme asymmetrical dependencies in art. This topic forms the focus of the following set of chapters in this edited volume.<sup>42</sup> To a certain extent, patron-client

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<sup>41</sup> This is part of the concept of the ‘continuity of religious sites’, developed by Mircea Eliade in his publication, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion – The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual Within Life and Culture* (San Diego/New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987 [1957]). On this issue, see also Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Towards a Theory of Re-Use: Ruin, Retro and Fake Versus Improvement, Innovation and Integration,” in *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2012): 34.

<sup>42</sup> Christoph Antweiler points out that these are social micro-relations which essentially are ‘similar to macro-patterns of dependence and inter-dependence’ (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 5). He characterises patron-client systems as life-long and, as such, as falling into the group of extreme forms of dependencies. This is in contrast to shorter-term and simpler dependencies (11–12). See my discussion of this differentiation under point 3 of the present chapter.

interactions can also be classified as simple work-based or labour relation. These will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>43</sup> However, as artistic work always involves creativity and the retainment of some original innovative choices, patron-artist interactions are treated separately.



**Plate 1.4:** Quwwatu'l Islām Mosque, Delhi. The site and building materials, first employed by Hindus and Jains, were re-used by Muslims in the late twelfth century.

Kanika Gupta in Chapter 12 describes the situation of Indian sculptors as one of strong dependency, in which even their artistic skill and their mastery of the techniques was often denied and ascribed to patrons, religious leaders or the gods themselves, who are not only portrayed as the donors but indirectly as the creators of the art.<sup>44</sup> Gupta argues that this is the reason why, at least in early Indian art, the names of artists are not known and have not been transmitted. It is indeed curious that we often know who

<sup>43</sup> The combination of ‘asymmetries of power’ and ‘work-based relations (labor)’ indicate that there often are ‘multi-modal relations’, as pointed out by Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 9.

<sup>44</sup> This is consistent with Christoph Antweiler’s observation that we generally know less about those who are subordinated than those who rule (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 10). On the other hand, C. Sivaramamurti stresses that there are cases in which kings were artists themselves (C. Sivaramamurti, *The Painter in Ancient India* [New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978]: 6). However, this is not the situation described here by Gupta.

commissioned the art under question, but not who fashioned it. However, one should add that this is also due to the fact that Asian artists were at least in part considered to be artisans, i.e. individuals who create objects and edifices for particular, in most cases strictly delineated, ritual purposes. Therefore, their works were not considered as embodying the free choices and self-expressions of an individual artist. This reflects a situation which also prevailed in Europe until at least the start of the eighteenth century. Gupta outlines a stringent religious control system and a ‘strictly codified grammar of sculpture’ as the main means for constraint. It is not clear if she considers this to have worked through written rules or dominant conventions. Despite this in many ways difficult and adverse situation, Gupta shows how the artists succeeded against all odds, by employing their intellect, creative genius and smallest permitted personal liberties, to create highly individual, imaginative and original works of art. To substantiate her argument, she analyses relief panels from the early Buddhist *stūpa* site of Bharhut (largely second century BCE) and from the first cave temples at Ellora (largely sixth century CE), both in Central India. At Bharhut, she shows that artists found freedoms in their individual interpretation and personal approach to depict a prescribed story. Furthermore, Gupta interprets the fact that the artists gave their full dedication to carving exceptional images of highest quality (as can e.g. be seen in the early caves at Ellora), as an expression of regaining control, pride and freedom in a situation of many dependencies and a lack of recognition of the masterworks they created.

With the following contribution by Jennifer Howes, the focus moves from early Indian art to the late eighteenth century. Howes enquires into a situation where the rulers and patrons of art production suddenly changed. Her focus lies on a group of unmarried female high-status courtiers, more precisely, female performance artists (Musarrati) from the inner court of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in South India. With the death of Tipu and the takeover of Srirangapatna by the British in May 1799, seventy-five female dancers lost their former master. They became completely dependent on and controlled by the British. They were placed under East India Company house arrest and remained in British detention until their deaths. This incarcerated them in a situation where their complex public performance services and high standing in an intricate royal culture were not understood and appreciated any longer.<sup>45</sup> It is fascinating that the British actually argued that they had freed these women from

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<sup>45</sup> Bethany Walker identifies such a situation in which one actor in an unequal power relation cannot exit as typical of an asymmetrical dependency (Bethany J. Walker, “Peasant Dependencies in Medieval Islam: Whose Agency in Food Production and Migration?” *Working Paper* 3, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 2). Christoph Antweiler classifies such a condition, in which all previous relations are broken up or ‘unmade’, as he puts it, as one of extreme control and asymmetrical dependency. The suppressed group is deprived of the ability to disobey, move away spatially or withdraw from the situation of suppression and imprisonment (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper* 1, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 9).

slavery.<sup>46</sup> This shows that situations of slavery and dependence can be subject to the perspective taken by the interpreter. The question of what is considered to be severe dependency or freedom is – at least in certain circumstances – debatable.<sup>47</sup> It had been the principal role of these women artists to act as entertainers, as singers, dancers, actresses and storytellers. Although they were exiled from their home in Srirangapatna to Vellore Fort in 1802, where they were kept with other political prisoners of the British Empire, two painted albums of Company painters from Vellore show that they carried on their performance traditions in the early nineteenth century. They continued to act in front of the Mysorean citizens who had followed them to Vellore in their thousands.<sup>48</sup> This very perceptive and attentive audience who recognised their high status, gave them a purpose, clear function and a commitment to hold onto. Through their perseverance to perform, they provided their own changed lives with meaning. Furthermore, through their appearances, the exiled entourage undermined the British and despite permanent control, managed through their storytelling and composing of plays and songs, to communicate with and to provoke dissent and opposition in the Mysorean community outside their prison. As a result, they resisted their new imperial masters, subverted their own dependency and regained some freedom to remain who and what they wanted to be.

With Chapter 14, jointly written by Pratyush Shankar and Snigdha Srivastava, we stay in the colonial period but move to the north-west of India, to the modern state of Gujarat. The two architect authors outline how the British only managed to control such large areas of India through a combination of direct and indirect rule. Important players in this were the Princely States, who were greatly dependent on the colonial power in terms of finances, security and in policy matters,<sup>49</sup> but who retained a certain amount of autonomy in day-to-day administrative matters. Although they liaised and collaborated in certain areas, this extreme form of dependency on a foreign

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<sup>46</sup> The British also considered that the new accommodation, designed by John Goldingham at Vellore for the locked-up performer women from Mysore, was superior and an improvement on their previous lodgings. As a result, the British completely misconceived the painful loss of the palace apartments and city the Musarrati called their home and which had provided the regal and ritual context that gave them status and influence.

<sup>47</sup> This issue has also been discussed by Christoph Antweiler. He stresses that one should be careful with ‘generalizing assumptions about the basic values as well as the motives and emotions of interacting humans’. (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 7). However, it is not clear whether the British really misunderstood the situation or whether this is an early instance of applying – what we call today – ‘alternative facts’ or ‘false facts’. Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to the U.S. President, used the expression of ‘alternative facts’ during an interview in January 2017. In this, she tried to endorse false statements about the number of people who had attended the inauguration ceremony of Donald Trump.

<sup>48</sup> According to Howes, there were about 6,000 inhabitants of Mysore who followed Tipu Sultan’s performance artists.

<sup>49</sup> For instance, states under indirect rule were not allowed to set up an army of their own but had to supply military support to the British. In a situation of conflict with one of their neighbours, however, the British would support the dependent Indian state.

power generated an atmosphere of distrust and at times outright defiance in the form of disobedience and non-cooperation. In fact, the authors show that through their own urban planning initiatives (e.g. public gardens, water bodies), newly commissioned civic buildings (e.g. museums, libraries, hospitals), but also through their progressive social, welfare and educational reforms, the native state of Baroda (now Vadodara), succeeded in establishing a ‘counter colonial narrative.’ Although the architects and planners who were employed by the semi-independent state to redesign the fabric of the cities were largely Europeans, they were hired independently and were not allied with the British. The close interaction of these professionals with local cultural traditions and the historic fabric of the city, generated a form of indigenous modernity. Mainly conducted between 1880 and 1910, these design interventions completely changed and transformed the character of the city of Baroda. Due to their dependence on imperial rule, certain British influences can also be identified in these new conceptions. Nevertheless, they illustrate that even within a situation of extreme financial and political dependency, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III managed through a strong personal engagement and the visionary architects, designers and social reformers he employed, to establish public spaces and institutions which embody transformative choices and freedoms in times of extreme dependency.

## 6 Alternative Forms of Artistic Dependency

In addition to the four main themes of artistic dependency, introduced by the authors and outlined in Section 5, there are other forms of dependency which further interconnect many of the papers in this volume. These are areas which form the focus of other research areas of the Bonn Cluster of Excellence.<sup>50</sup> In order to round off the debate and suggest fresh avenues to be explored in greater depth by historians of art and architecture in the new field of dependency studies in the future, further areas of dependences, having an influence on art production in Asia, will briefly be refer to in what follows.

### 6.1 Conventions and Norms

The question of how free people are of the conventions and norms of their time, culture or religious denomination, or how much they are consciously or unconsciously coerced by them, is a recurrent one in the chapters in this collection. All the papers introduced under point 5.3 discuss norms and practices, focusing on oral or written

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<sup>50</sup> This publication is a result of research area B, ‘Embodied Dependencies’. Research area A is entitled ‘Semantics – Lexical Fields – Narratives’, research area C, ‘Institutions, Norms and Practices’, research area D, ‘Labor and Spatiality’, and research area E, ‘Gender and Intersectionality’.



traditions. Especially those papers that address sacred canonical texts, which clearly prescribe guidelines for religious ceremonies, the rules of dance and its depiction, and the proportions for the creation of art objects and sacred structures, often refer to areas that have not been so well defined in written form, but are more part of an unwritten tradition.<sup>51</sup> In our contemporary understanding of the freedom of art, we associate such conventions more with crafts and the applied arts. However, as pointed out above, we have to bear in mind that this is a very recent understanding of art and that even contemporary artists are affected by trends, whether they follow or go against them. In both cases, producers of art and architecture are not entirely free of these constraints. Whilst some rules are fixed in writing, others are handed down from father to son, mother to daughter, or from master to pupil, something that is true in Asia in particular. In addition to this, artists are not free from fashions and the general zeitgeist, illustrating the many normative conventions on which people producing art and architecture depend.

## 6.2 Labour Dependencies

Dependencies are created out of relationships. Dependence relations become especially visible and often show particularly highly developed systems of reliance in the area of employment. To a large extent, economic networks only function because there is a need or dependency on one side and a product, merchandise or service available only on the other. Of course, there are also more equal relations, where both sides offer valued products wanted by the other.<sup>52</sup> However, it is more common to find asymmetrical dependencies where one party is at least more strongly dependent on the other. In addition to these economic exchange dependencies there are also more well-defined work-based relations.<sup>53</sup> Workers are in need of wages for their own as well as the survival of their families, placing them often in a severely dependent, unequal situation vis-à-vis their employers. The superordinate actors profit from the labour services of the subordinate partners, who for this reason are integrated, albeit at a low rank, into the societal

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<sup>51</sup> The latter is the main topic of the chapter by Sandra Jasmin Schlage.

<sup>52</sup> Such situations have generally been described as ‘a one-way dependency, where A is dependent on B (mono-dependency) or a two-way dependency where A is dependent on B, and B is dependent on A (mutual dependence, interdependence).’ (Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies [2022]: 10, 11). Although the form, value or quality of the dependence may be different between the two parties, mutual dependence is not of greatest interest when studying strongly asymmetrical dependencies.

<sup>53</sup> See the useful categories of different dependencies defined by Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn,” *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 9.

network of the more powerful group.<sup>54</sup> As such, dependency studies find a rich field of enquiry in the area of labour dependencies. The most extreme scenario in such work dependencies is usually identified as slavery,<sup>55</sup> this is not a term commonly employed or widely discussed in the context of traditional Asia, at least where artisans and builders are concerned. As the names and further details of artists, master builders and architects have rarely been transmitted in an Asian context, we lack the necessary detail to better understand and to classify their relations in the past. More rewarding here would be a study of asymmetrical trade relations of art objects either within Asia or between East and West. However, there are some hints to labour relations in some of the contributions in this volume.

Chapter 4 by Daniel Suebsman on the dependence of China on imported silver during the Ming dynasty, for instance, makes direct reference to work dependencies in the porcelain industry. He outlines that at the start of the Ming dynasty, a structure of corvée labour was instigated to staff the imperial porcelain kilns in Jingdezhen. The artisans fell into two different hereditary groups. First, permanent artisans, who constantly resided on site and second, seasonal artisans from outside the region, who worked there for three months every four years. The permanent artisans had to work in the official manufactory until the court's annual order had been met. Subsequently, they were permitted to work for private kilns for the remainder of the year. In addition to these trained artisans, there were large numbers of unskilled corvée workmen who did basic labour such as obtaining and administering raw materials. The dependent corvée labourers were supplied to the state by village organisations who in this way fulfilled their obligation for public service to the community. The emphasis on silver as the only means of payment during the later Ming dynasty, mentioned above, upset this ancient system where payments could be made through human labour. This had a marked effect on porcelain production. From 1563, itinerant artisans were not allowed to offer their payments in labour any longer. From this time onwards, the workforce comprised almost only full-time, paid artisans whilst seasonal workmen vanished. Although this improved the quality of the labour provided, the manufactories could not cope with the constantly increasing orders of the imperial court. This led to partnerships with so-called 'people's kilns' who took on more and more of the orders.

Another aspect of labour dependencies can be encountered in the contribution by Tiziana Leucci. She shows that *devadāsīs* or temple servants were subjugated only in some respects, but at the same time highly educated, more autonomous and enjoying a number of freedoms that ordinary married women could not partake in. Contrary to the views expressed by European travellers and missionaries, Leucci considers ordinary married women in the dominant patriarchal system of South Asian society to

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<sup>54</sup> See also Bethany Walker, "Peasant Dependencies in Medieval Islam: Whose Agency in Food Production and Migration?" *Working Paper 3*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 2.

<sup>55</sup> Christoph Antweiler, "On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn," *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 14.

be in a position of extreme labour dependency. According to her mind, as children they are slaves to their fathers, then to their husbands and when widowed to their sons, perverting the ordinary view, which is more likely to classify ‘temple servants’ as slaves and ordinary women as free subjects.

### 6.3 Gender Dependencies

Gender also plays a significant role in dependency studies, a fact illustrated by the final paper in the collection, which I discussed in the context of labour dependencies (6.2) and the case of the temple dancers as ‘slaves of god’, but also the life-long dependency of ordinary women on men in South Asia. Gender dependences, too, are closely interconnected with unequal relations of power. Gender inequalities figure strongly in the production of art in Asia. Certain types of arts are socially only permitted to be created by the members of one particular fixed gender. The arts of weaving and of drawing *kolam* designs<sup>56</sup> in front of private houses is in India reserved for women only (Plate 1.5). In Nepal, only men are permitted to turn a potter’s wheel (Plate 1.6).<sup>57</sup> In the Japanese Kabuki theatre tradition, female as well as male roles had to be acted by men from 1629 onwards.<sup>58</sup> As the chapter on depictions of dance scenes on Indian temple buildings by Sandra Jasmin Schlage appears to indicate, the art of dancing, which today in India is more dominated by women, may in the past have been performed by men and women alike. On the Amarāvathī *stūpa* in Andhra Pradesh, for instance, which dates from about the second to third centuries CE, there are depictions of both male and female dancers. Comparative examples from other sites indicate that this is not unusual. Other scenes denote a change in gender, from previously male performers to female dancers, as can be seen on the basement of the tenth-century Mūlanātha Svāmī Temple in Bahur, in Tamil Nadu. The art of sculpting, too, as Kanika Gupta shows, was in the past accomplished by women. At least in a traditional context, this is not common any longer today. Intriguingly, as Gupta shows, it was more commonly the daughters-in-law who were introduced into the artistic tradition of a family from outside, rather than the family’s own daughters, who were married off and moved to their husband’s family’s home.

<sup>56</sup> A *kolam* is a geometrical, often floral design pattern, laid out by the women of a household in white or coloured rice flour in front of private houses and temples for protection and auspiciousness. Whilst in the south of India, they are known as *kolam*, in the north-west they are referred to as *rangoli*.

<sup>57</sup> In addition to gender associations, the women and men in the different trades also need to come from a certain caste. The potters in the Kathmandu Valley, for instance, belong to the sub-caste of the Prajāpati (Sanskrit; in Newari: Kumā). For further information on this issue, see Niels Gutschow, *Stadttraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu-Tal: Eine architekturanthropologische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne/Mainz: Kohlhammer 1982): 47–50.

<sup>58</sup> C. Andrew Gerstle, *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage 1780–1830* (London: British Museum Press, 2005): 12.



**Plate 1.5:** Odalavadi Village, Tamil Nadu. Laying out *kolam* designs in front of private houses for protection is reserved for women only.



**Plate 1.6:** Bhaktapur, Kathmandu Valley. Only men are permitted to turn a potter's wheel in Nepal.

## 7 Conclusion

The chapters in this volume focus on embodied dependencies, i.e. the visual expression of forms of severe asymmetrical dependency in objects of material culture and the built environment throughout the wider region of Asia. Most of the contributions cover different areas of India, but Nepal, Tibet, the area of the Silk Routes and mainland China are also represented. The compilation of specific regional studies combined in this book concentrates on material from outside the usual focal area of slavery and dependency studies, which are Europe and the transatlantic slave trade. The long-held Western and monotheistic bias is further corrected by examining situations connected with Asian religious groups only. Figuring most strongly are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and various local cults in South Asia, many of which are polytheistic or at least present a complex pantheon of a multitude of revered beings and divinities. This publication is not a theoretical study, but one that introduces thirteen tangible case studies which give concrete and very specific insights into past and present-day strong unequal dependencies in connection with a number of art forms. Amongst these are painting, sculpture, architecture, city planning, gardens, porcelain art, dance, theatre, story-telling and ritual performance culture. The articles collected here concentrate on dependencies on the local climate, the availability of resources, on religion, society, oral and written cultural traditions, as well as on politics and patrons. In addition to the four

main groups of dependences,<sup>59</sup> the papers also make reference to dependences on conventions and norms, labour, as well as to gender dependencies. This shows that dependences are all-pervading at a number of different, at times simultaneous or coexisting, levels. Whilst some dependencies are omnipresent, such as the dependence on the local climate in the science of building or the question of the availability of resources, which heavily influences all art productions, others are more specific to a particular temporal situation.

It is fascinating that almost all of the contributions make us question long-held perceptions of what dependencies are. Some of the papers show that even written manuals are not as prescriptive and dominant in art production as one might have thought, although they provide clear directions and norms. On the other hand, situations where no codified guidelines exist are perceived by the artists themselves as strongly regulated by rules that are generally accepted, but not necessarily written or formulated. An interesting case are the British, who argued that they liberated women from a tyrant, although in the women's own view their alleged 'liberation' threw them into an intolerable dependency.<sup>60</sup> Whilst European missionaries classified temple dancers as slaves, one can argue – from a contemporary Western standpoint – that they were free, in contrast to ordinary married women who for their whole life depend on the men in their household.<sup>61</sup> Even if some might not fully agree with all of the interpretations, these changed perspectives still lead us to the insight that dependency classifications can at times be personal readings, reflecting individual or external viewpoints. As has been described in the case of the British above, early presentations of what have latterly been called alternative or false facts and other political manipulations might have played a role in some of the debates.<sup>62</sup> The discussions in the contributions definitely show that even circumstances which might be categorised as situations of extreme asymmetrical dependency by some, might not be considered as such by all the actors involved.

Whichever view we take in specific instances, the different case studies demonstrate the enormous breadth and diversity of dependency phenomena embodied in Asian art and architecture. Viewed critically, it is shocking how dependent artists and architects have generally been and continue to be. When we try to think of situations of dependency more generally, usually the image of the slave first comes to mind and not that of the artist. However, all the chapters illustrate also that despite situations or settings of highly restricted autonomy, due to strong and enduring unequal relations, artists and architects have at all times found at least some space for freedoms and self-expression.<sup>63</sup>

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59 These are climatic and resource dependences (5.1), religious and social dependencies (5.2), dependences on oral and written traditions (5.3) and dependences on rulers, patrons and markets (5.4).

60 This refers to the material in Chapter 13 by Jennifer Howes.

61 This is with reference to Chapter 6 by Tiziana Leucci.

62 On the issue of 'alternative' or 'false facts', see note 47 in this chapter.

63 Whilst this collection of thirteen papers introduces an already large variety of regions, religious and artistic traditions and illustrates the highly complex visual nature of dependency phenomena,

This shows that the traditional concepts of ‘slavery’ and ‘dependency’ on one and that of ‘freedom’ on the other hand, cannot be classified as such clearly delineated polar opposites. At least in the area of the history of art and architecture in Asia, this situation needs to be rethought, as it clearly is much more complex, nuanced and multifaceted.

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this is very much not exhaustive. It is hoped that other studies will follow, penetrating further into this fascinating area of visual studies and extending the remit of subject areas, regions and time frames even further. It is to be hoped especially that dependencies in modern and contemporary arts will be the focus of future studies, where a general perception prevails that the arts have freed themselves from functions and dependencies. However, as already indicated in this Introduction and in Chapter 10 by Sandra Jasmin Schlage, this appears not to have completely been the case.

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Birgit Angelika Schmidt

## Chapter 2

# Climate and Resource Dependencies in Buddhist Art and Architecture along the Northern Silk Road

## 1 Introduction

The oases on the northern and southern edges of the Taklamakan Desert in today's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China have always been important nodes on the trade routes of the ancient Silk Roads. Bordered to the north by the Tianshan Mountains, the archaeological remains and sites of the monastic settlements on the edge of the lowlands of the Tarim Basin bear witness to the once flourishing Buddhist culture along what was probably the most important region of long-distance trade in Eurasia. From the third to the fourteenth centuries CE,<sup>1</sup> manuscripts, art objects and colourful wall paintings and clay sculptures were created in the architectural complexes of this cultural landscape corridor.

Their rediscovery in the course of international 'research expeditions' marked the start of Central Asian research at the beginning of the twentieth century, and led to the transfer of a large number of these art and cultural objects to various museums and collections worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

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1 I deliberately chose a very extensive time span due to the facts that, firstly, the area under study extends over thousands of kilometres and secondly, there continue to be major contradictions with regard to dating the material heritage from these regions. According to Jason Neelis, "the archaeological evidence of Buddhist monasteries in the Tarim Basin of eastern Central Asia (modern Xinjiang) is not reliably dated before the middle of the third century CE [ . . . ]". See: Jason Neelis, "Networks for Long-Distance Transmission of Buddhism in South Asian Transit Zones," in *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, vol. 2, ed. Tansen Sen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014): 5. In the author's opinion, the end of this creative period was heralded by the collapse of the Mongolian Empire in the fourteenth century and the resulting decline of the Silk Road. When the Uyghurs at Kocho (Turfan) were conquered by the Muslim ruler of Mongolia, the population was still primarily Buddhist when an embassy from the Timurid ruler Šāhroḡ (807–850/1405–1447) visited Turfan in 823/1420. See Encyclopædia Iranica, "Chinese Turkestan iii: From the Advent of Islam to the Mongols," 17.10.2021, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/chinese-turkestan-iii> [accessed 25.08.2022].

2 The Hermitage at St. Petersburg, the British Museum in London, the Musée Guimet in Paris, the National Museum in Tokyo, the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum in Kamakura, and the National Museum in Seoul are just a few of the largest.

The course of the continental old Silk Roads (Plate 2.1) is geographically characterised by deserts, oases and river valleys, high mountains and steppes.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that prosperous civilisations developed predominantly in the oases, which were fed with abundant meltwater from the mountain rivers and blessed with mineral resources, shows the extreme dependence on the climate and the resulting availability of resources. Accordingly, after the oases of the southern route had dried up between the late third and fifth centuries CE, probably due to a change in climate,<sup>4</sup> the preferred trade route shifted to the northern Silk Road. Secondary literature also mentions that the ancient cities of Niya and Karadong were abandoned because of drought in the fifth century CE, while Loulan continued to exist – in remnants probably – until 542 CE.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the four German Turfan Expeditions,<sup>6</sup> which between 1902 and 1914 travelled mainly to the sites and nodes along the route at the northern edge of the Taklamakan Desert, this paper discusses the extent to which the extreme arid climate<sup>7</sup> and vegetation influenced the choice of local building materials and construction methods in architecture, as well as the development of artisan production. The basis for these investigations are the archaeological traces and materials that remained *in situ* as well as the material collected by the German explorers, which is housed in the current collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst. I shall focus mainly on the wall paintings and sculptures detached from their architectural context. The records, photographs, drawings and archaeological reports made in the course of the German expeditions form an additional, important source of information.

In this paper, I will examine the rock-cut<sup>8</sup> and the surface architecture within four selected regions located on the northern route, namely Tumshuk, Kucha,

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3 Hannes A. Fellner, “Zur Geschichte der Alten Seidenstraße,” in *Die Neue Seidenstraße Vision – Strategie – Wirklichkeit*, ed. Bernhard Müller and Peter Buchas (Vienna: Urban Forum, 2017): 17.

4 Ines Konczak, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen an der Nördlichen Seidenstraße – Das Bildmotiv der Prophezeiung der Buddhaschaft Śākyamuni’s in den Malereien Xinjiangs* (Ketsch bei Mannheim: n.p., 2014): 14. In her footnote, Konczak cites James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007): 26 and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Die Seidenstraße: Handelsweg und Kulturbrücke zwischen Morgen- und Abendland* (Cologne: DuMont, 1988): 169. She adds that the eastern southern route was probably already difficult to negotiate at the end of the fourth century, which is why the Chinese pilgrim Faxian on his journey to India (399–414 CE) chose the northern route to Wuyi, which probably means Karašahr (Karashahr).

5 Jeanette Werning, “Klima und Vegetation,” in *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007): 43.

6 Named after the destination of the first German expedition, the Turfan oasis in eastern Central Asia.

7 Dry desert climate, which is characterised by low annual precipitation.

8 A man-made cavity in rocks which may be decorated with drawings, paintings, sculptures or statues, and/or scratched engravings. By carving and excavating solid rock where it naturally occurs, one can create architecture and/or sculpture. This kind of activity creates what is known as ‘rock-cut architecture’. Modified caves and caverns are not considered rock-cut architecture, but can also contain

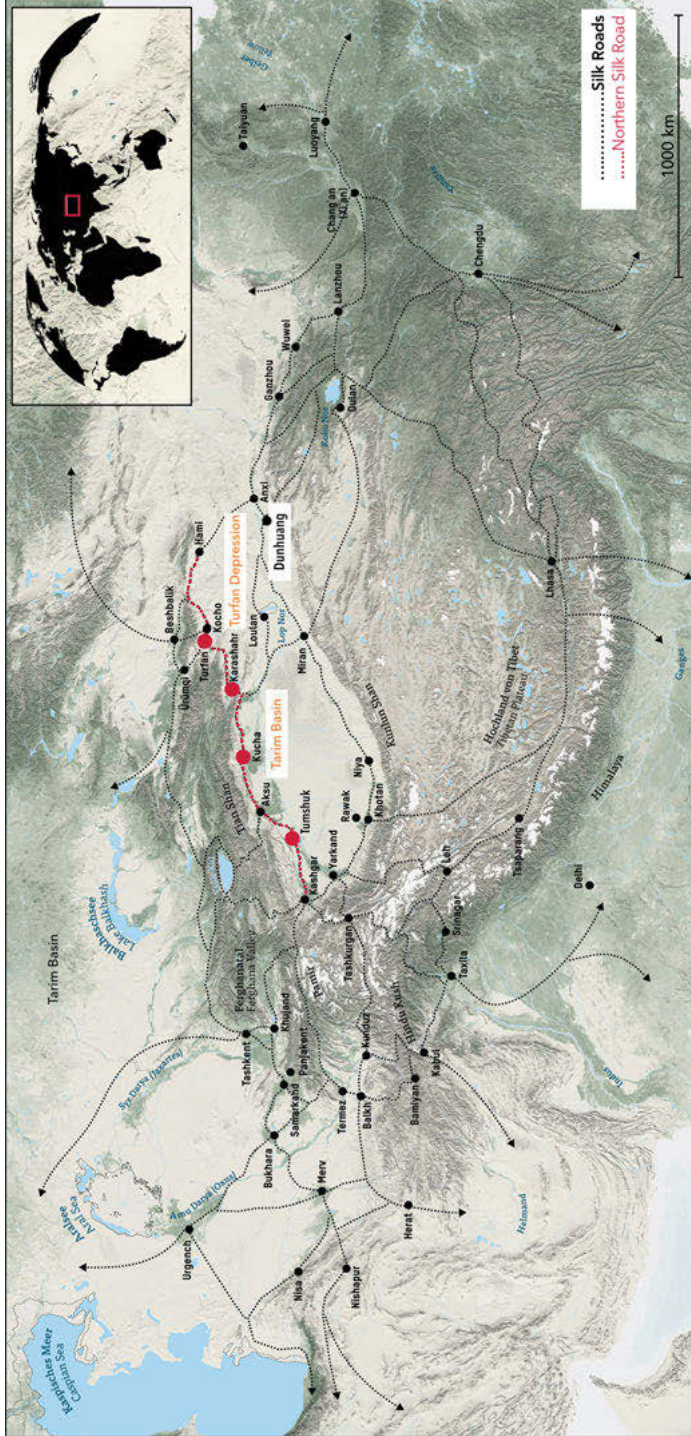


Plate 2.1: Map of the network of the old Silk Roads.

Karashahr/Shorchuk and Turfan (Plate 2.1) from the point of view of climate and resource dependency and, where possible, I will also highlight the artistic freedoms that existed within these dependencies.

## 2 Geography of the Northern Silk Road

The area under investigation is characterised by tough natural conditions: in its interior lies the largest desert in Central Asia, the Taklamakan, and it is bounded by monumental mountain ranges, the Pamirs to the west, Tianshan to the north, and Kunlun to the south. Seasonal flows of meltwater from the mountains form the basis of life and civilisation in the oases in the Tarim Basin.

### 2.1 Climate and Vegetation

Today, Xinjiang belongs to the temperate desert climate zone. The plains surrounded by high mountain ranges have a continental climate with extreme temperature differences between day and night, and summer and winter. Extensive basin landscapes alternate with plateaus, which in turn are framed by mountain ranges. The land masses are farther from the sea than any other in the world, and maritime climatic influences are held back on all sides by the mountain ranges, so that the Central Asian basin landscapes and plateaus have a steppe, semi-steppe or desert character.<sup>9</sup>

In particular, the Tarim Basin and the Turfan Depression (Plate 2.1) are characterised by the combination of a basin-desert climate and an extremely continental climate, including frequent strong winds and sandstorms and extremely low precipitation. At the same time evaporation is enormously high, for which reason everything dries out very fast. The Tarim Basin is extremely hostile to life. ‘However, this was not always the case’, as Jeanette Werning, co-curator of the exhibition *Origins of the Silk Road*,<sup>10</sup> explained in a newspaper interview,<sup>11</sup> adding that, ‘Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein still

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imposing decorations. The three main applications of rock-cut architecture were temples, tombs, and cave dwellings. This definition is based on: Angela Weyer et al., eds., *EwaGlos: European Illustrated Glossary of Conservation Terms for Wall Paintings and Architectural Surfaces* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Oskar Weggel, *Xinjiang/Sinkiang: Das zentralasiatische China – Eine Landeskunde*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde 158 (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1987): 1.

<sup>10</sup> Exhibition stations: Berlin: Martin-Gropius-Bau (13/10/2008–14/01/2009), Mannheim: Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (09/02/2008–01/06/2008).

<sup>11</sup> Geneviève Lüscher, “Tief im Sand der Wüste Taklamakan,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30.03.2008, [https://www.nzz.ch/tief\\_im\\_sand\\_der\\_wueste\\_taklamakan-1.697108](https://www.nzz.ch/tief_im_sand_der_wueste_taklamakan-1.697108) [accessed 07.09.2021]. Translation by the author.

encountered primeval poplar forests with tamarisk and willows [. . .], and that was only about 100 years ago.’ Even though it was always a desert region, at that time there were lakes and rivers with large reed beds (Plate 2.2), deer and large numbers of wild boar.



**Plate 2.2:** Kurla close to Shorchuk at the beginning of the twentieth century (B 1813).

Farmers in the oases harvested millet, wheat and barley; they cultivated peach and pear orchards as well as grapes and cotton. Settlements were established wherever the meltwaters from the mountains reached the plains. Today, this lush vegetation has almost disappeared, the rivers have dried up, the lakes silted up. In a publication accompanying the exhibition, Werning explains that more favourable climatic conditions still exist today on the northern edge of the Tarim Basin, i.e. on the southern slope of the Tianshan Mountains, which echo the descriptions of Aurel Stein from 1928. In the foothills and in the vicinity of Kizil (Plate 2.1), the comparatively numerous bodies of water and higher rates of annual precipitation create a climate which to this day is favourable to the cultivation of crops and fruit in the oases (Plate 2.3).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jeanette Werning, “Klima und Vegetation,” in *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007): 41.





**Plate 2.3:** Market scene in Kucha in 2014.

In the course of the interview, Werning describes the climate in that region through the ages. She mentions that millions of years ago, current Xinjiang was already a desert with mobile sand dunes, and that the climate has remained dry ever since. However, the high mountains of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau meant that Xinjiang was permanently cut off from the influence of the moisture-giving south-eastern monsoon. Even so, large wetlands rich in vegetation developed, especially in the high, arid basin landscapes. These were fed by rivers, almost all of which resulted not from precipitation but from the meltwaters of the glaciers in the surrounding highlands. They encouraged the formation of extensive primeval forests and dense reed beds near the rivers – some with complex networks of distributaries – and lakes, where a rich fauna developed. Lakes and rivers created an important microclimate in which greater humidity could be retained locally or regionally. This favoured the formation of river oases. However, the further the glaciers retreated to higher altitudes and thus their meltwaters decreased, the lower the water flow of the rivers also became, especially in the Tarim Basin.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jeanette Werning, “Klima und Vegetation,” in *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007): 41–42.

A recent publication that addresses the dramatic change in the interaction between humankind and climate should not go unmentioned in this context. In it, the author Johannes Preiser-Kapeller discusses the climate, pandemics and the changes in the Old World up to 500 CE and tries to identify the role played by climate and epidemics in the downfall of various states.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 Flora and Fauna

Paleobotanical finds can provide information about material culture. The tree population in the oases in the Tarim Basin consisted mainly of poplar, willow, tamarisk, cones and mulberry trees. Cultivated fruit-trees were apricot, peach, olive, apple, almonds and walnuts. The wooden objects found from Central Asia were carved out from poplar and walnut trees. This can also be seen from the wooden artifacts found during the various expeditions, such as architectural elements and statuettes.<sup>15</sup> Before it can be worked, the wet core of the poplar tree must be well dried. After that, it is a light wood that is easy to carve and resistant to tearing. Poplar wood has a high content of cellulose, which makes it very flexible and, although soft, also resilient. Even though the poplar is a deciduous tree, its wood has properties comparable to those of a coniferous tree.

In addition to the poplar, reeds (*Phragmites communis*) and marsh bulrushes, various grasses, but also straw from sesame (*sesamum indicum*), cotton (*Gossypium*) and hemp occurred in various locations.<sup>16</sup> These trees and plants were used in art and architecture on the northern Silk Road and will be mentioned as examples in the course of this work. For a more in-depth discussion, see Robert N. Spengler. In *Fruit from the Sands: The Silk Road Origins of the Foods We Eat*, the author explores the history of the origins and spread of agriculture in Inner Asia and across Europe and East Asia.<sup>17</sup> Using the preserved remains of plants found in archaeological sites, he identifies the regions where crops were domesticated and traces their routes around the globe.

According to Werning, ‘everything points to the fact that this rapid change of the environment is man-made.’ As an example she points to the fact that ‘the herders in the Bronze Age (2000 BC) still kept cattle, later mainly sheep and goats, finally [Bactrian] camels. The voracious goats in particular disturbed the unstable microclimate

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, *Die erste Ernte und der große Hunger. Klima, Pandemien und der Wandel der Alten Welt bis 500 n. Chr.* (Vienna/Berlin: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> See: Chhaya Bhattacharya, *Art of Central Asia, with Special Reference to Wooden Objects from the Northern Silk Route* (Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1977): 7–8; Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel, eds., *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Jeanette Werning, “Klima und Vegetation,” in *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007): 44–45.

<sup>17</sup> Robert N. Spengler III, *Fruit from the Sands: The Silk Road Origins of the Foods We Eat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

and radically pushed back the reeds, exposing ever larger areas to wind erosion.<sup>18</sup> She also cites a text fragment from the Han period (206 BCE to 220 CE) that documents the protection of trees and forests and imposes a penalty for cutting them down.<sup>19</sup> In summary, it can be said that the tree population in this region has declined over the millennia and that this resource has always been limited.

## 2.3 Geology and Topography

The basement rocks of the Tarim Basin are exposed mainly around the edges of the basin; they are made up of various types of schist, quartzite, amphibolite, phyllite, marble, crystalline carbonate rock and metavolcanic rock, among others. These crystalline rocks are overlain by 1) dolomite, argillaceous limestone, tillite, feldspathic sandstone, conglomerate, siltstone, slate, marl, and volcanic breccia; and 2) marine carbonate rocks, sandstone, siltstone and limestone, conglomerate, and carbonate rocks.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the high basin landscape is a so-called ‘weathered rock landscape’ is illustrated quite impressively by its geographic position (Plate 2.1), showing the flow of material from the mountains in the north into the depths of the Tarim Basin. Weathered products such as limestone and clay<sup>21</sup> form the loess landscape, which is characteristic for the cultural landscape of the Tarim Basin. Loess is a yellowish-grey sediment which consists mainly of silt with grain sizes ranging from 0.002 to 0.063 millimetres. A certain amount of lime is also characteristic. The clay mixture, composed of weathering products, is one of the most common geological formations in these regions. Over the course of its geological history, this lowland of the Tarim Basin was several times flooded by sea water and then dried up again. The evaporation of the water, which is rich in salt and minerals, caused precipitate. The order of their solubility begins with the most difficult, soluble

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<sup>18</sup> Jeanette Werning in an interview with *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*: Geneviève Lüscher, “Tief im Sand der Wüste Taklamakan,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30.03.2008, [https://www.nzz.ch/tief\\_im\\_sand\\_der\\_wueste\\_taklamakan-1.697108](https://www.nzz.ch/tief_im_sand_der_wueste_taklamakan-1.697108) [accessed 07.09.2021]. Translation by the author.

<sup>19</sup> Jeanette Werning, “Klima und Vegetation,” in *Ursprünge der Seidenstraße*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2007): 47.

<sup>20</sup> Kwang-Yuan Lee, “Geology of the Tarim Basin with Special Emphasis on Petroleum Deposits, Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, Northwest China,” USGS Publications Warehouse, 16.09.2021, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/1985/0616/report.pdf> [accessed 25.08.2022].

<sup>21</sup> The term ‘clay’ refers to a naturally occurring material composed of fine-grained ‘clay minerals’, silt, sand and gravel of various sizes. The ‘clay minerals’ form the binder in the clay, since their structure enables them to retain water. In art and architecture, clay can be used as a plastering material or in the form of sun-dried adobe bricks and rammed earth by adding plants (or other fibrous materials) and/or animal hair for reinforcement. When discussing clay constituents, the term ‘clay mineral’ is useful. It refers to the phyllosilicate minerals and to minerals which impart plasticity and harden upon drying or firing. This definition is based on: Stephen Guggenheim and Robert T. Martin, “Definition of Clay and Clay Mineral: Joint Report of the AIPEA Nomenclature and CMS Nomenclature Committees,” *Clays and Clay Minerals* 43, no. 2 (1995): 257–59, <https://doi.org/10.1346/CCMN.1995.0430213>.



minerals. Thus, calcium sulphate (i.e. gypsum) also precipitates at the beginning, as evaporite rock, and is mostly deposited in depressions. As a result of the death of marine life, massive sediments formed over time, adding limestone rock formations containing clay to the landscape in addition to gypsum deposits. Their folded inclination (Plate 2.4) and slanted layer arrangement is due to plate tectonic pressure exerted by the mountain massifs surrounding the Tarim Basin. Meltwater rivers dug deep into these loess landscapes. On dense limestone layers or on a ‘trap formation’ of solidified, thin-bedded lava, water ran off or remained in depressions, where oases with their own microclimate could develop.



**Plate 2.4:** Folded slope of limestone rock formations close to Kizil in 2014.

The mountains surrounding the Tarim Basin are mainly made of granite rock, which in turn is surrounded by very old sandstone formations. The granite as well as the sandstone are feldspar-rich rocks. Granite weathers comparatively quickly in this continental climate and forms rugged mountain structures. Feldspar is relatively unstable and weathers into clay, while the quartz in the granite is found as sand. Clay-rich sediments formed numerous so-called ‘badland landscapes’ at the edge of the Tarim Basin. These are characterised, on the one hand, by their mostly horizontally oriented, strip-like sediment structure and, on the other, by narrow, deep erosion channels.

In terms of site selection the monastic settlements under investigation, many of which show characteristic rock-cut architecture, were preferably dug into these steep eroded slopes. The porosity and softness of the sedimentary rock formations made

digging easy. The cave-like living and ritual spaces had the advantage of being pleasantly cool in summer and warm in winter. Protection from cold and heat was made possible by special building forms such as windowless structures or cave dwellings and buildings with projecting barrel vaults.<sup>22</sup>

Little has been preserved of the surface architecture. The preferred building material was clay from this region, as it did not have to be fired or otherwise processed in an energy-intensive way, but could be used in the shape of rammed earth and adobe bricks and was found above all in the Tarim Basin. The use of clay in art and architecture is thus primarily due to it being a local resource. From antiquity onwards, clay has been the most important building material in Central Asia. Clay forms the top layer of loess deposits and varies in terms of its composition and properties, depending on the conditions of its formation and its origin.<sup>23</sup> In this paper I will illustrate how the adaptation of building traditions was shaped regionally, based on selected examples.

## 2.4 Mineral Pigments: The Basis for the Production of Painting Material

Some 130 different minerals occur in the soils of Xinjiang, with nonferrous metals such as copper and gold the most important ones in that region. It is worth taking a look at the locally occurring minerals (natural earth oxides), as these, in the form of pigments, are the basis for the production of painting material. Pigments can be classified according to colour, chemical composition or source (natural or synthetic), and can be used as colourants by the addition of a binding agent. Colourants are of particular relevance in architecture in wall paintings and sculptures, but also the colourfully designed wooden objects.

Painting materials in Central Asian wall paintings (corresponding in European art history to the late antique and early medieval periods) were first investigated scientifically at the beginning of the twentieth century by Gettens.<sup>24</sup> In the 1970s, Riederer undertook scientific research on wall paintings and sculptures in the Berlin collection.<sup>25</sup> By employing analytical methods, he derived general conclusions as to the use of pigments (and colourants) in the wall paintings from Central Asia. The white

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22 Robert Kostka, "Zentralasiens Wüsten- und Gebirgsregionen," in *Kunst und Kultur entlang der Seidenstrasse*, ed. Heinrich Gerhard Franz (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987): 22.

23 Nasiba S. Baimatowa, *5000 Jahre Architektur in Mittelasien. Lehmziegelgewölbe vom 4./3. Jt. v. Chr. bis zum Ende des 8. Jhs. n. Chr.* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2008): 26.

24 Rutherford J. Gettens, "The Materials in the Wall Paintings from Kizil in Chinese Turkestan," *Technical Studies in the Field of Fine Arts* 6 (1938): 281–94.

25 Josef Riederer, "Technik und Farbstoffe der frühmittelalterlichen Wandmalereien Ostturkistans," in *Beiträge zur Indienforschung*, ed. Herbert Härtel (Berlin: Museum für Indische Kunst, 1977): 353–423.

pigments he identified included gypsum, anhydrite, and, rarely, lead white. For the blues, lapis lazuli and indigo was used, and for green, atacamite. For the reds, Riederer mentioned mercuric sulfide in its mineral (cinnabar) or synthetic form (vermilion). He did not detect this pigment<sup>26</sup> in wall paintings from the Kucha region, however, where mainly red iron oxide was used. Riederer also mentions the presence of lead oxide (red) and massicot (yellow, currently taken to refer to an orthorhombic lead (II) oxide mineral with the composition PbO).

With the exception of lapis lazuli, an intensely blue semi-precious stone, current knowledge suggests that the colours used in Central Asian art are usually based on locally occurring minerals. Lapis lazuli may have reached the Buddhist nodes in Central Asia via trade along the Silk Roads from the West, as the only deposits known in antiquity are located near Sar-i-Sang in the Badakhshan province in the Hindu Kush. The extraction of Afghan lapis lazuli began around the third millennium BCE. The stones were exported to all parts of the Greco-Roman world. Two smaller deposits are located in the northern Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan and the Chagai Mountains in Pakistan.<sup>27</sup>

### 3 Introduction to the Nodes of Buddhist Sites Along the Northern Silk Road

Neelis demonstrates very impressively the relationship between the trade networks of the Silk Roads and the spread of Buddhism in the late first century CE, along the northern routes via Gandhara and the upper Indus regions across Central to East Asia.<sup>28</sup> In *Geschichte der Alten Seidenstraße*, Fellner vividly describes the interplay between settled urban and mobile nomadic cultures and so also focuses on the nodes, especially the oasis cities of the Tarim Basin. Buddhism played a formative role in these multicultural

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<sup>26</sup> However, his assumption was confirmed in a study published by the author of the present article in 2016, which brought scientific evidence for the presence of cinnabar and malachite (a green basic copper carbonate mineral with composition  $\text{Cu}_2\text{CO}_3[\text{OH}]_2$ ) in wall paintings from the Kucha region. See Birgit Angelika Schmidt, Martin Andreas Ziemann, Simone Pentzien, Toralf Gabsch, Werner Koch and Jörg Krüger, “Technical Analysis of a Central Asian Wall Painting Detached from a Buddhist Cave Temple on the Northern Silk Road,” *Studies in Conservation* 61, no. 2 (2016): 113–22, <https://doi.org/10.1179/2047058414Y.0000000152>.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas F. Calligaro, “Materialanalysen: Untersuchungen an Steineinlagen und Gold aus Tillya Tepe,” in *Gerettete Schätze – Afghanistan – Die Sammlung des Nationalmuseums in Kabul*, ed. Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Amsterdam: De Nieuwe Kerk, 2010): 278.

<sup>28</sup> Jason Neelis, “Networks for Long-Distance Transmission of Buddhism in South Asian Transit Zones,” in *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, vol. 1, ed. Tansen Sen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014): 3–17.

centres between the third and eleventh centuries, so that the founding of Buddhist monasteries went hand in hand with the emergence of important city states and smaller principalities.<sup>29</sup>

The trade routes of the Silk Road, which remained the most important West-East connection for more than a thousand years, thus promoted not only economic but also cultural exchange and brought the Buddhist nodes closer together in terms of science and technology. In this context, Marianne Yaldiz<sup>30</sup> mentions the states of Tumshuk, Kucha, Karashahr and Turfan on the northern route (Plate 2.1). According to Yaldiz, each individual oasis saw itself as an autonomous city-state and made its own laws.

### 3.1 Tumshuk

The westernmost archaeological sites on the northern Silk Road are located near the village of Tumshuk, about 250 km east of Kashgar. Here, too, topography dictated the location of the Buddhist settlements; amidst low mountains rising from the plain, the buildings were partly erected on a protruding ridge. On the protrusions of the ridge, at a height of about 45 metres, there are flat summit areas suitable for building.<sup>31</sup> Yaldiz refers to the architecture found there as ‘monastic settlements’.<sup>32</sup> The whole area, a large valley watered by the Yarkand and Kashgar Rivers, is dotted with eroded mountains that stand like mesas above the broad valley floor.<sup>33</sup>

The French expedition led by the sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) made its first investigations there in 1906, and identified two main sites: the Toqquz Sarai monastery and a site known as Tumşuq Tagh. The former was located on a small hill plateau. In 1913, the fourth German expedition, led by Le Coq, put all its energy into investigating the southern settlements on three cliffs, which were described by Pelliot as the Tumşuq Tagh monastery complex.<sup>34</sup> The archaeological photos, descriptions

<sup>29</sup> Hannes A. Fellner, “Zur Geschichte der Alten Seidenstraße,” in *Die Neue Seidenstraße Vision – Strategie – Wirklichkeit*, ed. Bernhard Müller and Peter Buchas (Vienna: Urban Forum, 2017): 29.

<sup>30</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 4.

<sup>31</sup> Marylin Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia*, vol. 2, *Handbook of Oriental Studies* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002): 536.

<sup>32</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 99.

<sup>33</sup> Marylin Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia*, vol. 2, *Handbook of Oriental Studies* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002): 496.

<sup>34</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 99–100.

and plans of the German and French expeditions mostly indicate surface architecture. These structures were mainly built of sun-dried adobe bricks. Le Coq describes the locally occurring rock as a 'kind of brittle schist [. . .] strongly mixed with clay',<sup>35</sup> into which, for example, a staircase could also be cut (Plate 2.5).



**Plate 2.5:** Stairway to the small statue temple (B 759).

One can only make assumptions about the roofs and roof shapes, but it is possible that these were made of timber or thatched with reed canary grass. A photo taken below Tumšūq Tagh documents the rich deposits of reed canary grass at the beginning of the twentieth century (1913) (Plate 2.6).

<sup>34</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 99–100.

<sup>35</sup> Albert von Le Coq, *Von Land und Leuten in Ostturkistan: Berichte und Abenteuer der 4. Deutschen Turfan-Expedition* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1928): 142.



**Plate 2.6:** Rich deposits of reed canary grass below *Tumšuuq Tagh* (B 1243).

### 3.2 Kucha

A very extensively researched region, Kucha is situated halfway between Turfan in the east and Kashgar in the west and includes the Buddhist monastic sites of Kizil, Kumtura, Simsim, Subashi, Kum Arik and Duldur Akur, among others (Plate 2.7).

Most of the monastic quarters here are caves dug into the rocks. The monastic settlement certainly extended further by constructing surface buildings in addition to the caves, although only a few remains survive. However, surface architecture has also been found in Kumtura and Simsim, Duldur Akur and Subashi, while elsewhere the existence of large numbers of buildings can be assumed which simply did not outlast the centuries.

In the seventh century, Xuanzang, the only one of the known Chinese pilgrims to India who reached the Kucha area, described his impressions of this land and reported rich agricultural yields and numerous mineral deposits.<sup>36</sup> In accordance to his description, the largest and most important monastic complex, Kizil (Plate 2.8), is located in

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629)*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1906).

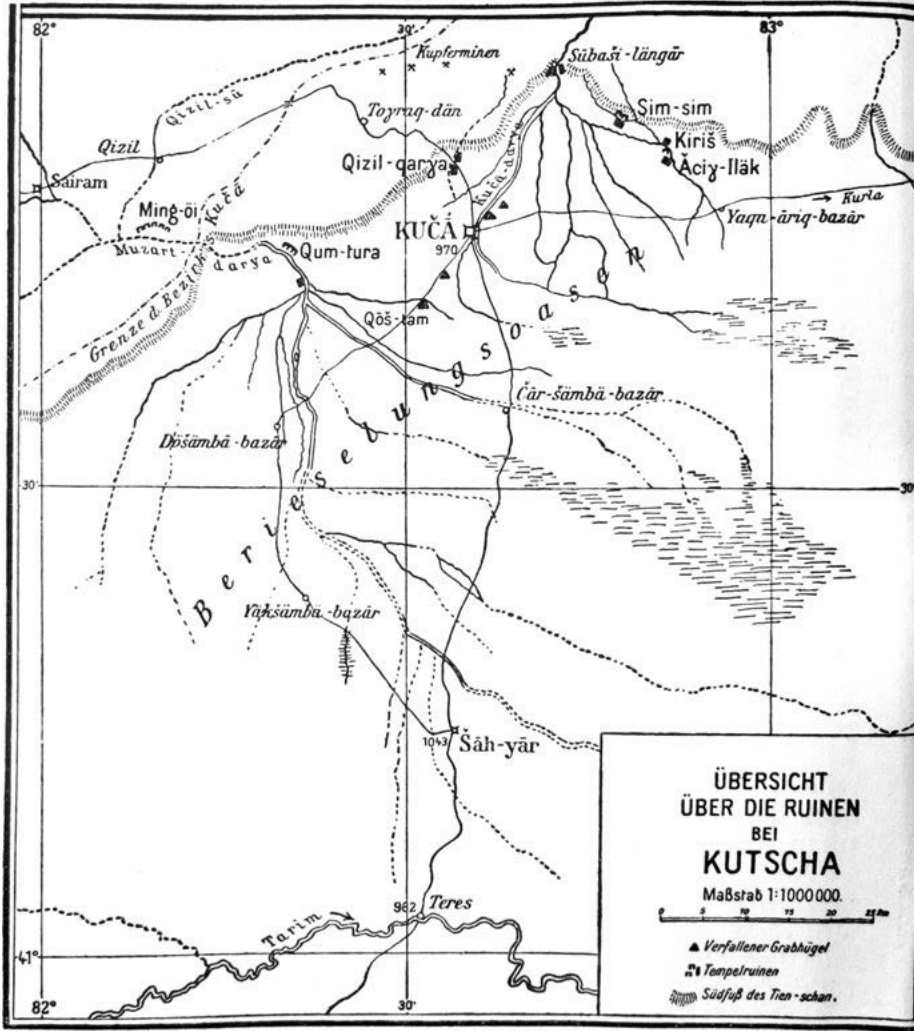


Plate 2.7: Map of Kucha by the Berlin cartographer and orientalist A. Herrmann (1886–1945).

the area of Kucha, on remote mountain slopes on the upper reaches of the Muzart River. Behind its wide meanders that winds through fertile fields, Kizil is situated against the backdrop of an imposing, high mountain range.





Plate 2.8: Kizil in 2014 with a modern façade.

### 3.3 Karashahr/Shorchuk

The archaeological site of Shorchuk is located about 25 km southwest of the small town of Karashahr (today Yanqi).<sup>37</sup> Not far from the town lies the huge Bostan Lake, which also feeds a river. During the period of active use the landscape was characterised by fertile pastureland, and the crossing of the northern and southern trade routes of the Silk Road made this oasis an important node during the Buddhist flourishing of this region. Northwest of today's village of Shorchuk, on the edge of a plateau, stood a temple town with numerous large buildings and many small shrines, all of them surface buildings (Plate 2.9). At the beginning of the twentieth century the landscape of ruins was divided in two by a very small spring and a stream<sup>38</sup> and comparatively little rock-cut architecture was found in a ridge at the north.

All the archaeological records of the various expeditions (mainly German, British and Russian) confirm abundant findings of clay-based sculptures at this oasis site. In the spring of 1907, the third German expedition discovered a deposit of about 30

<sup>37</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 113–17.

<sup>38</sup> Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan: Bericht über Archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Reimer, 1912): 192.





**Plate 2.9:** Surface architecture close to Shorchuk (B 659).

gypsum plaster moulds representing individual parts of figures (faces, limbs or decorative ornaments), which were used for the serial moulding of modules for clay-based sculptures. External equipment such as tassels etc. was also found.

Northwest of Shorchuk, at the foot of the mountain, is a series of ruins. Albert Grünwedel, the leader of the German Turfan Expeditions, divided them into a smaller and a larger complex, with the main complex behind them. He describes the landscape as a ‘thicket of tamarisk, poplars, and bluebells’.<sup>39</sup> Grünwedel hardly studied the surface buildings, concentrating instead on the rock-cut architecture, while Stein worked exclusively in those surface buildings. The latter comprised more than 100 individual buildings which, in Stein’s opinion, served exclusively religious purposes. All were built of sun-dried bricks, the larger ones sometimes reinforced with daub and wattle.

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<sup>39</sup> Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan: Bericht über Archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Reimer, 1912): 192.

### 3.4 Turfan

Bordered by mountain ranges – the Bogdashan to the north and the Chöltag to the south –, the river oases of the Turfan Depression have always formed an important and extensively used habitat.

It lies up to 150 metres below sea level. [ . . . ] In summer, the loess layers of the *Flaming Mountains* [ . . . ] reflect the summer heat, and in winter, icy desert winds bring arctic cold from the mountains and the eastern and southern desert areas [ . . . ]. The area around the district capital Turfan (Turpan) is very fertile. An extensive underground canal system [*Karez*] stores the water and distributes it to the fields almost without evaporation. Grapes and apricots have been imported into the heartland of China since ancient times.<sup>40</sup>

Due to its geographic location, the Turfan Oasis was much more exposed to cultural and political influences from China than its neighbouring regions to the west. Named after the city of Turfan, already mentioned in ancient Central Asian sources, it includes, among others, the ruined city of Idikutšähri, the former capital of the Gaochang Empire and the Western Uyghur Kingdom (referred to as Kocho in ancient Turkic texts) (Plate 2.10), as well as the rock-cut architecture of Murtuk (Bezekli) and Sengim.<sup>41</sup>



**Plate 2.10:** The ruins of Kocho.

<sup>40</sup> Caren Dreyer, *Abenteuer Seidenstrasse: Die Berliner Turfan-Expeditionen 1902–1914* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 2015): 40. A graphic representation of this water supply system can be found at Robert Kostka, “Zentralasiens Wüsten- und Gebirgsregionen,” in *Kunst und Kultur entlang der Seidenstrasse*, ed. Heinrich Gerhard Franz (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987): 22.

<sup>41</sup> Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, “Turfan Studies,” <http://turfan.bbaw.de/bilder-en/turfan-engl-07.pdf> [accessed 07.09.2021].

In the introduction to the publication accompanying the exhibition ‘The Ruins of Kocho’, the curator and editor gives a brief historical summary of the region:

The Turfan Region was an important intersection of trade routes on the northern Silk Road. Military posts are known in this region from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). Kocho quickly developed into an important cultural and political centre. It had been the seat of several regional powers such as the Northern Liang (439–460), then in the seventh century the Chinese Tang Dynasty took control of the entire Northern Silk Road and Gaochang developed into a major administrative and commercial centre at that time [ . . . ] Sogdians were the most important traders on the Silk Road in the 4th–8th centuries. [ . . . ] Then in the second half of the 8th century a major change took place in the whole region. After heavy losses in a battle against the Arabs in 751 CE the Chinese Tang Dynasty was weakened and then An Lushan, a high-ranking officer of Central Asian origin in the Chinese army started a rebellion, even forcing the Emperor to flee the capital. Only with the help of foreign troops could the Tang Dynasty regain power, the upheaval lasted several years (755–763 CE), and control of the oasis cities of the northern Silk Road had to be given up in consequence. The foreign troops who saved the Tang from complete destruction were the Uyg[h]urs, then controlling of a vast Kaganate in and around today’s Mongolia with Karabalgasun as their capital.<sup>42</sup>

The majority of them left Mongolia and migrated south and west. The group that migrated westward established two kingdoms, namely the Western Uyghur Kingdom (second half of the ninth century–thirteenth century) whose centres were in the Turfan area, and the Ganzhou Kingdom in Gansu province (mid-ninth century–1028).<sup>43</sup>

Toyok, Sengim and Murtuk (Bezekli) are located in the Turfan region close to small rivers that rise in the rugged mountains. Until the fourteenth century, the often very deep and narrow river valleys were used as retreats by mainly Buddhist hermits and monks. For them, cave temples and meditation rooms were cut into the rock, and monastery buildings, stupas and shrines were erected and often lavishly decorated. In many cases they were built on narrow terraces, often high above the river. Where the existing rock was unsuitable or it was necessary to compensate for recesses in the rock face, cave spaces were supplemented with porches made of adobe bricks or rammed earth and formed into single or even double vaults and domes. Niches, cavities and sculpture remains indicate that clay-based sculptures, probably Buddha or bodhisattva figures, often stood high up in the rock and that there were wooden porches and galleries, stairs and balustrades. In all these places, however, there had also been surface architecture.

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<sup>42</sup> Lilla Russell-Smith, “The Ruins of Kocho: Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road – The Project,” in *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, ed. Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016): 10.

<sup>43</sup> Yukiyo Kasai, “Geschichte und Religion der Uiguren nach dem Untergang des Kaganats,” Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Fakultät für Ostasienwissenschaften, 10.05.2021, <https://oaw.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/xinjiang/yukiyo-kasai-geschichte-und-religion-der-uiguren-nach-dem-untergang-des-kaganats/> [accessed 06.01.2022]. For a more detailed overview see Shimin Geng, “The Uighur Kingdom of Kocho,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia. The Age of Achievement – A.D. 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century*, vol. 4, ed. Muhammad S. Asimov and Clifford E. Bosworth (Paris: UNESCO, 1998): 206–12.

In the solitude of the mountain gorges, buildings were more likely to be protected from destruction than near settlements.<sup>44</sup> In summary, the architecture of the buildings in the Turfan region were mostly surface buildings (Plate 2.11) which were exclusively constructed of sun-dried adobe bricks.



Plate 2.11: Kocho, ruin β (B 921).

### 3.5 Excursus: Sponsors and Donors, Patrons and Benefactors – Forms of Economic Dependence

Wealthy Silk Road rulers and merchants were significantly involved in the creation of these Buddhist residences; as benefactors and patrons, they contributed to the development of art and culture by financing stupas and monastic settlements near cities and wealthier, rural areas, and ensured the survival of Buddhist communities.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Caren Dreyer, *Abenteuer Seidenstrasse: Die Berliner Turfan-Expeditionen 1902–1914* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 2015): 66.

<sup>45</sup> Hannes A. Fellner, “Zur Geschichte der Alten Seidenstraße,” in *Die Neue Seidenstraße Vision – Strategie – Wirklichkeit*, ed. Bernhard Müller and Peter Buchas (Vienna: Urban Forum, 2017): 26–27, and Jason Neelis, “Networks for Long-Distance Transmission of Buddhism in South Asian Transit

Although the expansion of Buddhist institutions was not solely determined by economics, Neelis notes that the religious and economic spheres were closely intertwined.<sup>46</sup> Sarah E. Fraser also states that ‘the close relationship between temple and governmental administrative units in Silk Road kingdoms blurred precise divisions between secular and religious, economic and spiritual, and political and monastic.’<sup>47</sup> Her study on the practice of artists and the workshop system in China and Central Asia, 618–960 CE, assumes that the artists were largely not monks. To be sure, her research does not rule out monastic involvement in image production; there is ample evidence that the monastic community participated in all aspects of the process. But in general, it was a professional class of artisans – painters, sculptors, carpenters, metalsmiths and textile workers – who created the bulk of artistic production. They were hierarchically organised according to their expertise, and their titles reflected their position in this hierarchy.<sup>48</sup> Fraser can present many of her observations and findings with such clarity because she was able to work with written documents and surviving records from the monasteries’ accounts (invoices, expenses and lists) from Dunhuang, an important Silk Road hub (Plate 2.1).

We may reasonably assume that the concepts and administrative structures of artists and workshops in the regions at the focus of the present paper did not differ significantly. Even though there is still an immense lack of research, it is likely that there were fundamental, conceptual and compositional parallels in artistic practice at different times and in different places.

## 4 Materials and Manufacturing Techniques – Forms of Climate and Resource Dependency

From the introductory descriptions (see chapter 3. Introduction to the Nodes of Buddhist sites along the northern Silk Road) of the various Buddhist sites on the northern

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Zones,” in *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Tansen Sen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014): 4. (Neelis quotes: Gustavo Benavides, “Economy,” in *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015]: 82.)

46 Jason Neelis, “Networks for Long-Distance Transmission of Buddhism in South Asian Transit Zones,” in *Buddhism Across Asia. Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, vol. 1, ed. Tansen Sen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014): 4.

47 Sarah Elisabeth Fraser, “An Introduction to the Material Culture of Dunhuang Buddhism: Putting the Object in Its Place,” *Asia Major* 17, no. 1 (2004): 2.

48 Sarah Elisabeth Fraser, “An Introduction to the Material Culture of Dunhuang Buddhism: Putting the Object in Its Place,” *Asia Major* 17, no. 1 (2004): 8. (Fraser quotes Sarah Elisabeth Fraser, *Performing the Visual: The Practice of Buddhist Wall Painting in China and Central Asia, 618–960* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004].)

Silk Road, it has become obvious that each monastic site was best adapted to the regional, geological and topographical conditions in its own way. Another common feature we can deduce from the (geographical) location of these architectural complexes is the necessary fulfilment of two preconditions important for religious and human needs, namely seclusion from secular life and the availability of water and nearby fertile land. Accordingly, the choice of location and construction method, i.e. rock-cut or surface architecture, was also based on these criteria.

## 4.1 Rock-Cut Architecture

Among the Buddhist kingdoms of Central Asia, the Kingdom of Kuča [Kucha] is the best suited to reconstruct local Buddhism between 200 and 650 CE, because a great number of rock-carved monasteries, large and small, are still extant, although in varying states of preservation.<sup>49</sup>

If we look at Kizil, for example, it is striking that the choice of location, namely caves dug into the towering cliffs of the north bank of the Muzart River, is directly related to the climate: the cliffs are separated from the river by several hundred metres of gradually sloping fertile land. In order to protect the caves from floods, which could cause devastating damage, especially in spring when the snows began to melt, the monasteries were therefore built at a sufficient height above the highest water level of the river.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to this deliberately chosen location, the layout of the caves can also be connected with the climatic conditions and the resulting material properties. The rock typical for Kizil consists of conglomerate and is accordingly soft, making it easy to dig caves. However, this advantageous property of the rock also has a disadvantage in that the rock, which resembles scree, is weak in terms of stability and adhesion, and can therefore be described as loose and fragile in its structural properties.

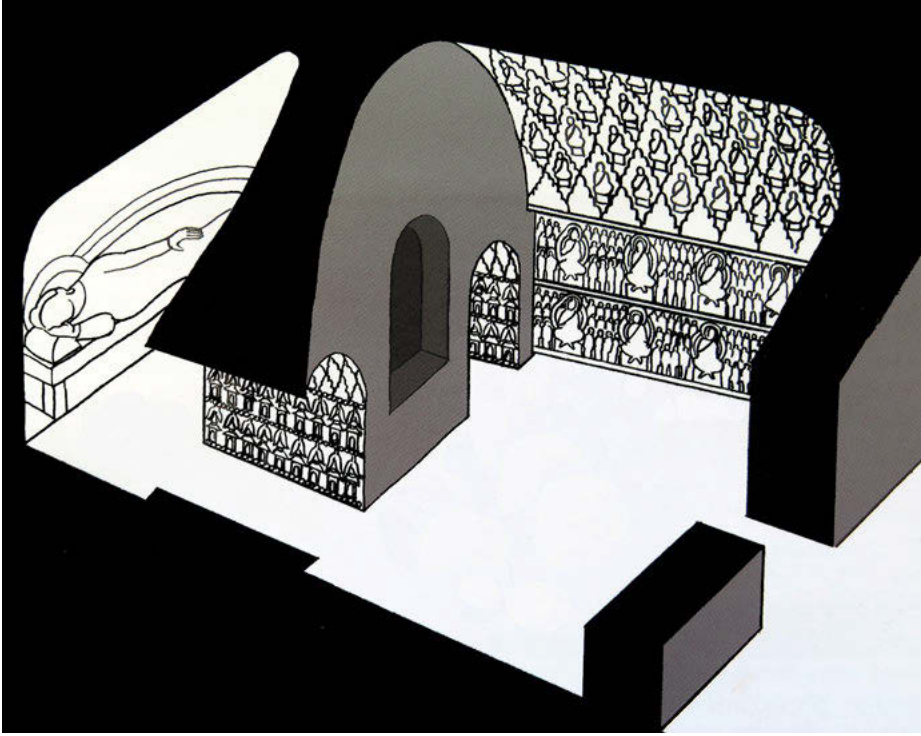
The fact that the rock formations are loose or compound materials was discussed in detail in section 2.3 Geology and Topography. Valerie Hansen (2012) cites the layout of the so-called central pillar caves in Kizil (Plate 2.12) as an example, and explains the existence of the pillars positioned centrally this cave type by a need for support, most probably because the rock of the excavated caves was too fragile and brittle.<sup>51</sup> Her example also confirms the finding that the design and the layout of the Buddhist cave architecture, while naturally determined and defined

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<sup>49</sup> Angela Howard and Giuseppe Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources of Meditation in the Ancient Monasteries of Kuča* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015): 1.

<sup>50</sup> Marianne Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1987): 20.

<sup>51</sup> Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road. A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 60.



**Plate 2.12:** Schematic representation of a central pillar cave in Kizil.

by their intended use and function,<sup>52</sup> was also shaped by the properties of the rock, so that at this point a dependence of the construction method on the available materials is also evident.

## 4.2 Wooden Elements

Although access to wood on site was limited (see section 2.1 Climate and Vegetation), timber was available and indeed necessary for construction. From the earliest times,

<sup>52</sup> ‘The rock monasteries [of Kucha] responded to the threefold needs of the residential community: to provide living facilities, worship spaces and areas specifically planned for meditation. The percentage of decorated caves [i.e. with sculptures and wall paintings] in each monastery varies, but they are about a third of the total number. It was in these decorated caves that most of the ritual activity took place.’ Giuseppe Vignato, “Monastic Fingerprints: Tracing Ritual Practice in the Rock Monastery of Qizil through Archaeological Evidence,” *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* 20–21 (2016–2017): 22.

wood was used mainly for flat roofing of rooms, for load-bearing columns, door frames and board coverings, as well as for stabilising walls made of adobe brick.<sup>53</sup>

In an article on ‘Ruin Q in Kocho and its wooden architectural elements’, Klaas Ruitenbeek notes that both ends of the beams used there were structurally anchored and inserted into earthen walls or adobe brick walls.<sup>54</sup> He also quotes Grünwedel, the leader of the First Turfan Expedition (1902–1903), who mentioned the imprints of old wooden constructions preserved everywhere.<sup>55</sup> These examples of freestanding buildings impressively demonstrate the structural necessity of wood in clay-based architecture; but it was also indispensable in rock-cut architecture.

In the case of the caves, wooden staircases were necessary to reach entrances at high elevations. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the brittle conglomerate rocks are inherently unstable, which means that the caves have been damaged to varying degrees by constant erosion. The outer parts of the caves, the antechambers, have been affected the most. These antechambers were essential for the function of the caves. Antechambers with wooden elements were built in front of the entrances to many of these caves. But these antechambers were extremely vulnerable to the effects of weather and natural disasters, and had very often completely eroded away at the time of their rediscovery. Vignato, who has worked intensively on the formative elements of rock monasteries of ancient Kucha, also addresses the damage and losses to these antechambers in his research. Despite the lack of material evidence, he succeeds in reconstructing the load-bearing wooden architecture on the basis of grooves, postholes and other installation marks left on the cliff.<sup>56</sup> Vignato has been able to prove the use of timber in the following areas: 1) wooden structures in front of caves, 2) the wooden architecture of doors and windows; and 3) the wooden structures inside the caves.<sup>57</sup> Small statuettes and furniture were carved from wood, such as those found in the antechamber of Kizil cave 76, some of which are today in the Berlin collection (Plate 2.13). As timber resources were limited locally and thick trunks were needed, especially for the load-bearing structures in the architecture, Vignato

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53 Nasiba S. Baimatowa, *5000 Jahre Architektur in Mittelasien. Lehmziegelgewölbe vom 4./3. Jt. v. Chr. bis zum Ende des 8. Jhs. n. Chr.* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2008): 48.

54 Klaas Ruitenbeek, “Ruin Q in Kocho and its Wooden Architectural Elements,” in *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, ed. Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016): 109.

55 Klaas Ruitenbeek, “Ruin Q in Kocho and its Wooden Architectural Elements,” in *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, ed. Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016): 113.

56 Angela Howard and Giuseppe Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources of Meditation in the Ancient Monasteries of Kuča* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015): 57–63.

57 Giuseppe Vignato, “The Wooden Architecture of the Kizil Caves,” *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 1 (2006): 11–27.





**Plate 2.13:** Photomontage of object III 7139 by Birgit A. Schmidt based on B 794.

suggests – in a recent article – that timber could also have come from the Tianshan Mountains and been floated down the Muzart River to the sites.<sup>58</sup>

In summary, it should be evident at this point that timber was an integral part of the architecture and art along the northern Silk Road. It was used both for construction and as a decorative material. Although its physical remains have been preserved only to a limited extent, the archaeological evidence clearly shows that wood was used again and again and that architecture and art were dependent on this resource. Reuse in architecture, as Ruitenbeek impressively documents on the basis of a painted beam with an older Sanskrit inscription underneath the paint,<sup>59</sup> is a welcome variant. But reuse inevitably also often meant that these wooden elements were eventually burnt as firewood.

<sup>58</sup> Giuseppe Vignato, “The Reappearance of the Buddha. A Preliminary Study on the Lost Clay Statues in the Caves of Kucha,” *East and West N.S.* 2 61, no. 2 (2021): 120.

<sup>59</sup> Klaas Ruitenbeek, “Ruin Q in Kocho and its Wooden Architectural Elements,” in *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, ed. Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016): 122.

### 4.3 Wall Paintings

The main cultural relics at the sites of interest are splendid wall paintings and polychrome sculptures. Complementing the research on the painting layers, the Getty Conservation Institute has conducted investigations of selected caves in Kizil, Kumtura, and Bezeklik [among other sites along the Silk Roads in China] on the plaster materials used for the wall paintings and sculptures, and their manufacturing techniques.<sup>60</sup> The article published by the Getty scientists mentions by way of introduction that

[. . .] cliffs into which these caves were excavated consist of sandstone and conglomerate with argillite cement containing clay minerals such as montmorillonite. These materials make the cliffs susceptible to water penetration. The rock is porous and loose and has poor mechanical strength.<sup>61</sup>

After the rock surface of the excavated cave was completed, layers of clay were applied. Due to the coarse-grained and rough surface of these clastic sedimentary rocks, it was necessary to prepare a smooth surface for painting. This was achieved by clay plaster of different compositions. The number of layers could vary. In general, one or more layers of coarse clay plaster are followed by a layer of fine clay plaster.

The clay and fibres used to make both coarse and fine plaster were usually obtained locally. Analyses performed by the Getty showed that the coarse plaster was made of clay mixed with sand and straw, with the straw used varying from site to site. Thicker wheat straw was mixed in the plaster. The fine plaster was made of fine clay and sand tempered with hemp, cotton, or wool. According to the results of the Getty Institute, this layer was mainly mixed with wool in the Kizil, Kumtura, and Bezeklik Caves. The ground layer, onto which the painting was then applied, is primarily gypsum.

Results from X-ray diffraction analysis of pigments from the Kizil Caves showed that colours used are reds, primarily vermilion and red lead, which have mostly discoloured, and red ochre; the blues are lapis lazuli; the greens are copper hydroxy chloride minerals such as atacamite; the brownish black is PbO<sub>2</sub>, which is produced by the oxidation of red lead; and the whites are mainly gypsum. The binding agent of

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<sup>60</sup> Zuixiong Li, "Deterioration and Treatment of Wall Paintings in Grottoes along the Silk Road in China and Related Conservation Efforts," in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Conservation of Grotto Sites, Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang, People's Republic of China, June 28–July 3, 2004*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 46–55.

<sup>61</sup> Zuixiong Li, "Deterioration and Treatment of Wall Paintings in Grottoes along the Silk Road in China and Related Conservation Efforts," in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Conservation of Grotto Sites, Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang, People's Republic of China, June 28–July 3, 2004*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 46.



**Plate 2.14:** Schematic illustration adapted by Birgit A. Schmidt, based on a photo of a wall painting *in situ* (Kizilgaha).

the paints is animal glue, probably made from ox hide.<sup>62</sup> In summary, the construction can be illustrated by a schematic representation as follows (Plate 2.14).

Dependency on climate and resources is also vividly documented by the uses to which the wall paintings and their clay plaster systems were put after the caves were no longer in active use. In an article on Ruin  $\beta$  in Kocho, the authors Dreyer and Konczak-Nagel mention that large gaps had already formed in the outer walls of this monastic complex at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time, carts went back and forth to take large quantities of the fertile mud walls to the surrounding fields. The extent of these losses is shown quite impressively by comparing photos from the beginning of the twentieth century with images from 2015: on the basis of selected views of the ruins, the decay of the ruins as well as the losses can be clearly documented.<sup>63</sup> Like wood (see section 4.2), the mineral-rich compacted clay plaster was reused, in this case as fertiliser for the nutrient-poor and sometimes highly saline soils. The compacted clay plaster was able to retain moisture for a long time, which also proved advantageous for sowing. Certainly it was not only this form of reuse that

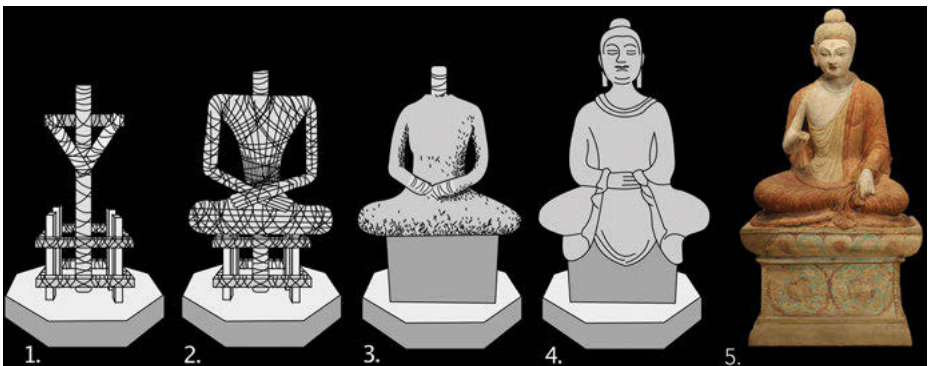
<sup>62</sup> Zuixiong Li, “Deterioration and Treatment of Wall Paintings in Grottoes along the Silk Road in China and Related Conservation Efforts,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Conservation of Grotto Sites, Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang, People’s Republic of China, June 28–July 3, 2004*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 46–55.

<sup>63</sup> Caren Dreyer and Ines Konczak-Nagel, “Architecture of the Great Monastery: Ruin  $\beta$ ,” in *The Ruins of Kocho. Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, ed. Lilla Russell-Smith and Ines Konczak-Nagel (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016): 71–78.

was responsible for the extent of the damage. Natural as well as man-made environmental influences should also not be disregarded.

#### 4.4 Sculptures

The materials used to paint the colourful sculptures (Plate 2.15) are identical to those in the wall paintings. The monumental to life-size figures were usually supported by a wooden armature on the inside (1), which was wrapped with reed and straw bundles (2) to form the shape. They were certainly moistened in order to achieve better adhesion for the layers of clay applied next (3), due to the water retention and the porous surface of the bundles. Straw chaff, animal hair and plant fibres were then added to the clay to reinforce the coarse layers (Plate 2.16) Re-modelling with layers of finer clay plaster and the application of the head and limbs took place in the next step (4). Finally, a thin ground of gypsum plaster and various paint layers were added (5).



**Plate 2.15:** Technological construction of a sculpture illustrated by Birgit A. Schmidt for the Humboldt Forum.

It is reasonable to assume that the larger sculptures were made at their intended place of purpose, usually indoors, very often in high relief and so required additional fastening to the walls. Details of these production processes are the subject of my current research, and are also discussed by Vignato.<sup>64</sup> In summary, according to my current state of knowledge, sculptures in these dimensions were unfired, which can be explained on the one hand by their size and their fixed placement in the room, and on the other by the limited availability of timber. The Berlin collection houses only a few life-size sculptures (the Buddha from Shorchuk (inventory number III 7841) in the

<sup>64</sup> Giuseppe Vignato, "The Reappearance of the Buddha. A Preliminary Study on the Lost Clay Statues in the Caves of Kucha," *East and West* N.S. 2 61, no. 2 (2021): 101–24.





**Plate 2.16:** Magnified (20x) details of III 7609.

sketch in Plate 2.15 is rather an exception and even smaller than life-size). Most of its pieces sometimes are heads and a variety of mainly figurative fragments. These smaller objects also have supporting armatures inside, but depending on the size of the object these may be made merely of thinner branches, which were however also usually covered with plant fibres such as straw.

With regard to the climate and resources dependencies, gypsum must be the focus of our attention in the context of the clay sculptures. Gypsum was found both in the wall paintings and the clay sculptures as a paint ground, i.e. as a very thin ground layer of gypsum plaster. The fact that gypsum was used as a plaster is evidence that the craftsmen and artists certainly had the knowledge to further process this mineral.

As mentioned in section 3.3 Karashahr, the German explorers found a deposit of about 30 gypsum plaster moulds in Shorchuk, representing individual parts of figures (Plate 2.17) (faces, limbs or decorative ornamentation) and used for the serial moulding of clay sculptures. These moulds are in the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst; scientific investigations confirmed the presence of a gypsum plaster also known as 'plaster of Paris'. Gypsum is a naturally occurring, soft mineral composed of calcium sulphate dihydrate. When heated (from 60°C to 200°C), it loses water and becomes calcium sulphate hemihydrate, plaster of Paris – a fine white inorganic powder. Mixed with water, it becomes a mouldable material that hardens quickly. Next to

its function as a plaster it is also used for making ornamental casts and moulds. Unlike lime, gypsum only requires a comparably small amount of combustible material such as wood. This may explain the almost complete absence of lime plasters along the northern Silk Road.



**Plate 2.17:** A mould (III 7990a-e) from the museum's collection depicting hands and an upper body.

Baimatova also confirms this assumption for the regions of Central Asia further to the west, and discusses lime plasters and their limited applicability in her doctoral thesis. Since higher temperatures are required for the burning of lime than for gypsum, lime was used less frequently.<sup>65</sup>

The existence of moulds possibly explains why almost identical heads appear in Karashahr, in Duldur-Akur (Kucha) or in Kocho (Turfan) (Plate 2.18) but this observation is still connected with a multitude of questions which are part of my ongoing doctoral thesis.

<sup>65</sup> Nasiba S. Baimatowa, *5000 Jahre Architektur in Mittelasien. Lehmziegelgewölbe vom 4./3. Jt. v. Chr. bis zum Ende des 8. Jhs. n. Chr.* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2008): 47.



**Plate 2.18:** Photomontage depicting a head (left: MG. 23756, Musée Guimet, Paris) from Duldur-Akur (Kucha), and from Kocho (Turfan) (right: III 4480, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin). Map adapted by Birgit A. Schmidt.

So the most diverse nodes along the Silk Roads are connected by a kind of uniformity in those faces. In terms of their shapes and proportions, all the clay-based sculptures I studied at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst are strikingly similar. Unlike wall paintings, the figures were apparently handed down unchanged for centuries. To what extent these initial observations are valid, however, is still under investigation. Fraser notes that

moulds brought back from Central Asian expeditions [. . .] now in the Hermitage Museum indicate that the process of making sculpture in Dunhuang and the Qizil area cave shrine, [. . .] was consistent with the piecemeal approach of the wall painter. [. . .] Artists pressed mud plaster into the cavities and, when it dried, affixed the component pieces for the sculpture to a niche or wall.<sup>66</sup>

Artistic practice here shows a certain dependence on the moulds themselves. Within these clearly defined manufacturing processes, we may interpret the freehand modelling of parts of the hair and hair ornaments, and possibly also of the drapery, which vary from figure to figure, as areas of artistic freedom.<sup>67</sup>

Alexandra Vanleene posited a distinction between ‘modelling schools’ (additive), and ‘sculpting schools’ (subtractive; carved) in Gandharan art production in her work on the site of Haḍḍa. In Haḍḍa, modelling seems to have been a ‘deliberate choice, an

<sup>66</sup> Sarah Elisabeth Fraser, *Performing the Visual: The Practice of Buddhist Wall Painting in China and Central Asia, 618–960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004): 98.

<sup>67</sup> But my observations lead me to conclude that even these elements, although modelled freehand, followed a uniform and idealised canon.

affirmed preference'.<sup>68</sup> By contrast, the sculptures of the northern Silk Route investigated in this article clearly were the products of a 'modelling school' in which modelling was definitely dictated by the material, clay. Accordingly, the artists had no choice, neither in terms of material nor in terms of forms of expression. The dependence on moulds, but also the obvious restriction by the available materials, can be impressively illustrated by the comparison with the example just mentioned. A restriction was already imposed by the material itself, namely the clay.

In order to gain insights into the art production in the sites on the northern Silk Road relevant to this study, it is absolutely necessary – as well as informative – to discuss the materials used. We can therefore conclude that the type of construction, the size and the shape of the sculptures strongly depended on the properties of the building materials available.

## 5 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the German Turfan Expeditions, which travelled between 1902 and 1914 mainly to the Buddhist sites and nodes along the northern Silk Road (around the Taklamakan desert), this paper discussed the extent to which the climate and vegetation influenced the choice of local building materials and construction technologies in architecture and in the development of artisan production in these regions on the basis of selected sites, find objects and accompanying materials produced during the expeditions. Even though research into and knowledge about the organisation of artistic practice and workshop systems is still in its beginnings for this region, an evaluation of the traces left in art and architecture allows us to draw insightful conclusions about artisan production.

I deliberately chose to present each node of Buddhist culture along the northern route of the Tarim Basin individually. In the spirit of Faccenna, '[. . .] each center [. . .] should be considered first in its own right, in terms of its own production, and then in terms of synchronic and diachronic connection, taking great care not to impose our own schemes and theories on the individuality of the work [. . .]'.<sup>69</sup> Fraser, too, demonstrates strategies for capturing the local, regional and international characteristics of

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68 Alexandra Vanleene, "Differences and Similarities in Gandhāran Art Production: The Case of the Modelling School of Haḍḍa (Afghanistan)," in *The Geography of Gandhāran Art*, ed. Wannaporn Rienjang and Peter Steward (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2018): 143, <https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/PublicFiles/media/The%20Geography%20of%20Gandharan%20Art.pdf>.

69 Domenico Faccenna, "The Butkara I Complex: Origins and Development [At the Origin of Gandharan Art. The Contribution of the IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission in the Swat Valley Pakistan]," *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 9, no. 3–4 (2003): 305.



Buddhist material culture and art. Both provide precise readings of documents and monuments that place the object in context.<sup>70</sup>

I provided specific examples to illustrate the fact that the extreme summer heat and the extreme cold caused by the icy desert winds in winter had a decisive influence on the choice of location and the type of construction of the monastery buildings. The choice between surface buildings and rock-cut architecture was significantly influenced by the factors of climate and vegetation, which also directly impacted the location and size of the monastic settlements, all demonstrating extreme dependencies. The master builders, craftsmen and artists had a very limited choice of construction materials at their disposal. On the other hand, these restrictions made it possible to achieve perfection in the use of those few materials. A modelling school of sculptures developed which met the highest standards in terms of art technology.

The clay-based sculptures and wall paintings that survived to the present day clearly show that there was a great deal of knowledge about the properties of clay as a building material and that the advantages of this material were exploited in a variety of ways depending on its role and function in the architectural context. The colourful design of the surfaces with their bright colours and gold applications testify to mastery of this craft. An example worth mentioning is a sculpture (III 7618) in the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, which had originally been placed in an interior room in Yarkhoto (Turfan region). Its eyeballs are adorned with inset black glass appliqués. It is not difficult to imagine the effect of these ‘glowing’ eyes in the dark room under torchlight. The design of many of these rooms can certainly be considered an impressive overall composition.

This study is the first to focus on gypsum, a naturally occurring material. I have been able to clarify how strongly the production of sculptures was influenced by the gypsum deposits, as well as by knowledge of the technique of plaster firing, and how it was directly dependent on it. The fact that the modelling technique had developed to such a high technical level that the manufacturing of sculptures at the highest artistic level could apparently be practised for centuries, is ultimately due to the absence of other materials with sculptural qualities. The lack of alternatives therefore compelled the artists and craftsmen to work with locally available materials, and to take these works to perfection. In summary it can be said that through systematic adaptation of building traditions to the various regional, geological and topographical conditions, the rugged conditions of the landscape were used to the best possible advantage.

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<sup>70</sup> Sarah Elisabeth Fraser, “An Introduction to the Material Culture of Dunhuang Buddhism: Putting the Object in Its Place,” *Asia Major* 17, no. 1 (2004): 13.

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Julia A.B. Hegewald

## Chapter 3

# Temple Architecture in Coastal Karnataka: An Interplay of Climatic Dependencies and Artistic Freedoms

## 1 Introduction

The region of Karnataka represents one of the cultural highlights of South Asia. This is from a point of view of artistic, architectural, cultural and religious diversity. In these, the region shows an unbroken continuity to the present day. Furthermore, the area is characterised by an enormous climatic variability. The Deccan high plateau is characterised by a hot and dry climate with very little rainfall, and the availability of hard stone for building projects. Towards the west, the uplands slope down steeply to a narrow fertile coastal belt that is drenched by regular rains. As a consequence, buildings constructed along the west coast are intensely exposed to the monsoon, which absorbs moisture from the ocean as it approaches the shoreline. Due to this extreme climatic situation, buildings had to be adapted to withstand prolonged and often heavy downpours. The ready availability of water resulted in the formation of inland waterways, the cultivation of large forested areas and the easy accessibility of wood as building material throughout the coastal region.

This paper argues that architecture is generally strongly dependent on and has been adapted to the regional climatic situation. The geography, but in many ways also the local weather, determine the availability of naturally available construction materials. This dependency<sup>1</sup> on climate and building resources will be contrasted with the freedoms and choices which were nevertheless open to architects, master builders and artisans during the design process, even in past centuries when infrastructure was less developed. Questions of dependence and freedom will be analysed by examining Jaina temple-building traditions in Karnataka. For this purpose, two closely related but widely differing areas will be contrasted: the dry Deccan upland and the more humid, low-lying south-western Indian coastal belt.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter, like the other contributions in this volume, does not consciously differentiate between the two terms 'dependence' and 'dependency' and uses them largely as synonyms. Theoretical analyses in dependency studies identify 'dependence' as a more limited condition of shorter duration, while 'dependency' is concerned with a longer-term, more large-scale and to a greater extent lasting phenomenon. On this issue, see, for instance, the discussion in the Introduction of the present volume (Chapter 1, section 3) and Christoph Antweiler, "On Dependency, Dependence, and a Dependency Turn," *Discussion Paper 1*, Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (2022): 1–16.

## 2 Jainism in the Deccan

The following section will give a brief introduction to the history and special features of Jainism in the Deccan in order to provide some basic background information. The origin of the religion lies in the east Indian region of Bihar in the fifth to sixth centuries BCE. According to legend, a severe draught and resulting famine affected the east of India during the third century BCE, causing large numbers of the local Jaina community including some of its foremost religious leaders to migrate from the area.<sup>2</sup> While one group moved further west, the second, allegedly led by the famous teacher or *ācārya* Bhadrabāhu, went south into the Deccan.<sup>3</sup> It was they who formed the Digambara ('space' or 'sky-clad', meaning 'naked') form of Jainism, as opposed to the Śvetāmbaras ('white-' or 'cotton-clad'), who generally are more prominent in the north and west of the country.<sup>4</sup> Digambara chronicles narrate that Bhadrabāhu died a religious death by voluntary starvation (*sallekhanā*) in the Deccani pilgrimage centre of Shravanabelgola (Śravaṇa Belgola) in about 298 BCE.<sup>5</sup> According to legend, Bhadrabāhu was accompanied by Candragupta Maurya, the grandfather of the emperor Aśoka.<sup>6</sup> A deep belief in this narrative has become engrained in the religious memory of the region, fed by numerous references in inscriptions and literary works,<sup>7</sup> as well as connections with specific locales and edifices said to have been visited by these

2 A number of scholars place this migration in the third century BCE, as Robert J. del Bontà does in, "The Temples and Monuments of Shravana Belgola," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 78. Others date it earlier, towards the end of the fourth century BCE. See Radha Champakalakshmi, "Monuments and Sculptures 300 B. C. to A. D. 300: South India," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 92–106 and Kuthur Ramakrishnan Srinivasan, "Monuments and Sculpture A. D. 600 To 1000: The Deccan," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 185.

3 Various Digambara and Śvetāmbara accounts have been transmitted about this migration and the resulting schism of the Jaina community into Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras. Consult, for instance, Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990 [1979]): 5.

4 For additional information on the two main sects of Jainism see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009): 17–19.

5 For further details see Robert J. del Bontà, "The Temples and Monuments of Shravana Belgola," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 82; Saryu Doshi, "The Art Treasures of Shravana Belgola," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 101; and S.P. Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005): 28, 33.

6 Candragupta is said to have converted to Jainism and also to have ended his life through *sallekhanā* at the same site of Shravanabelgola. The story of the joint migration of Candragupta and Bhadrabāhu to the south has been depicted in detail on two carved steatite screens installed in the Candragupta Basti at Shravanabelgola, dating from the twelfth century, which bear forty-five narrative panels each.

7 On this, see L.K. Srinivasan, "Shravana Belgola: In Legend and History," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 45.

two historic personalities. It is, however, actually more likely that wandering Jaina monks transmitted the religion over centuries from Bihar through Orissa into Tamil Nadu. It seems likely that Jainism reached Tamil Nadu in the early centuries BCE, probably before the end of the fourth century BCE. From there, it appears to have arrived in Karnataka in the early centuries of the Common Era, probably around the second century CE.<sup>8</sup>

In the early centuries CE, Jainism was gradually losing influence in areas of northern India other than Rajasthan and Gujarat. Yet it continued to flourish in the southern states, especially in Karnataka, under the patronage of local rulers.<sup>9</sup> From the mid-fourth century CE, Jainism experienced great support under the Western Gaṅgās,<sup>10</sup> the contemporary Kadambas<sup>11</sup> and under the Western Cālukyas.<sup>12</sup> The Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ(u) and the Kadambas of Banavāsi supported and developed the religion further from the fourth to the sixth centuries CE.<sup>13</sup> Inscriptional evidence shows that Shravanabelgola developed into a prominent place of pilgrimage, in fact into one of the most celebrated religious sites in the south, from the beginning of the fifth century CE onwards.<sup>14</sup> Epigraphic and literary evidence as well as surviving statues and buildings indicate that the Cālukya and Rāṣtrakūṭa monarchs were also positively disposed towards Jainism and its culture.<sup>15</sup> Whilst traces of Jaina temples and their related inscriptions date back to the early Cālukyas in the seventh century CE, the earliest statues and fully preserved temples date from the eighth to tenth centuries.<sup>16</sup> The carving of the colossal statue of Gommaṭeśvara

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Srinivas Ritti, "Jain Inscriptions," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 141; I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 31; and Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 104–5.

<sup>9</sup> On this subject refer, for instance, to Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 156.

<sup>10</sup> I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 31; Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 117.

<sup>11</sup> Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 123.

<sup>12</sup> Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 127, 156.

<sup>13</sup> Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 426–27.

<sup>14</sup> See I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 44. This is attested mainly by footprints carved into the rock of the twin hills at the site.

<sup>15</sup> On this, see Srinivas Ritti, "Jain Inscriptions," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 143; I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 32; Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 177.

<sup>16</sup> The earliest preserved Jaina temples are to be found at Aihole, Hallur and Pattadakal, dating from about the seventh to the tenth centuries CE. During the medieval period, South India was controlled by a number of overlapping and consecutive rulers and small chieftains. This fact and the frequent

at Shravanabelgola, which was commissioned by Cāmuṅḍarāya (940–989 CE), the famous minister and general of both Marasimha II (r. 961–974) and Rācamalla IV (r. 974–984), probably in 981 or 983 CE,<sup>17</sup> indicates the peak of Jaina influence in Karnataka in the tenth century. The statue depicts the naked ascetic, who is the son of the first Jina, Ṛṣabhanātha, in an upright pose with elongated arms hanging down on both sides of his body (*khaḍgāsana* pose), reaching almost to his knees.<sup>18</sup> Large numbers of temples and Jaina settlements were created in Karnataka at this time.<sup>19</sup>

Things changed from about 1,000 CE onwards, when the fortunes of the Jainas started to wane in southern India as well. From the middle of the twelfth century, Jainism begun to be threatened by Hindu groups, such as Vaiṣṇavas and Śrīvaiṣṇavas (*bhaktas*), by Śaivas and Vīraśaivas, and in the northern Deccan region by Muslim migration into the wider area.<sup>20</sup> In these unstable times, many Jaina sacred edifices were destroyed, or absorbed and transformed by newly developed and incoming religions and their converts. During this process, Jaina statues were frequently decapitated or otherwise mutilated, while temple buildings were destroyed or re-used by other faith groups.<sup>21</sup> Desecrated

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lack of inscriptions and precise dates for the founding of shrines make it difficult to establish firm links of temples with ruling dynasties. There were a number of Cālukya rulers, such as the Cālukyas of Badami (ca. 500–757) and the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa (ca. 973–1198). The period in between was largely dominated by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (ca. 757–973). The dates for the respective dynasties given here have been taken from K.M. Suresh, *Temples of Karnataka (Ground Plans and Elevations)* (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2003): 6, 10, 17.

17 See Kuthur Ramakrishnan Srinivasan, “Monuments and Sculpture A. D. 600 To 1000: South India,” in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1975): 224; L.K. Srinivasan, “Shravana Belogola: In Legend and History,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 47; Robert J. del Bontà, “The Temples and Monuments of Shravana Belgola,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 63 and I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 150.

18 Adinatha’s son is usually called Bāhubali. However, in Karnataka he is better known as Gommaṭa or Gommaṭeśvara. See L.K. Srinivasan, “Shravana Belogola: In Legend and History,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 48; and Lakshmi Chand Jain, “The Legend of Bāhubali: The Quintessence of Quest and Conquest,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 37–44.

19 On this issue, see Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 427.

20 For further details, refer to Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 427; L.K. Srinivasan, “Shravana Belogola: In Legend and History,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 50.

21 See the chapter on the theory of re-use by Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Towards a Theory of Re-Use: Ruin, Retro and Fake Versus Improvement, Innovation and Integration,” in *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2012): 30–54, as well as the entire volume edited by Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata Kumar Mitra, eds., *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety* (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2012), which discusses practical examples from the fields of the humanities and social sciences. For individual case studies of the re-use of sacred Jaina sites in the Deccan, consult also Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Jaina



figures can be seen at the Pañcakūṭa Basti at Kambadhalli, for example.<sup>22</sup> Jaina temples in Karnataka are locally referred to as *basti* (also spelled *bastī*) or *basadi*.<sup>23</sup> In the south, the Jainas only retained a strong backing in the modern state of Karnataka, where they continued to wield power at least in several small areas.<sup>24</sup> Amongst these were the cluster of sites and edifices in and around Shravanabelgola on the Deccan plateau, as well as Mudabidri (Mūdabidri) and its neighbouring sacred centres in the remote coastal strip, beyond the Western Ghats. In these regions, Jainism continued to thrive and is still flourishing to the present day.<sup>25</sup>

### 3 Geography and Climate

Next, I will discuss the local geography, climate and resource availability in the regions under discussion. As we saw above, Karnataka falls into at least two distinct geographic and climatic regions. The modern state capital of Bangalore lies on the southern plateau, which is a relatively dry highland. Where irrigation is available, one finds cultivations of *ragi*,<sup>26</sup> paddy, coconut trees and areca palms. Otherwise the region is a high desert with large stretches of relatively barren terrain (Plate 3.1 above).<sup>27</sup>

To reach the coastal region of Karnataka, one has to descend the side of a steep mountain ridge, the Sahyadri hills.<sup>28</sup> At the bottom lies the Kanara region, a long and

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Temples in the Deccan: Characteristics, Chronology and Continuity,” *Journal of Deccan Studies* 5, no. 1 (2007): 1–24.

22 The temple at Kambadhalli is one of the landmarks of South Indian temple architecture, dating from 900 to 1000. For further details see, for instance, I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karnāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 161 and Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 76–81. On the occasion of the last Mahāmastakābhīṣeka in 2018, some of the scattered and partially destroyed stone statues were placed again in wall niches and in some instances, the mutilated faces, limbs and genitals of stone statues were restored in plaster.

23 The words ‘*basadi*’ or ‘*basti*’ are derived from the Sanskrit term ‘*vasati*’, meaning ‘residence of god’. S.P. Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005): 191.

24 On this issue, see Asim Kumar Chatterjee. *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 2, *AD 1000–1600* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000): 66, 147.

25 This has also been discussed by Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 427.

26 *Ragi* is a locally cultivated form of millet which does not require large quantities of water.

27 See H.V. Shreenivasa Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan. *A History of Karnataka (From the Earliest Times to the Present Day)* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1977): 7; Saryu Doshi, “The Pilgrim’s Path at Shravana Belgola,” in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1981): 20.

28 Further information on this is available in Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the pre-historic times upon the modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): vi. The mountain range is registered on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as an area harbouring an unusually high biodiversity.



**Plate 3.1:** Terrains typical of the desert-like dry Deccan plateau (above) and the fertile and well-watered coastal belt.

narrow lowland, which stretches about 300 kilometres north to south, bordered by hilly slopes to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west. This slender strip of relatively level land is irrigated by a number of streams and is consequently very fruitful and productive. It also abounds in mineral resources, which generate further prosperity.<sup>29</sup> The many trade ports along the coast and its rivers with boatyards and fishing industries have led to the growth of numerous commercial and trade hubs as well as liberally funded pilgrimage centres.<sup>30</sup> The Sahyadri mountains, which range from 2,000 to more than 8,000 feet in height, present a barrier for the heavy monsoon clouds. This causes generous and regular rains to be discharged over the coastal belt, which has led to the growth of dense evergreen forests, consisting primarily of teak and sandalwood trees (Plate 3.1 below). In addition, there are bamboo groves and the cultivation of coffee, cashew nuts, areca nuts, tea, cardamom, coconut and bananas, often grown in large plantations.<sup>31</sup>

## 4 Jaina Religious Architecture

Jaina temple complexes are found throughout Karnataka, on the Deccan highland and in the low-lying coastal stretch. However, as these are located in climatically divergent zones where different building materials are naturally available, the architecture of the two zones looks strikingly different. Both traditions show a strong dependency on and adaptation to the local weather conditions, and reflect the use of regionally available construction resources. These issues will be examined in more detail in what follows.

### 4.1 Temples on the Dry Uplands

On the Deccan plateau, temples are largely made of cut stone. This can be a soft and usually yellowish sandstone (Plate 3.2), or a greenish or grey, hard granite. Other sacred structures have been built of steatite, commonly referred to as soapstone or potstone, a form of chloritic or talc schist, which is readily available throughout the region.

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<sup>29</sup> These minerals include iron, copper and mica, and valuable stones such as garnets and limestone, which can be used for building and creating cement. On the mineral resources of the region see Himashu Prabha Ray, "India's Forgotten Coastal Monuments: The Case for Kanara," in *The Twenty-first Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Lecture* (Mumbai: The Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation, 2019): 14.

<sup>30</sup> See also H.V. Shreenivasa Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka (From the Earliest Times to the Present Day)* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1977): 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> H.V. Shreenivasa Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka (From the Earliest Times to the Present Day)* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1977): 6.



**Plate 3.2:** The Camundaraya Basti on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola displays the typical features of a *drāviḍa* temple structure.

The temples in this area exhibit the typical features of the south Indian style of architecture (*drāviḍa*). As part of this idiom, structures have relatively plain exterior walls. Some facades have been adorned with pilasters and niches, which can either remain empty or frame decorative or figurative elements.<sup>32</sup> The temple walls are crowned by a prominent roof moulding (*kapōta*)<sup>33</sup> which is topped by a number of ornate elements. These include miniature pavilions and horseshoe-shaped arches (*gavākṣas*, *kūdus*), creating an elaborate parapet. The same pattern is repeated in the roof tower. In this place, the elaborate composite cornices have been arranged in

<sup>32</sup> The niches of the twelfth- to thirteenth-century Nagara Jinālaya Basti in Shravanabelgola (1195 CE), for instance, contain simple decorative elements, such as rondels or rosettes. Further information on the temple can be found in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 49–50. The Śāntīśvara Basti in Jinanathapura (Jinanāthapura), built at roughly the same time, is unusual in housing a large number of figural representations in its exterior niches. For a detailed discussion of the iconographical scheme of the temple, see the chapter by Robert J. del Bontà, “The Shantinatha Basadi at Jinanathapura,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Saṃskṛti, 2011). Most Jaina temples throughout the region, including those dating from the Hoysāḷa period, are reasonably plain. This shows the continued influence of the earlier, rather unadorned Gaṅgā style also in later buildings.

<sup>33</sup> On this, see also I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 147.

diminishing tiers to form layered, pyramidal roof shapes (Plate 3.2). These signpost the most sacred element of the temple building below: the shrine (*garbha-gr̥ha*), which houses a single – or in a Jaina context frequently multiple – object(s) of veneration.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the region of upland Karnataka there are particularly many Jaina temples with more than one shrine. In some, there are two sanctums (*dvikūṭācala*) positioned side-by-side or facing one another. In others, three *garbha-gr̥has*, usually of roughly equal size, have been combined (*trikūṭācala*). These shrines can also be arranged laterally, as is the case in the early Trikūṭa Basti, also known as the Candragupta Basti (ca. 850 CE) on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola.<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, they can be positioned in the form of a three-petalled clover leaf, surrounding a joint central hall. The latter is especially widespread, and can be seen in the twelfth-century Hoysala Odegal Basti on Viṇḍhyagiri, also at Shravanabelgola (Plate 3.3).<sup>36</sup> Lesser-known is the even larger temple of this type at Chikka Hanasoge (Chikka Haṇasoge). In the latter example, in addition to the joint central hallway, a further chamber was added on each of the three sides to enlarge the star-like arrangement.<sup>37</sup> Five-shrined layouts (*pañcakūṭācala*) were also created by adding another two shrines, usually facing one another, situated at the front of triple-shrined temples. Especially well-known is the highly complex combination of the five sanctums of the Pañcakūṭa Basti at Kamabadhalli (Kambadhalli), dating from the late ninth century.<sup>38</sup>

Generally-speaking, most Jaina temples throughout Karnataka consist of a shrine (*garbha-gr̥ha*), followed by a shallow vestibule (*antarāla*) leading to one or more halls (*maṇḍapa*) that can be either open and/or closed. Entrance to the sacred building is usually through an open, pillared porch (*mukhamaṇḍapa*, *agramaṇḍapa*).<sup>39</sup> Whilst a pyramidal, *drāviḍa* roof is most common of south Indian temple architecture, there

<sup>34</sup> For further details on the common display and veneration of multiple items of worship see Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Jaina Temple Architecture: A Progression from Images to Shrines and Temple Cities,” in *South Asian Archaeology 1999. Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists*, ed. Ellen M. Raven (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Whilst in the north of India, the name of this hill would be spelled ‘Candragiri’, with a long ‘i’, in Karnataka, where this term has been absorbed into the local Kannada language, it is spelled with a short ‘i’ as ‘Candragiri’. The Candragupta Basti has been discussed in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 68–70.

<sup>36</sup> This temple is addressed at greater detail in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 32.

<sup>37</sup> For additional information and a drawing of the temple see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009): 524.

<sup>38</sup> This Gaṅgā temple also comprises architectural additions dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries.

<sup>39</sup> On this, consult also I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 36; and S.P. Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005): 40–41.



**Plate 3.3:** The Odegal Basti on Vinḍhyagiri at Shravanabelgola is a triple-shrined structure with flat roofs.

are also cases where either no roof structure ever existed or where this has not been preserved, and where both the shrine and the preceding halls are covered by a flat roof (Plate 3.3). Examples are the two *bastis* on Vinḍhyagiri and at Chikka Hanasoge, discussed above. Due to the general aridity of the area, flat roofs are no problem.

It is very common of Gaṅgā, Hoysaḷa and Cālukya temples to have elaborately decorated ceilings (*vitāna*). These can be corbelled, and may then also be referred to as lantern ceilings, with a prominent lotus pendant projecting from the middle. A good example can be seen in the Akkaṇṇa Basti (1181) at Shravanabelgola.<sup>40</sup> Particularly striking are the square, flat arrangements, usually consisting of nine smaller compartments that combine to form one large square. We might look to the elaborate ceiling in the Śāntinātha Basti at Kambadhalli, which shows seated Śāntinātha surrounded by the eight guardians of the directions (*aṣṭadikapālas*).

To summarise on the temple-building traditions on the arid Deccan upland: good quality stone is readily available for construction projects. A mostly desert-like environment allows sacred structures either to have flat or pyramidal stone roofs, following the *drāviḍa* style of temple architecture, not requiring a sloping roof to allow excessive rain water to run off.

<sup>40</sup> See Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 50, for further information on this temple.



## 4.2 Temple Architecture in the Wet Lowlands

Let us now turn to the territory and architecture of the wet lowlands of Karnataka, bordering the shoreline on the west, which forms the primary focus of this chapter. This area is commonly known as Canara or Kanara. Officially, the state divides into two districts. The southern part, which is of main concern to us, is known as South Kanara, Dakṣiṇa Kannaḍa (Jille), Tuḷunāḍu or Tuḷudēśa.<sup>41</sup> It has its own local languages, Tuḷu and Konkani, and a unique culture.<sup>42</sup>

Evidence of Jaina activities in the region go back to the fourth century CE.<sup>43</sup> It seems that Jaina temple building must have started from at least the seventh century CE<sup>44</sup> with a very prolific phase up to the eleventh or twelfth centuries. However, in their present form, most of the *bastis* of the Kanara coastal district largely date from the fourteenth and later centuries. The sacred edifices of the Jains form the principal objects of architectural interest in the region.

Although the shrines on the west coast do not usually follow the general south Indian *drāviḍa* temple style, which includes a pyramidal stone roof, they are also found in South India. Due to the ready availability of wood in the area and the need to protect buildings against heavy monsoon rains, shrines throughout the littoral region are characterised by having wide, projecting, sloping roofs (Plate 3.4). Because these often consist of multiple, superimposed elements, the edifices are visually related to the pagoda temples of neighbouring Kerala, but also appear similar to those in Nepal and the Far East.<sup>45</sup> The similarities with the shrines in Kerala and Nepal are, in fact, due to a comparable climate of pronounced and recurrent rains. Kerala borders the coastal region in the south and shares the same weather conditions. The modern state of Nepal is located on the Himalayan slopes where the heavy monsoon clouds discharge much of their water to lose weight in order to pass over the steep

41 Cf. Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 431; and Himashu Prabha Ray, "India's Forgotten Coastal Monuments: The Case for Kanara," in *The Twenty-first Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Lecture* (Mumbai: The Vasant J. Sheth Memorial Foundation, 2019): 13.

42 Further information on this region, its art and architecture can be found in Julia A.B. Hegewald, "Pagodas, Pillars and Popular Cults: The Jaina *Bastis* of Coastal Karnataka," *Veranda: Journal of Susant School of Art and Architecture* 1, no. 1 (2019): 14–37.

43 On this, see P.R. Srinivasan, "Monuments and Sculpture A. D. 1300 To 1800: The Deccan and South India," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1975): 370.

44 Cf. Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 407.

45 In addition to similar roof types, temples and other edifices in Kerala also often employ mud as building material. See the publications by Deepa G. Nair, "An Investigation on the Potential of Mud as Sustainable Building Material in the Context of Kerala," *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy* 13, no. 1–2 (2017): 107–22, and Shailaja Nair and P.B. Sajan, "Contemporary Explorations in Mud Construction: Kerala," *Context: Built, Living and Natural, Journal of the Development and Research Organization for Nature, Arts and Heritage* 11 (2015): 111–16.

Himalayan ranges. Similar architecture can also be found on the slopes of the Indian Himalayas, for example, in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakand, or in the neighbouring States of Sikkim and Bhutan.<sup>46</sup> Structurally, the Himalayan and the south Indian coastal traditions basically represent a simple Gupta-style temple, consisting of piled-up cubic building blocks to achieve height (a sign of the importance of the gods), to which roofs have been fixed on all four sides for protection. Contrasting with this format, the so-called ‘true’ pagoda temples of China, Korea and Japan follow an entirely different logic, as they have been derived from the Buddhist *stūpa*. In these latter structures, the form is not predetermined by climatic conditions but is due to a ritual concept: that of the building and the worshippers (in their ritual movement) encircling a central pole and sacred relic.<sup>47</sup>



**Plate 3.4:** View of the Kere Basti near Karkal, which has multiple sloping roofs protecting the wood and mud-built construction against the rains.

<sup>46</sup> On these regions, see Miki Desai, *Wooden Architecture of Kerala* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2018): 21–31, and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Dependency on Building Resources and Expertise in the Himalayas,” *Dependent. The Magazine of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies*, 2021–1: 12–13.

<sup>47</sup> The characteristic features of the Far Eastern pagoda and its development from the Buddhist memorial mound of the *stūpa* to pagoda temple structures has been discussed in detail by Dietrich Seckel, “Stūpa Elements Surviving in East Asian Pagodas,” in *The Stūpa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*, ed. Anna Libera Dallapiccola (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1980): 249–59, and Johannes W. Glauche, *Der Stupa: Kultbau des Buddhismus* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1995): 97–99.



The steep, slanting temple roofs of the Konkan coast have traditionally been covered with terracotta tiles (Plate 3.5). The clay for firing is available locally.<sup>48</sup> Projecting wooden struts or brackets, often carved in the shape of divine or heavenly figures, frequently support the wide roof overhangs. Below them are wooden pillars that form open but covered ambulatory paths (*pradakṣiṇā patha*) which at least partially surround most temple structures. The outer walls of the temple edifices are plain, traditionally made from a combination of wood and mud, both of which are readily available local natural products.<sup>49</sup> Even when in recent times temples were substantially renovated, modernised and given a stone cladding of thin tiles,<sup>50</sup> the elaborately carved traditional wooden pillars and ceiling panels have in many instances been retained. One can see this very well in the entrance porch of the extensive Pārśvanātha Basti in Venur.<sup>51</sup>

However, over time and probably as a reaction to the stone temple building traditions of the dryer Deccan upland and the monumental constructions found in central and northern India, stone was introduced for structural temple building in the coastal area as well. This was probably largely due to the creation of firmer roads that allowed the transport of heavy blocks of stone over longer distances. However, laterite also appears to have been quarried locally in larger quantities than before.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, stone remained a rarer, more expensive and therefore highly treasured building material, used essentially for sacred structures only. It seems that initially, stone had been employed for the basement storeys to prevent damp from rising up into the mud walls, and to give greater durability to load-bearing pillars. Stone pillars integrated

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48 I am grateful to Kevin Fernandes for pointing out that tiles were only introduced to the region by the Basel Mission in the 1800s. It appears that previously, thatch and other locally available natural fibres were used to cover the roofs. This is attested to by Srinivasan, who mentions thatch as traditional material for roof constructions in the region. See P.R. Srinivasan, “Monuments and Sculpture A. D. 1300 To 1800: The Deccan and South India,” in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1975): 367.

49 On the walls in the region see Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 442. The quality of mud varies according to its ingredients. Typically, it is composed of silt, clay and local soil, mixed with water. Due to their exceptional thermal regulating properties, mud walls create a comfortable microclimate indoors, cool in the summer and warm during the winter months. See also Shailaja Nair and P.B. Sajan, “Contemporary Explorations in Mud Construction: Kerala,” *Context: Built, Living and Natural, Journal of the Development and Research Organization for Nature, Arts and Heritage* 11 (2015): 111; and Deepa G. Nair, “An Investigation on the Potential of Mud as Sustainable Building Material in the Context of Kerala,” *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy* 13, no. 1–2 (2017): 109, 119.

50 This was at times done during restoration campaigns in the twentieth century, in order to make basic mud constructions appear more precious and clean and to look like stone-built temples.

51 There are multiple local spellings for this place: Enur(u), Eluru, Yenūr or Yēñūru.

52 On this issue, see also Kuthur Ramakrishnan Srinivasan, “Monuments and Sculpture A. D. 600 To 1000: The Deccan,” in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 367; and H. Cousens, *The Chālukyan Architecture of the Kanarese Districts*, Archaeological Survey of India 42, New Imperial Series (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1996 [1926]): 134–35.



**Plate 3.5:** View into the roof of the Pārśvanātha Basti at Venur, revealing its wood and tile construction.

into constructions largely made of wood and earth can be seen in the Kere Basti (1545) on the south side of Karkal (Kārkala).<sup>53</sup> Subsequently the wide, projecting roofs, which are indispensable due to the wet climate, were also translated into stone.<sup>54</sup> Light terracotta tiles were replaced with stone slabs, usually laterite or granite. Such stone slab roofs can be seen in the Śāntinātha Basti at Venur. Through the translation from wood (for the substructure) and fired clay tiles (for the covering) into stone, the roofs substantially gained in weight. As a result, the stone coverings had to be supported by huge numbers of pillars from below. Representative examples, exposing numerous supporting pillars, are the famous Caturmukha Basti at Karkal (1586), which allegedly has 108 pillars – a sacred numeral – (Plate 3.6), and the Candranātha or Hosa Basti (1429) in Mudabidri (Plate 3.8 below).<sup>55</sup> Revealingly, the latter temple is popularly known as the ‘Thousand-pillared Temple’. In order to provide enhanced stability, a double row of pillars was employed in the rear portion of this temple to support the heavy multi-storeyed sanctum towering above.

The direct conversion of wooden construction techniques into stone becomes particularly apparent from inside the temples, when one gazes up into the roofs.<sup>56</sup> The stone interior of the halls, their pillars and struts, have been richly carved (Plate 3.7). Many of the structures in the coastal region also have elaborately carved ceilings.<sup>57</sup> These are usually corbelled or lantern ceilings. Whilst the lower edge gradually changes into a round, domed shape, a lotus pendant projects into the space of the domical ceiling at the top end. Others are flat arrangements, usually consisting, again, of nine squares, such as

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53 Kere Basti literally means ‘tank temple’. The *basti* is located inside a large, irregularly-shaped reservoir known as Ānekere Lake, and reached via a bridge from the south. See Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 110. Other *kere bastis* in the region have no bridges and can only be visited by boat. See, for instance, the example at Varanga. For further information on this site, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009): 526–27.

54 This was not the first time in the history of Indian architecture that earlier wooden constructions were subsequently rendered in stone. A very visible instance are the early rock-cut monasteries in Maharashtra. Similar to the examples discussed in this chapter from Karnataka, this was also done in Kerala and with regards to other temple and building forms throughout India. See the interesting discussion of this issue in Miki Desai, *Wooden Architecture of Kerala* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2018): 34–37.

55 For further information on the two temples, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 84–90, 114, 117. For the number of pillars at Karkal, refer to Sheker Naik, ‘Heritage and Tourism: A Case of Jain Temples and Monuments in Undivided Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka, India,’ *JOHAR – Journal of Hospitality Application and Research* 5, no. 2 (2010): 152.

56 On this issue, see Miki Desai, ‘The Stone-Built Jaina Temples of Mudabidri: A Comparative View with the Jaina Temples of Gujarat and the Wooden Temple Architecture of Kerala,’ in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Saṃskṛiti, 2011): 202–8.

57 See also I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karnāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 155, 235.



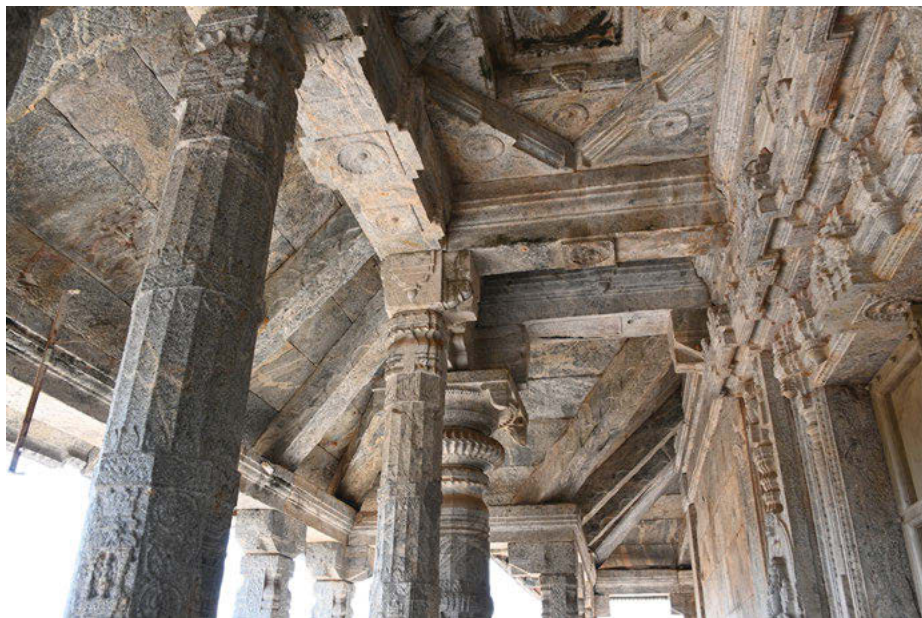
**Plate 3.6:** The heavy stone roof of the Caturmukha Basti at Karkal is supported by a large number of stone pillars from below.

the one we already encountered in the architecture of the Deccan plateau. Iconographically, the square ceiling panels consist of a grid, showing usually either eight of the nine planets (*navagraha*) or the eight guardians of the world regions (*aṣṭadikapālas*) arranged around a central Jina panel.<sup>58</sup> For elaborate ceiling arrangements, see, for instance, the temples at Hiriyangadi (Hiriyāṅgaḍi) near Karkal, the Candranātha Basti at Mudabidri and the Śāntinātha Basti at Venur. Illustrating the importance of the ritual of circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*) in the architecture of the region, internal ambulatories (*pradakṣiṇā patha*) regularly surround the shrines. Providing a long line of access to the sanctum, a number of roofed halls have usually been raised at the front of the shrine.

Many of the Jaina temple edifices along the west coast of Karnataka are multi-storeyed and accommodate superimposed sanctums on two or three levels. For structural reasons, many of the upper floors have been constructed of wood, usually raised above a lower storey made of stone or a combination of stone pillars and inserted mud walls. This is illustrated by the double-storeyed Guru Basti in Mudabidri, which

<sup>58</sup> Cf. I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 235. The nine-grid arrangement is a sacred composition that also forms part of the *maṇḍala* ground plans of temples.





**Plate 3.7:** In the later temples of the coastal region, wooden construction techniques were translated into stone, as here at Karkal.

goes back to the eight century (Plate 3.8 above).<sup>59</sup> In the triple-storeyed Candranātha Basti in the same place, the lowest storey is all stone, the first floor is a mixture of stone and wood, whilst the uppermost level of the shrine is entirely made of wood. In contrast to the lower stone roof, the two upper ones are covered with copper sheeting (Plate 3.8 below).<sup>60</sup> This is more expensive as a material, but even lighter than tiles and therefore especially suitable for multiple superimposed roofs. However, there are examples where even the upper floor levels have been built of stone. This is the case in the Śāntinātha Basti at Hiriyangadi near Karkal and the Baḍaga Basti at Mudabidri (Plate 3.9), both dating from about the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.<sup>61</sup> In most cases,

<sup>59</sup> In the Guru Basti, a statue of Pārśvanātha has been enshrined on the ground level, with a Nandīśvara Dvīpa representation housed on the first floor above.

<sup>60</sup> See Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 443. In the Candranātha Basti, above an image of Candranātha on the ground floor are sculptures of Supārśvanātha, Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra on the first-floor level, topped by a shrine housing the twenty-four Jinas (*caubīsī*) made of crystal, on the second floor.

<sup>61</sup> In the latter temple, the shrine on the ground floor houses Candraprabhu, while above is installed a statue of Abhinandanātha and a *caturvīmśati* tablet that displays the twenty-four Jinas. Additional information on the two temple sites has been included in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 103–6, 117–19.



**Plate 3.8:** At Mudabidri, the two-storeyed Guru Basti and the triple-storeyed Candranātha Basti show combinations of stone and wooden floor levels.



**Plate 3.9:** The Baḍaga Basti at Mudabidri is almost entirely made of stone, including its raised storey.

access to these raised storeys is provided by wooden ladders from inside the temple edifices. Good examples of such access stairs can be seen in the Pārśvanātha Basti at Venur and the Śāntinātha Basti at Guruvayanakere. The latter is a relatively unusual temple, in which also non-Jainas are permitted access to the upper level of the sacred structure. In this temple, a statue of Pārśvanātha and a Nandiśvara Dvīpa representation are accommodated in the shrine and the hall on this raised floor level. In addition to the relatively simple wooden stairs, this temple has an additional external staircase to ease the upwards and downwards flow of larger groups of visitors on festival days.

There are other local peculiarities typical of the coastal area, which are, however, not related to the climate but to a quite open cultural and religious environment in which Jaina, Hindu and other religious groups engage in reasonable amounts of sharing.<sup>62</sup> These include altars for offerings and pillars associated with temple complexes. Often there are large numbers of platforms, altars (*balipīṭha*, *balikallu*) and columns, which have been positioned axially at the entrance to the temples.<sup>63</sup> All *bastis* which

<sup>62</sup> See also the chapter by Jahfar Shareed Pokkanali in this volume (Chapter 7), who similarly describes the sharing of ritual concepts along the west coast of India; in his case in neighbouring Kerala.

<sup>63</sup> On *balipīṭhas*, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009): 197.

host a car (*ratha*) festival have a flag post erected at their front. This is the case in the Candranātha, the Ammāvāra and the Baḍaga Bastis at Mudabidri. Other pillars display flags (*dhvajastambhas*), lights (*dīpastambhas*) or statues of the Jinas (*mānastambhas*).<sup>64</sup> The pillars have always been displayed in one straight line, positioned at the front of the temple buildings. They can either be placed inside the walled complex, as in the Candranātha Basti at Mudabidri, or outside the walls, as can be seen at the Baḍaga Basti at Mudabidri. A third option is to find the pillars in both locations, as is the case in the Śrī Padmāvātī Ammanavaru Basti at Hiriyangadi.

Unique in a Jaina context are *mānastambhas* and Brahmastambhas. *Mānastambhas* have a fourfold and at times a single representation housed inside a pavilion or exposed to the air. Statues may be seated or standing. While *mānastambhas* are associated with Digambara Jainism throughout India and can in rarer instances also be found in a Śvetāmbara context,<sup>65</sup> Brahmastambhas are especially typical of southern and in particular of south-western Karnataka. The latter type of pillar displays a sculptural representation of Brahmadeva, a *yakṣa* and *kṣetrapāla*.<sup>66</sup> Statues of Brahmadeva placed on pillars usually present him in a seated posture with two arms. He bears a club or sword in his right and a seed-filled lemon in his left hand. In reliefs that are frequently carved into the bottom of the pillars, Brahmadeva can also be shown riding a horse. Similar to the Jinas raised on *mānastambhas*, the sculptures of Brahma can also either be open to the air or placed within pavilions.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, a small shrine, dedicated to the *kṣetrapāla*, the guardian of the temple complex, would be placed to the rear left of the temple when viewed from the

<sup>64</sup> A variety of different kinds of pillars is discussed in Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G+H-Verlag, 2009): 183–97; in Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Sacred Symbols, Enlightened Beings and Temple Guardians: The Display of Holy Elements on Pillars in Jaina Temple Complexes in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 134–60; and in Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Pagodas, Pillars and Popular Cults: The Jaina Bastis of Coastal Karnataka,” *Veranda: Journal of Sushant School of Art and Architecture* 1, no. 1 (2019): 14–37.

<sup>65</sup> There are examples of *mānastambhas* in the complex of the Śvetāmbara Dādā Bārī Jaina Temple in southern Delhi, and in the Śvetāmbara temple complex located in the fort of Mandu (Māndū), Madhya Pradesh. For further information see also Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Sacred Symbols, Enlightened Beings and Temple Guardians: The Display of Holy Elements on Pillars in Jaina Temple Complexes in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 138.

<sup>66</sup> A *yakṣa* is an attendant and a guardian deity associated with a Jina, while a *kṣetrapāla* is a guardian of the sacred temple compound.

<sup>67</sup> For additional information on the iconography of Brahmadeva, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Sacred Symbols, Enlightened Beings and Temple Guardians: The Display of Holy Elements on Pillars in Jaina Temple Complexes in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 146–49.



front. If the main temple opens towards the east, then this is the south-west corner.<sup>68</sup> Although Brahmadeva is also a *kṣetrapāla*, the small shrines discussed here are somewhat different. They are generally lower, simply placed either on a low platform or a short pillar, raising the object of veneration not higher than the eye-level of a standing person. Iconographically, too, the statues of ‘general’ *kṣetrapālas* found towards the rear of sacred complexes differ from those placed at the very top of pillars which are specifically named Brahmadeva. In the ‘generic’ representations, he is either human, depicted as a standing man who holds a trident (*triśūla*), with his second arm on his hip,<sup>69</sup> or they show the *kṣetrapāla* in the form of a snake. Sometimes, the figural representation has simply been replaced by a trident as symbolic marker of the divinity.<sup>70</sup> The serpent representations are more generally referred to as snake stones (*nāgakaḷa*, *nāgaśīla*). Frequently, large numbers of such carved stone tablets have been grouped together. Some serpent representations are more elaborate, showing a snake with five or seven heads, forming protective hoods, or a being which is half-snake and half-man. The latter is usually referred to as a snake king (*nāgarāja*). In fact, often both forms are displayed side by side on one platform or inside one and the same shrine. Combinations of both forms can be encountered in the Kallu Basti in Mudabidri and the Pārśvanātha Basti at Venur. Other snake stones have been placed beneath venerated trees,<sup>71</sup> such as a fig, shal or parijata tree, commonly planted inside Jaina temple compounds. Alternatively, they may be lined up along the outer rear wall of a shrine or the length of the precinct wall behind the temple. Devotees venerate these additional sacred images when circumambulating the main temple.

Most temples are enclosed by high compound walls (*prākāra*) and entered through substantial and elaborate gateway structures, then usually referred to as *mahādvāra*, meaning ‘large gate’.<sup>72</sup> Whilst on the Deccan plateau, these gateways usually display the *drāviḍa* style by having a barrel-roofed *gopura* gate, the roofs of gateways in the coastal belt have the sloping tiled roofs characteristic of the region. The Kanara gateways are usually quite deep. Many have covered spaces at the front and/or back, towards the

68 Bhatt points out that in Hindu temples, the shrine of the guardian of the sacred precinct (*kṣetrapāla pīṭha*) is always located in the north-east of the outer ambulation path. See Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 420.

69 See also Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Sacred Symbols, Enlightened Beings and Temple Guardians: The Display of Holy Elements on Pillars in Jaina Temple Complexes in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 148, 157–58.

70 The same applies to representations of Śiva, whose presence may be indicated by his trident (*triśūla*) only.

71 See also Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 405.

72 On this, refer to Paduru Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuḷuva History and Culture (From the Pre-Historic Times upto the Modern)* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975): 424.

temple courtyards.<sup>73</sup> Some even contain side or elevated subsidiary shrines, such as can be seen at Venur in the Gommaṭeśvara enclosure and in the gateway of the Candranātha Basti at Bhatkal.

So far, we noticed a dependence on stone as the predominant building material in the arid Deccan region, and a traditional reliance on wood and mud as principal resources for constructing temples in the littorals. Due to more intense quarrying and better road networks that allow the transport of stone over longer distances, builders in the Kanara Region also constructed edifices out of stone, which, at least in large quantities, is not a readily available local resource. It appears that at least from the early fifteenth century onwards, stone was used more widely for building in coastal Karnataka as well.<sup>74</sup> During the twentieth century, another building material, concrete, was introduced to the wider region and is now used everywhere in the Indian subcontinent. Concrete is an easily available, global, and reasonably cheap construction material; it can be purchased in powdered form and mixed on site with sand and water, making it an extremely popular material to employ. As in other regions of the subcontinent, Jain temples in Tuḷunāḍu have regularly been repaired, renovated, transformed, extended or even entirely been replaced. In these substantially renovated or newly constructed edifices, concrete – a man-made building material widely used throughout the world – has been employed. Through the development of reinforced concrete and steel beams the distance between the pillars changed again. Wood has quite a wide span, which had to be reduced when beams were made out of stone. With the introduction of steel beams and concrete, the distance between pillars can be even greater than in largely wooden constructions. Concrete structures can be clad in stone panels, which is cheaper than creating solid stone edifices and also creates lighter constructions. It should be noticed that in contrast to mud, fired earth (tiles) and wood, which are renewable materials, cement, concrete and steel are highly energy intensive in their production.<sup>75</sup> However, despite this further expansion of the range of available materials, the scope of which has now been extended beyond only locally available products, the overall design of the temples

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73 A gateway opening towards the space at the front of a temple can be seen at the Deramma Śeṭṭi Basti at Mudabidri and one providing a covered but open space towards the courtyard in the Śāntinātha Basti in Hiriyangadi.

74 For instance, the Candranātha Basti at Mudabidri, of which substantial sections were constructed in 1429, has significant sections made of stone. The Caturmukha Basti at Karkal, dating from 1586, on the other hand, is entirely built of stone. However, as wooden temples require regular repairs and temples were often altered or completely replaced during later centuries, it is difficult to date this change from wood to stone more precisely. In addition, stone never completely replaced mud, wood and terracotta tiles and even today, new temples are being built entirely of these traditional materials. It is not only a question of the available resources but also of available funds.

75 On this issue, see G.S. Sruthi, "Mud Architecture," *International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology* 2 (2013): 47; Shailaja Nair and P.B. Sajan, "Contemporary Explorations in Mud Construction: Kerala," *Context: Built, Living and Natural, Journal of the Development and Research Organization for Nature, Arts and Heritage* 11 (2015): 112.

in most instances has remained relatively unaltered over the centuries. One example is the Neminātha Basti at Hiriyangadi, which has been extensively modernised. Another fascinating case is the Candranātha Basti at Dharmasthala. A photograph by Kurt Titze, published in 1998, shows the temple largely as a structure made of wood and earth with tiled roofs.<sup>76</sup> However, in 2001, the local Jaina community had the temple completely deconstructed, and the main statue was temporarily housed in a shrine close by. At least by 2019, a concrete structure with stone cladding had entirely replaced the original temple (Plate 3.10). This illustrates another shift in material and an additional extension of the freedoms available to temple builders today, moving further away from a local resource dependency.



**Plate 3.10:** The Candranātha Basti at Dharmasthala, which was replaced by the Jaina community in recent years, illustrates modern constructions in concrete.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper has explored the interaction between climate and resource dependencies in the region of coastal Karnataka, and the freedoms which master architects and artisans, working for the local Jaina community, still found within these strongly predetermined

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<sup>76</sup> See Plate 318 in the publication by Kurt Titze, *Jainism: A Pictorial Guide to the Religion of Non-Violence* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998): 223.

circumstances. In order to illustrate the special case of coastal Karnataka, I contrasted the architecture characteristic for the region with the climate, the availability of building materials and with the architecture on the dry Deccan plateau, which is physically closely related but very different.

The in large parts almost desert-like high, flat terrain of central and southern Karnataka has a hot and very arid climate with hardly any rainfall, while hard and durable stone is easily obtainable for building projects. Towards the west, the raised lands of the Deccan uplands drop away abruptly to a narrow, fertile coastal area, saturated by regular and persistent rains. Based on the presence of substantial wooded expanses along the coastline, timber was traditionally the building material chosen for the construction of domestic as well as religious structures in this region. In order to protect the wood against damp, wide, projecting, sloping tiled roofs were placed atop substructures made largely of a combination of wood and mud.

The architecture of both regions has been adapted to the local climatic situation and the availability of materials for construction. Along the Konkan coast, buildings had to adjust in order to withstand prolonged and often heavy rains, which is quite unusual for the wider area of the subcontinent. A similar situation, however, is found on the slopes of the Himalayan ranges, for example, in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, or in Nepal and Bhutan, just across the border from India. Whilst some temples in Himachal Pradesh have stone towers (*śikhara*) characteristic of the northern Indian temple idiom (*nāgara*), the beehive-shaped stone towers are not well suited to a wet climate, and most were later given protective wooden or metal roofs against the rains. Most typical of Nepal are pagoda temples. In many ways, these are similar to those in coastal Karnataka. However, whilst the latter typically possess walls made of mud and wood, those in Nepal employ a combination of fired brick and wood.

It is fascinating to observe that with time, probably as a reaction to stone-built temple traditions on the dry uplands of central Karnataka and in other areas of the country, stone also gained more popularity in the south-west. This might have been due to new quarrying technologies, an enhanced infrastructure and better road networks. Due to these, and possibly other issues, stone in larger quantities was introduced to the coastal belt as well. Although it still remained a scarcer, highly treasured and more costly building material reserved largely for sacred architecture, stone offered local builders more freedom in exploring design variations. Although there were attempts to translate architectural elements from wood into stone, this was not always possible as wood and stone have very different properties and substantially vary in weight. As such, stone edifices echo wooden constructions but require larger numbers of pillars to support increasingly heavy stone roofs. Even later, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the large-scale introduction of concrete changed the options available to the master builders once again. In combination with iron girders and stone cladding to dress concrete subconstructions, the weight of roofs and buildings could again be reduced. While wood and earth are locally available, traditional resources and stone can be brought in from a reasonable distance, concrete is a new modern,

international building material. Simple lime, clay or mud plaster was employed in India already during ancient times. It was used more prominently and gained increased popularity from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries onwards. Reinforced concrete of the kind we utilise today, however, was introduced to India by British military engineers at the start of the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup> It is a global resource, consisting of a mixture of naturally occurring materials, which today is being produced in local factories in coastal Karnataka. In this sense, the setting up of regional production sites made concrete, too, a local building resource. Although mud is strong, has wonderful climatic properties, low construction costs, is available throughout the region on site, needs no advanced technologies for building, is environmentally-friendly and sustainable, concrete is often preferred today, as it seen as more durable, damp resistant and allows buildings to be raised even more quickly, especially when using prefabricated blocks.

Whilst temple builders, as long as they had the necessary funds, could take liberties with regards to materials, the local climate is non-negotiable. As such, stone temples, too, had to be provided with sloping roofs, which when covered with large stone slates substantially gained in weight. As a consequence, the heavy stone roofs had to be supported on exceedingly large numbers of supporting pillars. Due to this fact, the design of the temples had to be altered and to be adapted by increasing the number of load-bearing supports. This led to the creation of a distinct regional aesthetic with strongly sloping, often multiple roofs, supported by substantial numbers of pillars. This approach has also been reflected in more recent temple reconstructions made from concrete, even if concrete and steel beams have other properties, so that a pronounced local aesthetic still predominates. As such, climatic and resource dependencies create some limitations and drawbacks for designers of architecture, however, in the long run they also contribute to the development of a specific and identifiable local style, which is not simply superficial, detached and purely aesthetic but grounded in religious functionality and meaning, and deeply connected with the local area, its climate and resources.

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<sup>77</sup> For the use of concrete in India, see Stuart Tappin, “The Early Use of Reinforced Concrete in India,” in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Construction History, Madrid, 20th-24th January 2003*, ed. S. Huerta (Madrid: I. Juan de Herrera, SEDHC, ETSAM, A.E. Bevenuto, COAM, F. Dragos, 2003): 1938; and for plaster, refer to <https://gharpedia.com/blog/basic-guide-types-of-plaster-that-can-be-use-for-your-dream-home/> [accessed 07.09.2021].

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Daniel Suebsman

## Chapter 4

# Chinese Export Porcelain of the Ming Dynasty and its Dependence on Foreign Silver

## 1 Introduction

In the sixteenth century, Spanish colonial silver caused a paradigm shift in global trade. The huge output of the silver mines in New Spain and Peru stimulated the world economy and initiated new commodity flows around the globe.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese porcelain industry was one of the biggest beneficiaries of the influx of American silver to East Asia via the new trans-Pacific route. The city of Jingdezhen in the southern province of Jiangxi was already Asia's largest ceramics producer at the time, producing wares for the domestic market, Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea and, to a lesser extent, the Islamic region in Central and West Asia. With the influx of colonial and Japanese silver, Jingdezhen eventually grew into an industrial metropolis producing for the global market from the seventeenth century onwards. Other important industrial centres in China that expanded with the influx of silver were Suzhou (silk weaving), Jiangnan (cotton processing) and Wuhu (textile dyeing and printing), as well as the paper manufactories spread throughout the empire. The development in the porcelain sector is not only highly interesting from the perspective of trade and economic history, but also for the art historian, as it can be seen in many porcelain decors and shapes that were adapted to the tastes of overseas customers.

The interdependency of Chinese export ceramics and silver imported from abroad did not begin with the exploitation of American mines, but goes back at least to the seventh century. Persian Sassanid silver coins from this period have been found in China both along the Silk Road and at several sites in the southern province of Guangdong in the same context as Tang-period pottery.<sup>2</sup> This indicates that silver has always been used by foreign traders as a means of payment for ceramics. The discovery of the wreck of the *Belitung* in 1998, which sank in the Java Sea in the ninth century, has shown that the maritime Silk Road was an important trade route between China and the Islamic world for more than a millennium, in addition to the overland route. The Arab dhow was on its way to the Middle East and contained Chinese utilitarian pottery

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<sup>1</sup> See Leticia Arroyo Abad and Nuno Palma, "The Fruits of El Dorado: The Global Impact of American Precious Metals," in *The Fruits of the Early Globalization: An Iberian Perspective*, ed. Rafael Dobado-González and Alfredo García-Hiernaux (London: Springer Link, 2021): 95–131.

<sup>2</sup> Chu Chieh-yüan and Ch'in Po, "Persian Sassanian Coins Discovered at Ch'ang-an and Yaohsien in Shensi Province," *Kaogu* 2 (1974): 126–32; Guangdong Cultural Relics Committee, "Guangdong ying de lianyang nanqi he sui tang gu ji de fajue," *Kaogu* 3 (1961): 139–41.

from Henan, Hunan, Hebei and Zhejiang provinces. Some of the blue and white stoneware dishes from the Gongxian kilns resemble Abbasid earthenware from Basra, proving an early interplay of artistic styles between China and the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> In addition to ceramics, the wreck also contained gold and silver tableware and eighteen silver ingots of 99.5% purity, which is considered the earliest evidence of Chinese bullion being used in overseas trade.<sup>4</sup>

From the late Middle Ages, European silver also reached China in exchange for ceramics, although initially not directly, but in stages through the Islamic region and port cities in India and Southeast Asia. In the fifteenth century, Europe suffered from a precious metal shortage, the ‘Great Bullion Famine’, which was accompanied by a severe economic recession. Research has identified several causes, including an excessive outflow of silver eastwards via the Levant, insufficient mine output, the interruption of regular gold inflows from Africa, the costs of the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453), the plague and the widespread hoarding of silver among the population because of pessimistic prospects for the future. Thanks to technical progress in mining and metal processing, European silver mines, such as those in Saxony, Bohemia, Hungary and Tyrol, were able to increase their output fivefold from around 1460 onwards and end the shortage.<sup>5</sup> The production of copper, which was in great demand internationally because it was needed for coinage and the forging of weapons and tools, also increased. Southern German merchant dynasties in particular were active as financiers and tenants of the mines and were thus able to immensely increase their own wealth and that of their sovereigns. Now they no longer had only agricultural natural goods at their disposal at the trading centres, but coveted metals, which they could exchange in Italian ports with Muslim middlemen for oriental luxury goods such as spices, silk, porcelain or ivory. Venetian, Genoese and Florentine merchants also went further and further east to bazaars in search of goods they could profitably sell in Europe. Among them was regularly Chinese porcelain, evidenced by its frequent mention in fifteenth-century Italian inventories and its depiction in painting.<sup>6</sup> It is impossible to estimate how much European silver reached China via the Near and Middle East at this time, as no records exist and coins were usually melted down and re-minted during their circulation within Asia. In many oriental empires, from the Ottoman Empire to Persia, Yemen and Southeast Asia, there were silver currencies, or at least silver was a recognised material of

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3 Alan Chong and Stephen A. Murphy, *The Tang Shipwreck. Art and Exchange in the 9th Century* (Singapore: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017): 99.

4 Alan Chong and Stephen A. Murphy, *The Tang Shipwreck. Art and Exchange in the 9th Century* (Singapore: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017): 205–6.

5 Harry A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe 1460–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977): 31–32.

6 Marco Spallanzani, *Ceramiche orientali a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Libreria Chiari, 1978). Arthur I. Spriggs, “Oriental Porcelain in Western Paintings. 1450–1700,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 36 (1964–66): 73–74.

exchange. An interesting example of how early European silver travelled the long distance to China is a Venetian *Grosso* that was found alongside two Bengali silver coins in Guangzhou in the tomb of the eunuch official Wei Juan (Plate 4.1).<sup>7</sup> Wei Juan (d. before 1495) worked at the Guangzhou Port Authority between 1447 and 1488, where he was in constant contact with traders from India and the Islamic world who arrived by ship. During the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), banknotes were the main currency in China, copper coins and silver bars were occasionally issued, and uncoined gold was also common in trade. Provincial governments were required to hold silver reserves equivalent to the value of the banknotes issued. Regionally, cowrie shells served as a parallel currency; they are also mentioned in the travelogue of the Venetian merchant Marco Polo



**Plate 4.1:** Grosso silver coin, excavated from the tomb of Wei Juan, Venice, 1457–1464.

<sup>7</sup> Maurizio Scarpari, “A Note on a Venetian Coin of 15th Century Discovered in Canton,” *Kaogu* 6 (1979): 538–41.

(1254–1324) and had a fixed exchange rate to silver.<sup>8</sup> To achieve high arbitrage, the foreign traders often brought expensive luxury goods that were difficult to obtain in China. Overland from Central Asia, for example, they brought horses and jade, and via the ports spices from Southeast Asia, Indian jewels and ivory. Silver and gold were globally recognised means of exchange, but they had a different value ratio in China than in the Islamic world and in Europe, which Marco Polo also noted: ‘The coinage of this country is in gold by weight and also in porcelain shells. One ounce of gold is given for five ounces of silver and one saggio of gold for five saggi of silver, because there are no silver mines in the country, only gold. Therefore, the merchants who import silver have a good profit.’<sup>9</sup>

This difference in valuation was a major reason for the rapid international spread of Chinese porcelain, which began only a few years after its invention in Jingdezhen in the fourteenth century. China could not absorb the foreign silver without a quid pro quo, but had to provide products for it that were in demand in the countries of origin of the silver. With silk and porcelain, it had two exclusive goods that generated high profits abroad. Blue and white porcelain did not correspond at all to Chinese taste at the time of its invention, but seems to have been intended as an export commodity from the very beginning. The porcelain produced in the Yuan Imperial Manufactory often shows stylistic foreign influences, which is not surprising since the first director of the Imperial Bureau of Manufacture (*jiang zuo yuan*) was not Han Chinese but Nepalese and was followed by Persian and Mongolian directors. The cobalt pigment needed for porcelain painting had to be imported from the Middle East until the early Ming dynasty, when domestic deposits were finally found. In addition to the workers in the imperial manufactory, an even larger number worked for private kilns. Since the porcelain season lasted only from April to November, they often spent the rest of the year working as peasants in the fields of the kiln owners, or going back to their home regions. The tax revenues from the private porcelain producers made an important contribution to society, they were used ‘to pay the provincial governor, his deputies and the local police, and provide for the widows and orphans of the potters. Extra taxes were levied and provided for festivals.’<sup>10</sup> During an archaeological dig in Jintan (Jiangsu Province), a Yuan-era porcelain jar was recovered that its owner probably buried when being forced to flee in haste because of social unrest.<sup>11</sup> The blue and white vessel was filled with over 50 silver objects, including the finest tableware, jewellery and ingots of

<sup>8</sup> August Bürck, *Die Reisen des Venezianers Marco Polo im dreizehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1855): 392.

<sup>9</sup> August Bürck, *Die Reisen des Venezianers Marco Polo im dreizehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1855): 399.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Dillon, “A History of the Porcelain Industry in Jingdezhen” (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1976): 22.

<sup>11</sup> Xiao Menglong, “A Yuan Dynasty Hoard of Blue-and-White Jars with Cloud-and-Dragon Designs Found at Jintan in Jiangsu Province,” *Wenwu* 1 (1980): 59–62.

various sizes. Many of the objects were stamped with the name of the workshop, an artist's signature, the silver content or the weight. The find illustrates that in the Yuan period silver could be a material for utilitarian objects, a status symbol, a store of value and a currency. However, the find also shows that porcelain was ranked below silver in terms of esteem. Official reign marks (*nianhao*) are not found on Yuan porcelain; they were only introduced under the Ming Emperor Xuande, presumably to permanently remind recipients of court gifts and posterity of the product's origin. Along the Silk Road, Chinese porcelain was traded on via tribute missions and private trade to many parts of the Mongol Empire and beyond. In an archaeological find from Huocheng (Xinjiang Province) for instance, Jingdezhen porcelain was recovered together with celadon ware from Longquan and silver coins from the Chagatai Khanate, dating from 1352 to 1361. After the collapse of the Mongol Empire, the sea route became increasingly important for trade with China. New customs barriers emerged on the Silk Road, which reduced the traders' profits, and passage had become very dangerous in some sections due to military conflicts, robbers and the plague.

Jingdezhen had come under rebel control in 1352, before the Ming came to power, so the official Yuan office was closed and not reopened by Ming officials until 1369 in the Hongwu era. About 300 kilns were in operation at this time, so there was a brisk business traffic of couriers, officials and merchants.<sup>12</sup> The Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368 to 1398) was hostile to precious metals. As in the previous Yuan dynasty, banknotes and copper coins were official means of payment, but he wanted to gradually withdraw silver from circulation. In the imperial encyclopaedia *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* (c. 1725), quotes from him have survived in which he rejects the reopening of silver mines in Shandong and doubts their usefulness for the people.<sup>13</sup> He believed that the wealth of a state modelled on the Tang emperor Xuanzong (685–762) had to be based on agriculture. Hongwu banned the trade in gold and silver in the eighth year of his reign and threatened offenders with punishment.<sup>14</sup> However, due to the increasing loss of value of paper money and the scarcity of copper coins, the population could no longer do without silver as a means of payment. After recovering from the turmoil of the dynastic change, China's peasants generated more and more surpluses, so that trading activities increased steadily. In the private sector, silver ingots were used for larger transactions, which were made by silversmiths in the size of one's choice, so that towards the end of Hongwu's reign, the ban on silver had become redundant. Ingots worth fifty taels (Chinese: *liang*), which corresponded to about two kilograms, became established as the standard size. As in the Yuan period, they often bore an inscription indicating source, use, weight, silversmiths and purity. Sometimes the 'sycees' were decorated with silk patterns, therefore the English term was derived from the Cantonese words for 'fine silk' (*sai-si*).

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Harrison-Hall, *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2001): 22.

<sup>13</sup> Chen Menglei, *Gujin Tushu Jicheng, Jingji huibian, shi huo dian, 1726–1728*, 229 *juan*.

<sup>14</sup> Li Dongyang, *Ming huidian*, 1509, 31 *juan*.

The succeeding Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–1424) had state-owned mines in southern China reopened and production quotas drastically increased; silver was also imported from Chinese-controlled mines in northern Annam and Burma. It became an important revenue for the Ming state to finance the maritime expeditions of Admiral Zheng He (1371–1433/35). Among the gifts that were presented to the courts of Southeast Asia and the rich on the Indian Ocean and as far as Africa, there was always blue and white porcelain from Jingdezhen, along with silk and paper. Often the porcelain was adapted to the taste of the recipients, such as giving it the shape or ornamentation of Islamic silver vessels, and was thus an excellent advertisement for future trade deals (Plate 4.2).<sup>15</sup> Porcelain was also promoted in this way in Central and West Asia under the Xuande Emperor, where it advanced to become a status symbol of the upper classes. In 1436, under Emperor Zhengtong (r. 1435 to 1449), the grain tribute tax in seven southern provinces was partly payable in silver instead of in kind, and military officials received their pay in silver. The so-called ‘gold floral silver’ (*jinhuiyin*) was thus the first officially recognised silver currency of the Ming dynasty. For the peasants and officials, this eliminated the inconvenient transport of tribute grain over long distances, but it did not help the state to achieve greater prosperity, as a long period of drought triggered famines and the plague became rampant. The fact that silver never had the status of an official currency in China until then was also due to the fact that, apart from the productive mines in Fujian, Zhejiang and Yunnan, there was not enough of it to be able to supply the whole empire. The Ming dynasty encyclopaedia *Tiangong kaiwu* lists silver mines in ten provinces,<sup>16</sup> which produced about 11.3 tons of silver annually (Plate 4.3).<sup>17</sup> Since silver became the most important means of payment for larger amounts during the Ming dynasty and its own deposits did not cover its needs, China became heavily dependent on imports from abroad. Japan became the most important supplier, exporting silver to China from around 1540.

## 2 Silver Imports from Japan

Private overseas trade was prohibited (*haijin*) throughout almost the entire Ming period and, in the case of Japan, replaced by official tribute trade. Since such a ban was difficult to implement in practice, clandestine trade always existed between China and Japan, even involving local officials and wealthy family clans. The discovery of

<sup>15</sup> Jiena Huo, *Weisses Gold: Porzellan und Baukeramik aus China 1400–1900* (Cologne: Walther König, 2015): 22–23.

<sup>16</sup> Sun Ying-Hsing, *Chinese Technology in the Seventeenth Century: T'ien-kung K'ai-wu* (Pennsylvania: Dover Publications, 1966): 238.

<sup>17</sup> Lin Sun, G. Yang, Liu Ruiliang, A.M. Pollard, T. Zhu and C. Liu, “Global Circulation of Silver between Ming-Qing China and the Americas: Combining Historical Texts and Scientific Analyses,” *Archaeometry* 63, no. 3 (2021): 629.



**Plate 4.2:** Porcelain bottle for the Islamic market, China, Ming Dynasty, Yongle period (1403–1424).

large silver deposits in Japan (c. 1540), the end of tribute trade with Japan (1557) by the Ming Dynasty and the arrival of Europeans in East Asia fundamentally changed the situation in the mid-sixteenth century. Japan had hitherto been an importer of silver, but quickly became an exporter after the discovery of new deposits, as the



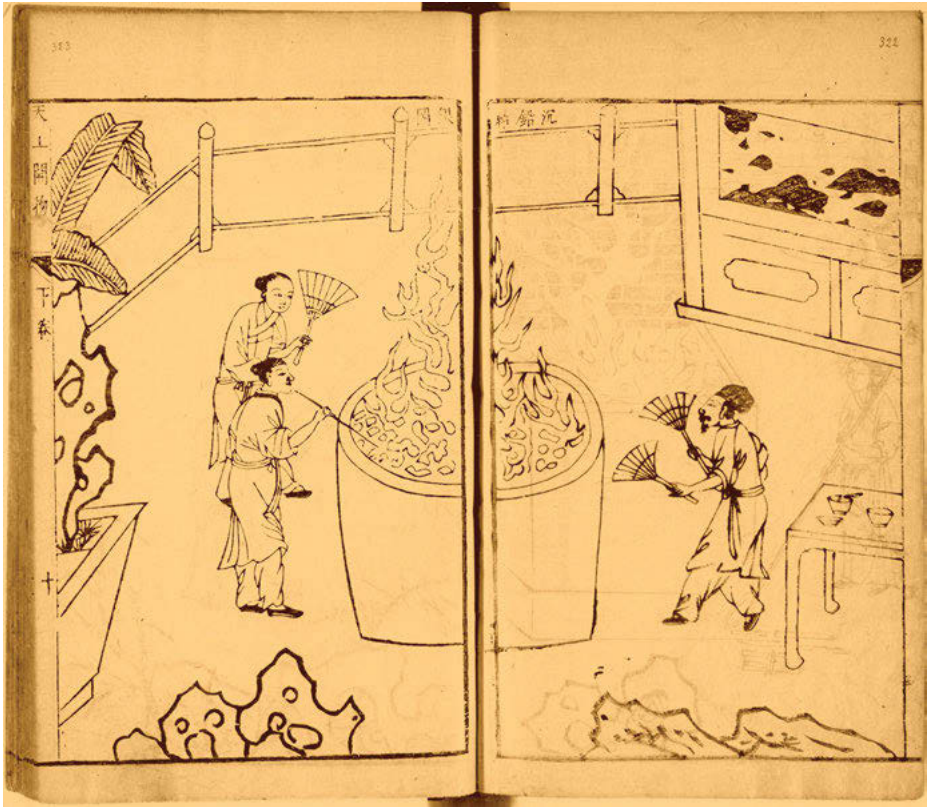


Plate 4.3: Silver cupellation, woodblock print.

yields from the new mines and the purity of the silver were very high thanks to a new cupellation technology (*haifuki-ho*) adopted from Korea.<sup>18</sup>

Japan's suddenly increased purchasing power quickly attracted the interest of Asian and European merchants. From the Portuguese sailors, Chinese merchant groups had adopted the practice of building military fortresses and arming their ships with powerful cannon, which made them pirates in Beijing's eyes and attackers on the state authority in the south. At the same time, the Japanese central government was also losing power, so local *daimyōs* (feudal lords) began to do business with the pirates. The Ming dynasty responded with a military campaign, driving the traders out of their island strongholds, where they often allied with the Portuguese. In 1567, Tu Zemin, the governor of Fujian, submitted a petition to the court asking for the ban

<sup>18</sup> For the history of Japanese silver production see A. Kobata, "The Production and Uses of Gold and Silver in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Economic History Review New Series* 18, no. 2 (1965): 245–66.



on maritime trade to be abolished. The Ming dynasty was aware that it could not permanently stop trade without immense costs anyway, and it also needed revenue to finance conflicts in the northwestern border regions. So it allowed maritime trade, but only with south-eastern countries, not with Japan. The monopoly for direct trade with Japan thus fell to the Portuguese, who had leased Macau as a self-governing trading post from the Chinese government from 1557 and were not affected by the ban. The first Portuguese had landed in Tanegashima in 1543, and since then had regularly come to Kyushu and Hirado, mainly with Chinese silk. From 1571 onwards, Nagasaki became the main port of the so-called *Nanban* trade (trade with the ‘uncivilised peoples of the south’). Many of the Portuguese traders in Asia were not temporary expatriates who went back home after gaining wealth, but Sephardic Jews who had fled the Iberian Peninsula because of the Inquisition. Some families were spread around the globe in important trading ports and had established well-functioning trade networks between Europe and Asia and between Asia and America. The English traveller Ralph Fitch (1550–1611) reported in the 1580s:

When the Portugals go from Macao in China to Iapan, they carry much white silke, golde, muske and porcelanes: and they bring from thence nothing but siluer. They haue a great caracke which goeth thither euery yere, and she bringeth from thence euery yere aboute sixe hundred thousand crusadoes.<sup>19</sup> and all this siluer of Iapan, and two hundred thousand crusadoes more in siluer which they bring yeerely out of India, they imploy to their great aduantage in China: and they bring from thence golde, muske, silke, copper, porcelanes, and many other things very costly and gilded.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the goods mentioned by Finch, saltpetre, mercury and musk were sought-after Chinese goods, as well as handicrafts and artworks, such as calligraphy, paintings, carpets and lacquerware.<sup>21</sup> An estimated 200 tonnes of silver per year were shipped from Japan during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>22</sup> Via Southeast Asian ports such as Manila, Hoi An, Pattani, Batavia and others, traders from Fujian in particular brought Chinese goods to Japan, thus circumventing the trade ban imposed by the Ming Dynasty. Japanese scholars estimate that between 1560 and 1600, 11,250 kilograms of Japanese silver were traded via Southeast Asia.<sup>23</sup> The amount of Japanese silver coming to China fell off after establishment of the transpacific Manila route in

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<sup>19</sup> 600,000 cruzados were equivalent to about 22,500 kilograms of silver.

<sup>20</sup> J. Horton Ryley, *Ralph Fitch: England's Pioneer to India and Burma* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1899): 179.

<sup>21</sup> Lin Man-houng, “The Shift from East Asia to the World: The Role of Maritime Silver in China’s Economy in the Seventeenth to Late Eighteenth Century,” in *Maritime China in Transition 1750–1850*, ed. Gungwu Wang and Chin-Keong Ng (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 2004): 81.

<sup>22</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, “Born with a Silver Spoon: The Origin of World Trade in 1571,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 202.

<sup>23</sup> Kozo Yamamura and Tetsuo Kamiki, “Silver Mines and Sung Coins: A Monetary History of Medieval and Modern Japan in International Perspective,” in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. John F. Richards (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983): 351.

1571, but did not completely stop until 1760. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an estimated 128 tonnes per year and an even higher amount of smuggled silver was imported via the Manila route from Spanish America.<sup>24</sup>

Chinese ceramics were held in high esteem in Japan since the Song Dynasty (960–1279); monochrome stoneware bowls and celadon vases were popularly used in tea ceremonies and passed down through generations. In the late Ming Dynasty, various types of Chinese porcelain were introduced to Japan. In the Jiajing era, fine Jingdezhen porcelain with polychrome and gilded decoration (*kinrande*) was highly prized (Plate 4.4). Kinrande ware is also known from collections and excavations in Turkey, Egypt, Europe and Central America. A bowl from the Dresden collection came there in 1590 as a diplomatic gift from the Medici family and bears the auspicious saying *wan fu you tong* 万福攸同 ('May ten thousand times luck come together') as base mark, which is also found on Chinese copper coins. Between 1585 and 1615, huge quantities of coloured (*gosu-akae*) and blue and white (*gosu-de*) porcelains were imported from Zhangzhou (Fujian province) to Japan (Plate 4.5), which were also used as food serving vessels in the tea ceremony. After 1600, the blue and white Kraak ware (*fuyo-de*) from Jingdezhen came into fashion, which was later also copied by the Arita kilns. During the Tianqi (1620–1627) and Chongzhen (1627–1644) reigns, a special type of porcelain from Jingdezhen was in great demand in Japan, aesthetically tailored to the tastes of Chinese scholars – the blue and white *ko-sometsuke* and the coloured *ko-akae* – and was subsequently produced specifically for Japan.<sup>25</sup>



**Plate 4.4:** Kinrande bowl, China, Ming dynasty, Jiajing period (1522–1566).

<sup>24</sup> Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "Born with a Silver Spoon: The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 204.

<sup>25</sup> Julia B. Curtis, *Trade Taste and Transformation. Jingdezhen Porcelain for Japan, 1620–1645* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2006).



**Plate 4.5:** Charger showing two Portuguese carracks, China, Zhangzhou, Ming dynasty, Wanli period, c. 1600.

In addition to the Portuguese and the English, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) also did business in Japan to obtain silver, which they in turn used to buy Chinese porcelain for export to Europe and certain Asian markets. In 1609, they opened their first trade factory in Hirado off the coast of Japan. To eliminate their competition, they tried to blockade the ports of Manila and Yuegang, where the Spanish were active, and attacked the ports of Zhongzuosuo (Xiamen) and Macau. They also regularly captured Chinese junks on their way to Manila and sold their cargo of porcelain in Japan and Southeast Asia. Sometimes they collaborated in piracy with Englishmen and shared the booty. After occupying the small island of Dayuan (now Tainan) at Formosa, the Dutch founded Fort Zeelandia between 1624 and 1634. After their defeat in the Battle of Macau (1622) they were considered pirates by the Chinese government

and no longer allowed to settle on the mainland. From 1632, they were able to commission blue and white porcelain with European decorations and shapes through Chinese intermediaries from Jingdezhen.<sup>26</sup> The extent to which the Dutch depended on Japanese silver for their porcelain purchases is illustrated by a message sent to Batavia by the governor of Formosa in November 1637. He wrote that ‘he has no means enough to pay for the expected cargoes of Chinese merchandise, i.e. porcelain, and that he hopes that the silver from Japan will arrive at the proper moment.’<sup>27</sup> When trade relations between Macau and Japan broke down around 1639/40, the Dutch were the only European nation to continue official business with Japan. They even initiated Japanese porcelain exports from Arita to Europe from 1659 onwards, when the Jingdezhen kilns could hardly deliver any more supplies due to the turmoil of civil war. Silver from Japan was not only collected by foreign traders, but also exported by the Japanese themselves for a time. Between 1600 and 1635, a fleet of Japanese ships, the so-called ‘red seal ships’ (*shuinsen*), engaged in maritime trade with Southeast Asia under official licence from the Tokugawa shogunate; they are said to have exported over 800,000 kilograms of Japanese silver in exchange for goods such as lead, sugar, hides and incense.

### 3 Silver Imports from the Spanish Colonies

The European silver boom of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had almost completely bypassed the royal houses of Spain and Portugal, whose territories had few mines, so they began searching for precious metals in distant lands. Advances in ocean-going shipbuilding had significantly extended the possible search radius, so Columbus eventually reached America, and the Portuguese found the sea route to India after successfully circumnavigating Africa. Another concern of the Portuguese was to take over the lucrative intermediate trade for goods from the Orient, which had been in the hands of Muslim traders for centuries. In America, the Spanish originally hoped to find gold, but instead they stumbled upon vast silver deposits from the 1530s onwards. The most important ones were in what is now Mexico, which was ruled by a viceroy under the name ‘New Spain’, and in the city of Potosi in the viceroyalty of Peru on the territory of present-day Bolivia. According to European law, the Spanish crown was entitled to the entire yield of the precious metal mines in the colonies, but

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26 Christiaan J.A. Jörg, “Chinese Porcelain for the Dutch in the Seventeenth Century: Trading Networks and Private Enterprise,” *Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia*, vol. 16, ed. Rosemary Scott (London: Percival David Foundation/School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992): 183–205.

27 Thijs Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company, As Recorded in the Dag-Registers of Batavia Castle, Those of Hirado and Deshima, and Other Contemporary Papers: 1602–1682* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1954): 40.

because of the great distance, it leased them to local subjects and made do with a third. The American mines were not very productive at first, as the traditional method of smelting silver was limited by the scarcity of charcoal. In the 1550s, a new smelting method was introduced from Europe that effectively separated the silver from other metals using mercury. The mercury came mainly from Castilian mines operated by the Augsburg Fugger Company, which also exported it to the American colonies. The Fuggers from Augsburg had become the richest company in Europe by mining silver and copper in the Alps and Carpathians. When their mines were almost exhausted in the 1520s, they became internationally active as traders and investors in mining.

In New Spain the silver was mined by paid indigenous workers and African slaves. In Peru the Spanish introduced an institutionalised system of coerced labour for the mines called *Encomienda* (entrustment), in which the local population had to serve the ruling class seasonally for several years. It was not difficult to implement within the indigenous population, as there had already been an Incan practice of forced labour (*Mita*) in pre-Hispanic times. After being minted into official coins, the silver reached China via three main routes. At the beginning, it was carried by the transatlantic ‘treasure fleets’ to Europe, and from there on Portuguese ships via India and Southeast Asia to the southern Chinese coast. When the Spanish founded the capital of the Philippines in 1571, a second route gained in importance – the transpacific route from Acapulco to Manila. Peruvian silver flowed most of the time via Acapulco to East Asia, temporarily there was a direct connection between El Callao (Peru) and Manila. The third main route was across the Atlantic Ocean via Seville to the ports of London, Amsterdam and Antwerp and from there on English and Dutch ships to the Far East. For many historians, this era marks the beginning of the modern world economy with the Spanish real as first global currency.

Arriving in Manila on galleons, the silver was exchanged with Fujian merchants for silk, porcelain and other goods and taken by them on junks to mainland China. In 1567, the Longqing Emperor allowed merchants from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou to do business with foreigners (except Japanese) in the Yuegang (‘Moon Port’) of Zhangzhou (Fujian Province). In 1574, a year after they had received official permission to trade with Chinese merchants and even to send missionaries to China, the Spanish helped the Ming Navy chase away a pirate clan.<sup>28</sup>

After the unification of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580, Philip II banned passages between Spanish and Portuguese oversea territories so as not to mix the businesses of the two nations. Nevertheless, Portugal was drawn into the Dutch War of Independence (1568–1648) waged by the Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands against King Philip II. When Philip II banned Dutch traders from the spice trading centre of

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<sup>28</sup> Guanyu Wang, “Chinese Porcelain in the Manila Galleon Trade,” in *Archaeology of Manila Galleon Seaports and Early Maritime Globalization*, vol. 2, ed. Chunming Wu, Roberto Junco Sanchez and Miao Liu (Singapore: Springer Link, 2019): 96.

Lisbon in 1594, they were forced to look for new sources of supply and began to attack the Portuguese trade monopoly in Asia militarily. At the same time, conflicts between the English and the Spanish increased at sea. The Florentine world traveller Francesco Carletti (1573–1663) covered the transpacific route from Acapulco to Manila in 76 days between March and June 1596.<sup>29</sup> He estimated that silver worth one million *scudi d'oro* came annually from Acapulco to the Philippines in exchange for Chinese goods.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese porcelain exported to the Spanish colonies in the Americas during the Ming Dynasty was largely the same as that exported to Europe. However, we also know of pieces that were specially decorated for customers in colonial Mexico, such as jars with a crowned, double-headed eagle for the Augustinian order.<sup>31</sup>

The capture of the *Santa Catarina* in 1603 ushered in the end of a century of Portuguese dominance in Asia in favour of the Dutch, and with it the end of their market leadership in the porcelain trade. East of Singapore, the VOC captured a 1400-ton Portuguese carrack loaded with silk and over pieces of 100,000 Chinese porcelain. The cargo was auctioned in Amsterdam for the sum of six million guilders and awakened a hunger for more. Between 1604 and 1657, the Dutch imported more than three million pieces of Chinese porcelain into Europe.<sup>32</sup> The Dutch blockade of the Straits of Malacca (1635–40), which led to the fall of Malacca in 1641, had little effect on silver imports to China via Macao, as most came back into the country from Nagasaki. Silver supplies from the New World declined significantly for a few decades from the 1630s when the Zacatecas mines were depleted and the Viceroy tightened export restrictions on silver.

## 4 The Silverisation of the Chinese Economy

While Japanese silver often reached China in the shape of ingots, Spanish American silver arrived as small coins called ‘ocean money’ (*yangqian*) or ‘barbarian money’ (*fanqian*) (Plate 4.6). Since China had its own legal and informal standards for silver, the coins were melted down upon arrival and bullions of Chinese weight units in the shape of horse hooves or boats were casted. The ingot shape became so popular during the Ming dynasty that it was even imitated in imperial lacquer and porcelain

<sup>29</sup> Francesco Carletti, *Ragionamenti di Francesco Carletti Fiorentino sopra le cose da lui vedute ne' suoi viaggi si dell' Indie Occidentali, e Orientali Come d'altri Paesi* (Florence: Giuseppe Manni, 1701): 122.

<sup>30</sup> Francesco Carletti, *Ragionamenti di Francesco Carletti Fiorentino sopra le cose da lui vedute ne' suoi viaggi si dell' Indie Occidentali, e Orientali Come d'altri Paesi* (Florence: Giuseppe Manni, 1701): first part, 124.

<sup>31</sup> William R. Sargent, *Treasures of Chinese Export Ceramics from the Peabody Essex Museum* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012): 63–66.

<sup>32</sup> Thijs Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company, As Recorded in the Dagh-Registers of Batavia Castle, Those of Hirado and Deshima, and Other Contemporary Papers: 1602–1682* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1954): 42.

(Plate 4.7). Chemical analyses have shown that the purity of official Chinese silver bulions is a few percentage points higher than that of coins from Mexico and Potosi.<sup>33</sup> It can be concluded that the American silver in China was subjected to an additional refining process during smelting before it was recast. Triggered by the massive influx of silver from Japan and the New World, the Ming dynasty between the Jiajing era (1522–1566) and the Wanli era (1573–1619) gradually introduced a currency and tax reform, known as the ‘Single Whip Tax Reform’ (*tiao bian fa*). Paper money and copper coins lost their dominant role and silver became the new main currency. It was implemented that each household had to pay its tax obligations in silver instead of goods, such as grain from the last harvest, textiles, or instead of corvée labour.<sup>34</sup> After more than 2,000 years, the traditional form of land tax payment and labour service was abolished. Any large commercial transaction was now to be executed with silver in order to slow down the hyper-inflation provoked by an over-issuing of paper money. This change in monetary and fiscal policy literally exploded China’s demand for silver in the years that followed. The Florentine merchant Filippo Sassetti (1540–1588) wrote in 1586 that ‘the Chinese, among all the peoples of Asia, are wild about silver as everywhere men are about gold.’<sup>35</sup> The extreme disparity of the silver-gold exchange rate between China and the rest of the world, as already noticed by Marco Polo long before, made it highly profitable for merchants to buy Chinese products with American silver and resell them in the rest of the world. According to Flynn and Giráldez, ‘the value of silver in China was (at times) 100 percent higher than that of the rest of the world in the 1540s to 1640s.’<sup>36</sup> The annual volume shipped from America to Asia was restricted by the Spanish crown to prevent too much silver ending up in the hands of others. In quite a few contemporary sources, Spanish office-bearers and clerks raise concerns over the huge amounts of silver making its way ‘to the infidels’.<sup>37</sup> The influx of silver caused rising prosperity in many regions of China, especially in the provinces of South Zhili, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Fujian. The first private money houses (*qianzhuang*) opened where customers could exchange, store, borrow or transfer silver. The wealthy merchant caste craved art, antiques and objects made of precious metals, which revitalised many branches of traditional

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33 Lin Sun, G. Yang, Liu Ruijiang, A.M. Pollard, T. Zhu and C. Liu, “Global Circulation of Silver between Ming-Qing China and the Americas: Combining Historical Texts and Scientific Analyses,” *Archaeometry* 63, no. 3 (2021): 7.

34 Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020): 179.

35 Frank Spooner, *The International Economy and Monetary Movements in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972): 77.

36 Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (2002): 408.

37 Han-Sheng Chuan, “The Inflow of American Silver into China from the Late Ming to the Mid-Ch’ing Period,” *Journal of Chinese Studies* 2 (1969): 59–80.

Chinese arts and crafts. Presumably, they also wanted to adorn their living spaces with the arts to conceal their lower level of education by Confucian standards and to be accepted in the circles of intellectual scholar officials. Although the plot is projected into the Song dynasty, the Ming-era novel *Jinpingmei* paints an apt picture of the luxurious life of the wealthy merchant class of the era.<sup>38</sup> It is about the silk merchant Ximen Qing from Shandong province and his decadent lifestyle with several concubines. Throughout the novel, silver is mentioned: for example, how it is used for shopping, as bride money or to bribe officials, and what quantities are turned over in transactions (Plate 4.8).<sup>39</sup> There is often talk of tableware made of precious metals, while porcelain does not seem to have played any particular role in this social class. However, for all the advantages that silverisation brought to China and its upper class, there were also disadvantages, such as rapid urban growth, unbridled speculation and significant price inflation.<sup>40</sup>

## 5 Impact on the Porcelain Industry

At the beginning of the Ming dynasty, a system of *corvée* labour was established in the imperial porcelain kilns in Jingdezhen with two types of hereditary artisans: permanent artisans (*zuozhu jiang*) who lived permanently with their families on site, and seasonal artisans (*lunban jiang*) from other parts of Fuliang county as well as neighbouring prefectures and counties who came to work there for three months every four years.<sup>41</sup> The permanent artisans had to work in the official manufactory for so many days until the court's annual order was fulfilled, and were then allowed to work for private kilns the rest of the year. In addition to the artisans, there were many hundreds of unlearned *corvée* labourers who procured and processed raw materials and effected transport for the imperial manufactory. They were provided to the state under the *Lija* system by semi-official village organisations, which thus fulfilled their duty of service to the public. The 'Single Whip Tax Reform' and the silverisation of the Chinese economy had far-

<sup>38</sup> For a German translation including 200 Ming-period illustrations, see Franz Kuhn, *Kin Ping Meh oder Die abenteuerliche Geschichte von Hsi Men und seinen sechs Frauen* (Leipzig/Weimar: Gutav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> Franz Kuhn, *Kin Ping Meh oder Die abenteuerliche Geschichte von Hsi Men und seinen sechs Frauen*, vol. 2 (Leipzig/Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1983): 163.

<sup>40</sup> William Atwell, "Ming China and the Emerging World Economy, c.1470–1650," *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, *The Ming Dynasty 1368–1644*, part 2, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 407.

<sup>41</sup> Rose Kerr and Nigel Wood, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 12, *Chemistry and Ceramic Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 209.





**Plate 4.6:** Silver coin, 2 Reales, Bolivia, Potosi mint, 1572–1598.

reaching consequences for porcelain production.<sup>42</sup> After 1563, the seasonal artisans had to provide payment in silver in lieu of their service obligation, 1.8 *liang* for each four-year block, i.e. 0.45 *liang* per year.<sup>43</sup> The structure of the workforce changed as well, it now consisted almost entirely of paid artisans who earned an annual wage of between nine and twelve *liang*, and the large number of seasonal labourers disappeared. This benefited the product quality, as the special skills required for the making of porcelain

<sup>42</sup> Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020): 179.

<sup>43</sup> One *liang* was equivalent to about forty grams of silver.

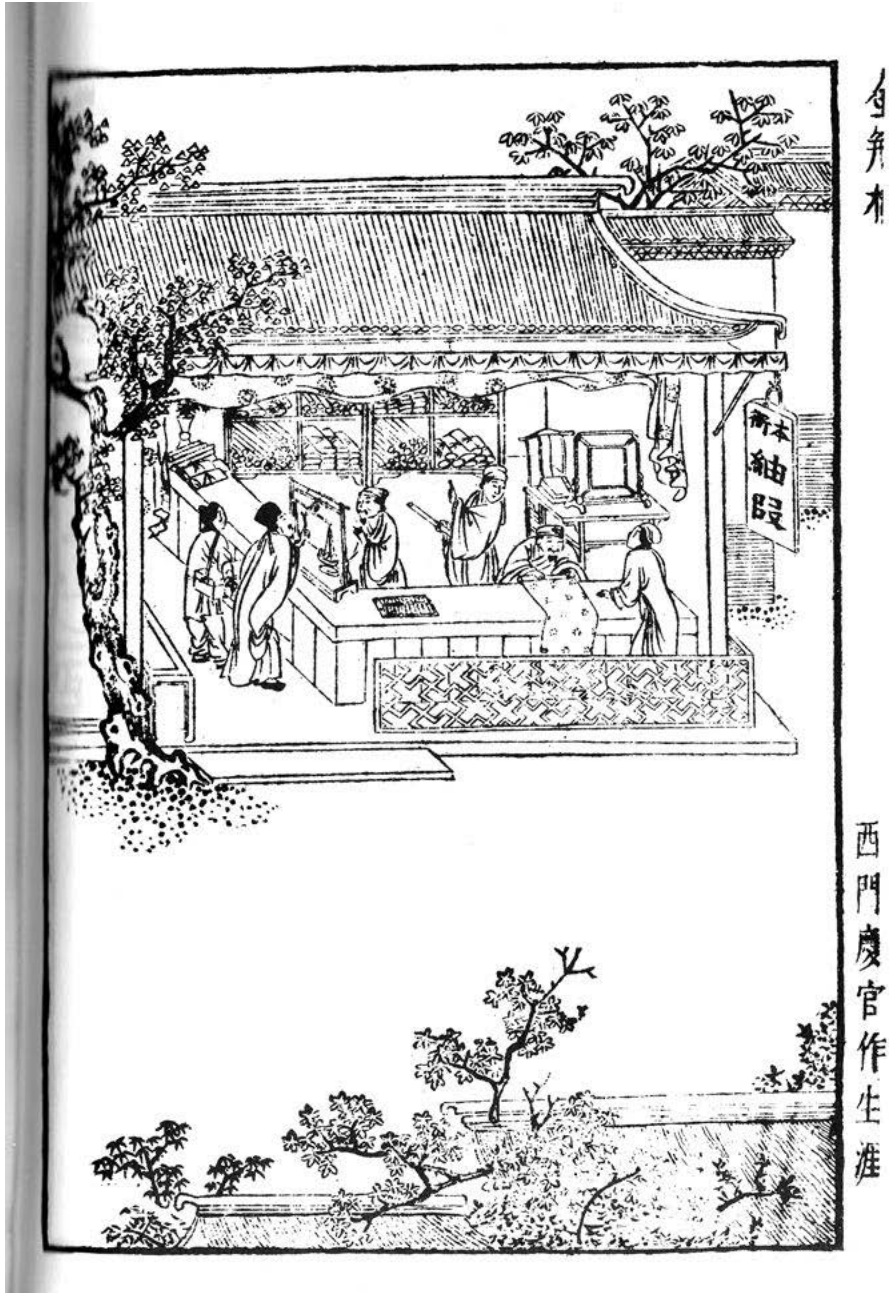


**Plate 4.7:** Imperial porcelain box in the shape of a silver ingot, China, Ming dynasty, Longqing period, 1567–1572.

had not been able to evolve with a workforce that changed annually. Another consequence was an end to the monopoly of the official kiln, which could no longer cope with the ever-increasing orders of the imperial court.<sup>44</sup> It entered into an ‘official partnership with the people’s kilns’ (*guanda minshao*) and outsourced more and more orders to them, which in turn attracted new investors and traders to Jingdezhen. Most notably the ‘Hui merchants’ (*Hui shang*) from Huizhou in the south of neighbouring Anhui province invested large sums in the porcelain industry.<sup>45</sup> Since their mountainous homeland did not allow for agriculture, they had specialised in trade for many generations – since the Tang dynasty in tea, from the Song dynasty increasingly in salt and paper, later also in silk, cotton, wood, ink and porcelain. The Hui merchants had a reputation throughout the country as reliable businessmen with goods of high quality; their contacts ranged as far as Southeast Asia and Japan. In Jingdezhen they enlarged the production capacities of the kilns, which triggered a massive influx of people. Many of the Anhui kiln owners did not live in Jingdezhen, but managed their businesses from their home towns. In addition to the orders for the court, their kilns also produced goods for the domestic market and for overseas and coastal traders who took orders

<sup>44</sup> Hu Chen, “The Operation of Imperial Goods Supplies and the Logic of Imperial Silver Monetary System: A Study on the Reform of Jingdezhen Official Kiln System in Ming Dynasty,” *Chinese Journal of Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2020): 139–62.

<sup>45</sup> For the Hui merchants see Michael Dillon, “A History of the Porcelain Industry in Jingdezhen” (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1976): 127–28; Anne Gerritsen, “Merchants in 17th Century China,” *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Jan van Campen and Titus Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders, 2014): 92.



白角布

西門慶官作生涯

**Plate 4.8:** Silver is weighed in a silk shop, illustration from the novel *Jinpingmei*, woodcut print, China, Ming dynasty, sixteenth century.

from foreigners. The city of Jingdezhen is located deep inside the Chinese mainland, where European merchants had no access. To order a custom-made porcelain decoration or shape, they had to hand over coins, sketches or models to Chinese middlemen. This type of business was conducted at the biannual-fair at Guangzhou, at Malacca, Manila, Zhangzhou and Batavia. A partial payment in silver was made immediately and the rest upon delivery a year after. In this way some European silver coins reached Jingdezhen, as is evidenced by decorations on blue-and-white Ming porcelain. On Shangchuan Island in Guangdong Province, where the first Portuguese trading post on Chinese soil was located, a shard of a porcelain bowl was unearthed, which bears a cross as base mark, similar to that depicted on Portuguese coins of that time.<sup>46</sup> Pieces from later decades display motifs for which the porcelain painters had drawn on European silver coins, such as a bottle with the royal Spanish arms of Castile and León (Plate 4.9). In both China and Europe, silver was a symbol of power and wealth. Possibly for this reason, European traders sometimes had their porcelain painted with currency symbols. It marked them as status symbols and suggested that the ‘white gold’ was equivalent to a precious metal.

During the Chinese civil wars from the mid seventeenth century until the 1680s, porcelain production in Jingdezhen ceased. During this time, more Dehua porcelain from Fujian, known as Blanc de Chine, was exported to Europe, as the kilns were barely affected by the civil war and the central government was no longer in control of this part of the southern coast. The Arita kilns in Japan complemented Chinese production for Europe during that time, but could not compete for a long time as their ovens only had limited production capacities. Only the restoration of public order during the Kangxi rule and the lifting of the ban on maritime trade in 1684 allowed production to flourish again. American silver once more became the most important means of payment until porcelain exports began to decline at the end of the eighteenth century.

## 6 Conclusion

Jingdezhen dominated the global luxury ceramics market for several hundred years. In 1712, the French Jesuit missionary Francois-Xavier Dentrecolles (1664–1741) reported 18,000 families living in the city. This corresponds to about one million inhabitants, making it a huge industrial capital, large even from today’s perspective. We have seen that the livelihood of this city was heavily dependent on silver imports from Europe and from other parts of Asia from the fifteenth century onwards, and from Japanese and American silver from the mid-sixteenth century. In the Qing period, copper coins and

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<sup>46</sup> Huang Wei, “Guangdong taishan shangchuan dao hua wan ping yizhi chutu ciqi ji xiangguan wenti,” *Wenwu* 5 (2007): 78–88.



**Plate 4.9:** Porcelain bottle with Royal Spanish coat of arms, China, Ming dynasty, early seventeenth century.

silver bullions remained China's standard currencies, and in 1792 the first official silver coins were issued. It was not until 1934 in the Republican era that China went back to paper money. The circulation of silver coins was abolished, private ownership of silver was banned and the silver holdings of banks were expropriated. A paper for the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies must of course also mention the essential



role of slavery and forced labour in the interdependency of silver and Chinese porcelain. African slaves and indigenous forced labourers were exploited in silver mining in the American mines, and in Jingdezhen corvée labourers continued to be employed in the official porcelain kilns until the late sixteenth century. In China, the influx of silver significantly changed the 2,000-year-old land tax laws and triggered the end of forced labour. It was replaced by a compulsory financial levy, the amount of which was far below the wages that could be earned during that time. The porcelain of Jingdezhen changed material culture in many parts of the world and influenced arts and crafts. It expedited the foundation of local pottery, faience or stoneware factories and finally led to the reinvention of hardpaste porcelain outside East Asia. Every time China experienced interruptions in the foreign silver supply, this soon after became noticeable in porcelain production. In the early nineteenth century, when the English no longer wanted to pay for their purchases in silver and introduced opium instead, porcelain production at Jingdezhen declined, as did artistic quality. Although silver no longer plays a role in today's monetary system and porcelain is now produced in many countries, Jingdezhen remains the porcelain capital of the world, producing hundreds of thousands of tonnes annually for export.

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Tiziana Lorenzetti

## Chapter 5

# ‘Slaves of God’: Extreme Religious Dependency in Medieval South India (800–1100 CE)

## 1 Introduction

Civilisations, both of the ancient and the modern world, have witnessed many forms of slavery and dependency. The forms of slavery that have been amply researched so far have mostly dealt with the counter-position of two agent forces: on one hand those in a dominant position (e.g. rulers, masters, winners), on the other those in a condition of dependency: captives, slaves, subjugated peoples.

However, certain peculiar forms of dependency have also existed which cannot be classified under the opposition of the two above-mentioned categories; one of these may be found in the culture of medieval South India<sup>1</sup> where what might be defined as ‘self-inflicted slavery’ came to the fore.<sup>2</sup> It had to do with a state of absolute submission to the person’s chosen deity, especially to Lord Śiva; so much so that the devotee, referring to themselves as ‘slave of god’ (*adyar* or *tondar* in Tamil sources), was even willing to undergo acts of self-sacrifice in honour of the divine, including oblation of parts of their own body or even their life.

Acts of self-oblation were not unknown in some ancient civilisations which abound in sacrificial rites. Just to mention one famous example, in Asia Minor, the priests of the goddess Cybele were reputed to castrate themselves in honour of the deity, and images of castration clamps used as instruments for such acts have, actually, come down to us.<sup>3</sup> But when it comes to medieval South India – particularly from the ninth to the twelfth centuries – we find that manifestations of votive self-mutilation were widely practiced, not only by the so-called ‘slaves of god’,<sup>4</sup> who were regarded as true and proper holy

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1 Although the concept of the Middle Ages is of western origin, such a definition is commonly applied to a specific period of Indian history, approximately from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. Cf. Kevasan Veluthat, “Into the ‘Medieval’ – and out of It. Early South India in Transition,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 58 (1997): 1–46.

2 Although rarer and less intense than in the south, instances of violent devotion are also present in North India.

3 J. Peter Södergard, “Ritualized Bodies of Cybele’s Galli and the Methodological Problem of the Plurality of Explanations,” in *The Problem of Ritual*, ed. Tore Ahlbäck (Stockholm: The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History Åbo, Finland, 1993): 169–93.

4 The canonical ‘slaves of god’ hailed from Tamil culture and lived between the sixth and the tenth centuries; they comprised sixty-three Śaiva devotees (Nāyanmār) and twelve Viṣṇu devotees (Ājvārs).

persons or saints,<sup>5</sup> but also by other devotees, mostly (but not exclusively) Śaiva. This paper attempts to throw new light on the multi-layered meanings of the extreme religious dependency of the Śaiva devotees in the region encompassing modern-day Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Such violent devotional acts of the ‘slaves of god’ have been long-standing objects of scholarly study and debate, as their lives and poetical works have also been. Even so, some puzzling questions have still not been properly answered, namely,

- a) why did the Hindu devotees’ sacrifice of parts of their own bodies or even their own lives gain such popularity especially in medieval South India, reaching its apex around the twelfth century?
- b) why was partial mutilation no longer considered sufficient, and self-beheading became the most precious and auspicious offering?

Any attempt to answer these research questions can only begin with an overview of this singular practice of violent devotion.

## 2 Violent Aspects of Hindu Devotion in Medieval South India

Many literary, epigraphic and sculptured sources bear testimony to blood sacrifice and self-directed violence characterising the devotional milieu in South India from about the seventh century onwards.

For instance, as Kalidos has pointed out, the early medieval *Devīmāhātmya purāna* (*adhyāya* 13, v.12, roughly fifth to seventh centuries), and the late twelfth-century *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi*, in describing how Durgā may be propitiated, also speak of the *navakhaṇḍam* offering. It was widely practiced in medieval Tamil culture and consisted in the devotee’s cutting off one or more of their nine (*nava*) vital organs or body-parts (*khaṇḍam*), and oblation to the goddess.<sup>6</sup> The twelfth-century hagiographic Tamil text *Periya Purāṇam*,<sup>7</sup> which is, in turn, based on earlier works like the tenth-

5 As used in a European context, the word ‘saint’ is equally applicable to a holy devotee in South India. Vidya Deheja, *Slaves of the Lord. The Path of the Tamil Saints* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988): 1.

6 Raju Kalidos, “Iconography of Maḥiṣāsūramardini: A Probe into Stylistic Evolution,” *Acta Orientalia* 50 (1989): 21. It may be noted that, in earliest Tamil culture, the *navakhaṇḍam* offering was celebrated in honour of the hunter-goddess Korṟavai, deity of war and victory, later assimilated to Durgā. Cf. V. Murugan, *Tolakāppam in English* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2001): 399.

7 The *Periya Purāṇam*, attributed to the sage Sekkizhaar (Cekkilar), constitutes the final part of the *Tirumūrai* ‘Book of the Holy Order’, the canonical text of Tamil devotional literature. The *Periya Purāṇam* has been published in a number of editions. This paper refers to the 1985 edition by G. Vanmikanathan Pillai, *Periya Purāṇam. A Tamil Classic on the Great Śaiva Saints of South India by Sekkizhar* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985).

century *Tiruttoṅṭar Tiruvantāti*,<sup>8</sup> describes the life-stories of the sixty-three canonical Śaiva devotees (Nāyaṅmār), celebrating and sanctifying violence towards their relatives and their own selves in honour of Śiva.<sup>9</sup> For example, the devotee Kaṅṅappan takes out his own eye with his arrow to heal and restore the bleeding eye of Śiva's *liṅga* (*Periya Purāṇam* vv. 818–827).<sup>10</sup> The story of Kaṅṅappan, frequently represented in art, both painted and sculpted (Plates 5.1, 5.2), contains all the elements of the *bhakti* message: the irrelevance of caste, the refusal to blindly follow religious impositions and the paramount love and devotion to the god.<sup>11</sup> Another devotee, Kaṅṅampullar, unable to offer anything else to Śiva, burns his own hair (*Periya Purāṇam* vv. 4057–40961).<sup>12</sup> One more self-sacrificial rite, well attested to in many literary and iconographic sources, has to do with cutting off one's own head and offering it to the chosen deity.

A number of scholarly studies have sought to explain the meanings of such violent self-sacrificial acts. One of these explanation posits that on a metaphorical level, self-sacrifice could be related to the ancient idea of 'initiation by death', whereby love for god transubstantiates the lover: killing the sinful flesh of the outer body purifies the inner one,<sup>13</sup> in other words, death is not the end, but rather a transformative event leading to the cessation of a conscious state and consequent rebirth on a superior plain.<sup>14</sup> The consistent presence of blood could be explained as the regenerative element of life: '[. . .] in blood and death the sacred power that regenerates life reveals itself'<sup>15</sup>

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8 The *Tiruttoṅṭar Tiruvantāti* is attributed to Nanpi Aṅṅṭar, the collector of the *Tēvāram*, the first seven books of the *Tirumuṟai*.

9 Depictions of salient episodes from the lives of the sixty-three Nāyaṅmār often adorn the external walls of Hindu temples, a major example being the Darasuram (Tārācuram) temple in Thanjavur, where the complete set of life-stories is portrayed. J. Ralston Marr, "The Periya Purāṇam Frieze at Tārācuram: Episodes in the Lives of Tamil Śaiva Saints," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 42, no. 2 (1979): 268–89.

10 Vanmikanathan Pillai, *Periya Purāṇam. A Tamil Classic on the Great Śaiva Saints of South India by Sekkizhar* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985): 527–29.

11 Vidya Deheja, *Slaves of the Lord. The Path of the Tamil Saints* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988): 23, 79–81.

12 Vanmikanathan Pillai, *Periya Purāṇam. A Tamil Classic on the Great Śaiva Saints of South India by Sekkizhar* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Matha, 1985): 462, 463.

13 Dennis D. Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion among the Nāyaṅārs. A Study in the Periya Purāṇam of Cēkkilār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotee. Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 389.

14 Mircea Eliade, *Miti Sogni e Misteri* (Milano: Rusconi, 1976): 255–63; Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 5.

15 Dennis D. Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion among the Nāyaṅārs. A Study in the Periya Purāṇam of Cēkkilār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotee. Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 390.



**Plate 5.1:** Kanṇappaṇ takes out his own eye to heal the bleeding eye of Śiva's *liṅga*. Gouache painting on paper.

and 'the blood sacrifice produces the creative seed'.<sup>16</sup> Blood in itself is seed; its potential creative power is stressed in many Indian myths.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths. Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980): 108.

<sup>17</sup> David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths. Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980): 103, 104.



**Plate 5.2:** Kaṇṇappaṇ takes out his own eye to heal the bleeding eye of Śiva's *liṅga*. Vaidyēśvara temple, Talakad, Karnataka.

Another oft-quoted reason lies in the devotee's desire to demonstrate the extraordinary, emotional and ideal nature of his love for his god:<sup>18</sup> a love that gives no room to the mundane, earthly values of righteousness, prosperity, and affections, including family bonds.<sup>19</sup> In order to describe the kind of ardent love (*aṇṇu*, in Tamil) that goads one to perform outstanding devotional acts, C. Vamadeva has coined the term *vannaṇṇu*, violent devotion.<sup>20</sup>

According to A. Monius, such violent aspects of mainstream religious expression should be seen in the light of a spiritual and cultural background where the god is the player engaged with the devotee through the fabric of a cosmic love-play, whereby 'the rivers of blood on the battlefield are of no more cosmic or moral import than rivulets

<sup>18</sup> As far as we know, blood sacrifices were performed exclusively by men.

<sup>19</sup> Dennis D. Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion among the Nāyanārs. A Study in the Periya Purāṇam of Cēkkilār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotee. Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 377.

<sup>20</sup> Chandraleka Vamadeva, *The Concept of Vannaṇṇu 'Violent Love' in Tamil Śaivism, with Special Reference to Periya Purāṇam* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995): 35.

of water trickling through a sandbox in the arena of *lilā*, where Śiva serves simultaneously as lord, referee, and playmate'.<sup>21</sup> Recently, some scholars have come to consider these violent acts to be a kind of bargaining with the god in difficult times of famine and social upheaval which were, indeed, quite common in medieval South India.<sup>22</sup>

It has also been argued that the violent devotional displays as represented in art and described in Hindu texts like the *Periya Purāṇam*, should be viewed as a kind of antithesis to contemporary writings by the religious enemies of the Hindus, mostly Jains, that promote a different ethos and lifestyle.<sup>23</sup> By contrasting the devotional heroism of the Hindu saints with the asceticism of the Jains, such texts would function as instruments of a competing propaganda, as an alternative and more refined way to carry on the doctrinal disputes that had long sustained rivalry between religious communities in medieval India. Indeed, it is well known that polemical literature also served as a 'self-definition',<sup>24</sup> wherein, as certain scholars maintain, opposition to Jainism was central to the identity-building process for Tamil Śaivas, especially in the royal courts.<sup>25</sup> The violence intrinsic to the texts should therefore be seen as a part of courtly polemics – and not necessarily as reliable historical facts – where the poet-saints cast themselves in the role not only of religious but also of political heroes, upholding Tamil Śaivism against foreign 'others' with their own blood and devotion.<sup>26</sup>

We shall return to all these conjectures later, with new hypotheses. So far, the phenomenon of devotional self-sacrifice in medieval India appears to have been analysed most commonly from a religious and symbolic-metaphorical point of view, or else considered as a device for religious propaganda. In this paper, I am approaching the question not only in terms of its religious connotations, but also its socio-historical and martial implications, which would offer us a better window to understand certain fundamental motives for the violent aspects of such devotional behaviour. Let us begin with a look at the dawn of the so-called 'Indian Middle Ages' and its antecedents.

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21 Anne E. Monius, "Love, Violence and the Aesthetics of Disgust: Śaivas and Jains in Medieval South India," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32 (2004): 152.

22 Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 269.

23 Anne E. Monius, "Love, Violence and the Aesthetics of Disgust: Śaivas and Jains in Medieval South India," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32 (2004): 139, 140. The Jaina text *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in its turn ridicules human love in its many aspects, including love for god, and seeks to denigrate non-Jaina religious tendencies.

24 Indira Peterson Viswanathan, "Śramaṇas Against the Tamil Way, Jains as Others in Tamil Śaiva Literature," in *Open Boundaries*, ed. John E. Cort (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998): 164.

25 Steven M. Vose, "The Violence of Devotion. Bhakti, Jains, and the Periyapurāṇam in Telling Early Medieval Tamil History (7th to 12th c.)," *Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* 1 (2006): 104.

26 Steven M. Vose, "The Violence of Devotion. Bhakti, Jains, and the Periyapurāṇam in Telling Early Medieval Tamil History (7th to 12th c.)," *Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* 1 (2006): 105, 106.



### 3 Social – Historical – Religious Setting

From before the Christian era, the two main *śramaṇa* (non-Brāhmanical) religions, Jainism and Buddhism,<sup>27</sup> had played a dominant role in South India, in religion, politics, society and economy.<sup>28</sup> Jainism, in particular, prospered as nowhere else. In present-day Tamil Nadu, for instance, a corpus of records, dating back to pre-Christian times, reveals that the Jains were already present in the region, especially in the district of Madurai.<sup>29</sup> Their influence continued to grow in the following centuries, so much so that, at the beginning of the Christian era, vast territories from the western to the eastern coast of Deccan had fallen under their influence.

For several centuries Jainism, which proliferated into a number of monastic schools, remained a widely practiced religion in South India, and one of the most important sources of cultural production. Imposing ruins and rich artistic and heritage monuments still bear witness to the bygone splendour of the Jainas.

This started changing from about the seventh century. At that time, the decline of the vast Gupta Empire led, particularly in the south, to the rise of a mosaic of regional kingdoms, often at loggerheads with one another. Such political instability with the discontinuous geography lending itself to regional fragmentation, affected trade, both along the maritime routes within India and towards the west, which was in its turn weakened by the so-called Plague of Justinian.<sup>30</sup> As a result, most Indian cities, especially those located along the main old trade routes, declined as social, economic and political points of reference. The metropolises that had prevailed in previous ages gave way to smaller, though often thriving, pilgrimage towns, where life revolved around religious institutions.

The twilight of the cities, which brought about a shift from a market-based exchange economy to an agriculture-based subsistence economy, affected the Jaina financial system. It was rooted in urban and mercantile trade, and so ideally suited to allowing them to practice their ideal of non-violence. Jaina monastic establishments, located in the suburbs or on the main trade arteries, also declined. Although they

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<sup>27</sup> Buddhism had taken refuge in the south as early as the reign of the emperor Aśoka Maurya.

<sup>28</sup> Much evidence, including from archaeology, which is often underestimated by scholars, confirms the widespread diffusion of Jainism and Buddhism in the pre-medieval period. Cf. Giovanni Verardi, *The Gods and the Heretics. Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2018): 13–87.

<sup>29</sup> Vidya Deheja, *Slaves of the Lord. The Path of the Tamil Saints* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988): 25.

<sup>30</sup> The Plague of Justinian was a pandemic that afflicted the eastern Roman Empire, the Sassanid Empire and port cities around the entire Mediterranean during the reign of the Roman emperor Justinian I (527–565 CE). There were repeated outbreaks over a period of two hundred years.

were landowners, the Jainas had derived most of their profits and livelihood from trade with passing caravans – as the Buddhist monasteries had.<sup>31</sup>

The complex socio-historical situation<sup>32</sup> and the growth of a new agrarian society favoured entrenched agrarian interests and, consequently, increasingly large groups of Brāhmins, already linked to the land by a bond as strong as it was ancient. In time, the Brāhmanical agrarian settlements grew in importance. They controlled huge real estates and even entire villages, donated by devotees and sovereigns, so that Brāhmins were able to effectively counter the territorial and socio-political expansion of other religious groups. The Brāhmanical power-base, rooted in land grants and special economic and administrative privileges, was further consolidated due, not least, to the rise of two new closely-connected epoch-making changes. One was the spread of the *bhakti* movement,<sup>33</sup> the other the rise of the Hindu temple complex, which became not only the centre of village religious and social life, but also of a new political and economic power structure. The development of the ‘Hindu temple ideology’ as a symbol of a renewed Brāhmanical power went hand in hand with an increasing antagonism towards other creeds, such as Buddhism and Jainism, for religious and socio-economic predominance. Moreover, as Verardi has pointed out, the model of society promulgated by the Brāhmins was a *varṇa*-based state society which involved strict observation of caste and sub-caste. It caused strong opposition, especially from those who viewed the caste system as flawed.<sup>34</sup> The hostility between Brāhmanical sects and the *śramaṇas* was not limited to the doctrinal debates and defamatory disputes that had long been a feature in the competition between religious communities in medieval (and pre-medieval) India. In fact, the rivalry had acquired a militant complexion from quite early on.

In the course the twelfth century, the new web of religious and socio-economic conditions further exacerbated such conflicts. This was the period that saw an upsurge in commercial activity, aided by the rise of a monetary financial system.<sup>35</sup> The revival of

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31 It has long been recognised that both the Jaina and Buddhist monastic communities, from their very inception, maintained close links with members of the mercantile class.

32 For more information see R. Nath Nandi, *Social Roots of Religion in Ancient India* (New Delhi/Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1986): 18–26.

33 The term *bhakti* may be generally translated as ‘devotion’ to a deity, even though the meaning of the word has changed over the centuries, coming to embrace concepts of respect, love and personal surrender to the god as well. The earliest traces of a devotional approach to the divine may be found already in the mysticism of the *Upaniṣads*, in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*; however, a large-scale *bhakti* movement with specific traits, although not uniform, originated in Tamil Nadu between the sixth and seventh century CE. Cf. Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement. A New Perspective* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987): 8–35, 201–54; Muttayil G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, “Bhakti Movement in South India,” in *The Feudal Order, State, Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India*, ed. Dwijendra N. Jha (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000): 385–410.

34 Cf. Giovanni Verardi, *The Gods and the Heretics. Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2018): 255–58.

35 Cf. Tejaswini Yarlagadda, *Social History of the Deccan* (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakasha 2004): 97.



trade encouraged the growth of a new class of merchants (mostly Śaivas), who came into conflict particularly with the Jains who, despite their continuing loss of power, still maintained a certain economic influence in South India, especially in Karnataka.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, the Śaiva-Jaina conflict was not only a matter of commercial competition: it also became an ideological one, since both the Hindu and Jaina shrines drew their wealthiest patrons from their respective trading communities. Religious competition was therefore always involved and, in this respect, the twelfth century represented a watershed. It witnessed not only the maximum expansion of the Hindu temple complexes and the Brāhmanical agrarian settlements – which prospered as never before, thanks to the support of many ruling families<sup>37</sup> – but also an increasing popularity of two major Brāhmanical creeds, Śivaism and Viṣṇuism. To the detriment of the *śramaṇas*, the twelfth century also saw the emergence in Karnataka of yet another (counter) tradition: the Liṅgāyat/Viraśaiva movement,<sup>38</sup> which soon encountered violent resistance from the ancient Jaina communities. The Jainas had to fight on two fronts: against the Śaiva militant groups on one hand, and the Viraśaivas on the other. Competition frequently led to large-scale bloodshed.<sup>39</sup>

## 4 Medieval Inter-Religious Struggles

As can be seen from this brief historical overview, despite the oft-lauded religious tolerance intrinsic to India's civilisation (especially in the Brāhmanical-Hindu milieu), the Middle Ages, particularly in the south, were characterised by violent inter-religious conflict, in particular between the Śaivas and the Jainas. A considerable number of historical sources bears witness to these bloody struggles, even if we admit the possibility – as is often the case – of hagiographic, mythological or narrative exaggerations.

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<sup>36</sup> Uma Aery and B.S. Mathur, "Some Aspects of Trade in Jain Literature (800–1200 A.D.)," in *Medieval Jainism: Culture and Environment*, ed. Prem Suman Jain (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1990): 85–93.

<sup>37</sup> Among these royal dynasties were the Western Cālukyās and the successor dynasties of the Kalachuris and Seunas who patronised a number of Śaiva sects, particularly the Kālāmukhas. David N. Lorenzen, "The Kālāmukha Background to Viraśaivism," in *Studies in Orientalology. Essay in Memory of Prof. A.L. Basham*, ed. Sachindra Kumar Maity, Upendra Thakur and A.K. Narain (Agra: Y.K. Publishers 1988): 278.

<sup>38</sup> The Liṅgāyats, bearers of the *liṅga*, are also known as Viraśaivas (heroic Śaiva). The two terms are generally used interchangeably, although some scholars believe that the Liṅgāyats and the Viraśaivas used to be two different groups which came to blend together only in the course of recent history. Malleshappa M. Kalburgi, *History and Geography* (Belgaum: Liṅgāyat Adhyana Academy, 2005): 2–34.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pandurangrao Bhimrao Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs* (Sholapur: Gulabchand Hirachand Doshi, 1957): 29; Dwijendra N. Jha, *Rethinking Hindu Identity* (London: Equinox, 2009): 27–47.

This corpus comprises inscriptions,<sup>40</sup> literary works,<sup>41</sup> manuscripts – mostly gathered during the nineteenth century by Col. Mackenzie and later examined by the Reverend William Taylor<sup>42</sup> – and iconographic sources. The latter, which by their very nature required patronage, tend to contain precise references to contemporary facts.<sup>43</sup> What's more, the discerning eye is able to detect allusions to historical facts hidden under the veiled guise of certain iconographies.<sup>44</sup> Last but not least, archaeological remains often unequivocally document devastations at the hands of man, often corroborated by inscriptions.<sup>45</sup> Such is the case of many Jaina and Buddhist places of worship, which were desecrated by the Brāhmins. Take, for instance, Sarnath, one of the main centres of Buddhist worship, which was the object of repeated destructions, the last time in the twelfth century when *stūpas* and monasteries, sacked and burnt down, were replaced by an imposing Śivaite temple.<sup>46</sup> Or think of the Jaina sanctuary in ancient Puligere (modern Lakṣmeśvara, in Karnataka), whose splendour and successive spoilage at the hands of a Vīraśaiva devotee in the twelfth or thirteenth century is not only described in literature,<sup>47</sup> but still visible in the sanctuary itself. The building shows traces of mutilation, especially in the sculptures of the seated Jinas, which, framed in niches, adorn the parapet of the temple (Plate 5.3). Notably, a few Jaina images happen to have survived, as has been the case also with other *basadis* which had suffered similar assaults: these might represent a kind of a triumphal celebration, a reminder that the longstanding

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40 Pandurangrao Bhimrao Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs* (Sholapur: Gulabchand Hirachand Doshi, 1957): 397–403.

41 *Bhakti* literature, the hymns of the sixty-three Śaiva devotees (Nāyanmār) above all, beyond devotion and love towards the divine (Śiva), show continuous conflicts and marginalisation of the *śramaṇic* religions. R. Champakalakshmi, “General President’s Address: The Making of a Religious Tradition. Perspectives from Pre-Colonial South India,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 70* (2009–2010): 7.

42 Giovanni Verardi, *The Gods and the Heretics. Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2018): 34–36.

43 Giovanni Verardi, *The Gods and the Heretics. Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2018): 20.

44 In the early and late medieval periods, Indian iconography developed sophisticated iconographic innovations which, through the use of allegories and allusions, reflected the contemporary socio-historical situations. Tiziana Lorenzetti, “Art and Society in Early Medieval India,” in *The Complex Heritage of Early India. Essays in Memory of R.S. Sharma*, ed. Dwijendra N. Jha (New Delhi: Manohar, 2014): 645–67.

45 Among these inscriptions, we might cite those of Aṅṅigēri, Dharwar district (*South Indian Inscriptions* 1986, vol. 15, n. 59: 82 [Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India]), and Tālikōṭi, Bijapur district (*South Indian Inscriptions* 1986, vol. 15, n. 56: 79 [Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India]), which document the brutal extermination of Jaina groups and the destruction of their *basadis*.

46 Giovanni Verardi, *The Gods and the Heretics. Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2018): Appendix by Federica Barba, 523–45.

47 Cf. R.C. Hiremath and M.S. Sunkapura, eds., *Somanātha Caritra by Rāghavāṅka* (Bangalore: Kanada Sahitya Parishat, 2004).



**Plate 5.3:** Jaina sanctuary (now *Vīraśaiva*), Lakṣmeśvara, Gadag, Karnataka.

Jaina supremacy had been overcome (Plate 5.4).<sup>48</sup> After being despoiled, the temple was converted for ritual use by the *Vīraśaivas*, and re-named.

It is therefore no coincidence that numerous medieval epigraphic sources describe the Brāhmins as engaged in warlike activities and receiving military training.<sup>49</sup> Often, such military education was often given in centres called *sālai* (or *ghaṭikās* in Cālukya and Pallava territories), generally attached to local temples.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.1 Militant Attitude and Self-Sacrifice

Hand in hand with their militant attitude towards the *śramaṇas*, doomed to be the losers, medieval Śaivas tended to champion the cause of Śiva with fanatical devotion, even to the point of votive self-sacrifice. Beyond its long-debated religious-symbolic-

<sup>48</sup> Julia A.B Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra, "Jagannatha Compared: The Politics of Appropriation, Re-Use and Regional Traditions in India," *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 36 (2008): 26.

<sup>49</sup> Dwijendra N. Jha, *Rethinking Hindu Identity* (London: Equinox, 2009): 37, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Dwijendra N. Jha, *Rethinking Hindu Identity* (London: Equinox, 2009): 38.



**Plate 5.4:** Jaina image saved, Jaina sanctuary (now Viraśaiva), Lakṣmeśvara, Gadag, Karnataka.

metaphorical significances, such an act should be seen and understood precisely in relation to those inter-religious struggles. Indeed, self-oblation also retains a great martial importance: it manifests extreme courage, strength and heroism, qualities indispensable in a period of constant warfare. In addition, we must also consider the long-standing intimate connection between votive self-sacrifice and military exploits that can be found in many cultural contexts.

A warrior's self-oblation to ensure victory of the king and the kingdom's welfare is well known in a number of ancient traditions, particularly in medieval south India, where the king was seen as the guarantor of order and prosperity in his domains. Tamil culture, with its deeply embedded concept of martial suicide as the ultimate expression of loyalty to one's own sovereign or commander, abounds in such examples; a number of literary texts, such as the *Tolkāppyam*,<sup>51</sup> the oldest compendium of Tamil grammar, allude to it.<sup>52</sup> To this day, in Tamil Nadu, the phrase *senchorru-kadan*, 'the debt of red [blood] rice', is used as a metaphor for loyalty; it stands for the ritual of rice,

<sup>51</sup> *Tolkāppyam* is difficult to date. The original narrative may go back to the pre-Christian era. However, most scholars date the extant manuscript versions between the second and the fifth centuries CE. Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: Brill 1973): 138.

<sup>52</sup> 'the warrior offering his crowning life to fire in fulfilment of his vow [ . . . ]'. V. Murugan, *Tolkāppyam in English* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 2001): 412.

shared by the king or commander with his warriors who vowed to immolate themselves in battle for him.<sup>53</sup> According to Tyagi, the red-rice ritual was described by two Muslim travellers in ninth-century Tamil country.

A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, and some three or four hundred persons came of their own accord and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands, after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice, they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain; and they punctually fulfilled their promise.<sup>54</sup>

It is worth noting that the fifth- or sixth- century poem *Cilappatikāṁ*, celebrative of the hero committing the warrior's suicide, describes a modus operandi that was to become very common in the centuries to come: self-decapitation.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, several Maravar warriors<sup>56</sup> are said to have cut off their own heads at the feet of the goddess Durgā to ensure the victory of their king over his enemies.<sup>57</sup> A number of images of such self-annihilation have come down to us. One celebrated example is to be found in a rock sanctuary at Mahaballipuram, where a devotee is shown beheading himself as a token of honour to Durgā (Plate 5.5). Similar examples are sculpted on the so-called 'hero memorial stones' found primarily at medieval sites in South India, called *saavan kallu* by the locals.<sup>58</sup> Self-decapitation, underpinning multiple levels of symbolism concentrated in the image of the head,<sup>59</sup> was considered to be not only the most precious and devotional offering, but also the most courageous. This is precisely what displays the bond developing between the figure of the over-zealous devotee and the image of the hero-warrior, destined to become one of the leitmotifs in late medieval Hindu South India.

<sup>53</sup> Vidya Prakash Tyagi, *Martial Races of Undivided India* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications 2009): 278.

<sup>54</sup> Vidya Prakash Tyagi, *Martial Races of Undivided India* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications 2009): 278, 279.

<sup>55</sup> Prince Ilango Adigal, *Shilappadikaram (the Ankle Bracelet)*, trans. Alain Danielou (New York: New Directions, 1965): 776–85. Quoted by Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 269.

<sup>56</sup> According to a number of scholars, Maravar, one of the oldest social groups to be mentioned in Sangam Tamil literature, are a warlike tribe confined to the modern-day districts of Ramnad, Madurai and Thirunelveli. Pamela G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 9–12, 25–31.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 268.

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): plate VII.

<sup>59</sup> In many ancient traditions, the image of the head has always concentrated multiple levels of symbolism and meanings, being considered the noblest part of the body, the seat of the major senses, locus of the intellect and the dwelling-place of the inner powers, including that of regeneration. Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 147, 148, 151.



Plate 5.5: Varaha cave, Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu.

## 4.2 The Devotee as Hero Warrior

The conceptual equation of devotee and hero-warrior, where self-sacrifice in the name of devotion to the god merges with martyrdom and heroism in battle and evolves into a paradigm of heroic devotion, must have penetrated deep into the collective South Indian medieval imagination, so much so that its echo can be traced in a sixteenth-century Telegu novel. In it, the poet Piṅgaḷi Sūrana asserts that any devotee bold enough to cut off his own head and offer it to the deity will not only have it restored by an act of god, but also gain the power to destroy enemies or anyone who attempts to kill him.<sup>60</sup> An emblematic example – the probable inspiration for Sūrana’s

<sup>60</sup> Velcheru Narayana Rao and David D. Shulman, *The Sound of the Kiss or the Story that Must Never Be Told [by] Piṅgaḷi Sūrana* (New York: Columbia University Press 2002): 47, quoted by Gil Ben-Herut,



story – is the case of the historical figure Rāmayya, a twelfth-century Śaiva devotee and most likely a Vīraśaiva faithful, who during a violent controversy with the Jainas, was challenged to prove both his devotion and the power of his god by cutting off his own head and asking Śiva to restore it. There are different versions of Rāmayya's tale, infused with elements of laudatory mythology. One of the most famous is the Abalūr inscription in the eastern wall of the Someśvara Temple at Abalūr, Karnataka, which is usually dated to the end of the twelfth century.<sup>61</sup> It relates that, having invoked Lord Śiva for the grace of post-mortem restoration, the hero-devotee Rāmayya proceeded to decapitate himself. After the severed head had been offered to Śiva and exhibited in public for seven days, the god restored it to Rāmayya's neck and 'the head became sound again, without any scar' (line 43).<sup>62</sup> The miracle thus proved Rāmayya's bravery, his firm devotion and total surrender to his god, and the absoluteness of Śiva's omnipotence. Whereupon, the inscription says, there ensued a battle against the Jainas, led by Rāmayya, who, naturally, went on to win.

An extraordinary but little-known relief illustrating the Abalūr inscription is to be found in the same temple, directly below the inscription. It is a long frieze from the Western Cāḷukya period, conceived as a linear and continuous narrative. At the beginning of the representation, the severed head of Rāmayya, well detached from the rest of the body, lies on the pedestal (*pīṭha*) of a Śiva *liṅga* (Plate 5.6). On the right, Rāmayya has received his head back from the god and is ready for battle against the Jainas. After their defeat, Rāmayya and his warriors destroy a Jina image (Plate 5.7). In the last scene, Rāmayya celebrates his victory by lifting a Śiva *liṅga* (Plate 5.8). The sacred symbol is placed in the middle of the composition on a high pedestal flanked by two figures (the one on the left is identifiable as the hero-devotee Rāmayya himself), in a posture of homage, worshipping the *liṅga*. Twelfth-century Karnatik literature, marked by *vīra-rasa* or 'emotion of heroism' in the battlefield,<sup>63</sup> often refers to Rāmayya as the emblem of the perfect devotee-warrior. But there is more to it.

General scholarly opinion holds that self-decapitation, which is clearly very difficult to accomplish in practice, was merely a symbol or metaphor. In other words, texts, inscriptions and visual artefacts cannot be considered reliable proof for concrete facts. However, in my opinion, the concept of such practices, known as *dehatyāga*, body abandonment, is so deeply rooted in South Indian culture (even today) that it is hard to

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"Literary Genres and Textual Representations of Early Vīraśaiva History: Revisiting Ekānta Rāmayya's Self-Beheading," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 16, no. 2 (2012): 137.

61 John Faithfull Fleet, "Inscriptions at Ablur," *Epigraphia Indica* 5, inscription E (1898–99): 237–60.

62 John Faithfull Fleet, "Inscriptions at Ablur," *Epigraphia Indica* 5, inscription E (1898–99): 256.

63 Shadakshari Settar and Malleshappa M. Kalaburgi, "The Hero Cult," in *Memorial Stones: A Study of Their Origin, Significance and Variety*, ed. Shadakshari Settar and Gunther D. Sontheimer (Dharward/Heidelberg: Institute of Indian Art History and South Asian Institute, 1982): 16–36.



**Plate 5.6:** On the left, the severed head of Rāmayya lies on the pedestal. On the right, Rāmayya has received his head back from the god and is ready for the battle. Someśvara Temple at Abalūr, Karnataka.





**Plate 5.7:** Rāmayya and his warriors destroy a Jina image. Someśvara Temple at Abalūr, Karnataka.

believe that they were exclusively metaphorical.<sup>64</sup> Not to mention the eyewitness accounts that have come down to us. Of course not all the sources are to be taken at face value; however, the very quantity of evidence compels us to consider that at least a good portion of these narratives refer to actual events. Of the eye-witness accounts, the testimony by the late fifteenth-century Italian traveller Niccoló da Conti, a former pontifical secretary, is particularly reliable. He not only reports a Śaiva devotee intent on committing self-decapitation, but also offers a vivid and detailed account of how this oblation was carried out in practice. The faithful – Conti writes – would present himself with a sharp, crescent-shaped blade placed on the back of his neck with a cord attached to the two extremities of the blade. Images of such objects have come down to us. At the

<sup>64</sup> This is also the opinion of some scholars who have long studied the phenomenon of self-sacrifice in India. Cf. Mary Storm, *Head and Heat. Valour and Self-Sacrifice in the Art of India* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2013): 17; Mary Storm, “An Unusual Group of Hero Stones: Commemorating Self Sacrifice at Mallam, Andhra Pradesh,” *Ars Orientalis* 44 (2014): 63.



**Plate 5.8:** Rāmayya celebrates his victory by lifting a Śiva *linga*. Someśvara Temple at Abalūr, Karnataka.



critical moment, the devotee would bend his legs, loop the cord under his feet, and then, suddenly, stretch them to the full, thus cutting off his own head in one single stroke.<sup>65</sup>

At this juncture, considering that the tribute of one's own head was not merely metaphorical but, often, referred to real events; considering also the exaltation of the saint-devotee as a warrior-hero, and the consequent belief in the power of self-oblation to guarantee victory in battle, it is plausible that the whole self-sacrificial code of ethics, in the Hindu society of medieval south India – full-blown by the twelfth-century, a period of actual inter-religious strife – was above all a psycho-strategic device, with magical and supernatural overtones, unachievable to the adversary's weak religiosity. By intimidating the enemy, already on the altar of moral courage, it served to anticipate his complete physical subjugation: the ultimate military objective.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, self-directed violent acts – self-decapitation in particular – beyond their religious-symbolic-metaphorical connotations and beyond the many cultural implications, appear to have enjoyed great popularity in medieval South India: above all as an effective military strategy to intimidate and prevail over ones' enemies, religious enemies in particular. Such acts not only illustrated the courage and the sublime martial qualities of those who carried them out, but also the devotee's total trust and submission to the god (i.e., his being 'slave of god', in order to be 'supreme over all else'), who is shown as being so powerful as to be able even to resurrect the dead and, therefore, to grant victory. All this would have inspired terror and awe in the enemies, all the more so if these acts were actually performed.

Moreover, as modern anthropological and psychological research has proved, self-sacrifice builds trust, earns followers and, at the same time, facilitates cohesion within a group.<sup>66</sup> The latter point is of particular importance when the commitment of one's followers is essential, as it would have been in the constant bloody struggles of medieval south India.

Reading votive self-sacrifice in its proper military context appears to be supported by the long-standing tradition, deeply rooted in the south Indian ethos, whereby such violent acts would ensure victory, to the point that they were even exalted as yogic

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Henry Major, *India in the Fifteenth Century: Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India in the Century Preceding the Portuguese Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope; From the Latin, Persian, Russian and Italian Sources* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1842): 27–28.

<sup>66</sup> Yeon Choi and Renate R. Mai-Dalton, "On the Leadership Function of Self-Sacrifice," *Leadership Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1998): 475–76; Tiziana Lorenzetti, "Heroic Self-Sacrifice in the Medieval Liṅgāyat Tradition," *Proceedings of the 24th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art, Naples (2018)* (forthcoming).

practices to overcome one's enemies.<sup>67</sup> In addition, such a reading would also account for the bond between the figure of the over-zealous devotee and the image of the hero-warrior that was to become a leitmotif in late medieval Hindu south India.

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<sup>67</sup> Gil Ben-Herut, "Literary Genres and Textual Representations of Early Vīraśaiva History: Revisiting Ekānta Rāmāyā's Self-Beheading," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 16, no. 2 (2012): 138.

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Tiziana Leucci

## Chapter 6

# Usages and Instrumentalisations of the Sanskrit Term ‘*Dāsī/Dāsa*’ (Servant-Slave) in Pre-Colonial and Colonial South India: The Case of the *Devadāsīs* and *Rājadāsīs*

A courtesan must always deck herself with various ornaments, and in the company of her many servants, she must walk slowly, in a elegant and majestic manner. [ . . . ] When her lover is in bed and asleep she should awaken him by the sounds of her jewels and by the scent of the flowers’ fragrances and the perfumed oils smeared on her lovely body. [ . . . ] A dancer is the one who is bursting with youth, expert in dance, music and poetry, full of energy and who in any group of young and beautiful girls would stand out in excellence. [ . . . ] A courtesan is a lady who takes pleasure in the different performing arts (dance, music, acting, singing), mastered under the guidance of the expert teachers. Her gestures must be graceful. She should be humble, yet she must be bold and have strenght of character. She should be clever, proud and she should know well how to deal and behave in the royal courts, she should also be free from diseases, her speech should be melodious and she should be very intelligent. She should have an untiring nature as well, in order to endure in her profession. *Nāṭya Śāstra* by Bharata (circa fourth century CE)<sup>1</sup>

Under the guidance of expert masters, the Indian dancing girls’ training begins with vocal and instrumental music, dance, and whatever is convenient to stir up aesthetic pleasure and love of beauty in the soul of the Prince and the other members of his court, including the art of seducing hearts, even the less sensitive ones. [ . . . ] All dance and all play in those lovely girls; their features, eyes, arms, feet, every part of their body seems to move in order to charm [ . . . ] *Histoire d’Ayder-Ali-Khan*, by Maistre de La Tour, Paris 1783.<sup>2</sup>

The community which dedicates their women to temple service is known as *Devadasis*. It is a compound of two words God and Devotee and means the devotees of the God. Madras Devadasis Association, Madras 1928.<sup>3</sup>

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1 *Nāṭyaśāstra*, trans. Adya Rangacharya (Bangalore: IBH, 1986): 132, 218, 223.

2 Guy Deleury, ed., *Les Indes florissantes. Anthologie des voyageurs français (1750–1820)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991): 754, translated from the original French by Tiziana Leucci.

3 Madras Devadasis Association, *The Humble Memorial of Devadasis of the Madras Presidency* (Madras: n.p., 1928) [republished in: *Bharatanatyam. A Reader*, ed. Daves Soneji (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010): 128–29].

## 1 Introduction

The present chapter focuses on the analysis of a complex and, to this day, a very controversial issue, namely the Indian female performing artists and courtesans<sup>4</sup> who were once attached to temples and royal courts and communly known by the Sanskrit terms *devadāsī* and *rājadāsī*.<sup>5</sup> Composed of the words *deva* (deity), *rāja* (king) and

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4 I intentionally employ the term ‘courtesan’ for its specific meaning, i.e. a distinguished person employed in a royal court or in an aristocratic palace. The courtesan, in India and elsewhere, had to master the protocol, the politics and the good manners of a court, but also to be highly educated and refined, intelligent, witty, bold and clever, very much like Bharata’s *Nāṭya Śāstra* definition quoted above. Count Baldassarre Castiglione, the Italian Renaissance author, defined such qualities and abilities with the Italian term *sprezzatura*, which can be translated as ‘unaffected and effortless elegance, careless grace, unpretentious dignity, pride, nonchalance, but occasionally and when needed, also a disdainful attitude.’ For a better understanding of the complex status, roles and functions of the nobility and their courtiers and courtesans in Europe, see the manuals of the ‘ideal’ prince and of the ‘ideal’ courtier, titled respectively *Il Principe* (‘The Prince’) by Niccolò Machiavelli, written around 1513 and published in 1532, and *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (‘The Book of the Courtier’) published in 1528 by Baldassarre Castiglione (Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988]; Baldassarre Castiglione, *Il Libro del cortegiano, del conte Baldesar Castiglione* [Venice: nelle case d’Aldo Romano e d’Andrea d’Asola suo suocero, 1528]). During the Renaissance period in the aristocratic courts of Italy and all over Europe, the unmarried female courtesans were famous not only for their beauty, sensuality, artistic sensibility and capacities, but also for their vast knowledge of poetry, literature, music and dance. Noteworthy amongst them are Gaspara Stampa from Padua, Veronica Franco from Venice, Tullia d’Aragona from Rome, and many others. For the complex traditions of courtesans in various cultures see Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon, eds., *The Courtesan’s Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For the connection of politics and erotics in India, in relation to Machiavelli’s book, see the pertinent analysis by Wendy Doniger, *Against Dharma. Dissent in the Ancient Indian Science of Sex and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). About correct behavior, diplomacy, and political skills, tricks and games used by kings, courtiers and courtesans in Indian palaces in the past see Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tiziana Leucci, “Dance in Indian Society: Temple and Courtly traditions,” in *Dance and Society. Questions of Cultural Identity, Social Structure and Status, the Body Politic at Play*, ed. Barbara Segal and Bill Tuck (London: Early Dance Circle, 2013): 29–44; Tiziana Leucci, “Au Royaume de l’Amour les Courtisanes sont Reines. *Devadāsīs* et *Rājadāsīs* comme *Apsaras* terrestres et incarnations de la Fortune (*Śrī-Lakṣmī*),” in *Rājamaṇḍala. Le Modèle Royale en Inde*, ed. Emmanuel Francis and Raphaël Rousseleau (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2020): 189–221.

5 Though in each region of India a large number of terms are to be found for those artists and courtesans in texts and epigraphic inscriptions from various historical periods, *devadāsī* and *rājadāsī* are the ones most commonly used from the eighteenth century onwards, both in the vernacular languages and in European travellers’ accounts of India. On the local rich terminology see Leslie C. Orr, “Jain and Hindu ‘Religious Women’ in Early Medieval Tamilnadu,” in *Open Boundary. Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998): 187–212; Leslie C. Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God. Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Tiziana Leucci, “La tradition des devadāsī dans les temples et cours royales de l’Inde du Sud: approche ethno-historique d’une institution artistique et religieuse”



*dāsī* (female servant, slave), they imply, strictly speaking, a hierarchical relation, a link, a sort of bondage in terms of dependence and submission towards a deity or a sovereign. Thus, *devadāsī* is a generic Sanskrit word used throughout South Asia to designate a class of women – artists and courtesans – attached to the temples where they performed various tasks, both artistic and ritual. The primary evidence for the antiquity of the institution of *devadāsīs* in South India comes from inscriptions dated to the eighth and ninth centuries CE. *Rājadāsī* is also a generic Sanskrit term to designate a class of female courtesans, musicians, dancers, and poets attached to a royal court where they performed various functions. In Sanskrit and other Indian vernacular languages the terms for the courtesans are *gaṇikā* and *veśyā*, which usually designate those highly cultured women versed in the arts and politics, to be distinguished from ordinary sex workers. This ranking also corresponds to the terms found in Tamil epigraphy, which often designate *devadāsīs* as *rudra-* or *deva-gaṇikās* (the 'Rudra's courtesan' or the 'deity's courtesan'). Nevertheless, usage has changed over the centuries, mirroring the stigmatised status of courtesans according to moralistic and puritanical value judgments towards those female artists.<sup>6</sup> In order to better understand

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(Mémoire de Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales Paris, 2000); Tiziana Leucci, "South Indian Temple Dancers: 'Donated' to the Deity and 'Donors' for the Deity. Two Tamil Inscriptions on Music and Dance in the Rājarājeśvaram Temple (Tañcāvūr, 11th Century)," in *New Dimensions in Tamil Epigraphy: Historical Sources and Multidisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Appasamy Murugaiyan (Chennai: CRE-A Publ., 2012): 209–53. On the South Indian temple, court and salon dancers see also Frédérique Apffel Marglin, *Wives of the God-King. The Rituals of the Devadāsīs of Puri* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985); Saskia C. Kersenboom-Story, *Nityasumangali: Devadāsī Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987); Davesh Soneji, ed., *Bharatanatyam: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures. Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

6 On the changing perceptions and the related legal debate see Amrit Srinivasan, "The Hindu Temple-Dancer: Prostitute or Nun?" *Cambridge Anthropology* 8, no. 1 (1983): 73–99; Amrit Srinivasan, "Temple 'Prostitution' and Community Reform: An Examination of the Ethnographic, Historical and Textual Context of the Devadasi of Tamil Nadu, South India" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1984); Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform and Revival: The *Devadāsī* and Her Dance," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 44, 2 November 1985: 1869–76; Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform or Conformity? Temple 'Prostitution' and the Community in the Madras Presidency," in *Structure of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernizing Asia*, ed. Bina Agarwal (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1988): 175–98; Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India. A Social History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996); Kay K. Jordan, *From Sacred Servant to Profane Prostitute. A History of the Changing Legal Status of the Devadāsīs in India, 1857–1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003); Heidrun Brückner, Hanne de Bruin and Heike Moser, eds., *Between Fame and Shame: Performing Women – Women Performers in India, Drama und Theater in Südasien* 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011); Tiziana Leucci, "Du Dāsī Āttam au Bharata Nāṭyam: ethnohistoire d'une tradition chorégraphique et de sa moralisation et nationalisation dans l'Inde coloniale et post-coloniale" (PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales Paris, 2009); Tiziana Leucci, "La danse en Inde du sud, entre conflits générationnels, identitaires, de genre et de caste," in *MUSICultures* 44, no. 1 (2017): 134–62; Tiziana Leucci, "La danseuse de temple et courtisane au miroir de l'Occident chrétien. Usages et déplacements de l'imaginaire

the complex meanings of those two terms, we need to contextualise them within the larger framework of pre-Independence socio-religious Indian terminology. Until the first half of the twentieth century, the kings themselves were the main patrons both of the temples and of performing artists (dancers, poets, singers, bards, musicians, actors, etc.) and artisans (architects, sculptors, painters, jewellers, weavers, garlands makers, potters, tailors, gardeners, etc.). Artists and artisans worked in the shrines as well as in the royal palaces. One has also to bear in mind that the liturgy in a Hindu temple strictly follows a royal protocol. In other words: the deities are conceived of and honoured as ‘divine kings’ in their own shrines, as is clearly shown by the Tamil term for temple, *kōvil*, which literally means ‘king’s palace’. Consequently, the ceremonies performed in the temples are modelled on those in a royal residence. As distinguished, divine monarchs, the gods are served by a royal retinue of attendants including priests, ministers, bards, artists and various types of servants. Thus, the polysemic Sanskrit term *dāsī* (*dāsa* in its masculine form) also denotes a form of service and devotion, which implies an attitude of full surrender and respect towards a superior or a beloved being. This could be a deity or a king, but also a parent or a teacher. That is why in the symbolic terminology employed in the devotional relation between a person and a divine being or a royal patron, the terms ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ should be understood as a mark of distinction or even as an honorific title, manifesting the total submission of the individual to the divine will, the royal power, or a parent’s or master’s command. This type of relation is found in both written texts and oral literature, and it is widely represented in the iconography and the traditions of the performing arts, particularly in the religious practices of the so-called *bhakti* devotional doctrines and cults.<sup>7</sup> Although it may sound strange to us today, in the past in India defining oneself as the ‘slave’ of a deity or of another senior being was considered a true privilege by those holding or claiming such

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orientaliste dans l’Inde nationaliste et dans les études féministes postcoloniales,” in *Écrire et penser le genre en contextes postcoloniaux*, ed. Anne Castaing and Elodie Gaden (Brussels: Peter Lang, Comparatisme et Société no. 35, P.I.E, 2017): 59–88.

7 On the South Indian *bhakti* cultic traditions see A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*, trans. A.K. Ramanujan (London: Penguin Books, 1973); A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning. Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār*, trans. A.K. Ramanujan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Friedhelm Hardy, “Ideology and Cultural Contexts of the Śrīvaisnava Temple,” in *South Indian Temples. An Analytical Reconsideration*, ed. Burton Stein (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978): 119–51; Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Śiva. The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Tiziana Leucci, “Royal and Local Patronage of Bhakta Cult: The Case of Temple and Court Dancers,” in *The Archaeology of Bhakti II: Royal Bhakti, Local Bhakti*, ed. Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid (Pondichéry: IFP & EFEO, 2016): 257–302.

a title. It signified an unconditional love relation and a voluntary<sup>8</sup> act of surrender to a superior being (either divine or human). So it was not by chance that even the kings used to define themselves as the first *devadāsas*, the first slaves and servants of a particular god or goddess. Such a submissive devotional attitude is also evident in the names that parents gave to children in the hope that the particular deity after whom the child was named would protect and guide the baby (i.e. Kālidāsa, Purandaradāsa, Haridāsa, etc.). A similar practice is found in the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions, where the majority of children were named after the major Christian saints, Biblical prophets and angels. So in India, to define oneself as the 'servant', the 'slave', or to manifest the intention to 'serve' a deity, a king or a master, was not perceived as a derogatory term or a humiliating action, but rather as an act deserving respect and admiration. Furthermore, those voluntary 'servants' would receive the title of 'slaves' as an honour, a blessing or a gift that those superior beings (a deity, king, parent or teacher) would graciously bestow on their own faithful devotees and subjects. This kind of symbolic relation, implying respect and submission at once, was also expected to be shown by any individual towards the elderly, parents, relatives, chiefs, priests, ascetics, teachers, or master craftsmen. Obviously those relations imply an existing hierarchical system of 'hegemony' and 'subalternity', to quote one of Antonio Gramsci's basic concepts; but they meant more than a mere coercive form of authority, subordination and exploitation, as they were not deprived of strong and mutual emotional connections and attachments. Let us now analyse the other terms employed to define such relationships in order to shed more light on them.

## 2 Temple Women in the Epigraphic Inscriptions: The Analysis of the Terms *Nibandha*, *Taliccērip* *Peṅṭukaḷ*, *Tevaratiyāl*, *Paṇi*, *Seva*, *Murai*

In one of the longest medieval South Indian inscriptions (SII II, no. 66), the Sanskrit term '*nibandha*' is used to define those who received an allowance from the gods for their service in the shrine, including the *devadāsīs*, who in this inscription are referred to with the Tamil words *taliccērip peṅṭukaḷ*, literally the 'distinguished ladies of the temple quarters'. The text, dated to the year 1014 CE, was carved into the majestic

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<sup>8</sup> I mention voluntariness because one could also argue that young, pre-pubescent girls offered to a deity or a monarch by their families or other donors may not have acted voluntarily. Indeed they probably did not, but we should also consider that at that time even child-marriages were not the voluntary acts of the young couple concerned. We might also think of arranged marriages in contemporary South Asia, in which the partners are often chosen and organised by parents and families without the approval of both the girl and the boy. I mention this not to justify such acts, but just to bear in mind their context and their socio-religious background.

temple built at the beginning of the eleventh century by the Cōla emperor Rājarāja I, in his capital city of Tanjore (Tamil: Tañcāvūr) in today's state of Tamil Nadu. I quote just a few lines that follow the panegyric part (Tamil: *meykkīrtti*) of the inscription, translated into English by E. Hultzsch, to which I have made some few additions (the original Tamil terms and some explanation) in square brackets:

Hail [svasti]! Prosperity [Śrī]! [. . .] the lord Śrīrājarājadeva had [. . .] transferred (a number of) temple women [taliccērip peṇṭukaḷ] from (other) temple establishments of the Cōla country [. . .] as temple women of the lord of the Śrīrājareśvara (temple). To (these persons) shares (pañku) were allotted as allowance (nibandha). (The value) of each share (which consisted of the produce) of (one) vēli of land, was to be one hundred kalam of paddy, (measured) by the marakkāl called (after) āṭavallān, which is equal to a rājakesari. Instead of those among these shareholders, who would die or emigrate, the nearest relations [aṭutta muraī kaṭavār in the inscription: literally “those who have the obligation of the next rotation”] of such persons were to receive that allowance (Tamil kāṇi) [a land measure equal to one-eightieth of a vēli] and to do the work [paṇi] to be done in rotation [muraī]. If the nearest relations were not qualified themselves, (they) were to select (other) qualified persons, to let (these) do the work, and to receive (the allowance). If there were no near relations, the (other) incumbents of such appointments were to select qualified persons from those fit for such appointments, and the persons selected were to receive the allowance. Accordingly, (the names of these persons) were engraved on stone, as the lord Śrīrājarājadeva had been pleased to order. [Then comes the list of recipients, amongst whom are the names of the four hundred devadāsīs, mentioned with their honorific titles, their original places and the location of the house allotted by the temple to each one of them.]<sup>9</sup>

The Sanskrit term *nibandha* here means ‘to tie, to bind, to fasten, to chain, to fetter, to join, to unite, to connect’, but also ‘to appoint’. The word *nibandha* refers to *bandha*, which means ‘link’; in this case it also names the ‘connection’, the ‘bond’, the ‘chain’, or the ‘affiliation’ between the deity and more than eight hundred persons<sup>10</sup> employed at

<sup>9</sup> *South Indian Inscriptions. Tamil Inscriptions of Rajaraja, Rajendra-chola, and others in the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjavur*, vol. 2, part 3, ed. and trans. E. Hultzsch (Madras: Government Press, 1895 [repr. in *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, part 3–5 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992)]): 278.

<sup>10</sup> In the long list of more than eight hundred names in this inscription, beside the four hundred temple dancers there are also the dance masters, musicians, singers and artisans employed in this imperial shrine. Each is recorded by their proper names, honorific titles, place of belonging and by the type of allowance they received for their professional service to the deity in this temple. For a detailed description and analysis of the inscription see *South Indian Inscriptions. Tamil Inscriptions of Rajaraja, Rajendra-chola, and Others in the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjavur*, vol. 2, part 3, ed. and trans. E. Hultzsch (Madras: Government Press, 1895 [repr. in *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 2, part 3–5 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992)]); Tiziana Leucci, “South Indian Temple Dancers: ‘Donated’ to the Deity and ‘Donors’ for the Deity. Two Tamil Inscriptions on Music and Dance in the Rājarājeśvaram Temple (Tañcāvūr, 11th Century),” in *New Dimensions in Tamil Epigraphy: Historical Sources and Multidisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Appasamy Murugaiyan (Chennai: CRE-A Publ. 2012): 209–53; Tiziana Leucci, “Scenes of Music and Dance in the Mural Paintings at the Rājarājeśvaram Temple (Tañcāvūr, 11th century): Inter-Textual and Multidisciplinary Analysis,” in *Ajantā e oltre. Pitture Murali in India e Asia Centrale (Ajantā and Beyond. Mural Paintings of India, Tibet and Central Asia)*, ed. Laura Giuliano (Rome: Artemide and Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale ‘Giuseppe Tucci’, 2013): 95–118.

that time in this imperial shrine, in order to serve the god Śiva as Śrīrājarājadeva (Sanskrit: the 'Auspicious Emperor Deity'). The term *bandha* can therefore be interpreted and translated as the 'union' or the 'bond' between two individuals, in this particular case between the presiding god of the temple and each one of the 'servants' mentioned. The term also implies a sort of contract (from the Latin verb *contrahere*, 'to put together', 'to unite'), a form of 'transaction' and a 'mutual agreement' between two parties, both accepting the decisions and the obligations established in the exchange of a specific service. In the inscription, those mentioned as 'servants', according to their qualification and profession, were expected to work in the temple for the Śrīrājarājadeva god. In exchange for their services, the Cōla emperor Rājarāja I, acting on behalf of the deity, gave them as their allowance the houses located close to the temple, some wetlands to be cultivated, the products and revenues of those lands free of tax, a quantity of rice, and a daily amount of food, which was offered firstly to the images of the deities (Sanskrit: *prasada* 'grace') and then 'graciously' distributed among the priests and temple attendants, the pilgrims and the devotees. In the inscription, the Tamil term *murai*<sup>11</sup> is employed to define the right to perform specified 'work' and 'tasks' for which the 'god's servants' would get in exchange the above-mentioned allowances from the shrine. Consequently, though the semantic meaning of the term *nibandha*, as we have seen, evokes the action of 'binding, fettering, chaining, tying up, etc.', those 'temple servants' were not really 'slaves', as their work clearly implies a number of specific rights and several forms of remuneration for their services to deity in the shrine. This type of temple transaction and donation is quite common in Indian inscriptions. Interestingly, a large number of *devadāsīs* are mentioned in those temple inscriptions and in some other literary texts, as those who have been 'donated' to the shrine, and as the recipients of allowances. The 'distinguished ladies' are also referred to as 'donors of goods to the gods'. In fact, along with the royal family members, aristocrats and wealthy persons, the *devadāsīs* are often mentioned among the main donors of precious gifts and public buildings to local temples and monasteries<sup>12</sup> (e.g. golden jewels with precious stones, devotional statues, oil lamps, cows to supply clarified butter for the lamps, paddy fields, wetlands, gardens to supply flowers for the temple garlands, water tanks, guest houses for pilgrims, hospitals, etc.). The offer of such costly gifts to religious institutions necessitated a considerable amount of wealth held by their rich donors, in this case the

11 In the *Tamil Lexicon*, 6 vols. (Madras: University of Madras, 1982): 3300, and in T. Burrow and M.B. Emenau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986 [1961]): 5015; the polysemic term *murai* is translated as follows: 'order, arrangement, system, regularity, turn by which work is done, time (as once, twice), birth, manners, custom, approved code of conduct, relationship by blood or marriage, justice, antiquity, fate, nature, what is binding, law, duty, turn, relation between kin, propriety, virtue, relationship, manner, plan, course, system, routine.'

12 I refer here to the other religious institutions (Sanskrit: *maṭha*) where the members of various sectarian orders, as well as teachers and ascetics, resided, studied, worked and disseminated their faith and knowledge.

*devadāsīs*. Consequently, it is hard to believe that those wealthy and powerful women, who had the privilege to donate such costly items, were themselves slaves deprived of property and rights, in the sense of ‘unpaid female labourers’ whose forced work, as well as their life and destiny, was under the arbitrary control of patrons or owners. By contrast, this was the case with the majority of the ancient slavery forms and the slaves of African and Asian origins in modern Europe and in the Americas, or the victims of forced labour in the Nazi and Stalinist extermination and concentration camps. By saying this, I hope not to be misunderstood. I am not at all denying the abuses suffered by the women, men and children, neither I am defending here enforced prostitution or any other form of humiliating condition inflicted on any human being. Neither I am denying that in ancient, precolonial and colonial India there were forms of slavery that constituted true bonded and forced labour.<sup>13</sup> What I am rather arguing here is that the terms ‘slave’ and ‘servant’ were also used in India as honorific titles and to denote privileges in connection with forms of mutual dependency, service, respect, devotion, admiration and love. Such relationships largely substantiated the various *bhakti* devotional attitudes, including the most extreme forms of self-sacrifice which were considered to be heroic acts of total submission by those devotees who mutilated themselves or even committed ritualistic suicide in the act of offering their own life to the deity.<sup>14</sup> That is why we must be very careful to properly interpret and translate the polysemic sense and multilayered meaning of those terms, by being attentive to how they were employed within the Indian socio-religious systems in which they evolved, by trying to contextualise them both historically and culturally, and also by listening to and respecting the various indigenous points of view on this subject, as in the case of the members of the Madras Devadasis Association that, in 1928, defined themselves as ‘*Devotees of the God*’ by translating into English the etymology of the Sanskrit term *devadāsīs*.<sup>15</sup> Now let us go back to the terminology employed to refer to those women works and functions in the shrines and royal courts. The Sanskrit term used to define the service in a temple to this day is ‘*seva*’ (Tamil: *paṇi*). Thus, the work of the priests in the shrine is

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13 About slavery in the Indian Ocean see Alessandro Stanziani, “Slavery, Debt, and Bondage: The Mediterranean and the Eurasia Connection from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” in *Debt and Slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Worlds*, ed. Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013): 39–48; Alessandro Stanziani and Gwyn Campbell, eds., *Bonded Labour and Debt in the Indian Ocean World* (London: Routledge, 2013); Alessandro Stanziani, *Bondage, Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 2014); Alessandro Stanziani, *Seamen, Immigrants and Indentured Laborers in the Indian Ocean, 18th–20th Centuries* (New York/London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); Alessandro Stanziani, “Slavery and Post-Slavery in the Indian Ocean World,” Oxford Research Encyclopaedia, 30 July 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.697>.

14 On this topic see T. Lorenzetti’s contribution in this volume.

15 Madras Devadasis Association, *The Humble Memorial of Devadasis of the Madras Presidency* (Madras: n.p., 1928) [republished in: *Bharatanatyam. A Reader*, ed. Davesh Soneji (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010): 128–29].

defined as 'seva', as were the dances and songs performed in the past by the *devadāsīs* in front of the gods' images. Even the ritual services performed by the kings for the gods in the temples in their role as the servants of the major deities (*devadāsas*), were called 'seva', including the menial actions of sweeping the processional chariot and the ground of the shrine, fanning the statues, lighting the oil lamps and waving them in front of the deities' images, cleaning the lamps, the vessels and the metal objects of worship used during the liturgy, the filling the various lamps in the temple with clarified butter, etc.<sup>16</sup> All those functions were performed daily both by the priests and by the *devadāsīs*, until the abolition of the latter institution in November 1947, three months after the declaration of India's independence from the British. Another word often employed in the Tamil texts (both in the literature and in the epigraphic inscriptions) to define the courtesans attached to the temple is *tevaratiyāl* (*tevaratiyār* in the plural form). The term *tevaratiyāl* literally means 'she (who is) at the deity's feet', and its masculine form *tevaratiyān*, 'he (who is) at the deity's feet'. Thus, both terms refer to the subordinated person who bows, prostrates and places herself/himself at the feet of a superior being (divine or human). Those terms were also used to define the *bhakti* composers, as well as any devoted person, including powerful monarchs, saints and courtesans, who 'bowed at the feet' and submitted themselves to a deity, a king, a parent, a teacher, or a lover. Thus, being 'at the feet of someone' in South India meant to be 'at the service', to become a 'servant', or indeed a 'slave' of a higher-ranking person. Nevertheless, this act of subordination should be related to the complexity of human relations and feelings, which also included the deep love and respect, the fear and the awe, felt and manifested by the devotees towards the gods and other most respected and beloved people. After all, all those words borrow their terminology from a feudal and hierarchical type of economic and political system found in past Indian society in which, unfortunately, the condition of slavery no doubt existed, as it did in other parts of the world. Despite that, one should not confuse the use of all those terms when they are also employed in a metaphorical sense.<sup>17</sup> In order to better understand their meanings when

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<sup>16</sup> For the South Indian temple rituals and their liturgies see Anthony Good, "Divine Coronation in a South Indian Temple," in *Religion and Society in South India*, ed. V.G. Prakash Reddy Sudarsen and M. Suryanarayana (Delhi: BR Publishing Corp., 1987): 37–71; Anthony Good, "Multiple Meanings in South Indian Temple Worship," *Culture and Religion* 2, no. 2 (2001): 239–60; S.S. Janaki, ed., *Śiva Temple and Temple Rituals* (Madras: Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1988); Corinna Wessels-Mevissen, "Festival Vehicles and Motif Lamps: Reflections on Visual Elements in South Indian Temple Ritual," in *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, section 3, *Ritual and Visibility*, ed. Petra H. Rösch and Corinna Wessels-Mevissen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011): 567–97.

<sup>17</sup> I add another example to illustrate the metaphorical sense and use of the term 'servant'. In the regions of southern Italy, where my own family belongs, it used to be quite common in the colloquial language to pay respect and to greet an elderly person, or any other individual of a higher rank, by using the expression, '*Servo Vostro*', meaning 'I am your servant'. Such a way of greeting and thanking somebody certainly originated in the previous feudal society, but was also used by people of equal social class and status, and even by lovers. Such an expression did not mean that those people were



referring to the female temple and court ‘servants’ it will be useful to analyse the consecration ceremony of those girls to the shrines and their admission in the royal palaces. The study of such a ritualistic event will shed more light on their roles and functions within the contexts in which they operated, particularly if we try to interpret that ceremony through the prism of the rich socio-religious *bhakti* symbology and terminology.

### 3 The *Devadāsīs*’ and *Rājadāsīs*’ Consecration Ceremony: The Change of Status, their Integration into new Lineages and the Beginning of their Artistic Training

Let us now direct our attention to ceremony in which the ‘servants of the god’ and ‘servants of the king’ were dedicated to shrines and royal palaces. Young girls were offered to the temple or the court before puberty by their families or by other donors (kings, queens, members of the local aristocracy, rich landlords and merchants, etc.). Girls could be dedicated to a temple deity (male or female) for a number of reasons,<sup>18</sup> in order to serve the deity (*devadāsīs*) or the king (*rājadāsīs*). Their dedication ceremony was a true ritual of consecration,<sup>19</sup> a complex rite of passage according to the definition

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really themselves servants, it was merely the way they expressed their attitude of gratitude, devotion and respect. The image of the servant was metaphorically borrowed by them.

<sup>18</sup> The most common reasons why people from various castes, including the brahmins and the members of the local nobility, would dedicate a girl to the temple were, as an offering to the gods; making a vow to the deity in case of epidemic, drought, illness, misfortune and lack of male children; a thanksgiving for a grace received by the divine beings, etc. In South India there were also some communities that would regularly offer one of their daughters to the shrines. See Jean-Claude Galey, “Le créancier, le roi, la mort, essai sur les relations de dépendance dans le Tehri-Garhwal (Himalaya indien),” in *La dette*, *Puruṣārtha* 4 (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1980): 93–163; Tiziana Leucci, “South Indian Temple Dancers: ‘Donated’ to the Deity and ‘Donors’ for the Deity. Two Tamil Inscriptions on Music and Dance in the Rājarājeśvaram Temple (Tañcāvūr, 11th Century),” in *New Dimensions in Tamil Epigraphy: Historical Sources and Multidisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Appasamy Murugaiyan (Chennai: CRE-A Publ., 2012): 209–53.

<sup>19</sup> I intentionally employ the term ‘consecration’ for its original Latin meaning of ‘transforming, making and rendering somebody or something sacred’, ‘to sanctify.’ Some medieval Sanskrit texts clearly mention the initiation ceremony (*dīkṣā*) of those courtesans dedicated to Śiva’s temples (*rudragāṅikās*). See Dominic Goodall, “Introduction,” in *Śaiva Rites of Expiation. A First Edition and Translation of TrilocanaŚiva’s Twelfth-century Prāyaścittasamuccaya (With a Transcription of a Manuscript Transmitting Ḥṛī dayaŚiva’s Prāyaścittasamuccaya)*, ed. and trans. R. Sathyanarayanan (Pondichéry: IFP & EFEO, 2015): 15–62; Dominic Goodall, “Rudragāṅikās: Courtesans in Śiva’s Temple? Some Hitherto Neglected Sanskrit Sources,” *Cracow Indological Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 91–143; Tiziana Leucci, “Royal and Local Patronage of Bhakta Cult: The Case of Temple and Court Dancers,” in *The Archaeology of*

by ethnologist Arnold Van Gannep (1909); a ceremony of refinement, improvement and transformation (Sanskrit: 'saṃskāra')<sup>20</sup> which radically changed the status of the girls from ordinary beings into a god's or a king's servants/ slaves, who thereafter remained at the service of that specific shrine or royal court. If the girl was the natural daughter of a *devadāsī*, she could herself become a *devadāsī* only after her dedication ceremony to a temple's deity; in other words it was not possible to become a *devadāsī* just by birth without undergoing the specific ceremony of consecration. All the aged *devadāsīs* I met during my years of study in India<sup>21</sup> referred to the donation of a girl to a god or goddess by the Sanskrit term *devadāna*, which means 'a donation, a gift, an offering to the gods made forever, an act that is definitive and irreversible.' They explained to me that such an offering should be understood in the sense that the girl's family, from the time of the dedication onwards, renounced all rights and authority over their daughter, so that they could never claim her back.<sup>22</sup> In a number of medieval Tamil epigraphic inscriptions the dedicated girl was referred to as *tevaṇār makal*, which means 'the deity's daughter'. According to the old *devadāsīs* I interviewed, after the consecration ceremony of a girl to a temple she was integrated into the god's lineage, in Sanskrit '*devakula*'; and those who joined the royal court were integrated into the king's lineage, in Sanskrit '*rājakula*'. The donation of a girl to a temple or a court was considered an auspicious and pious act, generating important merits (Sanskrit *punya*). It was believed that it would assure the welfare, health and prosperity not only for the major recipients of such an offering (the temple and the court authorities), but also for the donors and the donated ones, by increasing the wealth and strength of their own families and the general well-being of the entire kingdom. So to better understand both the affinities and the differences between the temple and the court servants/dancers we have to keep in mind, once again, that the ritualistic protocol followed in the temple liturgy closely mirrors the one employed in the past in an Indian royal palace. In other words, the deities are the divine monarchs and their temples are their own palaces. In both the divine and the earthly kings' palaces, a royal retinue (including a number of ministers,

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*Bhakti II: Royal Bhakti, Local Bhakti*, ed. Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid (Pondichéry: IFP & EFEO, 2016): 257–302.

**20** For a study of the various 'saṃskāras' and rites of passages see Rajbali Panday, *Hindu Samskāras. Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993).

**21** The *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs* I interviewed during my years of fieldwork in South India, and with whom I learned dance and music, belonged to the temples and the royal courts of the modern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

**22** For a detailed description of a girl's dedication ceremony to a temple and royal court and her integration into various lineages (Sanskrit: *kula*), see Tiziana Leucci, "L'apprentissage de la danse en Inde du Sud et ses transformations au XXème siècle: le cas des *devadāsī*, *rājadāsī* et *naṭṭuvanār*," *Rivista di Studi Sudasiatici* 3 (2008): 53–87, <http://digital.casalini.it/3132853> [accessed 07.03.2008]; republished in *Dimensions formelle et non formelle de l'éducation en Asie orientale Socialisation et rapport au contenu d'apprentissage*, ed. Jean Marc de Grave (Aix en Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2012): 127–54.

officers, priests, scholars, bards, poets, performing artists, soldiers, astrologers, servants, etc.) daily attend their masters. The earthly king shared the royal power of the deity in the temple, but even so, his own authority was subordinated to that of the god. The same hierarchical order applied in the case of their respective troupe of royal artists.

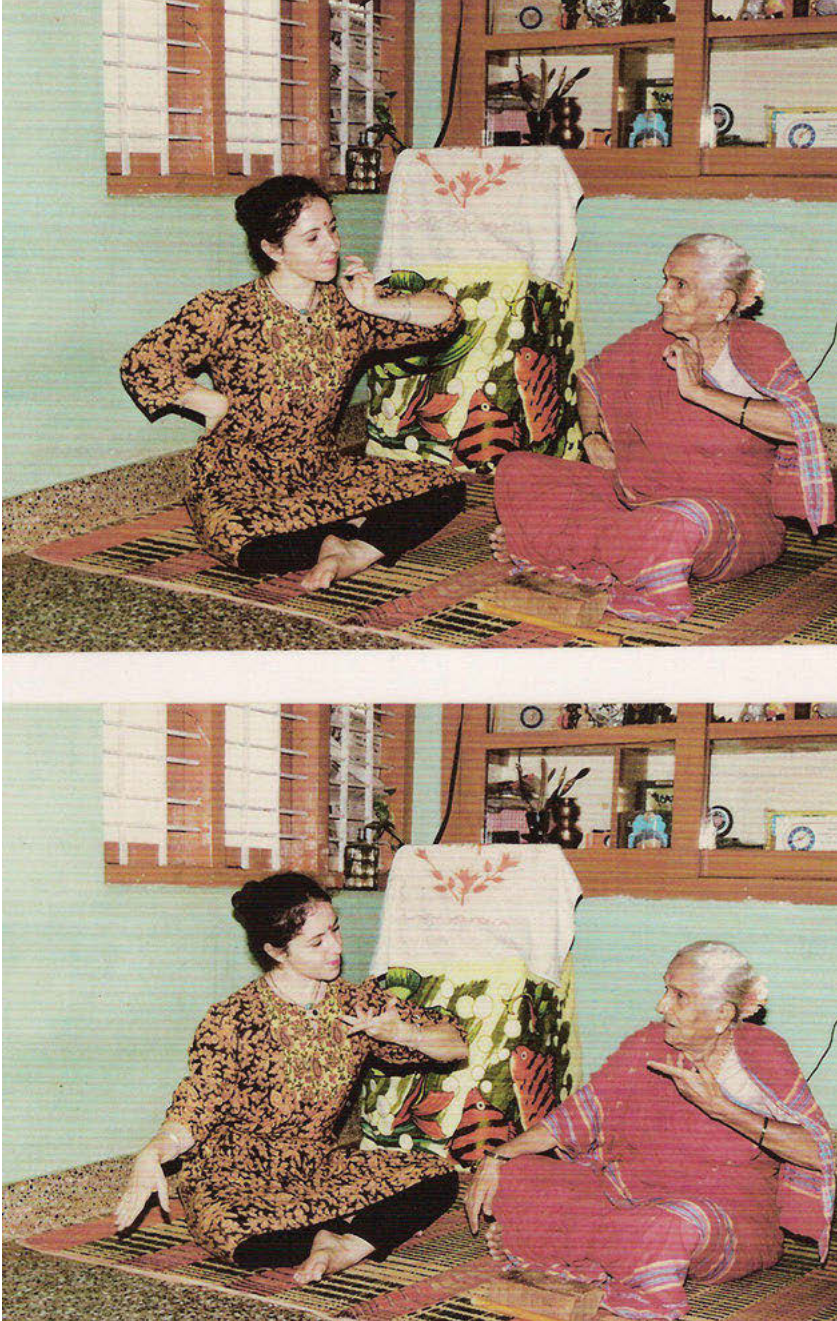
In 1992, I asked the last Mysore court dancer, Kadur Venkatalakshamma (1906–2002), from whom I learnt some pieces of the local music and dance repertoire (Plates 6.1, 6.2), to explain the main difference between *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs*. She replied,

*Devadāsīs* were serving gods, we were serving kings. They could perform their repertoire of dance and songs in both temples and royal palaces, whereas we, the court dancers (*rājadāsīs*), could only perform in the palaces and not in the temples. It was not a question of technical ability. We could easily perform the *devadāsīs*' pieces, because often we were both trained by the same dance and music masters: but we were not entitled to do so, because we were not initiated in the same way they were.<sup>23</sup>

According to Kadur Venkatalakshamma, temple and court dancers were both courtesans and artists, serving a divine and a royal master respectively. To sum up: the *devadāsī*'s divine patron was hierarchically superior to the earthly king, the patron of the *rājadāsī*, consequently the *devadāsīs* underwent a special ceremony of initiation (Sanskrit: *dīkṣā*), a specific rite of passage which made them superior to the *rājadāsīs*, both hierarchically and ritualistically. For both of them the ceremony of consecration to the temple, or to the court, determined not only the changes of their status, but also the beginning of their training in dance, music, poetry and literatures in various Indian languages. The artistic apprenticeship process took place in the house of the elderly *devadāsīs*, *rājadāsīs* and their music and dance masters (Tamil: *naṭṭuvanārs*). The training was quite a strict and a strenuous one (as it still is now for any pupil who gets trained and chooses a career of professional dance in India and elsewhere). The young *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs* used to start their classes early in the morning: they learnt songs and poems, and revised the dances steps and rhythmic sequences, till late in the evening. Except for breaks for meals and a time for resting after lunch, they were occupied by their lessons and by 'serving' their dance, music and poetry masters by also doing all the menial and domestic tasks in their homes. Thus, they were expected to help the teachers' family members to fetch water from the wells, to cut and cook vegetables and rice, to wash clothes, sweep and clean the floor of the house and courtyard, and to prepare incense, camphor, sandal paste and the flower garlands to be offered to the images of the deities, etc. Their training was in many ways very similar to an apprenticeship in other fields of arts and handicraft, in the sense of a true integration of the young pupils into those communities by the transmission of artistic knowledge and the embodiment of the 'secrets' of the specific profession passed on from the senior masters to the new generation. A similar

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<sup>23</sup> The interview took place in Mysore on August 1992.



**Plate 6.1:** Kadur Venkatalakshamma (1906–2002), the last court dancer at the Mysore Royal Palace (today Karnataka State, South India), teaching a song and related hand gestures to Tiziana Leucci.



**Plate 6.2:** Tiziana Leucci performing a South Indian temple dancers' song.

process was quite common in medieval and modern European societies amongst the various arts and handicraft guilds. It is not by chance that Indian performing artists, both in literary and epigraphical texts, were often associated with some castes of artisans. Interestingly, soon after their consecration ceremony the young pupils became members of their masters' family, by integrating into the master's own lineage. That is why the system of integration, or rather the manner of affiliation of the new students to a particular family of artists, as well as the learning process itself which took place in the house of the teachers, were at that time both referred to by the Sanskrit term '*gurukula*', which means 'to be affiliated, to join, to be part of the teacher's (*guru*) lineage, clan (*kula*)'. Thus, soon after their dedication ceremony and the beginning of their artistic training, the young *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs* were affiliated to their new lineages: the lineage of the deity presiding in the temple, i.e. '*devakula*', for the *devadāsī*, and that of the king in his palace, i.e. '*rājakula*', for the *rājadāsī*. Finally, both also integrated into the hereditary artistic families by becoming members of their dance and music masters' lineage ('*gurukula*'). Consequently, the Tamil definitions of the *devadāsī* as the 'gods' daughter' (*tevaṅṅar makal*) and the 'deities' servant' (*tevaratiyāl*), terms found in both the medieval Tamil epigraphic inscriptions and employed in South India till the twentieth century, make perfect sense in the light of their consecration ceremony and their affiliation to the 'divine' lineages of the presiding deities in the temples (Plate 6.3)

## 4 The *Devadāsīs* and *Rājadāsīs* in some European Travellers' Accounts

In addition to my fieldwork in South India, where I conducted my ethnohistorical research, I also studied dance with the masters from the hereditary communities of those temple and court performers. Back home, I started to study the way those female artists and courtesans have been perceived and described by European travellers in India from the late thirteenth century onwards.<sup>24</sup> This historiographical approach of studying

<sup>24</sup> Starting with an account by the Venetian merchant Marco Polo in the thirteenth century, most European visitors to India left descriptions of Indian dancers and courtesans. See Tiziana Leucci, *Devadāsī e Bayadères: tra storia e leggenda. Le danzatrici indiane nei racconti di viaggio e nell'immaginario teatrale occidentale (XIII–XX secolo)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005); Tiziana Leucci, "From Jean-Baptiste Lully to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The Construction of the Indian Dancer Character (*Bayadère*) on the European Stage (1681–1798)," in *From Pastoral to Revolution. European Dance Culture in the 18th Century* (2. *Rothenfelser Tanzsymposium*), ed. Uwe Schlottermüller, Howard Weiner and Maria Richter (Freiburg: Fa-Gisis Musik und Tanzedition, 2008): 115–31; Tiziana Leucci, "Vestales indiennes: les danseuses de temple dans les récits de voyage et l'imaginaire théâtral orientaliste (1780–1811)," in *Synergies Inde*, vol. 4, *L'orientalisme à l'humanisme en crise. Ponts entre l'Inde et l'Europe*, ed. Vidya Vencatesan and Philippe Benoit (Mumbai: Revue du GERFLINT, 2009): 171–79, <https://gerflint.fr/Base/>





**Plate 6.3:** Photo portrait of three young South Indian temple dancers.

Western sources, which were complemented by Indian ones, was very useful for gaining knowledge of the temple and the court culture throughout those earlier centuries, and for understanding the complex socio-religious and artistic institutions of the Indian courtesans through the observations and the interpretations of European travellers in South Asia. I will quote here just a few of those reports. The custom of consecrating young girls to the local deities, as well as the artistic and ritualistic roles played by the large numbers of dancing women employed in both temples and royal palaces, intrigued the majority of foreign travellers in India. It also aroused the contempt of a number of Christian missionaries, who could not understand and accept the presence of those dancers and courtesans within the temple precincts and in the local liturgy. From the early European accounts we see that the majority of authors were surprised at the prestige the women enjoyed in the eyes of the local population, religious and political authorities included, even if everyone was aware of their profession and the kind of life they led. What particularly shocked the missionaries were facts that the Indian courtesans, whether attached to a temple, a court, or with their own salon, did not get married; that they were very rich and cultivated, their profession was considered very privileged and that they had several lovers from amongst the most powerful and wealthy members of the aristocracy and the religious authorities. In fact, marriage was not at all part of their duties (*dharma*), unlike the rest of the female population at that time. In some of my previous works, I demonstrated the existence of a specific code of

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Inde4/leucci.pdf [accessed 25.08.2022]; Tiziana Leucci, "The Curiosity for the 'Others'. The Interest for Indian Dances and Oriental Customs (and Costumes) in Europe (1663–1821)," in *All'Ungaresca – al Espanol. The Variety of European Dance Culture from 1420 to 1820 (3. Rothenfelser Tanzsymposium)*, ed. Uwe Schlottermüller, Howard Weiner and Maria Richter (Freiburg: Fa-Gisis Musik und Tanzedition, 2012): 109–31; Tiziana Leucci, "Between Seduction and Redemption. The European Perception of South Indian Temple Dancers in Travelers' Accounts and Theatre Plays," in *Music, Dance and the Art of Seduction*, ed. Frank Kouwenhoven and James Kippen (Delft: Eburon-Chime, 2013): 261–87; Tiziana Leucci, "De la 'danseuse de temple' des voyageurs et missionnaires Européens à la 'bayadère' des philosophes et artistes (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle)," in *L'Inde des Lumières: De l'orientalisme aux sciences sociales (XVIIe–XIXe siècle)*, ed. Marie Fourcade and Ines Zupanov (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2013): 253–88; Tiziana Leucci, "Fascinantes bayadères, mais étrange musique . . . Réception française des danseuses indiennes: des récits de voyage aux œuvres de E. de Jouy, T. Gautier et H. Berlioz," in *Fascinantes étrangetés. La découverte de l'altérité musicale en Europe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Yves Defrance, Luc Charles Dominique and Danièle Pistone (Paris: L'Harmattan en collaboration avec le Festival Hector Berlioz-La Côte St. André, 2014): 343–65; Tiziana Leucci, "The 16th Century Portuguese Travel Accounts at the Origin of the Indian Dancer Character of the 'Bayadère' in the European Literary and Stage Productions," *Choreologica. The Journal of the European Association for Dance History* 11, no. 1 (2021): 75–134; Joep Bor, "Mamia, Ammani and Other Bayadères: Europe's Portrayal of India's Temple Dancers," in *Portrayal of the East: Music and the Oriental Imagination in the British Empire, 1780–1940*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007): 39–70; Joep Bor, "On the Dancers or Devadasis: Jacob Haafner's Account of the Eighteenth-Century Indian Temple Dancers," in *Music, Dance and the Art of Seduction*, ed. Frank Kouwenhoven and James Kippen (Delft: Eburon, 2013): 233–60 (J. Haffner's original text: 415–21).



behavior (*svadharmā*), similar to any other professional community, class, or caste in India.<sup>25</sup> Such a specific code was conceived in contrast to that applying to the majority of women, for whom marriage was an obligation, with the exception only of female ascetics, and Jaina and Buddhist nuns. As such, their duties and rules of conduct were totally contrary to, though complementary with, those of married women with whom they shared their husbands, who often were the courtesans' lovers and patrons. Consequently marriage, with its strict rules of female chastity, modesty, limitation of movement and segregation in the innermost areas of the house, particularly for upper-caste women, was considered an obstacle to the artistic profession of the courtesans which necessitated free movement and interaction with other male artists and musicians to enable public performances. Though we have some examples of courtesans marrying kings and becoming themselves queens (as we will see later on), they generally refrained from marrying their patrons and lovers in order to respect and conform to their own community's *svadharmā*. Interestingly, their specific occupation seemed to be the *sine qua non* condition for the enjoyment of a number of privileges in the temples and royal courts. Indeed, it was above all kings, aristocrats, priests and chiefs of monasteries who supported and protected the courtesans and their institutions. In other words, if the courtesans fulfilled their specific duties (*svadharmā*), which included their freedom to choose one or more lovers, they were not at all considered shameless, but rather virtuous. Thus, only by faithfully observing their own code of conduct would they be highly esteemed, appreciated and honoured. Local informants were explicit about the fact that, if the women practiced their occupation well, this respect for the rules of their profession could ensure them redemption for faults they had committed in present and even past lives, and obtain their release. The majority of European travellers, especially the missionaries, expressed great surprise at this explanation and questioned Indian 'morality', particularly that of priests and kings, to denigrate them. They also realised that in India, there was little sign of morality as conceived at that time in the West as a legacy of Judeo-Christian traditions, and they took the issue of the temple dancers and courtesans as a pretext for attacking the local religious and political practices as 'wicked', 'wrongful', 'evil' and 'degenerate', in order to strengthen and legitimate European colonial power and, for the missionaries, their work of evangelisation. Of the large number of European authors, I will quote as examples the Portuguese military officers Duarte Barbosa, Domingo Paes and Fernão Nuniz; the French army officers Maistre de la Tour and Etienne de Jouy, who was also a poet and a librettist for operas

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25 See Tiziana Leucci, "Du Dāsī Āttam au Bharata Nāṭyam: ethnohistoire d'une tradition chorégraphique et de sa moralisation et nationalisation dans l'Inde coloniale et post-coloniale" (PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales Paris, 2009); Tiziana Leucci, "Courtisanes vs épouses indiennes: l'art et la culture comme 'devoir statutaire' (*dharma*)," *Journal Asiatique* 303, no. 2 (2015): 284–94; Tiziana Leucci, "Deux modèles du *strīdharmā*: la courtisane et l'épouse," in *Les visages du dharma*, ed. Silvia D'Intino and Christelle Barois (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, forthcoming).

and ballets;<sup>26</sup> and finally some missionaries: the Dutch Protestant Calvinist Father Abraham Rogerius, the British Anglican Reverend Dr. Claud Buchanan and the French Catholic priest Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois. Their chronicles not only demonstrate the enduring importance those female artists had within the liturgic contexts in the local shrines and in the royal court during the most prestigious public religious festivals and ceremonies, but also the interest displayed by all foreign visitors in India towards those charming and talented dancers and musicians. I will now let them speak for themselves.

## 4.1 'Livro de Duarte Barbosa'

In the introduction to the English translation of Barbosa's chronicle, Mansel Longworth Dames mentions that Duarte Barbosa (1480–1519, or 1521?) arrived in India in the year 1500, most probably with Pedro Alvarez Cabral's army, and stayed there until 1516 or 1517 (pp. xxxiii–xxxiv). According to Dames, he started to compose his *livro* in 1516, and most probably completed it around 1518. Barbosa in his book refers to the Muslims of India as *moors*, whereas Hindus and Jains are called by him *gentios* (a term translated by Dames as 'heathens'). Dames based his translation, from which the following quotations have been taken, on a Portuguese manuscript found in Lisbon in 1813. An earlier, Italian translation formed part of the monumental work by Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, which was published in Venice in 1563. Barbosa, like previous travellers, admires the Indian culture and people.

### 4.1.1 The City of Cambaya

The people of Cambaya<sup>27</sup> are of great culture, accustomed to good clothing, leading a luxurious life, given to pleasures and vices. They feed well, and their custom is always to wash and anoint themselves with sweet-smelling unguents. They always, men and women alike, wear in their hair jasmine flowers or others which they grow there. They are great musicians in many modes of playing and singing.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See Tiziana Leucci, *Devadāsī e Bayadères: tra storia e leggenda. Le danzatrici indiane nei racconti di viaggio e nell'immaginario teatrale occidentale (XIII–XX secolo)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005): 104–13.

<sup>27</sup> Cambay (known today as Khambhat) was a city in the kingdom of the same name in the Western Indian region (in the present state of Gujarat). For a detailed analysis of the Portuguese sources on Indian courtesans see Tiziana Leucci, "The 16th Century Portuguese Travel Accounts at the Origin of the Indian Dancer Character of the 'Bayadère' in the European Literary and Stage Productions," *Choreologica. The Journal of the European Association for Dance History* 11, no. 1 (2021): 75–134.

<sup>28</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed about the Year 1518 A. D.*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1918–1921): 141.

After mentioning the city of Cambay, Barbosa left us an admiring description of the capital city of Vijayanagar (today in the state of Karnataka) in the empire of the same name, which he spelled *Bisnagua*. He was highly impressed by the beauty of its palaces and roads, by the wealth and the safety of the city for foreign merchants, pilgrims and travellers, and by the religious respect and tolerance towards all creeds and beliefs.

#### 4.1.2 Customs of the Kingdom of Narsinga and of the Inhabitants of the Country

They teach their women from childhood to sing, play and dance, and to turn about and take many light steps. These women are very beautiful and very bold. [ . . . ] The King has in his palace many women of position, daughters of great lords of the realm, and others as well, some as concubines, and some as handmaids. For this purpose the fairest and most healthy women are sought throughout the kingdom, that they may do him service with cleanliness and neatness, for all the service is carried out by women, and they do all the work inside the gates, and hold all the duties of the household. They are all gathered inside the palace, where they have in plenty all that they require, and have many good lodgings. They sing and play and offer a thousand other pleasures as well to the king. They bathe daily in the many *tanques* of which I spoke above, and kept for that purpose.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, Barbosa relates that the local king in the course of a war takes those dancers with him, in order to inspire love, courage, strength and deeds of heroism in his captains during the battles against his enemies. This custom is reminiscent of European idealised forms of courtly love between knights and their beloved ladies, about which a number of poems were composed and sung by medieval poets and troubadours:

Between both horse and foot the King of Narsingahas has more than a hundred thousand men of war continually in his pay, and five or six thousand women, who are courtezans, whom also he pays to march in his train, and wheresover he wishes to make war he distributes them according to the number of men whom he sends forth, and he says that war cannot be waged where there are no women. These are all unmarried great musicians, dancers and acrobats, and very quick and nimble at their performances.<sup>30</sup>

The King of Narsinga is oft times at war with the King of Daquem and the King of Otisa, who is another Heathen king, which also is situated within in the interior; and all these do one another all the injury they can. He of Narsinga seldom goes to the war himself but sends his captains and armies, and when the war has arrived at such a point that he considers it necessary to go in person, and when he has settled in his Council he will go; [ . . . ]. To all his captains he gives good

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<sup>29</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed about the Year 1518 A. D.*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1918–1921): 205–8.

<sup>30</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed about the Year 1518 A. D.*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1918–1921): 211–12.

pay, and more especially to the numerous unmarried women, very many of whom they take with them, some of whom are much respected and of great importance, rich and beautiful, wherefore those who are enamoured of them fight better to do them service [. . .]. And it is said that there is a great concourse of men thither from many lands on account of these same women. Among them are many women who are reserved for the king, and these travel in great state for they have great riches. Each of these principal women takes in her train five or six very beautiful young women, who are made over to her by their mothers to be brought up, and they take them to the Court, where they are settled on good pay, and this they hold among them to be a great honour. Some of them are so rich that a short time ago one of them, dying without son or daughter, made the King heir to all her property, and when he sent to collect that which she had left, found that a sum of seventy thousand *pardaos* [local gold coin] remained as well as another twelve thousand, which during her life she had set apart and left to one of her handmaids whom she brought up from the childhood; wherein there is no great marvel, for this kind of merchandise is the greatest and richest found in this world!<sup>31</sup>

## 4.2 Domingo Paes' Report

In 1498, Vasco de Gama landed on the southwest coast of India in the modern state of Kerala. Soon after, in 1500, Pedro Alvarez Cabral arrived in Cochin with an army and settled there more permanently. A few years later, in 1510, he reached Goa, where he established Portuguese supremacy over trade in the Persian Gulf for some one hundred years. One of the members of the first expedition, Domingo Paes, left awe-struck descriptions, written between 1520 and 1522 of the magnificence and wealth of the capital city of the Vijayanagara kingdom, and about the prestige of its courtesans.

These pagodas<sup>32</sup> are buildings in which they pray and have their idols; the idols are of many sorts, namely, figures of men and women, of bulls, and apes, while others have nothing but a round stone which they worship. [. . .] These *Bayladheras* (female dancers) are of loose character, and live in the best streets that are in the city (Vijayanagar); it is the same in all their cities, their streets have the best rows of houses. They are very much esteemed, and are classed among those honoured ones who are the mistresses of the captains; any respectable man may go to their houses without any blame attaching thereto. These women are allowed even to enter the

<sup>31</sup> Duarte Barbosa, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa. An Account of the Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed about the Year 1518 A. D.*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Mansel Longworth Dames (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1918–1921): 224–26.

<sup>32</sup> According to the French historian Guy Deleury, the term 'pagoda' derives from the Sanskrit name of the Hindu goddess Bhagavati, which the Portuguese pronounced 'Pagoti'. She was one of the major deities worshipped in the city of Goa, where the Portuguese established their headquarters. The term was also used by other European travellers and colonial officers to refer to the local deity's place of worship, and any other temple and shrine in India as well. See Guy Deleury, ed., *Les Indes florissantes. Anthologie des voyageurs français (1750–1820)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991): 1044.

presence of the wives of the king, and they stay with them and eat *betel* with them, a thing which no other person may do, no matter what his rank may be.<sup>33</sup>

[. . .] Who can adequately describe to you the great riches these women carry about their person? Collars of gold with so many diamonds and rubies and pearls, bracelets also on their arms and on their upper arms, girdles below, and of necessity anklets on the feet. The marvel should be otherwise, namely that women of such a profession should obtain such wealth; but there are women among them who have lands that have been given to them, and litters, and so many maid-servants that one cannot number all their things. There is a woman in this city who is said to have a hundred thousand *pardaos* (i.e. a gold coin), and I believe this from what I have seen of them.<sup>34</sup>

### 4.3 The Chronicle ('Chronica') by Fernão Nuniz

Fernão Nuniz was a Portuguese horse trader and a chronicler who lived in the capital city of Vijayanagar between 1535 and 1537, as did his predecessors Duarte Barbosa and Domingo Paes. His descriptions of the local customs he observed during his three years in India, though less detailed than the previous authors, nevertheless add a few elements that are quite interesting for us. For instance, he mentions the other name of one of the major queens of the ruling king Krishnarao, who had been his beloved courtesan before his coronation, and relates that the king was so devoted to and in love with her that he even built her a new city:

Now the King Crisnarao (Krishnarao), when he was young and growing up in this city of *Bisnaga* (Vijayanagar), had an intrigue with a courtesan for whom he had much affection, and who was called Chinadevidy, and for the great love he bore for her he promised many times that if ever he became King he would marry her; and though he said this in jest, it afterwards became true, so the history records. [. . .] Afterwards the king married many other wives, for these kings hold it a very honourable thing to have many wives; and this King Crisnarao married four, and yet he loved this one better than any of the others. This King built a city in honour of this woman, for the love he bore her, and called its name Nagallapor and surrounded it with a new wall which is one of the best works that he has in his kingdom, and he made in it a street very long and large with houses all of masonry. In order to people this town he ordered all the chiefs of his kingdom to build themselves palaces therein, and so they did.<sup>35</sup>

33 Domingo Paes, "Chronicle of the Vijayanagar Kings," in *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar). A Contribution to the History of India. Chronicles of Paes and Nuniz*, ed. Robert Sewell (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd., 1900 [1824]): 241–42.

34 Domingo Paes, "Chronicle of the Vijayanagar Kings," in *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar). A Contribution to the History of India. Chronicles of Paes and Nuniz*, ed. Robert Sewell (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd., 1900 [1824]): 270–74.

35 Fernão Nuniz, "Chronicle of the Kings of Bisnaga," in *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar). A Contribution to the History of India. Chronicles of Paes and Nuniz*, ed. Robert Sewell (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd., 1900 [1824]): 362–64, 366.

## 4.4 Maistre de la Tour

Another valuable account of South Indian court dancers was written by the eighteenth-century French artillery commander Maistre de la Tour. He served Sultan Haider Ali Khan, the ruler of the Mysore kingdom (in present-day Karnataka State) and father to the famous Tipu Sultan,<sup>36</sup> helping him in his fight against the British army. He lived at the royal court for three years, and when he returned to France he published in 1783 in Paris a book entitled *Histoire d'Ayder-Ali-Khan*. Here are a few paragraphs about the local court dancers:

At present the court of Ayder-Ali is one of the most famous in India, particularly his royal troupe of dancing girls which is certainly one of the most prestigious [. . .]. The theatre troupe (French: *Comédie*) in the court is composed only of women. A lady director, who also acts as impresario, selects and purchases from among little girls of four and five years old the most graceful ones [. . .]. The young girls so instructed start to give public performances when they are about ten or eleven years old; generally the features of their faces are the finest and the most delicate, with big black eyes, beautiful eyebrows, a little vermilion mouth and shining teeth; dimples in the cheeks, chin and in each finger; long black plaited hair reaching to the ground [. . .]. Their clothes are made of embroidered fabrics or golden brocades, richly decorated; they are covered in jewels from head to foot. [. . .] The tunes of the arias are joyful and pleasant, and the words sung by the solo voice often express the lamentations of lovelorn lovers. [. . .] The dancing girls are superior in their art to the actresses and singers, and we can also say that they would be highly appreciated and admired if they were to perform on the stage of the *Opéra* in Paris: [. . .] they are slight although their legs are very strong; they turn on one foot and stand up quickly with amazing vigour the next moment. They are so precise in the execution of the steps and the rhythmic sequences that they are able to accompany the other musical instruments with the sound of their ankle-bells, and because their gait is very elegant and their bodies are fine and lively, all their movements are consequently extremely graceful.<sup>37</sup>

It is clear that the artistic skills and charming allure of Indian dancers impressed Maistre de la Tour a great deal. He felt that they truly deserved to perform at the European 'temple' of the dance of his time: the *Opéra* in Paris.

## 4.5 Etienne de Jouy

Posted in India from 1786 to 1790 as an official of the French army, Etienne de Jouy (1764–1846) attended a number of performances by local Indian dancers. Impressed by their beauty and artistic skill, he created two librettos with these *rājadāsīs* and *devadāsīs* in mind, whom he saw as sharing a number of functions with ancient

<sup>36</sup> About Tipu Sultan's court dancers see Jennifer Howes' contribution in this volume.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Guy Deleury, ed., *Les Indes florissantes. Anthologie des voyageurs français (1750–1820)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991): 753–54, translated from the original French by Tiziana Leucci.

Roman priestesses:<sup>38</sup> the opera *La Vestale* ('The Vestal') with music by Gaspare Spontini, which premiered in Paris in 1807; and the opera-ballet *Les Bayadères*, which was dedicated entirely to Indian dancers. With the music composed by Charles-Simon Catel, it was performed for the first time in Paris in 1810 (Plate 6.4), attended, among others, by Napoléon Bonaparte, who appreciated it a lot. Étienne de Jouy found it necessary to include in his libretto a long introduction about the *bayadères* to inform the public about their privileges and the prestige and importance of their institution in Indian society:

To the Indian name of *Devedassis*, *Devaliales*, the French have substituted that of *Bayadères*, a corruption of the term *Ballaidera* that the Portuguese employed to define this large community of young girls consecrated both to the cult of gods and to voluptuousness. [ . . . ] The young girl whom her parents choose to dedicate to the pagoda must be presented to the *guru* (chief Brahmin) before she comes of age; beauty is an essential condition that no other consideration of birth or wealth can ever substitute. [ . . . ] Once the girl is accepted, the Brahmins and the dance and music masters take care of her education. [ . . . ] Their dance is essentially a pantomime. [ . . . ] As for their way of portraying the passions of desire and the transports of love, we can perhaps reproach them with what our actresses rarely deserve to receive as a remark: the capacity to penetrate so deeply in their roles and to mime nature so closely. [ . . . ] The *Bayadères* enjoy honorific privileges which in other countries would hardly be accorded them due to the unevenness of their customs. In many regions of Hindustan, particularly in Bengal, only the superior Brahmins and the *Devadassis* can approach the prince and sit in his presence; during public ceremonies they always occupy the first ranks, and any insult addressed to them is punished as strictly as those addressed to the Brahmins. Like them, the *Bayadères* are vegetarians, and are compelled, during night and day, to recite prayers and to carry out ablutions, and nothing can exempt them from performing such duties. Depending on their wealth, all the temples maintain a more or less considerable number of *Bayadères*; the biggest temples, like those of Jagannath or the one of Chidambaram, can have up to 150 of them, who are very beautiful and whose ornaments are extremely valuable.<sup>39</sup>

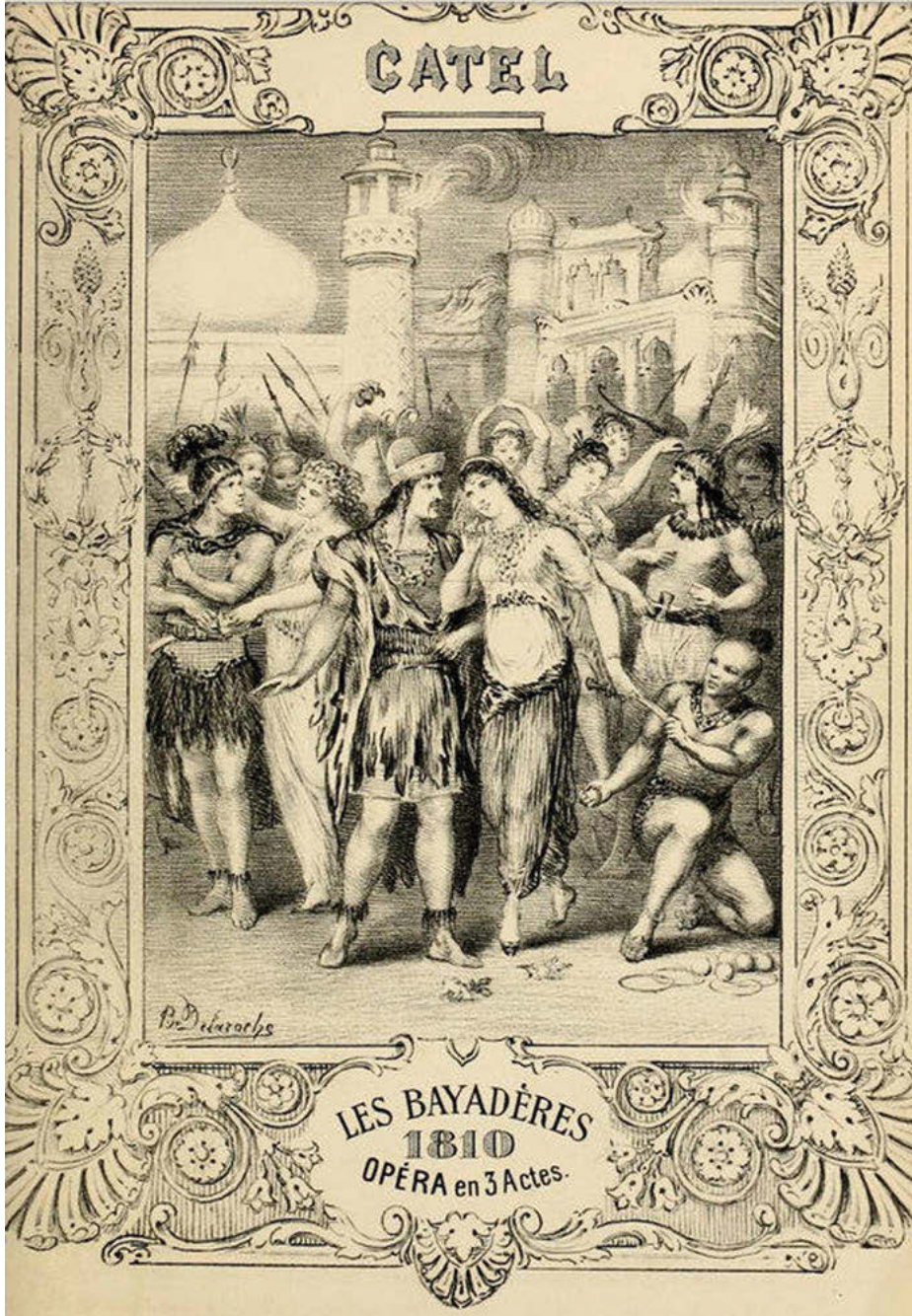
## 5 The *Devadāsīs* and *Rājadāsīs* in Some Missionaries' Reports

Having read the accounts of those European officers in India, let us now turn our attention to the writings of missionaries. From the large number of descriptions I have chosen to quote here only three authors.

<sup>38</sup> About the comparison between the ancient Roman Vestals and the Indian *devadāsīs* see Tiziana Leucci, "Vestales indiennes: les danseuses de temple dans les récits de voyage et l'imaginaire théâtral orientaliste (1780–1811)," in *Synergies Inde*, vol. 4, *L'orientalisme à l'humanisme en crise. Ponts entre l'Inde et l'Europe*, ed. Vidya Vencatesan and Philippe Benoit (Mumbai: Revue du GERFLINT, 2009): 171–80, <https://gerflint.fr/Base/Inde4/leucci.pdf> [accessed 25.08.2022].

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Guy Deleury, ed., *Les Indes florissantes. Anthologie des voyageurs français (1750–1820)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991): 752–53, translated from the original French by Tiziana Leucci.





**Plate 6.4:** Cover page of the music score for the opera-ballet 'Les Bayadères' (Paris, 1810), libretto by Etienne de Jouy (1764–1846), music by Charles-Simon Catel (1773–1830).

## 5.1 Abraham Rogerius

I will start with the Dutch Calvinist Abraham Rogerius, who lived in South India in the coastal town of Pulicat (in present-day Tamil Nadu state) from 1630 to 1640. He reported his experience in a work published in Leiden (1651), then translated from the original Dutch into French in 1670 under the title *La Porte ouverte pour parvenir à la connaissance du Paganisme caché, et la vraye représentation de la vie, des mœurs, de la Religion & du service divin des Brahmines* [ . . . ], meaning: ‘The Open Door to achieve the Knowledge of the Hidden Paganism, and the True Representation of the Life, the Customs, the Religion and the Brahmins’ Divine Service [ . . . ]’, to which the French translator, Thomas Lagrue, added: *Le Théâtre de l’Idolâtrie* (‘The Theatre of Idolatry’). The book was famous in its time as it was the first to put forward explanations of ‘Indian paganism’ obtained from a Brāhmin’s own lips, those of a certain Padmanābha. I quote here an excerpt about the *devadāsīs* whom Rogerius refers to as the ‘temple whores’, whose association with shrines had surprised him although he sums up the local explanation. Compared to the previous accounts, the Christian missionary stresses on the term ‘whores’ employed several times here, which shows his moralistic and judgemental attitude towards the lifestyle of those female artists. By contrast, the reaction of the Brāhmin informant is completely devoid of any sense of embarrassment towards them:

It seems a strange thing, given that these Brahmins hold temples to be sacred places, and the images so holy that *Shudras* do not dare touch them, that they nevertheless allow women of ill repute to be taken into the service of their gods. Not only do they let women who are improperly covered dance before them but women whose shameless behaviour is known by all. It seems strange, I repeat, but when you have heard the opinion they have of these whores, it will no longer seem so strange: One day, having the occasion to talk with the Brahman Padmanaba about the whores, he said that whores living in shamelessness could nevertheless behave so as to achieve release: which happens when those they court are faithful to them and if they do not break the agreement they have made together: Yes, he even said that such whores who are faithful to their favourites and receive them well will be rewarded for it in the life to come. [ . . . ] Now, with such an opinion of whores, it is no wonder that they use them in the divine service, and that they let them draw so near to Wistnou and Eswara [i.e. Viṣṇu and Īśvara, that is Śiva].<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Abraham Rogerius, *Le Théâtre de l’Idolâtrie ou la porte ouverte, pour parvenir à la cognoissance du paganisme caché, et la vraye représentation de la vie, des mœurs, de la religion, & du service divin des Bramines, qui demeurent sur les Costes de Chormandel, & aux Pays circonvoisins*, trans. Thomas la Grue (Amsterdam: Jean Schipper, 1670): 201–20, translated from the French by Nora Scott.

## 5.2 The Reverend Dr Claud Buchanan

In the following centuries, while Indian dancers were winning the heart of European travellers, poets, choreographers and composers,<sup>41</sup> the reactions of some other missionaries were even more virulent than that of Rogerius. The Reverend Dr. Claud Buchanan, a Briton, was rather horrified when he attended a festival that featured a processional temple chariot in the city of Puri, today in Orissa state. The following paragraphs illustrate his attitude, which was, sadly, very much shared by other European missionaries:

*Jaggernaut, 20th June 1806.* On Wednesday last the great day of the Rutt Jatra, Moloch was brought out of his Temple amidst the voices of thousands of his worshippers [ . . . ]. When the Idol was placed on his throne, a shout was raised such as I can never hear again on earth. [ . . . ] For Moloch receives no musical hosannas; but a hoarse roar from the men; and from the women an uttering which I cannot describe [ . . . ]. A high priest of obscenity moved the wooden horse, and

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41 See Tiziana Leucci, *Devadāsī e Bayadères: tra storia e leggenda. Le danzatrici indiane nei racconti di viaggio e nell'immaginario teatrale occidentale (XIII–XX secolo)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005); Tiziana Leucci, "From Jean-Baptiste Lully to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The Construction of the Indian Dancer Character (*Bayadère*) on the European Stage (1681–1798)," in *From Pastoral to Revolution. European Dance Culture in the 18th Century (2. Rothenfelser Tanzsymposium)*, ed. Uwe Schlottermüller, Howard Weiner and Maria Richter (Freiburg: Fa-Gisis Musik und Tanzedition, 2008): 115–31; Tiziana Leucci, "Vestales indiennes: les danseuses de temple dans les récits de voyage et l'imaginaire théâtral orientaliste (1780–1811)," in *Synergies Inde*, vol. 4, *L'orientalisme à l'humanisme en crise. Ponts entre l'Inde et l'Europe*, ed. Vidya Vencatesan and Philippe Benoit (Mumbai: Revue du GERFLINT, 2009): 171–80, <https://gerflint.fr/Base/Inde4/leucci.pdf> [accessed 25.08.2022]; Tiziana Leucci, "The Curiosity for the 'Others'. The Interest for Indian Dances and Oriental Customs (and Costumes) in Europe (1663–1821)," in *All'Ungaresca – al Espanol. The Variety of European Dance Culture from 1420 to 1820 (3. Rothenfelser Tanzsymposium)*, ed. Uwe Schlottermüller, Howard Weiner and Maria Richter (Freiburg: Fa-Gisis Musik und Tanzedition, 2012): 109–31; Tiziana Leucci, "Between Seduction and Redemption. The European Perception of South Indian Temple Dancers in Travelers' Accounts and Theatre Plays," in *Music, Dance and the Art of Seduction*, ed. Frank Kouwenhoven and James Kippen (Delf: Eburon-Chime, 2013): 261–87; Tiziana Leucci, "De la 'danseuse de temple' des voyageurs et missionnaires Européens à la 'bayadère' des philosophes et artistes (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle)," in *L'Inde des Lumières: De l'orientalisme aux sciences sociales (XVIIe–XIXe siècle)*, ed. Marie Fourcade and Ines Zupanov (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2013): 253–88; Tiziana Leucci, "Fascinantes bayadères, mais étrange musique . . . Réception française des danseuses indiennes: des récits de voyage aux œuvres de E. de Jouy, T. Gautier et H. Berlioz," in *Fascinantes étrangetés. La découverte de l'altérité musicale en Europe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Yves Defrance, Luc Charles Dominique and Danièle Pistone (Paris: L'Harmattan en collaboration avec le Festival Hector Berlioz-La Côte St. André, 2014): 343–65; Tiziana Leucci, "The 16th Century Portuguese Travel Accounts at the Origin of the Indian Dancer Character of the 'Bayadère' in the European Literary and Stage Productions," *Choreologica. The Journal of the European Association for Dance History* 11, no. 1 (2021): 75–134; Joep Bor, "Mamia, Ammani and Other Bayadères: Europe's Portrayal of India's Temple Dancers," in *Portrayal of the East: Music and the Oriental Imagination in the British Empire, 1780–1940*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007): 39–70; Joep Bor, "On the Dancers or Devadāsīs: Jacob Haafner's Account of the Eighteenth-Century Indian Temple Dancers," in *Music, Dance and the Art of Seduction*, ed. Frank Kouwenhoven and James Kippen (Delft: Eburon, 2013): 233–60 (J. Haafner's original text: 415–21).

pronounced indecent stanzas to the multitude, who responded at intervals. [ . . . ] The chief abomination within [the temple] is perhaps the dancing women, who twice in the day exhibit themselves before him. [ . . . ] Jaggernaut's abominations are obscenity and blood.<sup>42</sup>

Buchanan's reactions are quite eloquent: temple rituals are obscene and bloody, the temple 'dancing women' are the 'chief abomination', and accordingly, the Hindu god Jagannath is a true Canaanite 'Moloch', lascivious, bloodthirsty and demonic. His remarks neatly encapsulate some of the major arguments used later on by colonial writers and by Western and Indian moral and social reformers, as we will see shortly, in order to recast Hinduism and legally abolish the '*devadāsī* system' in colonial and post-colonial India.<sup>43</sup>

### 5.3 Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois

Some years later a French Catholic priest, the Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois (1766–1848), was sent as a missionary to South India and spent several years in the Mysore region. In 1817, he published a book titled *Description of the character, manners, and customs of the People of India; and of their institutions religious and civil . . .*, later on published in French in 1825. The book was quite successful, and its English version was reprinted several times during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A few decades ago, the French scholar Sylvia Murr demonstrated that Jean-Antoine Dubois had in fact plagiarised the work of his compatriot, Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux, a Jesuit priest.<sup>44</sup> Cœurdoux's original manuscript had been transcribed by the French military officer Nicolas-Jacques Desvaulx, who was close to the Jesuit missionaries. Desvaulx's transcript was copied by Dubois, who sold it to the British East Indian Company in Madras for publication, claiming that he was the author. I quote some paragraphs:

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<sup>42</sup> Claud Buchanan, *Letters Written during Travels through Part of British India between 1806 and 1808 by the Rev. Dr. Claud. Buchanan*, Microfilm (Library of the Maison des Science de l'Homme [MSH] Paris, n.d.): 17–35.

<sup>43</sup> About the legal debates for the abolition of the *devadāsī* system see Kunal M. Parker, "A Corporation of 'Superior Prostitutes'. Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998): 559–633; Kay K. Jordan, *From Sacred Servant to Profane Prostitute. A History of the Changing Legal Status of the Devadāsīs in India, 1857–1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003); Tiziana Leucci, "Du Dāsī Āttam au Bharata Nātyam: ethnohistoire d'une tradition chorégraphique et de sa moralisation et nationalisation dans l'Inde coloniale et post-coloniale" (PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales Paris, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> See Sylvia Murr, "Nicolas Jacques Desvaulx (1745–1823) véritable auteur de '*Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde*' de l'Abbé Dubois," in *Puruṣārtha*, vol. 3 (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1977): 245–58; Sylvia Murr, *L'Inde philosophique entre Bossuet et Voltaire*, vol. 1, *Mœurs et coutumes des Indiens (1777), un inédit du Père G.-L. Cœurdoux S.J. dans la version de N.-J. Desvaulx*, ed. Sylvia Murr (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1987).

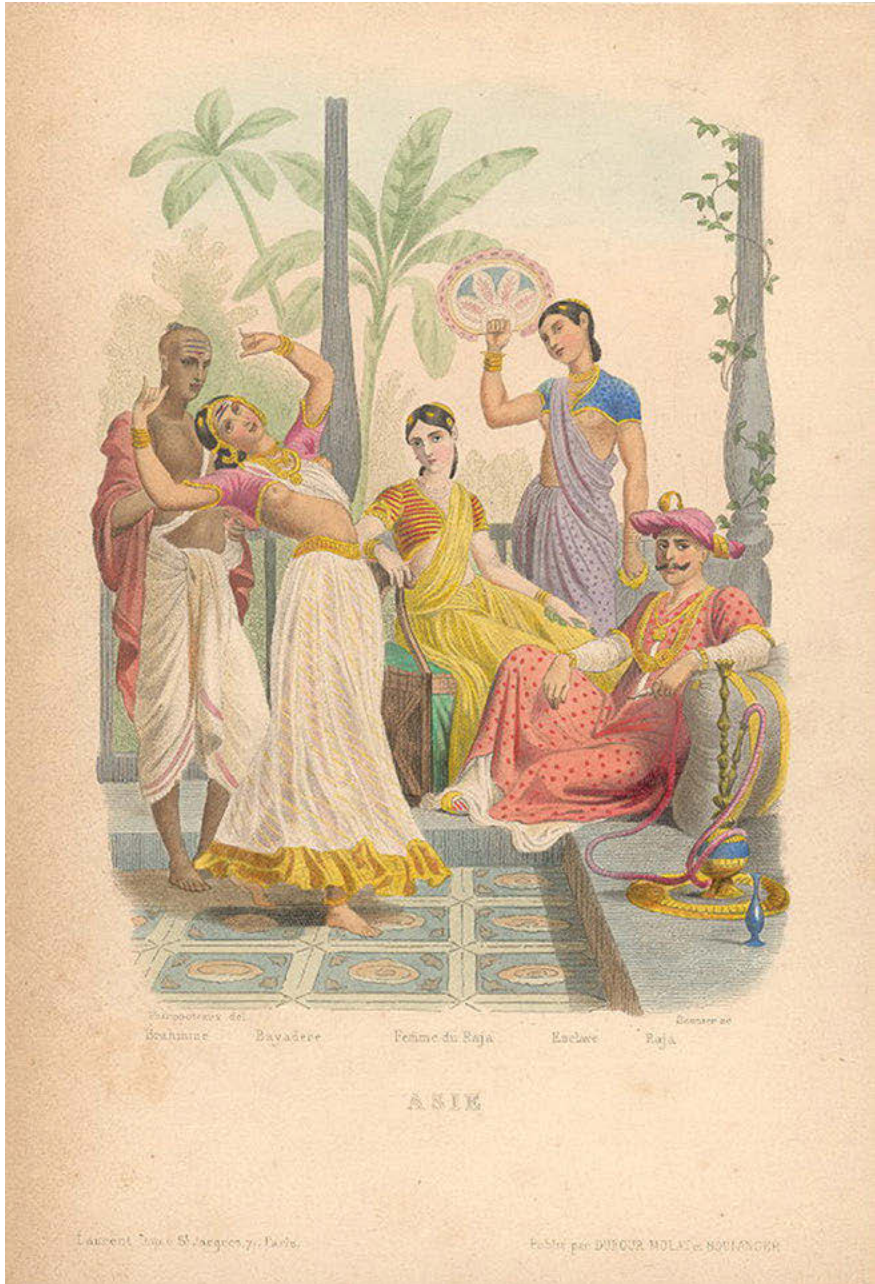
The courtesans or dancing girls attached to each temple [ . . . ] are called *devadasis* (servants or slaves of the gods). [ . . . ] Their official duties consist in dancing and singing within the temple twice a day, morning and evening, and also at all public ceremonies. The first they execute with sufficient grace, although their attitudes are lascivious and their gestures indecorous. As regards their singing, it is almost always confined to obscene verses describing some licentious episode in the history of their gods. Their duties, however, are not confined to religious ceremonies. Ordinary politeness (and this is one of the characteristic features of Hindu morality) requires that when persons of any distinction make formal visits to each other they must be accompanied by a certain number of these courtesans. To dispense with them would show a want of respect towards the persons visited, whether the visit was one of duty or of politeness. These women are also present at marriages and other solemn family meetings. All the time which they have to spare in the intervals of the various ceremonies is devoted to infinitely more shameful practices; and it is not an uncommon thing to see even sacred temples converted into mere brothels. They are brought up in this shameful licentiousness from infancy, and they are recruited from various castes, some among them belonging to respectable families. It is not unusual for pregnant women, with the object of obtaining a safe delivery, to make a vow, with the consent of their husbands, to devote the child that they carry in their womb, if it should turn out a girl, to the temple service. They are far from thinking that this infamous vow offends in any way the laws of decency, or is contrary to the duties of motherhood. In fact no shame whatever is attached to parents whose daughters adopt this career. The courtesans are the only women in India who enjoy the privilege of learning to read, to dance, and to sing. A well-bred and respectable woman would for this reason blush to acquire any one of these accomplishments. The *deva-dasis* receive a fixed salary for the religious duties which they perform [ . . . ]. Nevertheless, to the discredit of Europeans it must be confessed that the quiet seductions which Hindu prostitutes know how to exercise with so much skill resemble in no way the disgraceful methods of the wretched beings who give themselves up to a similar profession in Europe, and whose indecent behaviour, cynical impudence, obscene and filthy words of invitation are enough to make any sensible man who is not utterly depraved shrink from them with horror. Of all the women in India it is the courtesans, and especially those attached to the temples, who are the most decently clothed. Indeed they are particularly careful not to expose any part of the body. I do not deny, however, that this is merely a refinement of seduction. Experience has no doubt taught them that for a woman to display her charms damps sensual ardour instead of exciting it, and that the imagination is more easily captivated than the eye. God forbid, however, that any one should believe me to wish to say a word in defence of the comparative modesty and reserve of the dancing girls of India!<sup>45</sup>

Though this description denounces the *devadāsīs'* institution, also contains some positive remarks about their customs and behaviour. Interesting for us is the sentence about their dress, which describes them as very well and decorously covered: in complete contrast to a fanciful early nineteenth-century French picture depicting them exposing their breasts while dancing. In similar *deshabille* in the same image is the female 'slave' who is fanning the royal couple, whereas the queen is portrayed with her bosom covered (Plate 6.5)

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45 (Abbé) Jean-Antoine Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, trans. Henry K. Beauchamp (1905) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983): 584–87.





**Plate 6.5:** A French image representing 'Asia'. Shown are a Brahmin priest (*brahmine*), an Indian dancer (*bayadère*), a wife of the Rajah (*femme du Raja*), a female slave (*esclave*) and the Rajah (*Raja*). Noteworthy is that the dancer is not assimilated to the female slave who fans the royal couple, although are both portrayed bare-breasted, compared to Raja's wife who has her bosom covered.

## 6 The *Devadāsīs* in the Local Hindu Customary Laws

Let us now focus how the 'servants of the gods' were considered by the traditional customary Hindu laws, as found in a document from the late nineteenth century written by the Nellore District Judge, C. Ramachendrier, who also mentioned some ritualistic aspects of the consecration ceremony of girls to the temple. Noteworthy in the following paragraphs is the contrast between the Hindu customary laws and the colonial civil and penal codes:<sup>46</sup>

1. *Dancing girls attached to a pagoda are called Deva-Dassees* [ . . . ]. Natural as well as adopted daughters of dancing girls are made, when young, to dedicate themselves to the idol of the temple to which their mother belonged, and this ceremony is called *Pottukattu*. The girls pass through a certain ceremony in the temple, and the Gurukkal or the Brahmin making *puja*, as representative of the deity, ties golden *bottus* to the girls.<sup>47</sup> This completes the ceremony and stamps the girls as those that have dedicated themselves exclusively to temple service. [ . . . ]

*Though the decision law called the dancing girls outcastes, yet according to the Hindu notion they are not so. To the Hindus, any person or thing appartaining to a deity or temple is sacred, pure and incapable of polluting others.* An orthodox caste man who would avoid the contact of strangers or non-caste men as objects of pollution, does not become polluted even by their actual touch in a temple procession on festive occassions, and in procession of his sovereign who is looked upon by the *Smrtis* as the incarnation of Vishnu, the creator and preserver of the universe, and consequently holy and above wordly pollutions and sins. A caste-man marrying any non-caste woman or having intimacy with any such is put out of caste, and is denied all caste privileges, but his open intimacy with a dancing girl and his living with her as husband and wife does not strike the caste-men as an act inconsistent with the caste system and rules and he is not deprived of his status in caste! Brahmins making *puja* in a temple are considered inferior Brahmins and their contact is

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed study of the contrast between the local and the colonial legal systems see David Skuy, "Macaulay and the Indian Penal Code of 1862: The Myth of the Inherent Superiority and Modernity of the English Legal System Compared to India's Legal System in the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998): 513–57.

<sup>47</sup> Concerning this specific ceremony of 'tying the golden *bottus*', D. Soneji wrote: 'Between roughly 1824 and 1845, Serfoji II and his son Śivaji II built large seraglios called Kalyānam Mahal and Mangala Vilasam, respectively, that housed dozens of concubines who bore the titles *baī* or *ammāl* ("respected lady"). [ . . . ] The concubines, whose relation to the king was solemnised through a "sword marriage" (*katti kalyānam* ["marriage to the dagger"]), came from a strikingly diverse range of caste and regional backgrounds [ . . . ]. The *katti kalyānam* is significant for several reasons. Some professional dancing women underwent a similar rite called *poṭṭukattutal* (tying of the *poṭṭu* – pendant) in which they were "dedicated" to daggers [*kattutal*] in temple contexts. As I will argue later, the *poṭṭukattu* ceremony for dancing women needs to be understood in relation to the *katti kalyānam* ritual of palace concubines (even those in smaller kingdoms, or *zamindāris*), instead of being glossed as a "marriage" to a temple deity. Both ceremonies mark women as set aside for nonconjugal sexual roles, primarily as concubines. [ . . . ] The *poṭṭukattutal* is fundamentally a lifecycle ritual that binds a woman to the sexual economy of the courtesan lifestyle, and for the women of the Taiñjāvūr serraglios, the *katti kalyānam* had the same significance.' Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures. Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012): 34–36.

avoided when out of the temple premises; but in the presence of deities in temple and procession, their touch would pollute none. [. . .] That the dancing girls are not treated as out-castes will be evident from their having free access to the inner shrines in all temples, which privilege is denied even to a Brahmin if he but married a widow of his own caste, and from the fact of their consorting with a non-caste man resulting in excommunication by their own community on one hand and dismissal from temple service and denial of admittance into temples on the other.<sup>48</sup>

## 7 The Internalisation of Christian Morality by the Indian Westernised Urban Élite

From the end of the nineteenth century, a large part of the Indian urban élite educated in British religious educational institutions started to internalise the missionaries' values and the new puritanical morality. They gradually began to criticise their ancient customs of dedicating dancers to temple deities and royal courts. In the 1880s they started to join the virulent 'crusaders' of the anti-*nautch* (dance) movements whose members wrote pamphlets and petitions to the British colonial administration, urging them to abolish the courtesans' institutions. Contrary to what is often said and believed in India and elsewhere even today, British officials never took any legal action on this issue, which they considered not to be their concern. This was particularly so after the Mutiny (1857), which led to the annexion of India into the British Empire and Queen Victoria's declaration not to interfere in the religious matters of her Indian subjects. Even the British Viceroy in India replied to those petitioners that they did not find any inappropriate or indecent behaviour amongst the temple and court dancers, as they considered them simply as performing artists, similar to their counterparts in Europe, such as ballet dancers and opera singers. As a matter of fact quite often British officials did not share the missionaries' intolerant attitudes.<sup>49</sup> I quote some paragraphs from anti-*nautch* pamphlets:

*Change in Enlightened Indian Opinion.* – Christian Missionaries came to heathen Europe, proclaiming a God of infinite purity; and evils were condemned which had for many centuries remained unchecked. A similar process is now going on in India. Among enlightened men there is a growing feeling against *nautches*. In proof of this a few extracts may be made from papers conducted by Indians. The *Subodh Patrika*, a Bombay Journal, thus describes their evils:

<sup>48</sup> C. Ramachendrier, *Collection of the Decisions of the High Courts and the Privy Council on the Law of Succession, Maintenance, & C. Applicable to Dancing Girls and their Issues, Prostitutes not Belonging to Dancing Girls' Community, Illegitimate Sons and Bastards, and Illatom Affiliation up to December 1891* (Madras: V. Kalyanaram Iyer Publisher, Esplanade Cookson and Co., 1892): Introduction, i–iv.

<sup>49</sup> See Kenneth Ballatchet, *Race Sex and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics 1793–1905* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980); Tiziana Leucci, "Du Dāsī Āttam au Bharata Nāṭyam: ethnohistoire d'une tradition chorégraphique et de sa moralisation et nationalisation dans l'Inde coloniale et post-coloniale" (PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales Paris, 2009).



Not the least urgent such subject of reform is the institution of dancing girls among us. Stripped of all their acquirements, these women are a class of prostitutes, pure and simple. Their profession is immoral, and they live by vice.<sup>50</sup>

That hideous woman dances, and she smiles and she dances! And she cast furtive glances! Apparently a sweet damsel, a charming figure. But beneath that beautiful exterior dwells what? Infernal ferocity. Hell is in her eyes. In her breast is a vast ocean of poison. Round her comely waist dwell the furies of the hell. Her hands are brandishing unseen daggers ever ready to strike unwary or wilful victims that fall in her way. Her blandishments are India's ruin. Alas! Her smile is India's death. (Babu Keshub Chunder Sen)<sup>51</sup>

Reading those lines, it becomes evident that the Indian anti-*nautch* activists borrowed their words and expressions from the Christian missionaries' ideology and terminology. The vicious rethoric of their attacks against the Indian hereditary performing artists is striking to modern readers for the virulence of their judgements. They despise and humiliate the courtesans' bodies and their arts and reduced them to mere fragments of 'evil', a 'sinners' hell'. Unwilling to understand the local artistic and literary culture, they were unable to appreciate and enjoy the beauty and the sensuality of the refined poetry, music and dance (Plate 6.6)

## 8 From 'Gods' Servants and Devotees' to 'Gods' Prostitutes and Slaves': Catherine Mayo's Controversial Books

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, a number of progressive movements fought for the legal abolition of the slave trades in Europe and the Americas. After long political and legal battles, the abolitionists were successful in putting an end to those atrocious practices. In the meantime, a number of Christian missionaries, preachers and social reformers arrived in India at the end of the nineteenth century and focused their evangelical work on rescuing the god's servants, whom they portrayed as the sexual victims of perverted Indian priests and lustful kings. None of them tried to understand the complex socio-religious meanings of the terms *devadāsī* and *rājadāsī*, or the multilayered sense of the vernacular terminology employed to refer to a devotee as the deity's 'servant and slave'. Their intention was instead to vilify the local cults and customs and related religious beliefs in order to better convert Indians to Christianity, and to justify the civilising purposes of paternalistic colonial rethoric. In those years, proposals were made to take away young children from

<sup>50</sup> *Nautch Women: An Appeal to English Ladies on Behalf of their Indian Sisters* (Madras: Christian Literature Society/S.P.C.K. Press, 1893): 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Opinions on the Nautch Question*, ed. Punjab Purity Association (Lahore: New Lyall Press, 1894): 8.



**Plate 6.6:** Photographic portrait of two young North Indian dancers.

their biological or adopted *devadāsī* mothers and put them in orphanage-like boarding schools in order to 'reform' them and, eventually, convert them to Christianity.<sup>52</sup> Such 'rescuing' actions, though perhaps undertaken with good and sincere intentions, both in their own native countries and in India, often created a deep fracture between indigenous people and colonial religious institutions in charge of those children. Similar actions were taken in North America (Canada and the United States), where indigenous children were removed from their own families, culture and environment, and put into special boarding schools where they grew up deprived of all contacts with their parents, kin and traditions, with the purpose of 'reforming' and properly 'integrating' them into so-called 'civilised' Western society. We recently heard horrifying news from Canada about the discovery of hundreds of undeclared bodies of indigenous children, who had died destitute and ill-treated in such institutions, and were buried in mass graves.

An American writer, Katherine Mayo (1867–1940), arrived in India in the 1920s. Mayo belonged to white upper-class American society which proudly pointed to its British and Protestant origins. In her own country she fought to prevent Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish immigrants arriving from Europe from settling in the United States. She was also against the recognition of civil rights for African Americans, who had previously been the victims of the slavery trade. She also strongly believed in and supported British colonial power in South Asia, because she considered the local people too backward, superstitious and vicious to be able to govern themselves. Consequently, she was against the Indian independence movements, and in order to demonstrate the 'necessity' for India to be governed by the British, she visited England and soon after South Asia. In 1927 she published a book titled, *Mother India. An American Visitor's Criticism of Indian Social Life and Customs in the 1920s*, followed by other volumes supporting imperialism. In this book Mayo portrayed Indians in such a deformed, ridiculous and miserabilist way, that she aroused the contempt and the protest of a number of local intellectuals, amongst whom were the famous Bengali poet and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, and some freedom fighters and social and political activists including Mohandas Gandhi, Dhan Gopal Mukerji and Lala Lajpat Rai.<sup>53</sup> In her writings she focused particularly on the situation of women, and devoted great attention to the *devadāsīs*. This concern was not animated by a true feminist belief, but intended rather to

52 On the orphanages in India see Soni Sharma, "Learning to Labour: 'Native' Orphans in Colonial India, 1840s–1920s," *International Review of Social History* 65, no. 1 (2019): 1–28.

53 See Dhan Gopal Mukerji, *A Son of Mother India Answers* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928). Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi also wrote their own answers to Mayo's book in S.G. Krishnayya, ed., *What India Thinks of 'Mother India'. Being Articles and Statements by Some of Her Sons* (Boston: n. p., 1928). In 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai also wrote a book in response to Mayo's, titled *Unhappy India: Being a Reply to Miss Katherine Mayo's Mother India* (Calcutta: Banna Publishing Co., 1928). On the analysis and the impact of the Indian reactions to Mayo's statements see: Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India. The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2006).

show to her readers the ‘atrocious’ superstitions of India as well as the superiority of the colonial power’s civil and religious values. Thus, Mayo refers to the *devadāsīs* as the ‘slaves of gods’,<sup>54</sup> totally ignoring the multilayered meaning of the word ‘slave’ within the *bhakti* symbolic terminology or, even worse, by calling them the ‘prostitutes of the gods’ and the ‘prostitutes of the temple priests’. By doing so, she gives a distorted and misleading portrayal of the local socio-religious customs. In fact, she employs the same derogatory language used by the missionaries, as shown above. By employing the term ‘slave’, chosen on purpose instead of ‘servant’, which was the word used until then by the majority of Western travellers in India, she twisted the perception of the *devadāsīs* at her own profit by stressing on their supposed slavery condition. Mayo, who was known for her strong racist and eugenicist opinions, not only supported colonialism and imperialism and opposed Indian independence from British rule, but also advocated the cause of the superiority of the ‘white race’ in terms of morality and intelligence. In her view, the British deserved to rule their colonies. Referring to the *devadāsīs*, she intentionally employed the word ‘slave’ which was more sensational and emotional, being closely connected with the moral and legal debates on the abolition of the slave trades and the slaves’ deplorable conditions, particularly in the United States. For someone who believed in the superiority of the ‘white race’ and the supremacy of the American Protestant Christian minority of ‘pure’ English origins over the other communities of immigrants, she cleverly concealed her true conservative intentions behind her ostensibly progressive attitude. I quote from two of her books to present the main points of Mayo’s political views:

The general subject of prostitution in India need not enter the field of this book; but certain special aspects thereof may be cited because of the compass bearings that they afford. In some parts of the country, more particularly in the Presidency of Madras and in Orissa, a custom obtains among the Hindus whereby the parents, to persuade some favor from the gods, may vow their next born child, if it be a girl, to the gods. Or, a particularly lovely child, for one reason or another held superfluous in her natural surroundings, is presented to the temple. The little creature, accordingly, is delivered to the temple women, her predecessors along the route, for teaching in dancing and singing. Often by the age of five, when she is considered most desirable, she becomes the priests’ own prostitute. If she survives to later years she serves as a dancer and singer before the shrine in the daily temple worship; and in the houses around the temple she is held always ready, at a price, for the use of men pilgrims during their devotional visit in the temple precincts. She now goes beautifully attired, often loaded with the jewels of the gods, and leads an active life until her charms fade. Then, stamped with the mark of the god under whose aegis she has lived, she is turned out upon the public, with a small allowance and with the acknowledged right to a beggar’s livelihood. Her parents, who may be well-to-do persons of good rank and caste, have lost no face at all by the manner of their disposal of her. Their proceeding, it is held, was entirely reputable. And she and her like form a sort of caste of their own, are called *devadassīs*, or ‘prostitutes of the gods’, and are a recognized essential of temple equipment.

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<sup>54</sup> This is exactly the title of another book by Katherine Mayo, *The Slaves of the Gods. A Criticism of Indian Religious Customs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928).

Now, if it were asked how a responsible Government permits this custom to continue in the land, the answer is not far to seek. The custom, like its back-ground of public sentiment, is deep-rooted in the far past of an ultra-conservative and passionately religious people. [. . .] A province could be roused to madness by the forcible withdrawal of girl-children from the gods.

'You cannot hustle the East.' But the underground workings of western standards and western contacts, and the steady, quiet teachings of the British official through the years have done more, perhaps, toward ultimate change than any coercion could have effected.<sup>55</sup>

These descriptions fully contrast with the opinions of the temple and court artists I met and interviewed during the years of my fieldwork and dance training in South India. All those very cultivated and refined ladies spoke of their learning and the performing of their duties in the shrines and the royal palaces as the most enchanting period of their life, despite the fact that the dance and music training were both very strict and strenuous, as it still is in professional ballet schools today. As for their lovers, they pointed out that they never had their first patron at the age of five, as Mayo wrongly wrote. When I mentioned Mayo's words about the *devadāsīs* to them, they were horrified.

Two years after *Mother India* came out, Katherine Mayo published a new book entitled *Slaves of the Gods. A Criticism of Indian Religious Customs* in London in 1929. The *devadāsīs* were the main subject of this volume, as if Mayo, upset by the disapproval and the strong reactions that *Mother India* had aroused, wanted to defend her own positions and renew even more than before her attacks on Indian beliefs and practices. In her clever choice of the title and in the content of this new book, she wanted to impress on her international audience the 'evils' of India, amongst which the people's perversion, immorality and cruelty in supporting the 'slavery' of women and children, in the form of the *devadāsīs* religious system. In this new book a chapter devoted to the 'slaves of the gods' relates a story that Mayo claimed had been taken from real life, in which the main characters are a little *devadāsī* girl and a distinguished and respectable British lady, the governor's wife. Despite its length, I consider that it deserves to be quoted here.

[. . .] This narrative is taken from real life. It is not based upon the quotations that precede and follow it, most of which are cited merely to indicate the fact that some Hindus are already alive to certain dangers in their people's situation. The names assigned to the characters in the narrative are substitutes for those actually borne by the persons concerned. The Governor was on tour, inspecting his province. His wife, newly out from England, accompanied him. And for her sake it was that a visit to the famous old Hindu temple figured in this day's programme. Respectfully the priests conducted their guests as far as any non-Hindu may go, through the massive-columned chambers that lie before the Shrine. Respectfully Her Excellency praised the rich masses of carving and colour, the grandeur of proportion and design. And if now she shrank from the Goddess Awarder of Small-pox whose breasts dripped rancid butter cast upon them in handfuls by supplicants for safety or

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<sup>55</sup> Katherine Mayo, *Mother India. An American Visitor's Criticism of Indian Social Life and Customs in the 1920s* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927): 47–50.

cure, it was because too much rancid butter and too much smallpox, with the mercury at ninety degrees in the shade, taxed her yet unaccustomed nerves. With a suppressed movement of escape she turned toward the great closed space of the Holy of Holies, whither a waft of music now drew her eyes. And behold, within the shadows of the pillars, a lovely sight – a group of temple women, beautiful of garment, beautiful of posture, following the rhythm of the instruments with song. Then out from that group moved a fairy figure – a child, clad in a long white robe embroidered in thread of gold. Splendid jewels weighted her neck and arms and ankles; flowers crowned her hair. She carried a garland of sacred marigold blossoms, which, having prostrated herself in obeisance before the Great Lady, she offered with all graceful modesty, in her outstretched hands. But Her Excellency, who understood nothing, being new in the land, yet felt a tug at her heart-strings. The tiny figure was so frail, the rose-leaf mouth so sad, the velvet cheeks so wan beneath their rouge, the lines of breeding and intelligence so over-emphasized. And somehow, as she looked, the unconscious intentness of her gaze lifted the long black lashes till the little one's eyes rested full on her own. For an instant they stood so – the lady seeming to search into the depths of the child's soul – the child with dilating pupils and parted lips supporting the search in a sort of devouring tension – until some signal broke the spell. With a quick sight of awakening the small flower-bearer, rising from another deep obeisance, turned and glided away. And the priests, moving forward, led their guests to other scenes. But the work was done. Lakshmi, floating her mind at ease, could remember fragments of experience from her fourth year forward. Now she was seven. She remembered her mother's face – the fine-cut face of a high-bred Brahman. She remembered her mother's voice, moaning over and over: 'Little daughter, what is to become of you? How am I, a poor widow, to find you a dowry? How, without dowry, can you be wed? Yet not to be wed were shame – worse, far, than death.' Then she remembered her mother's cough, and how bad it grew; and how a Sahib doctor-lady came to help. Sometimes that doctor-lady said: 'You must lie and rest. Let me take baby Lakshmi home. When I come tomorrow I will bring her back.' Then followed another memory, as familiar – a memory of a big lighted room, of many people in the room, singing, or praying new prayers, and of certain few words, oft repeated, that somehow stood out from the rest. 'What does it mean?' she had asked the doctor-lady. What means 'Lighten-our-darkness-we-beseech-thee-O-Lord-and-by-thy-great-mercy-defend-us-from-all-perils-and-dangers-of-this-night-for-the-love-of-thy-only-Son-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ?' And though the doctor-lady had given her the meaning of the words in the Indian tongue, yet the strange originals themselves had remained imprinted on her sensitive child-brain. After that came a day when the poor mother grew suddenly worse. But the doctor-lady was gone a journey. And a pretty Hindu lady in a pretty dress, with many shining bracelets, had come. A *devadasi*, she was called. And she told wonderful tales. Then, 'You, too, are soon going a journey', this new friend said to mother, whose eyes were grown so big and burning bright, 'and if you let me take little Lakshmi, I will fit her to be married to the gods, and she shall have beautiful dresses and jewels to wear, and she will be honoured and admired. And never, never, can she be a widow, a thing of ill-omen, like you. See how fair she is of skin, how delicate is her nose, how clear her promise of intelligence and beauty! I will make her so full of grace that the greatest Brahmans will stand fixed in admiration before her and shower her with gold and praise. Give her to me.' But Lakshmi, strangely frightened, clung to her mother's knees. 'Don't send me away!' she wept. And the mother wept with her, clutching her in her arms. Yet she said, at last: 'I submit. For it is true I go a journey [sic] and must go alone. And though my heart misgives me, yet surely it cannot be wrong to leave my little one to the holy gods.' 'Quick!' cried the other, 'here is the joy-gift, to seal the bond!' – and Lakshmi heard a clink of coin. 'Great merit have you now with the gods.' Then the rocking and racking of the bullock-cart, on the long high road – and, in the dusk behind its curtains, a weary, frightened child sobbing herself to sleep on the pretty lady's knees. After that, just the great Hindu temple, and the temple house, where many other children dwelt in training for marriage to the gods. Such pretty creatures, all – chosen for their beauty and natural grace. And every day came the

hours of suppling the little bodies with oil and skillful rubbings, came the lessons in dancing, came the reading-lessons in order that long, long books of poetry might be learned by heart. Thus, every temple child grows learned beyond all women of old India. But the poetry, even though it concerned the gods, made many pictures that troubled Lakshmi's heart. Not knowing why, she turned against it. 'I will learn no more!' one day she exclaimed. 'Will not?' smiled her new mother. Then came the first real whipping of her life. Other children sometimes struggled, too. There had been Tara, who was big – almost ten years old; Tara, whose father, a rich man, had given her to the gods, to acquire merit and in prayer for a son. Tara was always unhappy. 'You don't understand', one day she had said to Lakshmi, 'but I understand, now. I am not a coward. They shall not make me do it. You shall see.' That night, from one of the inner chambers, came piercing shrieks of a little child, first in anger, then in agony. 'That is little Ešli! He is mad to take her so soon. She is too valuable to destroy in the making!' Lakshmi heard her 'mother' murmur. But Tara whispered: 'Ešli is so pretty – what if she is younger than you? That didn't save her. The priest couldn't wait. Now remember and watch: My time has come. I save *myself*!' Next morning they found her body in the well – drowned. Lakshmi's own training centred around the temple drama. And by the time she was ready to appear in public she already understood as much as a child can of the significance of word and act – yet with an instinctive revolt which, where once it had existed in the others, had for the most part been either cowed into submission or rotted away by the influences in the air. Never could she forget that first moment on the stage – the nightmare of loathing and fear that had filled her in advance – then the upflare of light, the burst of music – and the flash of unexpected memory: Memory of another big room, filled with light, filled with people – memory of other music. Before she knew what she did, she had dropped on her knees. 'Lighten-our-darkness-we-beseech-thee-O-Lord-and-by-thy-great-mercy-defend-us-from-all-perils-and-dangers-of-this-night-for-the-love-of-thy-only-Son-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ!' she was repeating, wildly, when the woman beside her pulled her upright with an admonitory pinch that brought the blood. After that, when the lights flared up and the music broke forth, she kept her feet – but words sprang to the lips. 'My own *mantra* – my own charm!' she called them in her heart. And something within her seemed to survive thereon. But now she was old – seven years old. Already they had 'married' her to the god – and if, till today, she had missed Ešli's fate, before much longer it surely must claim her. Under ever-present foreboding her child-soul sickened and sank. Then, as out of the blue, in the temple itself and before the very door of the Inmost Shrine, had come the summons – the silent summons in the Great Lady's eyes. 'She called me! Her spirit called me! I must go. I dare not wait.' Over and over through the remainder of that day the child had whispered to herself. So at nightfall, shrouding her bright raiment with a servant's scarf, she contrived with mouse-like cunning to slip out of the house and lose herself in the mass of pilgrims pressing to and fro through the temple streets. In and out through the crowd she wove, knowing nothing of way or place, conscious only of the terror at her back. To run she dared not, lest some one ask her why. Yet, presently, seeing beyond the temple purlieu a wider, less peopled street, she darted toward it, in the instinct for space. But just as she cleared the press of traffic, some idler's hand, snatching at her scarf, tore it away, exposing her tell-tale temple dress. 'A *devadasi*! A Slave of the Gods! A runaway!' shouted the idler, giving chase. And the pilgrim pack turned after him in full cry. Lakshmi ran, ran, ran as fast as fear could speed her. Her heart hammered cold in her throat. The world whirled around her. 'Lighten-our-darkness-defend-us-perils-and-dangers-' she panted. But they gained – they were closing in upon her – her strength was spent [ . . . ]

And then it happened.

Out of a doorway stepped a lady – her face was white. Lakshmi saw the face – and with one last sobbing cry sprang into the lady's outstretched arms. 'For-the-love-of-our-Saviour-Jesus-Christ',

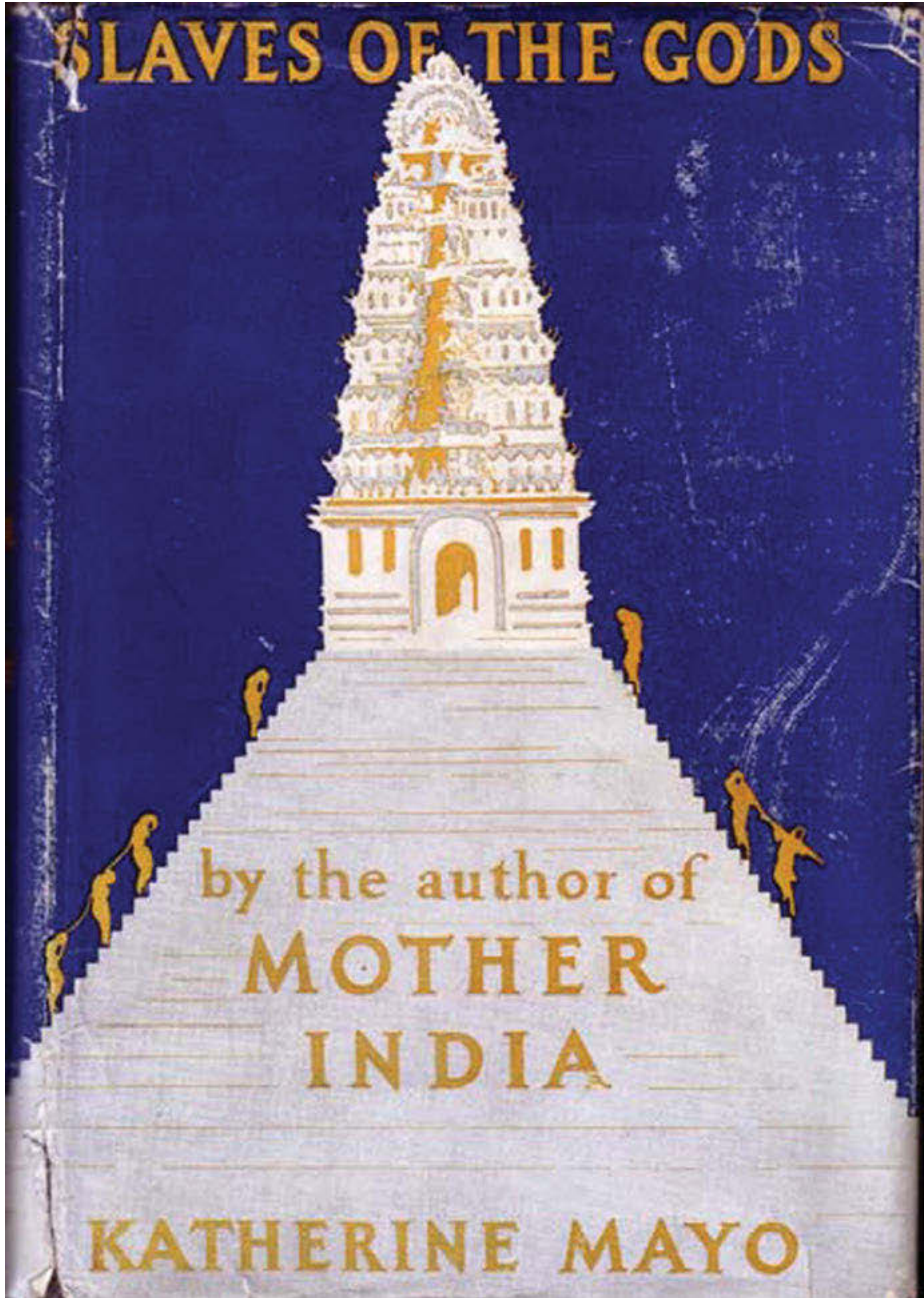
she gasped aloud, and fainted dead away. The lady faced the crowd. ‘What means all this?’ she demanded. ‘It is a *devadasi* – a temple prostitute. She belongs to our gods. She has run away. Give her to us! Give her here! We will take her back to the Brahmans’, shouted many voices, half frenzied, wholly threatening. But the lady seemed to grow suddenly tall. ‘This child has claimed my help in the name of Jesus Christ, *my Lord*’, the words rang like a bell, clear and slow. ‘Fall back!’ For a moment she so confronted them. Then, for all their numbers and their fury, they faltered, broke and melted from before her till she stood alone, with the child in her arms. ‘It was my own *mantra* – my charm – that worked’, said Lakshmi, afterward. ‘Now what can I do for your Lord? Can I dance for Him, and sing?’ Yet for a full year thereafter one who knew and understood had to sleep, to eat, to live with the child, to clear her mind of the rank weeds skillfully sown in thought and speech and deed. Lakshmi, now, is what you would have her – a happy, hearty, wholesome child, living in love-nurtured peace. As for the lady who rose in her path that night, she spends her life in the rescue of little Slaves of the Gods. But even today her work, because of the hatreds and dangers that surround it, must be done in the silence of namelessness, lest it be killed.<sup>56</sup>

From those paragraphs Mayo’s agenda is evident. She describes the young *devadāsīs* as poor ‘victims’ of the local superstitious beliefs and believers. According to Mayo, they even prefer to commit suicide or to run away from the temple ‘evils’, incarnated by the ‘ignominious’ and ‘unscrupulous’ elderly *devadāsīs*, who were themselves at the service of ‘immoral’ deities, and ‘greedy and lustful’ priests and kings. In her tale, those little girls could only be ‘redeemed’ by the ‘true’ and ‘just’ Christian god and religion, and finally be ‘saved’ by the ‘compassionate’ action of the British Lady. In a few words: the *devadāsīs* could be rescued only by the civilising mission of both Christianity and colonial rule. Quite eloquent in this regard is the cover image of Mayo’s book, which shows a temple (it seems to be a Maya temple, such as the one at Tikal in Mexico, rather than an Indian one . . . ) on the top of a hill, where a number of ‘temple-slaves’ are walking enchained, forced to enter into the shrine against their will (Plate 6.7). This written portrayal and its iconographic representation is striking for its sharp contrast to the words of all those *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs* I met during my fieldwork and dance training in South India. They all remembered their artistic and literary apprenticeships and their activities in the temples and the royal courts as the most delightful and prosperous periods of their life. They also spoke of their adopted *devadāsī* and *rājadāsī* mothers, and of the other music, dance and poetry teachers, with great affection and deep gratitude. Despite the miserable conditions into which they fell after the abolition of the *devadāsī* system, they never regretted their artistic profession: on the contrary, they were very proud and quite nostalgic about it.

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<sup>56</sup> Katherine Mayo, *Slaves of the Gods. A Criticism of Indian Religious Customs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929): 114–25.





**Plate 6.7:** Cover picture of Katherine Mayo's book, *Slaves of the Gods. A Criticism of Indian Religious Customs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929).

## 9 Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show how the Sanskrit and Tamil terms ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ have been used in India in various contexts, particularly within the complex *bhakti* devotional doctrines and practices. I started my case study by analysing those terms as found in some South Indian medieval epigraphic inscriptions, and the way they were employed in modern times. My intention was to demonstrate that in India, to define oneself as the ‘servant’ or ‘slave’ of a deity, a king or a master or to manifest the intention of ‘serving’ such a superior person or being, was perceived not necessarily as a derogatory term or a humiliating action, but rather as an act that deserved respect and admiration. Consequently, those voluntary ‘servants’, including powerful monarchs, would receive the title of ‘slave of the (or a) god’ as an honour, a blessing or a gift that the deities would graciously bestow on them, their own faithful devotees and subjects. This type of symbolic relation, which simultaneously signified respect and submission, meant much more than a mere coercive form of authority, subordination and exploitation, as it involved strong and mutual emotional ties and attachments for both parties. I then explored the accounts of Western travellers to India, which included European army officers, marchants, playwrights and missionaries. Some of these accounts contained quite insightful descriptions of the local female temple and court performing artists and their socio-religious roles and functions in past Indian society. The missionaries’ reports especially evoked a sense of shame in some members of the local Indian élites, who internalised the highly moralistic and puritanical attitudes of those Christian preachers. I also made an attempt to show how the terms ‘servant/slave’ were instrumentalised by some Western writers to blame Indians for their ‘uncivilised’ and ‘perverted’ religious customs, in order to demonstrate the superiority of the colonial rulers and claim their supremacy in terms of culture, religion and politics. I also showed that those temple and court ‘servants/slaves’ enjoyed some privileges that no other woman had at that time, and that they followed a specific code of behaviour (*svadharma*) with peculiar duties and rights conceived and shaped only for them, which stood in sharp contrast to that of married women. I questioned the use of the term ‘slave’, which denotes forced and unpaid female labour, in connection with the *devadāsīs* and *rājadāsīs*, and I found that a large number of Indian and foreign texts proved exactly the contrary. In all those documents, the women are described as being very rich, because their services to the temple and the courts were well remunerated. Due to their wealth, the women would donate valuable goods to the shrines and public institutions, including golden jewels with precious stones, land, gardens, buildings, water tanks, hospitals etc., which a genuine slave deprived of any rights, property and freedom would have been incapable of giving. In this paper I also reported some of those courtesans’ opinions, which were recorded during my interviews in India. Unfortunately, due to the stigma attached to their profession, and since the legal battles against their institution started at the end of the nineteenth century, the voices of those excellent artists have been unheard,

marginalised, dismissed and silenced. Following almost a century of legal and moral debates, the *devadāsīs* institution was abolished in the Madras Presidency (which encompassed at the time a large portion of South India) in November 1947, not by the British colonial power, as is often wrongly believed, but by the Indians themselves, and just three months after India won its independence. Even before the legal abolition of their status, all temple and court artists and the members of their entire community, which included their accompanying musicians, singers, and dance masters (Tamil *naṭṭuvaṇārs*), were stigmatised as 'licentious' and 'immoral' (Plate 6.8), a stigma that unfortunately endures even today. Yet the poetic repertoire of songs and dance performed by them was deeply suffused with both the erotic and the devotional dimensions of the *bhakti* cults. In those songs the male deities (Śiva and Viṣṇu) were addressed as the singer's own lords, parents, masters, patrons and lovers.<sup>57</sup> The historian Friedhelm Hardy rightly wrote,

[. . .] when discussing the theme of *eros* as pervading the Śrīvaiṣṇava temple culture, one further topic cannot be avoided: the music and dance professionally cultivated by the *devadāsīs*. [. . .] Missionaries like the Abbé Dubois and some Westernized Indians [. . .] attacked the *devadāsi* institution with a puritanical fanaticism which was equalled only by their complete ignorance of (or unwillingness to understand) its history and the motivation behind it. They succeeded only too well in their task: the abolition by law of the *devadāsīs* [. . .] resulted in the total destruction of one major segment of that culture through which for one and half millennia deep-rooted Southern religious sentiments had expressed themselves. The whole range of art that had surrounded the temple was eliminated, and even the whole issue of temple eroticism was prejudiced.<sup>58</sup>

On the topic of those hereditary women artists who were called 'servants' or 'slaves' of gods and kings I would like to add here that they were not only economically self-sufficient, very cultivated and quite prestigious, but that they also had the power to make decisions about their own lives and wealth, a remarkable element at that time. If one wanted to find a true slave in the world of women, it was, and still is, the deplorable condition of the average married woman. For centuries housewives without means, in India and elsewhere, worked in their homes as unpaid servants, mothers, teachers, nurses, cooks, sexual partners, etc. Often illiterate, ill-treated, beaten, abused, raped, betrayed, neglected, rejected and even killed, all those married women have been, and unfortunately still are today, totally dependant during their entire lives on the goodwill of a man: in their youth that of their father, later on their husband's and in old age their sons'. They lived, and still live, in constant economic and emotional dependency as the unremunerated victims of a true labour bondage fully legitimised and enforced by both

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57 On both the sensual and devotional dimensions of the Indian deities and their devotees' attitudes see Wendy Doniger-O'Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic* (New York: New Oxford University Press, 1973); Velcheru Narayana Rao, A.K. Ramanujan and David Shulman, *When God is a Customer. Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

58 Friedhelm Hardy, "Ideology and Cultural Contexts of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Temple," in *South Indian Temples. An Analytical Reconsideration*, ed. Burton Stein (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978): 138, 150.



**Plate 6.8:** *'The Tanjore Nautch Party'*. Photographic portrait of a troupe of temple dancers and their accompanying dance masters, musicians and singers from Tañcāvūr, today Tamil Nadu State.

the religious and the civic laws of purported morality and respectability. It is no coincidence that since gaining Independence from colonial rule, the only available female role model has been that of the submissive wife and self-sacrificing mother.<sup>59</sup> On the contrary, in the new free nation, there was no more place for the bold, proud and cultivated courtesans (Plates 6.9, 6.10), who were attacked, criminalised and finally juridically erased. But even though it had been legally abolished, morally stigmatised and socially scorned in 1947, the *devadāsīs* and the courtesans' mode of life, after a short period in the shadows, once again became an alternative model in the 1960s. Some emancipated women began to resist the expected status of the married woman, in conformity to the patriarchal pattern which is still being enforced today, particularly under the pressure of the far-right government and its associated fundamentalist political and religious movements. And so the courtesan-dancer, who enjoyed autonomy through her high level of education, who was free in her choice of lovers and patrons, and enjoyed a certain degree of independence to manage her profession and property, became a possible

<sup>59</sup> See Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., *Recasting Women. Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989); Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation. Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Sumathy Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2011).



**Plate 6.9:** Photographic portrait of the Bharatanātyam dance master V.S. Muthuswamy Pillai (1921–1992), South Indian hereditary artist, with two of his students, Sai and Subhulakshmi, all belonging to the performing temple and court artists, Madras (Chennai), 1953.



**Plate 6.10:** Photographic portrait of a North Indian artist and courtesan.



reference for some feminist activists from the high-caste urban intellectual élite. But this is another fascinating chapter to be written in a future work.

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Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali

## Chapter 7

# Mediating Śakti: Embodied Dependencies and Senses in *Teyyam*, Malabar, South India

## 1 Introduction

In postcolonial Kerala, one of the southern states of India, there are various sobriquets in circulation alluding to an intimate relationship between the people of the region and their material pasts. ‘Kerala as the land of temples’ is one such sobriquet. It is the Agamic temples of Central and Southern Kerala that come to the fore of the public imagination. However, North Kerala not only has temples, but even more shrines. It is at these shrines (Plates 7.1, 7.2) that different kinds of divine figures are propitiated. This paper is about the ritual tradition of *teyyāṭṭam* (Plates 7.3–7.5), which in accordance with local conventions are mainly held in the shrines of northern Kerala, more accurately in the erstwhile Kōlattunāṭu. The meaning of the word *teyyāṭṭam* is a conflation of two Malayalam words: *teyyam* (god) and *āṭṭam* (dance), literally translated as ‘dance of god’.<sup>1</sup> In this ritual performance, the *teyyam* performer embodies the spirit of *teyyam* deities, usually gods. The performer (*kōlakkāran*) temporarily becomes the divine figure. However, many *teyyam* performers and devotees in North Kerala are hesitant to acknowledge it as an art form. I will return to this aspect at the end of the paper.

The *teyyam* tradition is often compared to possession worship associated with the ancient Tamil region, in which ‘spirit possession’ was one of the earliest forms of worship. As the region lies within the vast Dravidian cultural geography, scholars readily acknowledge the continuities between the ‘Dravidian modes of worship’ mentioned in the Tamil Caṅkam literary corpus from the first centuries of the current era, and that which can be seen in the *teyyam* tradition.<sup>2</sup> Both forms include the worship of ‘apotheosised ancestors and fallen martial heroes’ which is an integral part of the ancient Tamil belief system.<sup>3</sup> The offering of liquor and blood sacrifices are also two other common indices.<sup>4</sup> As a

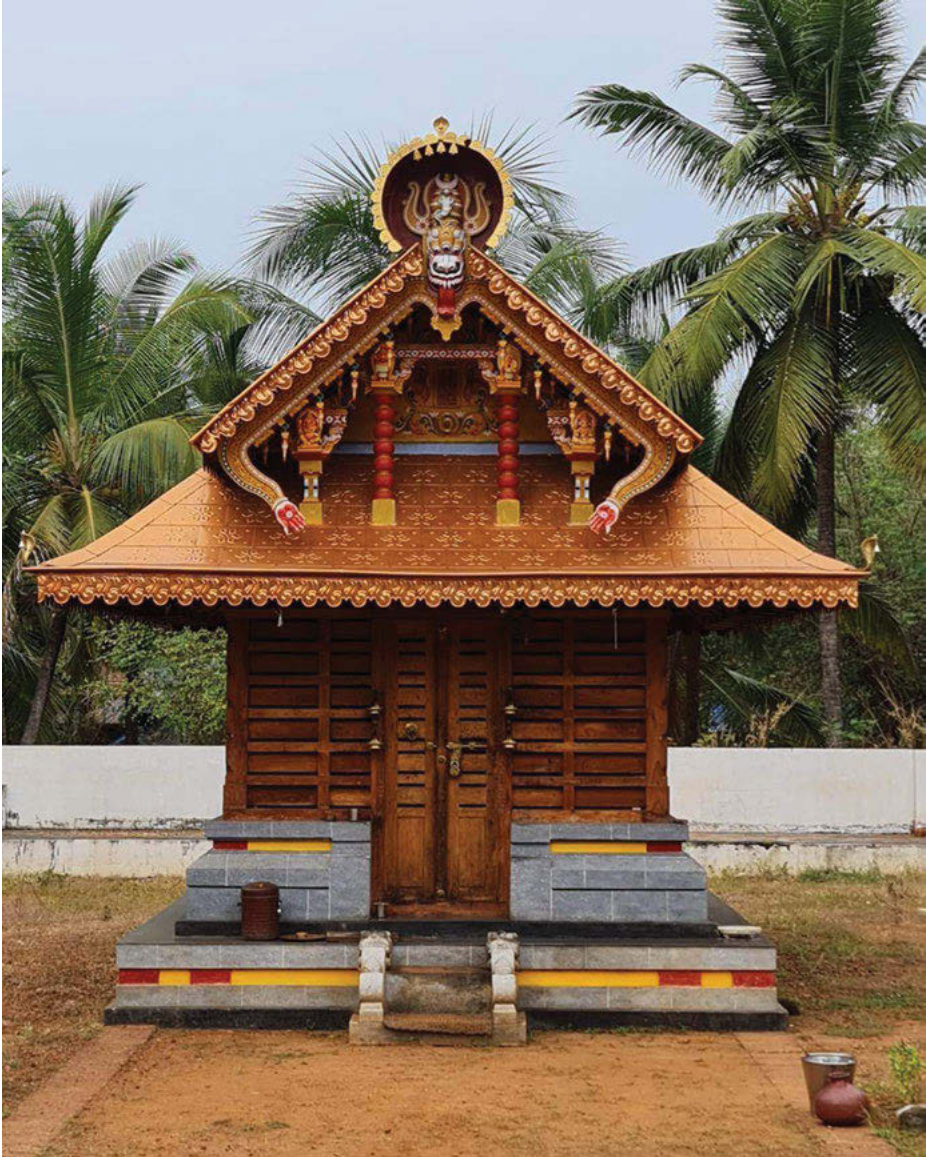
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1 Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 308.

2 Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 308. For the discussion of *teyyam* in relation to the Śāṅgam period, see K.K.N. Kurup, “Memorial Tablets in Kerala,” in *Memorial Stones: A Study of their Origin, Significance, and Variety*, ed. S. Settar and G.D. Sontheimer (Dharwad: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnatak University, 1982): 243–50.

3 Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 308.

4 Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 308.



**Plate 7.1:** *Teyyakkavu*, Nileschwaram, Kasaragod, 2021.

‘religious paradigm’ this form of worship is shared across the Dravidian cultural zone of South India. Rich Freeman observes that this ancient practice of ‘spirit possession’ in the region might have interacted with and co-produced the ‘local cultural form of temples and enshrined images associated with High Hinduism’. Simultaneously, ‘tantric’ beliefs





**Plate 7.2:** *Teyyakkāvu*, Nilesawaram, Kasaragod, 2021.

and practices intermediated between these two forms of worship.<sup>5</sup> Another important aspect of *teyyam* is that it is often an embodied performance of a posthumously apotheosised hero or heroine, and the current form of this performance goes back to the late medieval period in northern Malabar.<sup>6</sup> Historically, this apotheosis is inextricably connected to the social organisations of *Kōlattunāṭu* and the neighbouring regions (where there are also various other ritual performances more or less similar to the *teyyam* with differing names, for instance the *tiras* in Southern Malabar and *bhūta* worship in Tulu-nādu, South Canara). These ritual performance traditions from the south-western coast of India share many aspects with, however, regional differences. This study mainly focuses on *teyyam* of northern Kerala.

In contemporary Kerala, this ritual performance is being increasingly secularised. Going through many existing works on *teyyam* and conversing with many *teyyam* performers and devotees, this ritual performance and its shrines point to complex form of regional Hindu piety formed over many centuries. Though it has been theaterised

<sup>5</sup> Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 307.

<sup>6</sup> Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 309.



**Plate 7.3:** Kuttisatappan Teyyam, Tanakuruvalli Śri Kurumba Bagavati-kavu, Kannur, 2019.

and deterritorialised from Kerala, its pietistic signification in the region nevertheless endures. The *teyyams* can be categorised into four main types.<sup>7</sup> Primarily are the

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<sup>7</sup> See one of the early and very insightful studies on the subject, Dilip M. Menon, “The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar,” *Studies in History* 9, no. 2 (1993): 198.





**Plate 7.4:** Guligan-teyyam (a *śaivite teyyam*) with mask, Aduthile, Kannur, 2019.



**Plate 7.5:** Pottan-Teyyam lying down in charcoal fire, Aduthile, Kannur, 2019.

‘aspects of Shakti-Bhagavathi, Chamundi and Kurathi’,<sup>8</sup> which constitute around three hundred and fifty *teyyams*, and therefore form the largest category. This is followed by the ‘variation of Siva-Pottan, Gulikan, Bhairavan’, as Dilip Menon says, in which the forms of *teyyam* are often conflated with ghost, spirits, and heroes. The third

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<sup>8</sup> Dilip M. Menon, “The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar,” *Studies in History* 9, no. 2 (1993): 198.

category is the Vaishnava *teyyams*, in which the ‘Vishnumurthi or Vishnu in his *avatāra* as Narasimha has come to acquire general acceptance as a *gramadevata* [literally, deity of a village].’<sup>9</sup> The fourth category is that of the *teyyams* of heroes and heroines, which are often performed as forms relating to the above-mentioned categories.<sup>10</sup> The *teyyam* pantheon comprises the regional form of ‘*vīra*’ (hero) worship as well as the worship of Bagavati (*Śaktism*)-Śiva-Viṣṇu which is a transregional form, with the latter using the form of the earlier animated spirit ‘possession’.

Over the last couple of decades, scholarship on various aspects related to *teyyam* has steadily increased.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, some of the earliest studies remain the most comprehensive accounts of this subject ever written till day.<sup>12</sup> Existing scholarship can be categorised into two major strands. On the one hand, scholars delve into the intricacies of this tradition using an anthropological-ethnographic approach, sometime incorporating insights from both Sanskrit and vernacular Malayalam texts and problematising it through the lens of regional ‘Hindu’ cosmology.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, as

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9 Dilip M. Menon, “The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar,” *Studies in History* 9, no. 2 (1993): 198.

10 Dilip M. Menon, “The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar,” *Studies in History* 9, no. 2 (1993): 198.

11 To note a few important early studies on the subject, see K.K.N. Kurup, *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala*, Indian Folklore Series 21 (Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1973); Wayne Ashley, “The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala,” *Drama Review* 23, no. 2 (1979): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1145219>. M.V. Vishnu Namboodiri, “Thottam Pattukal: A Study” (PhD diss., University of Kerala, 1980); Wayne Ashley and Regina Holloman, “Teyyam,” in *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*, ed. Farley P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann and Phillip B. Zarrilli (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990): 131–50; Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991); Dilip M. Menon, “The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar,” *Studies in History* 9, no. 2 (1993): 187–217; J.J. Pallath, *Teyyam: An Analytical Study of the Folk Culture, Wisdom, and Personality* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1995); S. Nambiar, *The Ritual Art of Teyyam and Bhūtārādhane* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and Navrang, 1996); Gavin Flood, “Ritual Dance in Kerala: Performance, Possession, and the Formation of Culture,” in *Indian Insights: Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Bhakti*, ed. Peter Conolly and Sue Hamilton (London: Luzac Oriental, 1997): 169–83.

12 Especially Rich Freeman’s PhD dissertation submitted under the supervision of Prof. Arjun Appadurai (Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” [PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991]).

13 To cite a few recent additions, see Dinesan Vadakkiniyil, “Teyyam: The Poiesis of Rite and God in Malabar, South India” (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2009); Theodore P.C. Gabriel, *Playing God: Belief and Ritual in the Muttappan Cult of North Malabar* (London/Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub. Ltd, 2010); Rajesh Komath, “Political Economy of the Theyyam: A study of the time-space homology” (Phd diss; Mahatma Gandhi University, 2014); Thaniya Kaliyanthil Leela, “Goddesses of North Malabar: An Anthropological Study on Kinship and Ritual in North Malabar” (Master thesis, University of Bergen, 2016); in this vein see also Rich Freeman’s new study: Rich Freeman, “Śaktism, Polity and Society in Medieval Malabar,” in *Goddess Traditions in Tantric Hinduism: History, Practices and Doctrine*, ed. Bjarne Wernicke Olesen (London/New York: Routledge, 2016): 141–73; Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala: Embodying the Goddess-Clan*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020).



part of investigating historical questions, scholars situate the tradition within the early-modern socio-cultural dynamics of Kōlattunāṭu,<sup>14</sup> as corollary to this strand, studies also look at the appropriation and transformation of the *teyyam* form within the context of the broader historical shifts in the region, such as during the colonial and post-colonial periods.<sup>15</sup> Within these two broad and overlapping scholarly terrains, a few studies also utilise worn out tropes from sociology and anthropology.<sup>16</sup> *Teyyam* as an embodied ritual worship with its material assemblages poses an immense challenge to scholars. Most importantly, it asks us to be familiar with multiple disciplinary discourses, from social history to art history, from performance studies to the recent field of material cultural studies.

To point out the research lacunae more clearly, studies on the ‘art’ and ‘material culture’ in *teyyam* need to be explored a little further. For example, the processual approach of Victor Turner, whose many analytical tools evolved over the long stretch of his career, are very useful in explaining many aspects of the *teyyam* tradition and its explanatory value is well taken. For example, these tools include concepts of ‘social drama’, ‘liminality’, ‘anti-structure’, ‘communitas’ etc., and of how ritualised performances are the products of crisis and conflict between social groups.<sup>17</sup> In this perspective, liminal rituals function to redress conflicts among social groups by temporary exaltation of the weaker group. The function is cathartic, a pressure valve of the dominant order is released and through it, the dominant structural order is reinstated and rejuvenated, and thus, the normative social ethos seasonally reinforced. Social

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14 For a recent example of this second strand, see an interesting paper on early modern Hindu kingship: Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020, <https://neemerc.huji.ac.il/publications/sin-king-early-modern-kingship-and-deification-victimhood-malabar-south> [accessed 13.08.2021].

15 For instance, see Ashley Wayne and Regina Holloman, “From Ritual to Theatre in Kerala,” *Drama Review* 26, no. 2 (1982): 59–72; Dilip, M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism, and Communism in South India: Malabar, 1900–1948*, Cambridge South Asian Studies 55 (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Dinesan Vadakkiniyil, “Images of Transgression: Teyyam in Malabar,” *Social Analysis* 54, no. 2 (2010): 130–50.

16 J.J. Pallath, *Theyyam: Analytical Study of The Folk Culture, Wisdom and Personality* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1995); Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, “Performance as a Redressive Mechanism: ‘Processual Analysis’ of Theyyam” (unpublished Term Paper, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2009); Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, “Performance, Body and Intersubjectivity: Understanding Theyyam in Malabar” (Mphil thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012); Miho Ishii, “Playing with Perspectives: Spirit Possession, Mimesis, and Permeability in the *Buuta* Ritual in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 4 (2013): 795–812, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12065>. Filipe Pereira, “Ritual Liminality and Frame: What Did Barbosa See When He Saw the Theyyam?” *Asian Theatre Journal* 34, no. 2 (2017): 375–96, <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2017.0028>.

17 On the use of these concepts in the study of *teyyam* and its limits, see Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, “Performance as a Redressive Mechanism: ‘Processual Analysis’ of Theyyam” (unpublished Term Paper, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2009).

cohesion is strengthened. Scholarship rooted in this perspective, however, rarely appreciates the ‘art’ and ‘materialities’ in the ‘performance’. Within this perspective, it is the social processes that are in the analytical limelight, hence, an anthropocentric discourse dominates in the literature. For instance, in his interesting study, incorporating theoretical concepts from Victor Turner and Jerzy Grotowski, Filipe Pereira in a recent article on *teyyam* writes:

Applying Turner and Grotow[s]ki’s notions to the ritual of theyyams, the first result is that not all of the ritual is performance: a great deal of the events developed during the ceremony consist of activity. Lighting a bonfire, preparing the altars, organizing the ritual objects in their proper order, reciting the adequate prayers, doing the required poojas (offerings) and preparing and serving a meal for the community are integral parts of the ritual. Yet, in light of Grotowski’s purposes, they do not qualify as performance: they do not require a total and extraordinary motivation, they cannot be perceived as physical impulses, and they have no need for the kind of presence and awareness from a “here and now” holistic individual.<sup>18</sup>

[T]here was a meal, blessings, all kinds of ceremonial functions, but, for my framework, this was not performance. No local individual would agree with me; they would probably even find this insulting. To the locals, the different aspects of the ceremony, the structural and the liminal, are so strongly interlaced that they cannot be distinguished.<sup>19</sup>

This approach, while focusing on the ‘liminal’ nature of the ritual, dissociates those aspects of *teyyam* such as ‘lighting’, ‘preparing altars’ etc. which are seen as non-performative. Thus, attributing (performative) agency solely to human subjects in the ‘performance’ comes at the expense of materialities and visualities, which are integral to ensuring the efficacy of the ritual. Here, certain theoretical tropes are prioritised, though it is after all a scholarly interest and position. In the study of *teyyam*, as I have already mentioned, it is always the ‘performance’ of the ‘human’ agent which is in the limelight, with the ‘nonhuman’ subjects often overshadowed.<sup>20</sup> Of course, here, my use of ‘nonhuman’ is inspired by a current movement in humanities and social sciences that is often identified as *new materialisms*, which critically engages with the dominance of anthropocentric discourse of

**18** Filipe Pereira, “Ritual Liminality and Frame: What Did Barbosa See When He Saw the Theyyam?” *Asian Theatre Journal* 34, no. 2 (2017): 389, <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2017.0028>.

**19** Filipe Pereira, “Ritual Liminality and Frame: What Did Barbosa See When He Saw the Theyyam?” *Asian Theatre Journal* 34, no. 2 (2017): 391, <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2017.0028>.

**20** Such as in the study of other *teyyam*-like rituals of the region. For instance Miho Ishii’s study incorporates insights from the framework of perspectivism, however, she does not take up material and visual aspect of bhūta worship into it, see Miho Ishii, “Playing with Perspectives: Spirit Possession, Mimesis, and Permeability in the Buuta Ritual in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 4 (2013): 795–812, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12065>; for an interesting study on iconography of bronze Bhūta Masks, see Sandra Jasmin Schlage, “Bronze Bhūta Masks: An Analysis of the Collection of the Dakshina Chitra Museum,” *Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasiensforschung* 6 (2020): 36–82.

agency, power, and effect as well as its concomitant modern dualism such as human-nonhuman, mind-matter, subject-object, affectivity-rationality, and passivity-agency etc.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars who use the term ‘art’ in relation to *teyyam* often employ it in a paternalistic manner by categorizing *teyyam* as ‘folk’ art and through its juxtaposition against the high ‘classical’ or ‘Sanskrit’ dance traditions of Kerala (of India). Consequently, *teyyam* is relegated to the other end of the spectrum as an example of low/popular culture. Hence, the usual adjectives for *teyyam* are ‘folk’, ‘indigenous’, ‘popular’ and so on, and the study of art in *teyyam* usually follows this convention.<sup>22</sup> It is against this backdrop that this paper focuses on (em)bodied human and the nonhumans dependencies in *teyyam*.<sup>23</sup> First, elaborating an overarching theme of this paper, I discuss *śakti* as an important cosmological concept in Malabar, then secondly, the ‘social body’ and ritualised human dependencies in *teyyam*, and finally, the nonhuman in *teyyam* which I discuss from the perspective of ‘sensational religion’ (see below). I argue that the performance of *teyyam* (*teyyāṭṭam*) is a ritual mediation of *śakti*; within the ritual context of *teyyam*, *śakti* is mediated and *co-constitutively* animated, for which the material and visual aspects of the performance are integral: they are not passive, but actively participate in the mediation of *śakti* along with the human agents, together constituting a multi-sensorial experience (auditory, optic, haptic, olfactory etc.) of *teyyam*. When I emphasize (em)bodied dependencies and senses in *teyyam*, I am concerned with a relatively less prevalent mode of Hindu piety in which both regional and transregional ideas, practices and cultural forms were/are entangled, however, in this essay I am more concerned with the intricacies of the local-regional context of North Malabar.

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21 Nonhuman is an emergent concept now shared across many disciplines which belongs to a broader theoretical movement that aims to de-centre the ‘human’ and its putative subject status, to deconstruct related modern dualisms such as subject-object, and simultaneously acknowledge the agency of nonhumans. Nonhuman can be anything such as animals, bodies, technologies, affectivity, materiality, plants or organism. Bruno Latour, one of the torchbearers of that movement, famously said that ‘we have never been human’. It means human is always ‘collaborated’, ‘coevolved’, ‘coexisted’ with the nonhuman, and the agency of human and nonhuman actors is distributed through this heterogeneous network, therefore, society is a network of both human and nonhuman actors. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). As an emerging theoretical emphasis, it is a very fragmented field, yet it is also very connected, for a discussion on this movement with a focus on religion, see Sonia Hazard, “The Material Turn in the Study of Religion,” *Religion and Society* 4, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2013.040104>; see also Richard A. Grusin, “Introduction,” in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard A. Grusin, 21st Century Studies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

22 For a discussion on varying kinds of scholarly views of *teyyam*, see Filipe Pereira and Madina Ziganshina, “A Post-Colonial Instance in Globalized North Malabar: Is Teyyam an ‘Art Form?’” *Asian Anthropology* 19, no. 4 (2020): 257–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478X.2020.1765465>.

23 “Embodied Dependencies,” Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/research/research-areas/research-area-b-embodied-dependencies> [accessed 07.03.2022].

## 2 Śakti in the Cosmology of Malabar

In the everyday of Malabar, the notion of śakti cuts across boundaries of caste and sects. In its simplest literal sense, it signifies strength or vitality. However, this literal meaning of śakti is an epiphenomenon of a much more profound idea, and in its broader sense, it is deeply tied to the cosmology of the region and is understood as sacred power. As Freeman points out, there are different valuations and ideologies which inform the idea of śakti as sacred power.<sup>24</sup> It evolved as a key cosmological concept in the context of Kerala over a long historical period. The three major ideological forces that are fundamental in constituting this idea of śakti correspond to the three major regional castes, which are, according to Freeman, three ideological systems – the ‘brahmanical’, the ‘warrior’, and the ‘sorcerer-complex’.<sup>25</sup> The first component, the ‘brahmanical’, focuses on the assertion of the ‘purity-impurity’ principle of caste ideology. The second is centred on asserting political authority and focuses on martial and material power. The third, distinct from the other two, is about the appropriation of power from/through magic.<sup>26</sup> Interacting across these three nexuses, śakti as a divine concept is configured as a cosmological concept in the region.<sup>27</sup>

In the socio-cultural milieu of Malabar, Brahmins did not play an overriding role over the political elites, and rather, as many scholars reiterate, the priestly class had to adapt itself to the existing powerful political order of the region whose members were patrons of the Śākta cult.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in the royal temples of Kōlasvarūpam, a ruling principality in pre-colonial north Malabar, the brahmanic notion of purity was not a priority, and they continued to hold blood sacrifices in the royal temple premises, for example, at the Māṭāyi-Kāvu. Similar sacrifices were also common in other royal temples, further north of Malabar.<sup>29</sup> Being patrons of the Śākta cult, regional kings enjoyed huge public legitimacy and consequently were able to circumvent the authority of

24 Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): vi, 36.

25 Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): vi, 36.

26 This placing of ‘brahmanical’ in first place is problematic, see Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala: Embodying the Goddess-Clan*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020): 82.

27 For a discussion of this idea of śakti in a similar perspective, see Binu John Mailaparambil, *Lords of the Sea: The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663–1723)*, TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 30–31.

28 However, with regard to early medieval Kerala, eminent historians from Kerala hold another view, see M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumāls of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy* (Thrissur: Cosmo Books, 2013[1996]); On Brahmin Settlements in Kerala, see also Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993)

29 See the discussion of different classes within Nampūtiti caste, Rich Freeman, “Śāktism, Polity and Society in Medieval Malabar,” in *Goddess Traditions in Tantric Hinduism: History, Practices and Doctrine*, ed. Bjarne Wernicke Olesen (London/New York: Routledge, 2016): 141–73.



Brahmanism. Vedic notions of dualisms such as the transcendent and immanent or purity versus impurity are therefore not very relevant to the concept of *śakti* as discussed above. However, broadening the concept further beyond the tripartite conceptualisation given by Freeman, in a recent study it has been further broadened as an amalgamation of ideas drawn from various traditions such as the ‘Tāntric, Dravidian, Sanskritic, and Mappila-Muslim logics.’<sup>30</sup> Also probably, ideas from other communities of Malabar.

The circulation of tantric ideas within the regional cosmology of Malabar is considered a part of the transregional phenomenon of ‘tantrification’. This localisation of the tantric traditions was one of the broader significant cultural shifts between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. As a pan-Indic cultural phenomenon, it refers to the circulation of cosmological ideas of ‘Śaiva-Śākta’ across the post-Gupta Indic kingdoms.<sup>31</sup> It was initially fashioned as a system of ‘heteropraxy’ (*nāstik*), which took shape in response to the *smārta* conventions. Ethical righteousness and the violation of Vedic dictums of ritual purity were the significant features of tantric groups, whose members spanned various caste groups. Their liturgies aimed to activate immanent energy through bodily praxis, which contrasted with the dominant notions of purity and pollution. The rituals also involved substances such as blood and liquor, generally considered as ‘polluting’ substances.<sup>32</sup>

In the context of ‘Hindu’ temples and sacred groves (understood as *teyyam* shrines) of the region, there are two contrasting modes of practicing *tantra*. On the one hand there is dualistic *tantra* as practised by the Nambūtiri Brahmins in the *brahmanic* temples of the region, which substitutes ritual sacrifice with vegetative offerings. On the other hand, there is the ‘Kashmiri Tantric non-dualism’, which can be seen in temples such as those patronised by the Kōlattiri Rāja. In these temples, as already mentioned, blood sacrifice and alcohol were the preferred ritual offering. These temples also allowed for communal worship without barring the lower castes. In *teyyam kāvu*, either Śaiva-Śākta deities or warrior heroes/heroines are mainly invoked. Here the *śakti* is propitiated and ‘embodied’ in the body medium of the performer (*kōlakkāran*). The overarching idea of *śakti* is mainly constituted by the dominance of Śākta cults in the region. Due to its public following in the context of premodern Kerala, the esoteric Śākta practice can be understood as an exoteric practice, which enjoyed patronage of kings and warriors in the region and was held in high esteem by the ruling elites.<sup>33</sup>

30 Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020): 82; for me this ‘Mappila logic’ is not clear.

31 Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala: Embodying the Goddess-Clan*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020): 46.

32 Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala: Embodying the Goddess-Clan*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020): 31.

33 On this circulation of Kashmiri non-dualistic tantra in South India see Bjarne Wernicke Olesen, ‘Introduction,’ in *Goddess Traditions in Tantric Hinduism: History, Practices and Doctrine*, ed. Bjarne Wernicke Olesen (London/New York: Routledge, 2016): 1–15. See also John Richardson Freeman,

The heroic act of killing in the battlefield or in a hunt was also considered as a ‘register of śakti’.<sup>34</sup> In this same context, we can also see the conflation of ‘military might’ with ‘spiritual attainment’.<sup>35</sup> It was believed that things signifying the goddess, such as wooden banners (*paḷḷimaraṭi*), would bring favour in battles which were then carried at the head of army on their march to their rival kingdoms.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the idea of śakti is both ‘animate’ and ‘inanimate’,<sup>37</sup> as one *teyyam* performer elaborates on śakti:

*śakti* is multivalent, and it comes in different ways, ‘mentally, physically; to become a *teyyam*, a ‘*kōlakkāran*’ needs to acquire all these śakti, śakti is also ‘*dēvi*’ [goddess], ‘*dēvan*’ [god], but it is not ‘*adrshyaśakti*’ [invisible power], it is there in this *kāvu* [*teyyam* grove], as well as in other neighbouring *kāvu*, each *teyyam* has its own *dēvi*, or *dēvan*, or *vīrapuruṣhan* [apotheosised warrior] or *parapūrvikanmār* [ancestral divinities], whichever forms they are, they are *sarvavyāpi* [omnipresent] and, as a *caitanya*m (divine power), they are in the *kāvu*, during the performance, it is brought to the body of *kōlakkāran* and it takes days-long series of rituals [*anushtānakarmangal*].<sup>38</sup>

From this observation of a *kōlakkāran*, it is quite clear that śakti is performatively articulated as something immanent and sacred. However, this performative immanency not only requires a particular cultural (‘lower’-caste) body, but also a series of ritualised procedures. It is important to note that those who were located in the ‘lower’ strata of the social hierarchy were ascribed possession of divine power. Before the final transference of śakti to his body, it is channelled through many ritualised activities. Similarly, the ‘physical’ and ‘mental’ ability of the performer, which here the *kōlakkāran* consciously differentiates from the sacred śakti, is a conditioned disposition which is attained over time. When asked for more elaboration, he explained that physical and mental śakti had a special valence, and not everyone can ‘embody’ the śakti. He considers it as an *anugraham* (blessing) of the *teyyam* divinities that he performs. To summarise, within the shared cosmology of Malabar, the indexical

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“Untouchable Bodies of Knowledge in the Spirit Possession of Malabar,” *Paragrana* 18, no. 1 (2009): 160, <https://doi.org/10.1524/para.2009.0010>; Matthew Martin, *Tantra, Ritual Performance, and Politics in Nepal and Kerala: Embodying the Goddess-Clan*, Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 166 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2020): 165–68.

34 See Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in *Teyyam* Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 334, 708.

35 Sarah Cadwell, “Waves of Beauty, Rivers of Blood: Constructing the Goddess in Kerala,” in *Seeing Mahādevī: Constructing Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess*, ed. Tracy Pintchman (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001): 97.

36 Binu John Mailaparambil, *Lords of the Sea: The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663–1723)*, TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction 14 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047444718>.

37 Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in *Teyyam* Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 324.

38 Interview conducted on 30.08.2021. I thank performer Adarsh Peruvannan, Mangad, Kannur for sharing his invaluable knowledge with me.

presence of *śakti* ranged from titles through material artifacts to extra/super-ordinary powers.

However, *śakti* in the context of performance is not merely an indexical presence through a symbolic-material referent, but it is rather an *ontological* presence experienced as real. In temples it is sacralised and enshrined, but in the *teyyam* performance, the mode of access to the *teyyam* deity is different from *darśana* in the context of a temple, as will be discussed later. Studies on *teyyam* have usually placed more emphasis on the social constitution of the *teyyam* ritual. As I have already indicated, to avoid this anthropocentrism, it is essential to locate ‘nonhuman’ agency in the performance and to conceive the social and cultural body of the performer as just one ‘actant’ in the ‘network’, which together channels, possesses and enacts *śakti*. Within such a conceptualisation, and to emphasise the point here, the animated *śakti* in *teyyāṭṭam* is mediated and co-constituted by ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ actors. The multi-sensorial experience of *śakti* in the *teyyam* ritual is contingent on a shared cosmology, populated with various potent divinities,<sup>39</sup> and the honour and reverence which these divinities command often cut through sectarian and religious boundaries. In the *teyyam* performance, I argue that the enactment of *śakti* is ritually contingent on nonhumans. As Jane Bennett puts it, “‘Thing-Power’: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, an approach that emphasises only ‘human’ agency is not enough, since *śakti* is mediated through the power of both ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ actors alike, thereby enabling an ‘ontological fluidity’ (see below) across material paraphernalia of *teyyam*.

### 3 Posthumous and Puranic Gods: ‘Bodies’ in the Dependency of *Teyyam*

The *teyyam* tradition is inextricably tied to social organisations of caste, kinship, and other related structures of power such as the *taravād* (landed household) of the region. This social constitution of *teyyam* makes the question of dependency among social groups a significant one. Discussing these multivalent forms of social dependency in *teyyam* is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, and therefore is limited to the question of caste. I would like to emphasise that even during the liminal period of many *teyyams*, the *brahmanic* notion of pure/impure body is not completely annulled.

<sup>39</sup> For an interesting discussion of *teyyam* in relation to fertility, see P.K. Yasser Arafath, “Saints, Serpents, and Terrifying Goddesses: Fertility Culture on the Malabar Coast (c. 1500–1800),” in *Histories of Medicine and Healing in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Anna Winterbottom and Facil Tesfaye (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 99–124, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137567574\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137567574_4).

<sup>40</sup> Jane Bennett, “The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter,” *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (2004): 351, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591703260853>.

The ‘processual body’ of the *teyyam* performer is intricately connected to the social body of the various caste groups (the social corporeality of caste) involved in the ritual, including the devotees.<sup>41</sup> In the ritual praxis of *teyyam*, the ritualised body of the performer is an intermediary for the experience of the *śakti*. Elaborating this point, in this section, firstly, I discuss the social body in the organisation of *teyyam*, secondly the idea of posthumous agency, which is very pertinent to many *teyyams*, and thirdly, the potency of *teyyam* as an embodied and animated form of worship which led to its further appropriation. Although it mediates the divine *śakti* and functions as an embodied ritual praxis, the *teyyam* can also be seen as an act of dissent. Through the worship of deified heroes/heroines, it dramatises dissent and raises questions of an ethical nature.

### 3.1 The Social Body in Teyyam: The Performing and Worshipping Castes

Before (post)colonial politico-juridical measures were introduced, social life in Malabar was bound by stringent regulations and practices set by caste ideology.<sup>42</sup> In the context of the *teyyam* tradition, Rich Freeman describes these rules and regulations as ‘established customs of religion (*anuṣṭhānam*)’ and ‘norms of maintaining them in ritual practice (*ācāram*)’. The *anuṣṭhānam* and *ācāram* are also to be crucially maintained in ritualised settings.<sup>43</sup> *Teyyāṭṭam*, as a ritual performance, is conducted in shrines owned by both the ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ castes of the region. The shrines are also further operated based on ‘family, lineage or clan’. Broadly, the people of the region were/are ritually structured around the network of shrines and temples.<sup>44</sup> Ritualised interactions among the castes are ensured through *anuṣṭhānam* and *ācāram*, of which the practices around the ritual complex of the ‘temple-shrine’ have their own hierarchically ordered institutional offices (*sthānam*) through which power is exercised. As a form of ritualised dependency is instituted within the social body (castes),

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41 In the ‘Hindu’ discourse of body, as elaborated by Barbara A. Holdrege, the ‘*processual body*’ such as the ‘ritual body’, ‘ascetic body’, ‘purity body’, ‘devotional body’, and ‘tantric body’ facilitates transactions among ‘*integral bodies*’ such as that of the ‘social body’ (caste bodies), ‘divine body’, and ‘cosmos body’. See Barbara A. Holdrege, “Body Connections: Hindu Discourses of the Body and the Study of Religion,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2, no. 3 (1998): 341–86, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11407-998-0002-8>.

42 On stringent practices in Malabar based on spatial segregation and body contact, see the discussion and note 72 given for the chapter seven in Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (London: Chicago University Press, 1974): 154.

43 Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 33–34, 720.

44 Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 311.

a measure of power is also accorded to the *teyyam* performing castes due to their exclusive right to perform the *teyyam* in the shrine.

The *teyyāṭṭam* requires the co-operation of various castes. For convenience, a categorisation based on the relation of each caste with the performance will be fruitful in the further elaboration of embodied dependency in the *teyyam* performance. One such simple categorisation already in use is ‘*teyyāṭṭakkār*’ (‘performing castes’) and ‘*teyyārādakar*’ (‘worshipping castes’).<sup>45</sup> The performative immanency of *śakti* in *teyyāṭṭam* is primarily contingent on the specific ‘qualifier’ of the performer – his social body. Similarly, other rites related to the performance are allocated to other caste groups. Conventionally, ‘performing castes’ are from the ‘lower castes’ of North Kerala, which were considered ‘polluting’ to the ‘upper castes’ in the region. Although the ‘performing castes’ are traditionally considered inferior in the caste hierarchy, within the spectacle of the performance, the ‘words’ of the ‘lower’ caste performer are accorded great reverence by all ‘worshipping castes’.<sup>46</sup> In northern Kerala, the main performing castes are Vaṅṅān, Malayan, Pāṅān, Anchūrān, Munnūrān, Kalanādikaḷ, Māvīlan, Koppālan, Nalkittāya, Tulumalayavēlan, and Pulayā and the worshipping castes are Tiyyar, Nāir, Vaniya, Nākuvarṇakkar, Kōlanmār, Shāliyar, Mukayār, Paḷḷichanmar, Paṅiyanmār and Brahmins.<sup>47</sup>

In *teyyāṭṭam*, key positions are held by the ‘upper’ castes. For instance, it is the Brahmin priest (*tantri*) who sanctions the performance. Even if the ‘lower’ caste members organise their own *teyyam*, they need to seek sanction from the ‘upper’ caste priest.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the shrine (*kāvu*) where the *teyyam* performance is conducted has to be consecrated by the upper caste ‘*tantri*’ Brahmin, therefore the social body is a significant aspect of the ritual and is not limited to the social ‘body’ of the performer.<sup>49</sup> A representative from the political authority of the region (*koyma*) takes care of the ritual arrangements set by the *tantri*, and the village council (*uralanmār*) also help him. The oracle (*veliccapāṭ* or *kōmaram*) conducts the rituals in the *teyyam* performing shrines. If the oracle in *teyyam* is from the Tiyya, Kollan, Asāri, and Mūsāri castes, they are called *velichapād*, and if they are from Vaniya, and Maniyāni castes, they are called *kōmaram*. Another group of people is ‘Kūṭṭāyi’ who collect the resources to the shrine. However, only Tiyya castes (with a relatively better standing

45 Sanjeevan Azheekode, *Theyyathile Jathivzhakkam* (Kottayam: Kerala Current Books, 2007): 59.

46 Thaniya Kaliyanthil Leela, “Goddesses of North Malabar: An Anthropological Study on Kinship and Ritual in North Malabar” (Master thesis, University of Bergen, 2016): 50.

47 Sanjeevan Azheekode, *Theyyathile Jathivzhakkam* (Kottayam: Kerala Current Books, 2007): 61, 215.

48 Thaniya Kaliyanthil Leela, “Goddesses of North Malabar: An Anthropological Study on Kinship and Ritual in North Malabar” (Master thesis, University of Bergen, 2016): 8.

49 Wayne Ashley and Regina Holloman, “From Ritual to Theatre in Kerala,” *Drama Review* 26, no. 2 (1982): 101; Rich Freeman, “Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 174; Thaniya Kaliyanthil Leela, “Goddesses of North Malabar: An Anthropological Study on Kinship and Ritual in North Malabar” (Master thesis, University of Bergen, 2016): 50.

in the caste hierarchy) are allowed to be in 'Kūṭṭāyi' group. The Kalaśakkāran, again a member of the Tiyya caste, arranges the coconut leaves, liquor, and leaf torch before the performance. Each caste has their own *teyyam*, no matter whether it is the 'upper' or 'lower' caste, however, characteristically, the 'performance' remains a prerogative of the 'lower' castes, castes which were/are socially and economically marginalised by the 'upper' castes.<sup>50</sup> The fixed roles that are derived from their caste status are further ensured by conventions of *anuṣṭhānam* and *ācāram*. A form of 'dependency' shaped by the conventions and rules of caste is very central not just in the performance, but also in the origin tales (*tōrram*) of many *teyyams* (see below). Although the performer is always a male member from certain *teyyam* performing castes, the 'patrons' of the performance can be from any caste in the hierarchy. A *teyyam* deity may belong to a certain family, caste, and locality, and therefore, in the process of propitiating a 'teyyam', the patron(s) form dependent relations with various castes of the region.

Moving down from the 'upper' to the relatively 'lower' strata of the caste index of the region, ritualised dependency is evident, but it does not guarantee a total absence of caste values. For instance, the Nāyars (a caste with a relatively higher standing in the caste hierarchy, but a lower standing in relation to the Brahmin castes of the region), have their own *teyyam* shrines where they regularly make propitiation, and employ Brahmin priests to ritually cleanse and maintain the affairs of their temples. This ritual proximity of the 'upper' and 'lower' castes during the liminal order of *teyyam*, who are otherwise ritually apart, does not completely reverse the notion of 'purity' and 'pollution'. For instance, 'upper' castes of the region who have their family temples but do not have their own separate *teyyam* shrines, conduct *teyyam* performances at their own houses, sometimes in their courtyards. In such cases, they nevertheless ensure the ritual purity of their private household temples by using a low protective wall.<sup>51</sup> When the lower-caste *teyyam* performer and his troupe come to perform, the performer and his troupe are kept outside this protective wall.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, even if 'upper' castes are patrons of *teyyam*, there is nevertheless a limit to how much proximity can be tolerated; ritual pollution is a concern even during this 'liminal' season of *teyyam*.

*Teyyam* is patronised by different groups in the region, from the landed families (*taravād*) to the various service castes with differing standing within the social body. The dynamics of caste are quite visible in the organisation of *teyyam* as well as in its performance (*teyyāṭṭam*). Though *teyyam* tradition is a liminal form, it is also a form of perpetuating 'dependency' relations in sharing resources. The single most important feature of the performance is the rule that the performer should always be from

50 Rich Freeman, "The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 312.

51 Rich Freeman, "Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 171–72.

52 Rich Freeman, "Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 173.

the *teyyam*-performing 'lower' castes of the region. This is therefore a unique form of dependency where the ritually enforced superior-inferior castes form dependent ritual relations across the social body. In the organisational level, caste-specific roles are obvious in *teyyam* performance. Beyond this rather apparent ritualised dependency in the organisation of *teyyam*, a striking paradox is that many *teyyam* deities died challenging caste oppression and were then divinised.

Outside the liminal ritual performance, a direct ritual relationship between the 'upper' and 'lower' caste rarely occurs. Here, *teyyāṭṭam* contradicts high textualism as well as certain strands of the anthropology of caste that reproduces a text-focused view of rigid caste structure.<sup>53</sup> *Teyyam* alludes to the fact that ritualised interactions between/among castes can be seen outside *brahmanical* texts. This is the 'picture' that increasingly becomes clearer in recent scholarship which seeks to shift 'distorted perspectives that have persisted in two hundred years of Indological scholarship owing to overreliance on *brahmanical* texts for interpreting Hinduism.'<sup>54</sup> The ritualised interaction occurs as 'worshipping castes' belonging to different castes have ritual co-presence to enact and animate *śakti*' mediated by both human and nonhuman actors. However, even during the spectacle of the performance, the ritual transgression of pollution is not completely annulled, but maintained as per convention (see below). While simultaneously the experience of divinity by the worshippers through the body medium of the *teyyam* performer cuts across caste boundaries.

Many '*teyyams*' had lived and died as real human beings (if not an incarnation of puranic character), and the narrative accounts about them refer to acts of defiance connected to social ethos, more precisely oppressive practices of the caste ideology or patriarchy, because of which they were usually killed.<sup>55</sup> As their spirits returned vengeful, they were propitiated by divinisation. The humans were divinised 'after miraculous deeds and violent death, only because of the divine power already inherent within them'.<sup>56</sup> As per the interpretative logic of the local cosmology, their *śakti* is now posthumously evident. Once they enter the canons of *teyyam* divinities, they are then seasonally propitiated through a *teyyam* form. This practice of divinisation, in fact, denies their worldly 'human' agency (as real human beings who fought the dominant order), but ascribes to them a divine *śakti*; they are then absorbed into the

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53 See the criticism by Rich Freeman against Louis Dumont's textualism in the context of *teyyam*: Rich Freeman, "Purity and Violence: Sacred Power in Teyyam Worship of Malabar" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991): 48.

54 Heather Elgood, "Art," in *Studying Hinduism: Key Concepts and Methods*, ed. Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (New York: Routledge, 2007): 4.

55 On this aspect of violent death of human *teyyams*, see Rich Freeman, "The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 318.

56 Rich Freeman, "The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala," in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 318.



*teyyam* pantheon.<sup>57</sup> The cause or intentionality in the death of a hero/heroine is faced by their divinisation into a *teyyam*. In many *teyyams*, this posthumous agency enacted in the medium of the body critiques the ideology of ritual pollution while simultaneously embodying and performing divinity. However, when this form was historically appropriated by the ‘upper’ castes, the logic of caste ideology can be seen to prevail in it. I elaborate this point by following two different examples of *teyyam*.

### 3.2 Āippalli Teyyam: The Posthumous Agency of a Caṇḍāla

Often *teyyam* divinities have varying stories (such stories about *teyyams* are sung mainly before the performance and known as *tōrram*). For instance, the ‘Āippalli *tōrram*, which are sung during the ‘Āippalli *teyyam*, narrate a tragic story about a boy who failed to keep the pollution (*tīṇṭal*) at a distance and his Brahmin master, who were both killed by a despot. The Brahmin was killed for questioning the killing of his servant.

One *Ayikottaramana Embranthiri*, a Brahmin, owned a large field, *Chaladutara*. The Pulayas did all the works in this field. Once the *Embranthiri* had taken care of a boy, a Pulayan by name, *Pithari*. The boy was assigned to look after the field. One day, while *Pithari* was playing, *Kolathiri*, the king of *Kolathunadu*, and his Nayars came across the boy. Unfortunately, he was shot dead by the King because he was unable to keep the ‘pollution distance’. His master *Embranthiri* also was shot dead by the same king. The assassin suffered from several misfortunes due to his unjustifiable action. He and his family later got out of the trouble through worshipping the boy *Pithari* as *Iyepalli teyyam*. This *teyyam* tell us about the status, and the role of individuals. It also reveals about the threat and treatment received by the poor untouchables from powerful persons.<sup>58</sup>

In the story, both the ‘lower’ caste boy and his ‘upper’ caste master were killed because the boy did not maintain ritual distance from the king and his entourage, causing *tīṇṭal* (pollution) for them. The Brahmin was killed as he questioned the killing of his servant.<sup>59</sup> It is also notable that the safeguarding of a ‘lower’ caste *caṇḍāla* boy by a Brahmin was in contradiction to caste conventions. Although he was the servant of

57 Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, “Performance as a Redressive Mechanism: ‘Processual Analysis’ of Theyyam” (unpublished Term Paper, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2009).

58 M.P. Damodaran, “Teyyam Is the Best Tool for Reconstructing the History of North Malabar,” *The Anthropologist* 10, no. 4 (2008): 283–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2008.11891063>. For detailed discussion of *tōrram* of this *teyyam*, see Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020, <https://neemerc.huji.ac.il/publications/sin-king-early-modern-kingship-and-deification-victimhood-malabar-south> [accessed 13.08.2021]: 22–40.

59 Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020: 32.

a Brahmin, for the king, he was an ‘inauspicious *chandāla*’.<sup>60</sup> However, the boy’s spirit returns and creates many problems for the king, and as per the solution suggested by an astrologer, the Āippalli *teyyam* was performed, and the vengeful Pithāri was pacified and domesticated as a *teyyam* deity. The tone of the song of Āippalli *teyyam* is stridently against tyrannical political authority, the king of Kōlattunāṭu, whose sin is sung about, the killing of the Brahmin and his servant. In this song, the killing of a *caṇḍāla* and the killing of Brahmin are however received differently, the killing of the Brahmin; ‘Brahma-*hatya*’, being one of the five ‘grand sins’ (*mahāpātakam*). Interestingly, it is the duo of Caṇḍāla-Brahmin who haunt the king, and who are pacified through the divinisation.<sup>61</sup> The *tōrram* of this *teyyam* reveals the sin of the king and its injustice is the explicit theme of this *teyyam*.

The king’s action of killing the Brahmin can also be read in relation to the rise of ‘neo-*brahmanical* landlordism’ during the time of the Kōlattiri’s reign, the *brahmanical* power as vested in caste ideology posed a direct threat to the power of the king.<sup>62</sup> Further, the relationship portrayed in the *tōrram*, between the Brahmin and his servant, can also be seen as reflecting the social scenario of the time where good will between the two groups (Brahmins and the labouring castes) was necessary to the rising *brahmanical* landlordism in Kōlattunāṭu. In early modern Kerala, this *mahāpātakam* committed by the king is reflective of its time and social conditions. Considering the dominance of Śākta ideology in the region, particularly, the mention of ‘Emprāntiri’, the caste name mentioned in the *tōrram*, is a subcaste within Brahmins (imported Brahmins from Tulu of Karnataka), such friendship might be more likely.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the inappropriately exercised kingly agency is the main problematic in this *tōrram*, and the innocent Brahmin who befriended a *caṇḍāla* is juxtaposed against the unjust king. Like many other *teyyams*, the ethico-pietistic content is undeniable while it simultaneously negotiates and critiques the caste-ideology of ritual pollution (*tīṇḍal*).

60 Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020: 31.

61 Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020: 40.

62 Abhilash Malayil, “Sin of the King: Early-Modern Kingship and the Deification of Victimhood in Malabar, South-Western India,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020: 35.

63 On such friendship in the context of śākta, see Rich Freeman, “Śāktism, Polity and Society in Medieval Malabar,” in *Goddess Traditions in Tantric Hinduism: History, Practices and Doctrine*, ed. Bjarne Wernicke Olesen (London/New York: Routledge, 2016): 161.

### 3.3 Brahmanic Appropriation of ‘Poṭṭan’: The Impossibility of an Articulate Caṇḍāla

When *teyyam* is appropriated by the ‘upper’ caste of the region, caste dynamics, patronage relationships and the common sense of caste logic underpins its narrative. The Poṭṭan *teyyam* (Plate 7.5) is one of the best examples for this kind of appropriation. It is performed by Malayan *kōlakkāran* and is often patronised by the ‘upper’ castes of the region.<sup>64</sup> Violent deaths are featured in many of the *tōrram* and many of the *teyyam* stories feature ‘lower’ caste heroes who challenged the ethos of caste, portrayed as dissenting against a figure of authority. One of the Śaivite *teyyams* is known as Poṭṭan *Teyyam* (literally ‘foolish’ *teyyam*) is discussed in this section. It features an ‘untouchable tantric gnostic’, one among other *mantramūrtis* of the region.<sup>65</sup> This is a dominant form of the Poṭṭan *teyyam*, which is often patronised by Brahmin households and performed by Malayan *kōlakkāran*. In the *tōrram* of this popular version of the Poṭṭan *teyyam* (unlike its historical antecedent, which also features a ‘fool’ as *teyyam* with a similar name, however it is performed by the Pulaya community who are/were considered ‘lower’ than Malaya community) features the encounter between a *caṇḍāla* (a ‘lower’ caste person) and saint Śaṅkarācārya [Adi Śaṅkara], the well-known sage who belongs to eighth-century ‘Kerala’. Here, it is Śiva disguised as a ‘lower’-caste man who refuses to move from the path of the saint.<sup>66</sup> It is a challenge issued to authority when a lower-caste man refuses to yield the road to his social superior. They engage in an intense conversation, in which the *caṇḍāla* (Siva-in-disguise) reveals a wisdom and eloquence in contradiction to his social status as imagined in a caste-ridden society.

<sup>64</sup> John Richardson Freeman, “Untouchable Bodies of Knowledge in the Spirit Possession of Malabar,” *Paragrana* 18, no. 1 (2009): 145, <https://doi.org/10.1524/para.2009.0010>.

<sup>65</sup> *Mantramūrtis* are *teyyams*, usually in a pantheon of five of which the Poṭṭan *teyyam* is one, they are often patronised by Brahmins who practise magic through *mantras*, see Rich Freeman, “Śāktism, Polity and Society in Medieval Malabar,” in *Goddess Traditions in Tantric Hinduism: History, Practices and Doctrine*, ed. Bjarne Wernicke Olesen (London/New York: Routledge, 2016): 157, 161.

<sup>66</sup> See the interesting comparison in John Richardson Freeman, “Untouchable Bodies of Knowledge in the Spirit Possession of Malabar,” *Paragrana* 18, no. 1 (2009): 135–64, <https://doi.org/10.1524/para.2009.0010>; for this argument of *brahmanisation* of this *tōrram*, however not elaborated, see A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, *The Sacred in Popular Hinduism: An Empirical Study in Chirakkal, North Malabar* (Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1983): 170.

Saint Śaṅkara to *caṇḍāla*:<sup>67</sup>

'You, Chandala (low born),  
Haven't you the sense  
To recognize the learned from distance  
Those who belong to any of the four castes,  
To sense the gait of a Brahmin instantaneously?

'You have no knowledge of time  
The past, the present and the future,  
You have no caste,  
You beyond law,  
You don't wash,  
You smell of fish and beef  
You are naturals  
With no knowledge of God.'

'You seem to be bent upon  
Obstructing our path  
Abandon reckless ventures,  
You ignoramus,  
With no idea of higher knowledge.

You, so mean, Devil of the first water  
Get out of the way  
If you plan to defy,  
You shall be treated  
To a sound beating.  
Don't standing on the path,  
You evil minded man.'

*Caṇḍāla* to Saint Śaṅkara:

'What do you mean by path,  
And who should get himself out of the path?

Can you discriminate between  
Truth and Untruth?  
The perennial and the ephemeral,  
The Sacred and the profane,  
The clean conscience and the unclean,  
The female and the eunuchs  
The abstract and concrete  
The learned and low born?

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67 For the verses from the *tōrram* featured here, see K.M Tharakan, trans., "Thottam on Poṭṭan," in *The Sacred in Popular Hinduism: An Empirical Study in Chirakkal, North Malabar*, ed. A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel (Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1983): 173–76.

Please show us the path of justice.  
 In what respect do  
 We differ, if you omniscient  
 Please tell us.

Senses are five, six, and nine,  
 Elements are five,  
 Mandalas are three, *Eshnavas* (Desires) are three  
*Dushanams* (Evils) are three  
 Gods are three, bodies are three  
 Nerves are three.  
 States (of sleep, dream, awakeness) are three  
*Pranas* (life-breaths) are five  
*Upaprānas* (sub-life-breaths) are seven  
*Ādharas* (bases) are six  
*Kosas* (cells) are five,  
*Dhadhus* (constituting of the body) seven,  
 Is it with full knowledge of these  
 That you ordered us out?  
 Cut your bodies and see.  
 Any difference of colour in the blood of a Brahmin and mine?

‘The inviolable master  
 Who has rid himself of the burden  
 Of the rope of desire,  
 Stands in the hearts of Advaita.  
 It lights itself in you and me,  
 In this earth and in the sky.  
 If you could reach the original centre,  
 And through its nervous system,  
 Cross the six centres,  
 Ascend up to the cranium-lotus,  
 And from there merge  
 In the central nerve (that leads from the original  
 Centre to the Brahma Randra)  
 You reach the sphere of the moon  
 And drink nectar,  
 You experience sheer ecstasy  
 And the sense of duality dissolves,  
 And you experience non-duality.  
 You know not yourself, and yet  
 You are cross with me.  
 It is a matter of pity  
 That you have asked me to get away,  
 Poor me, holding the pot of toddy on my head  
 and managing a little family.

See, on the either side,  
 There are woods of thorn

And things movable and immovable;  
 God is the essence of all.  
 With thoughts of his glories in mind  
 How may you ask us  
 To move out? How may you abuse us?  
 Darkness of ignorance  
 Clouds your mind  
 Or else, you would not have erred this way.’

Seeing these unequivocal thoughts expressed by a *caṇḍāla*, the saint Śaṅkara immediately realises that it is none other than the Lord Śiva in disguise, he falls upon the feet of the *caṇḍāla* and praises him:

‘I kiss your feet, oh, wearer of the snake!  
 Forgive me wearer of time in your grace and save me.’

Now the lord Śiva speaks:

‘I came as a Chandala  
 To put you to test.  
 I know there is none on earth,  
 So learned as you,  
 Go you need not be late,  
 Nor shall you feel crest-fallen  
 May all the worlds be born through you.’

In this *tōrram*, the Poṭṭan<sup>68</sup> as *caṇḍāla* lacks agency. It is not a *caṇḍāla* who problematises the oppression of caste ideology, but Śiva in disguise. In the *brahmanical* ‘upper’ caste imagination, an articulate *caṇḍāla* is an impossibility which in the story is confirmed by the enlightened Śaṅkara. However, in the form of the *caṇḍāla*, Siva makes an impact on the saint, who propounded the Advaita philosophy. This encounter of Śaṅkara with the *caṇḍāla* and the saint’s spiritual enlightenment is featured in the hagiographic tradition of *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*. However, as Freeman explains, this appropriation is mediated by another intermediary Sanskrit text, the *Maniśāpañcakam*. It further confirms the higher-caste agency behind this creative transformation of an existing *tōrram*, which displaces its many ‘Dravidian’ elements as well as recasting it to an extent suitable for a *brahmanical* context.<sup>69</sup> In fact, in the *brahmanised* version, the presence of *caṇḍāla* is an absent presence (Śiva took a form of *caṇḍāla*), and is well received and more often patronised by ‘upper’ castes.

<sup>68</sup> The word Poṭṭan is often translated as ‘deaf-dumb’ (as did by K.M Tharakan in his translation, see note 66), along with its connotations of ‘a fool’ in the popular imagination. This bias is used here only to emphasize the paradoxical logic (a philosophizing fool), and hence the use of ‘fool’ within single quotation marks.

<sup>69</sup> John Richardson Freeman, “Untouchable Bodies of Knowledge in the Spirit Possession of Malabar,” *Paragrana* 18, no. 1 (2009): 146, <https://doi.org/10.1524/para.2009.0010>.

To summarise, from the ‘myths’ of many *teyyam* to its performance, the social body of caste is quite central, as seen in the first *teyyam* discussed above: the fallen heroes/heroines are tremendously potent after their divinisation. They transcend their death and as per the discursive logic of a cosmology shaped by Śākta tantric ideas, it is their inherent *śakti* that enabled them in the first place to perform extraordinary actions. However, the act of divinisation negates ‘human’ intentionality behind those heroic actions. In the *longue dureé* was appropriated by ‘upper’ castes of the region, with Sanskritic and *brahmanic* mediation adding further layers to it. Even if the ideologies of caste, such as ritual pollution and purity, are problematised in some *teyyams*, it is the logic of caste that nevertheless underpins them, especially as the *teyyams* were increasingly *brahmanised*. *Teyyam* as a collective ritual performance viewed through Ian Hodder’s model of dependence includes both ‘dependence’ (‘productive and enabling’) and ‘dependency’ (‘constraining and limiting’). Hence, *teyyam* can be said to be an ‘entanglement’ in which ‘human depends on things’ (HT) and ‘human depends on human’ (HH).<sup>70</sup> *Teyyāṭṭam* is a multi-sensorial practice and experience of ‘material and social entanglement’.<sup>71</sup>

## 4 Embodied Divinity: ‘Sensational Religion’ in *Teyyam*

I have already pointed out that existing scholarship on *teyyam* is anthropocentric, hence, the material and sensational aspects are side-lined. In the context of many new scholarly currents in art history, archaeology, anthropology of religion, and religious studies, this section intends to engage with a few aspects of *teyyam* from the perspective of ‘sensational religion’. As a multi-layered approach to religion, it is mainly concerned with ‘multi-sensorial experiences’, ‘practices of religion’, and ‘material objects’, hence it

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<sup>70</sup> In *teyyam*, the occurrence of two other dependences related to his idea of ‘entanglement’ (TT: things depend on other things, and TH: things depend on humans) are also likely (for example protection, and gathering of plants, animals, and substances belong to TH), but is not much discussed in this paper. I am very grateful to Prof. Ian Hodder for generously responding to my question on ‘dependency’ and ‘agency’ in relation to his ‘entanglement’, Ian Hodder, “The Force Fields of Things: An Archaeological Focus on Sequences of Things,” Joseph C. Miller Lecture Series, BCDSS, University of Bonn, Bonn, September 7, 2020; for his notion of dependence-dependency, and entanglement, see Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Chichester: Wiley, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118241912>. For the idea of dependency in the context of maritime Malabar, see Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali, ‘Improvisation Through a Culture of Dependency: Islamic Material Culture in the South Indian Littorals’, paper presented in ‘Dependency, Inequality, and Material Culture’, Workshop, University of Bonn, 12–14, February, 2019, Akademisches Kunstmuseum, Bonn.

<sup>71</sup> Sally M. Promey, “Religion, Sensation, and Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 3.

considers ‘relations among materialities, embodiment, the senses, and cognition’ and the interpretative worlds that inform and derive from these sensorial experiences as central in its methodological orientation.<sup>72</sup> ‘Sensational religion’, which is also broadly related to the ongoing movement in humanities and social sciences, critically engages with modernist ontological binaries, and seeks to shift from related anthropocentric ideas such as ‘belief’.<sup>73</sup> It focuses on experience (multi-sensorial) and embodied practices and emphasises the constitutive agency of material mediums; it is thus a ‘*relational* enterprise’ (emphasis original) and the ‘human’ in this enterprise is one among many actors and does not have a privileged position.<sup>74</sup> This approach emphasises the role of material and visual in the study religion, and many scholars work with this methodological intent. For instance, the idea of ‘sensational forms’ of Birgit Meyer is also concerned with ‘the affective appeal of religious media’ that ‘trigger as well as condense religious experience’.<sup>75</sup>

Informed by this approach, I conceptualise *teyyāṭṭam* as a ritual enactment of ‘śakti’ of a *teyyam* deity, in which besides the human body medium of the performer, its efficacy in ritual context is also contingent on practices that essentially include diverse multi-sensorial material media: materialities, and visualities. Together they ‘convey particular ways of “making sense” but concomitantly tune the senses and induce specific sensations, thereby rendering the divine sense-able, and triggering particular religious experiences’.<sup>76</sup> In this section, I present material-visual, multi-sensorial nonhuman socialities in *teyyam* performance, which are usually side-lined by the scholarship on *teyyam*.

## 4.1 Theyyakkāvu: Deity Inhabited

In Kerala, *kāvu*, in the contemporary public imaginary, is an ecological ideal with a religious sanctity. To pacify a posthumously vengeful ‘god’, it needs deification and an abode to live. Thus, a roaming ‘śakti’ is ritually emplaced in a definite place, this ritual act of emplacement is called *kudiyiruttal*. The aniconic *teyyam* insignia are often enshrined in modestly sized enclosed spaces (Plates 7.1, 7.2), often these spaces include their ecological surrounding referred to as *kāvu*. As a common term referring to any

72 Sally M. Promey, “Religion, Sensation, and Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 1.

73 Sally M. Promey, “Religion, Sensation, and Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 2.

74 Sally M. Promey, “Religion, Sensation, and Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 15.

75 Birgit Meyer, “Media and the Senses in the Making of Religious Experience: An Introduction,” *Material Religion* 4, no. 2 (2008): 124–34, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183408X328262>.

76 Birgit Meyer, “Media and the Senses in the Making of Religious Experience: An Introduction,” *Material Religion* 4, no. 2 (2008): 129, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183408X328262>.



sacred groves, a *kāvu* where a *teyyam* deity is enshrined is called *theyyakkāvu*. Conventionally, such spaces are in the middle of specially marked place with trees and plants, home to many creatures such as birds and snakes. Etymologically, the word *kāvu* is related to *kāval* and means protection, therefore, the Malayalam word *kāvu* means a protected place. My informants who have their family *kāvus* confirm that they are more tended to for their devotional significance than their ecological significance, and also, the religious significance of a *kāvu* without many trees and plants is not any less. *Teyyam* shrines in a *kāvu* contain a sacred insignia, usually a sword, which during the *teyyam* performance is held by the performer. The *śakti* of a deity is considered to be dwelling in the enshrined artifacts. Often, only a single insignia is enshrined in the *kāvu*, but in some cases, there can be more than one. In that case, they are usually separated by different shrines. If a *kāvu* belongs a particular family, then it might be located closer to their house, and in many such instances, the walled shrines are not very large structures.

Generally, once a deity is emplaced, it is believed that the deity inhabits in the shrine in the *kāvu*, and the *śakti* then exists in the *kāvu*. Due to this emplacement, if there are plants and animals in the *kāvu*, then they are intentionally left unharmed/untrimmed.<sup>77</sup> In a simple sense of the term, *theyyakkāvu* are a type of sacred precinct with or without vegetation usually at a very small scale. The patron family of a *kāvu* maintains and keeps it alive by lighting a lamp in front of the shrine or on the *tara* (usually a stone base), and by seasonally holding a *teyyam* performance, generally once in a year, on an astrologically set date, if not calendrically set. In relation to the broader phenomena of environmental destruction, the *kāvu* is also a threatened space, more and more of its ecological and cultural idiosyncrasy might be lost, and therefore, in the public imaginary, it is often romanticised, even if it is not always properly preserved. A deity in *kāvu* if moved to another place results in a new *kāvu* through the ritual process of *kāvumāṭṭam* (re-emplacement of a deity to a different place).<sup>78</sup> The size and scale of the newer constructions is contingent on the social standing and acceptance of the deity, for example, royal patronage, or a communal deity with a huge following, and as such the shrine will be large, especially when compared with the size and scale of family shrines. Larger *teyyam* shrines with single or multiple deities are generally not referred as *kāvu*, but as temples.

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77 However, in contemporary Kerala, *kāvu* are also ritually manipulated, see Catrien Notermans, Albertina Nugteren and Suma Sunny, "The Changing Landscape of Sacred Groves in Kerala (India): A Critical View on the Role of Religion in Nature Conservation," *Religions* 7, no. 4 (2016): 38, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7040038>.

78 See Catrien Notermans, Albertina Nugteren and Suma Sunny, "The Changing Landscape of Sacred Groves in Kerala (India): A Critical View on the Role of Religion in Nature Conservation," *Religions* 7, no. 4 (2016): 38, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7040038>.

## 4.2 The Architecture of the Teyyam Shrine: The Adaptation of the Ekatala Shrine

*Teyyam* shrines (Plates 7.1, 7.2) are usually built as a single-storied (*ekatala*) walled shrine with a single door at the front, built on a square plan. The plinth (*adhishṭhāna*) often consists of many moulded tiers which are featured one above the other; below the foundation is another base (*upapīṭa*). The important mouldings on the *adhishṭhāna*, which as part of a temple have to be placed in a prescribed order, however are here in the shrine rarely featured. Mostly, it is a simple *adhishṭhāna* without all individual mouldings. The shrines built in the design of a simple, square *ekatala* shrine conventionally do not have a preceding *archanāmaṇḍapa* (pillared hall). But the same square base in the inner space in which the insignia of the *teyyam* is enshrined is often enhanced by different techniques, especially by giving it additional height. In such cases, certain key mouldings of *adhishṭhāna* are featured, such as with a triple faced *kumuda*. Above such *adhishṭhāna* mouldings, there might be railings (*vēdika*) painted with textile motifs/colour strips. This further enhances the aesthetic appeal of the shrine as well as potency (Plate 7.1). Though *teyyam* shrines do not feature a different preceding structure as seen in a temple, the inner area of the shrine is usually preceded by a narrow porch or walled space, which is rarely coffered. As already mentioned, if there are multiple shrines in a partially walled *teyyakkāvu*, they are spatially and architecturally separated. However, a few high-profile *teyyam* shrines have huge encasements. The attempt of such material modes of enhancing the signification of a shrine is often mediated by the architectural features that signify a Kerala vogue. For this architectural mediation of *teyyam* shrine, the best example could be *Śrī-Muttappan* Maṭappura in Parassinikadavu in Kaṅṅur District.<sup>79</sup> This architectural mediation intentionally makes this shrine ‘architecture within architecture’, conceptually something prevalent in Indic ritual structure.<sup>80</sup>

Another notable characteristic in the architecture of *teyyam* shrines is its projected gable (Plate 7.6). At the uppermost of its *śuka-nāsa* or *śrī-mukha* (the frontal projection of a gable), a figure called *kimpuruṣa* (Plate 7.7) is usually present. It is one of the lower figures in the *saṅkalpa* (conception) spectrum of Hindu sacred figures. The *kimpuruṣa* figure has a horse’s head, three eyes, protruding tongue, and a crown with a combination of cobra-crescent motif. Both arms of *kimpuruṣa* are featured as two ridges of the gable, and the hands are designed as the ends of the ridges, with the hands usually twisted inwards, as if *kimpuruṣa* is protectively holding the miniature *teyyam* figures inside the gable (Plate 7.6).<sup>81</sup> As I have been informed, the purpose of

<sup>79</sup> For inner shrine of Śree Muthappan temple, see plate 27 in S. Jayashanker, *Temples of Kannur District* (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala: Directorate of Census Operations, 2003).

<sup>80</sup> On this aspect of Indic sacred building, see Stella Kramrisch, *Drāviḍa and Kerala: In the Art of Travancore* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1961): 11.

<sup>81</sup> On the *kimpuruṣa*, see S. Jayashanker, *Temples of Kannur District* (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala: Directorate of Census Operations, 2003).



**Plate 7.6:** Kimpuruṣa ‘holding’ miniature *teyyam* deities. Nilesram, 2021.

this figure in the shrine is protection (*kāval*) to the shrine, however, the convention of featuring *kimpuruṣa* is not limited to *teyyam* shrines but can also be seen in the regional temples. At the front of a *teyyam* shrine, atop of the roof, instead of a *kūṭa* (finial) it is usually a *kimpuruṣa* figure, therefore, a minor *teyyam* shrine features two *kūṭas* (finials rising above the roof).<sup>82</sup>

Along with other auspicious zoomorphic figures such as *makara*, miniature *teyyam* figures are featured inside the gable. These *teyyam* figures are not decorative appliques to the shrine, but scaled-down iconic figures of the *teyyams* which are often seasonally performed in the *kāvu*. Usually, the principal deity of a *kāvu* is featured in the middle of the gable and the remaining *teyyam* figures are placed on its adjacent sides. As an *ekatala* (single-storied, and with a vertically low profile) construction, the gable of *teyyam* shrines has a signification in the visual field. The figures are ‘costumed’ in a detailed way and featured at an angle staring down at those who look at them. They

<sup>82</sup> See S. Jayashankar, *Temples of Kannur District* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala: Directorate of Census Operations, 2003).



**Plate 7.7:** Kimpuruṣa figure fixed at the top of *teyyam* shrine, Nileshawaram, Kasaragod, 2021.

are permanent registers for the deities performed during *teyyam*. Being featured within the projected gable of the shrine, the miniature *teyyam* icons are symbolically and iconically charged with power and potency. Other features of the gable such as a parapet can also be seen, although it is not a very common feature.

In terms of material medium as well as style, like other religious structures such as the local mosques, the *teyyam* shrines utilise the 'Kerala idiom'. Locally available

materials such as stone and wood are two main material mediums used for their construction. The tiling of the roof, like other buildings in the region, is a modern phenomenon. In terms of the function of *teyyam* shrine, it is a sacred precinct that contains the enshrined aniconic insignia of the deity. The efficacy of *teyyam* performance depends on the containment of the *śakti* through material mediums and practices: in terms of its architectural assemblage as well as daily ritual practices such as lighting the lamp. The endurance of *śakti* as well as its further transference and enactment in the body medium of a performer and back to the *kāvu* are contingent on these material and ritual practices, in which the ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ merge. Overall, *teyyam* shrines seem to be an adaptation of the *ekatala* shrine. However, the incorporation of architectonic features such as moulded *adhiṣṭhāna*, *hasti-hasta* (elephant-trunk) railings for the entrance steps (*sōpāna*), and an outer wall (*chuttumatil*) around the *kāvu*, sometime with intermediary structures, indicate a conception of *śri-kōvil*, hence a spatial layout referencing to temples.

### 4.3 Deity Embodied: Mimesis in Teyyam

The enshrined and propitiated *teyyam* divinity is to be enacted periodically, a failure to do so may cause unfortunate events according to local belief. The performing of the *teyyam* deity consists of a series of ritual acts, which starts several days ahead of the actual embodiment of the deity in the body medium of a performer. This ability of a *teyyam* performer to become a *teyyam* is a practice of mimesis as noted by Miho Ishii in relation to *bhūta* worship of Tulunādu.<sup>83</sup> The study is very interesting, but on the aspect of mimesis, it needs some more elaboration. She observes that:

[. . .] to become a *buuta* impersonator is, first of all, to learn how to mimic the deity and assume its perspective [. . .] the candidate imitates another performer impersonating the deity to assume this perspective. In this sense, for the *buuta* impersonators, taking on the deity’s behaviour and perspective is the mimesis of mimesis, or double mimesis. However, if we examine their mimetic practice more carefully, we soon realize that it should be characterized rather as multiple mimesis [. . .].<sup>84</sup>

To this idea of *bhūta* worship as ‘multiple mimesis’, she further adds that ‘the art of the *buuta* impersonator consists not only of the *active* ability [emphasise added] to imitate another performer to acquire his perspective, but also of the *passive* capability

<sup>83</sup> See Miho Ishii, “Playing with Perspectives: Spirit Possession, Mimesis, and Permeability in the Buuta Ritual in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 4 (2013): 795–812, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12065>.

<sup>84</sup> Miho Ishii, “Playing with Perspectives: Spirit Possession, Mimesis, and Permeability in the Buuta Ritual in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 4 (2013): 802–03, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12065>.



[emphasis added] of being possessed by the deity and being given its perspective.’ Further, the ‘art of *buuta*’ needs the ‘grace of the deity’ and it is achieved through the performer keeping ‘himself in the state of *niyama niṣṭhe* (devoting oneself to the rules), the ideal condition from which to invoke the deity’s power’.<sup>85</sup> However, when the ritual efficacy of these performances in southwest India (here *teyyam* and *bhūta*) is studied through mimesis as imitation and the human centric notion of ‘*niyama*’ (rules and conventions), it misses out the material aspects within *niyama* such as sensuous media used in various stages.

Current scholarship has already broadened the traditional concept of mimesis as ‘imitation’, ‘emulation’, or ‘representation’ to include the ability of animated matter to mediate sacrality and effect. It sees mimesis as a ‘dynamic reenactment’ that involves intimate bodily contact with sensuous media such as transvalued items (for example secondary relics).<sup>86</sup> I further elaborate the point that the notion of mimesis as a ‘dynamic reenactment’ is significant in understanding the multi-sensorial mediation of *śakti* in *teyyam*. In addition to the ‘multiple mimesis’, there is also the circulation of transvalued sensuous media between the *teyyam* shrine which houses the *teyyam* insignia and the performer, who receives, inhales, and ingest into his body. Therefore, mediation and efficacy in *teyyam* is not only an effect of impersonation and practices such as painting and costuming (see below). Integral to *becoming teyyam* is also the inhalation and ingestion of transvalued sensuous media.

As I have already mentioned, from the perspective of ‘*sensational religion*’, *teyyāṭam* can be looked at as a multi-sensorial experience of divinity in which, through the use of various kinds of multi-sensorial media, the performer becomes *teyyam*, and the devotees are able to feel the presence of the deity. It is a series of processes that are necessary in order to embody and manifest divinity. The ritualised act of *teyyam* is facilitated through the network of multi-sensorial *nonhumans* (both materialities and visualities) and the *human* senses (auditory, optic, haptic, and olfactory) along with its further cognitive reception and affective responses (such as interacting and seeking blessings, showing bodily reverence). Thus, to argue, in *teyyāṭam*, material media, the human senses and cognitive-bodily responses mediate and co-constitute the presence of divinity. In the embodied performance of a *teyyam* deity, materialities are not passive aspects of the performance. The ‘dance’ of the *teyyam* deity is a culmination of several rites through which the *teyyam* deity is invoked using various material and visual media.

<sup>85</sup> Miho Ishii, “Playing with Perspectives: Spirit Possession, Mimesis, and Permeability in the Buuta Ritual in South India,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 4 (2013): 803, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12065>.

<sup>86</sup> Finbarr Barry Flood, “Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam,” in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 459–94.

This transformation of ‘human’ into a ‘nonhuman’ *teyyam* is a slow process. It is contingent on several ritualised rites which begin days earlier and include fasting (*nōmbu*), abstinence from sexual contact and eating only vegetarian food prepared by prepubescent or postmenopausal women.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, his social corporeality, the kinds of food items, and even his physical bodily processes constitute to the efficacy of performance. As a collective ritual practice, in the *teyyam* performance conventions and customary rights prevent ambiguities about how things/events should occur according to the order of the performance. There might be a shrine, or a deity-centred order and conventions to follow. Once the date of the performance is fixed, the performer receives the *aṭayālam* (sign). It starts from the initial rites of blessing and activation of the shrine. The concerned family and community prepare the material paraphernalia needed for a successful enactment.

First, the performer and his associates go to the shrine of the particular *teyyam* whom they seek to propitiate, and seek blessings from the deity generally two days prior to the full costume and performance. In a makeshift place next to the shrine, the performer puts on his make-up and costume (a minimal version) in order to seek the deity’s favour a day before full costume and performance; a minor form of the *teyyam* is then performed either as *tōrram* or in a relatively more elaborate form, called *vellāṭṭam*. The minor form with minimal costume contributes significantly to the final transformation of the body medium to a deity. To prepare for either of the minor forms, the performer is given a folded banana leaf containing sandal paste and water which were consecrated at the shrine previously, and in an orderly way, he puts the paste on his body and drinks the water. The substances act as conduits of sacred substance and mediate between the aniconic insignia in the shrine and the animate body of the performer. They add to the embodiment in two ways: internally, as he drinks the water (bodily act of ingestion) and externally, as he smears the paste on the surface of his body. As I have already mentioned, the ingestion constitutes to mimesis not as imitation but as a substance of mediation: a nonhuman agent of enabling ‘ontological fluidity’ between *teyyam* insignia in the shrine and performer. Furthermore, the visual and olfactory (especially that of the sandal paste) ontological qualities of these substances add to their efficacy. Tantric knowledge also mediates the ways in which these substances are applied in different zones of the body.<sup>88</sup>

Next, a second folded banana leaf is handed to the performer which contains uncooked rice grains, five lit oil wicks, five betel leaves, turmeric powder, and areca nut pieces. The second leaf set has also been ritually consecrated. The performer puts a few grains into his mouth, throws some over his body, and throws some grains against the shrine, he then inhales the vapour of the lit wicks, after which the wicks are kept on

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87 Wayne Ashley, “The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala,” *Drama Review* 23, no. 2 (1979): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1145219>.

88 Wayne Ashley, “The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala,” *Drama Review* 23, no. 2 (1979): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1145219>.



**Plate 7.8:** Sri Thiruvarkatt Baghavati, Madayikkav, see the band of snake charms (*thalapāli*). Photo credit: Vineeth Vinod.

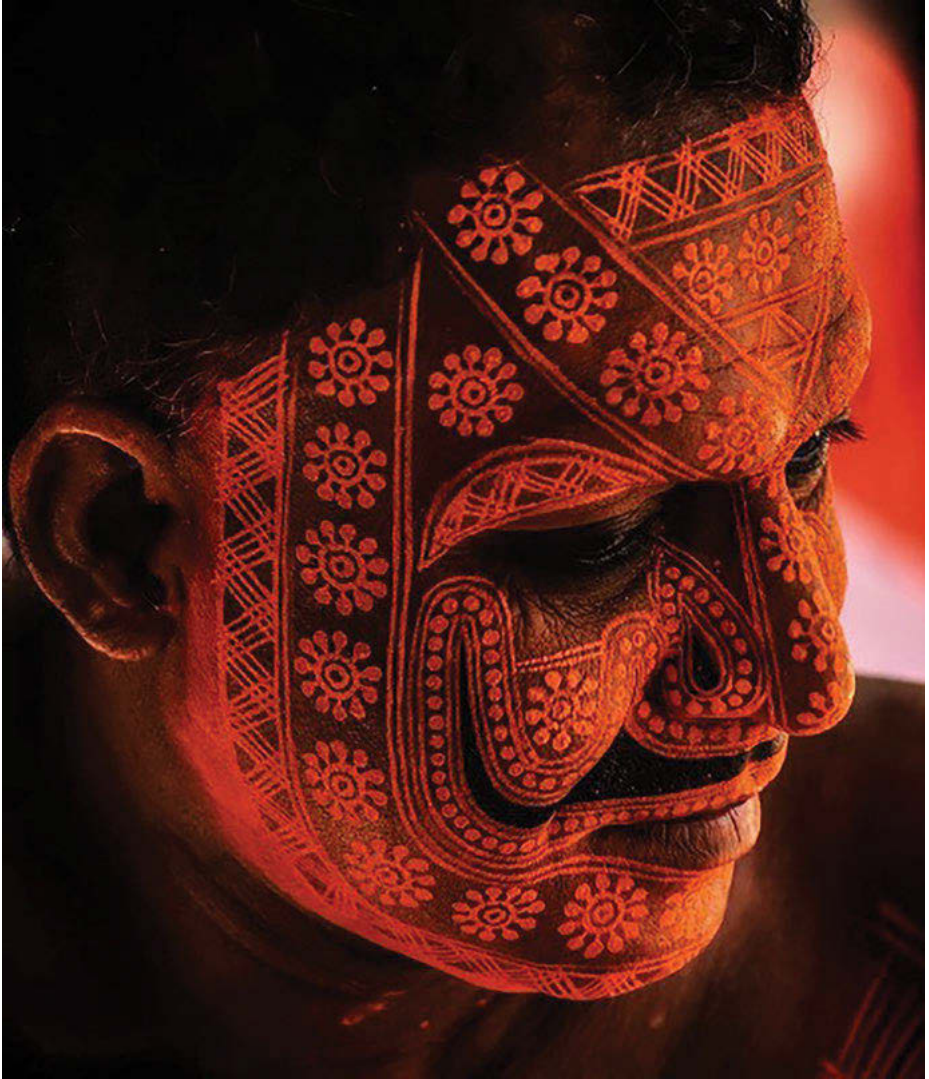


the *kalaśatara* of the shrine. The five wicks represent the *prāna* (breath) or the life energy of the performer. The rites and substances further enhance the link between the power of the deity and the body of the performer.<sup>89</sup> The next step is the recitation of the initial *tōrram* songs (at this stage it is called *varaviḷi*, meaning calling or invoking the deity) in front of the shrine in which the life history of the deity is recited by the dancer and his troupe.<sup>90</sup> During the *tōrram* performance, the performer has yet to put on his elaborate costume. The minimal costume may have features such as a *talapāli* (Plate 7.8), the band of twenty-one snake charms made of silver which is tied over the forehead and represents the twenty-one teachers (*gurūs*) of *teyyam*. Wearing it, he performs the *tōrram*. With the ingestion of ritually consecrated substances by the performer, the daubing of the paste over his body, and by invoking the deity through the ‘speech act’ of *tōrram* with its musical accompaniment, the devotees, as well as the performer, from the perspective of ‘*sensational religion*’, have already been multi-sensorially bombarded with several synecdochical elements of the deity. However, the full transformation of the performer to the deity only happens in the next stage of the performance, in which along with the other senses, it is the visual that dominates.

Although the stages of the transformational rites are more or less similar to the previous day, more iconographically distinguishable ornamental features are added on the body of the performer for the next stage. This phase of becoming a deity includes more elaborate costuming and intricate make-up called *mukhathezhuth* (literally, ‘writing on face’ or ‘painting on face’), which is different from *teyyam* to *teyyam* (Plates 7.8, 7.9). However, there are also *teyyams* in which instead of facial make up, a mask is used. For example, Śaivite *teyyams* such as the Gulikan (Plate 7.4) or Poṭṭan (Plate 7.5) *teyyam* are usually performed with a mask called *poimukham* (literally, ‘false face’) and the *teyyam* often holds or wears on his forehead a *triśūla* (trident), which is a synecdochical representation of Śiva, as the deity is Śiva disguised as a *caṇḍāla* which was discussed earlier. This feature is very apt and is not a mere ornament. Similarly, the crescent seen on the forehead of female *teyyam* divinities is a synecdochical representation of Śiva. As there are hundreds of *teyyams*, it is difficult to give a full iconographic picture of *teyyam* divinities and a full survey of them is a herculean task. However, there are common features that can be seen, such as the *talapāli* worn by most *teyyams*. By costume and facial make-up, people can easily identify their *teyyams*, and artistic mimesis is deeply implicated in *teyyam* costuming and make-up. With *mukhathezhuth* and costuming, the *teyyam* performer is finally ready to embody the deity. When the performer is getting himself ready by applying intricate

<sup>89</sup> Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 314.

<sup>90</sup> Wayne Ashley, “The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala,” *Drama Review* 23, no. 2 (1979): 104, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1145219>. See also Rich Freeman, “The Teyyam Tradition of Kerala,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin D. Flood, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003): 315.



**Plate 7.9:** Ilayagurukkal Teyyam Mukhathezhuth, Mundayodu koodangurukkanmar kăvu, 2019.

make-up and costuming in the *aniyara*, *tōrram* songs are sung and these are called *aniyara-tōrram*.

For an efficacious performance, besides the narrative history and description of the deity through *tōrram*, the visuality (mental image) invoked by the aesthetically transformed performer is essential; it should be in the 'same' form of the deity which



Plate 7.10: 'Muchilottu Bhagavathi's Atichuthali Thottam' Kannur, 2012. Photo credit: Viashak Kallore.





**Plate 7.11:** Mirror gazing of Vishnumurthi Teyyam, Kannur, 2022. photo credit: Jayesh Lakshman.

is diachronically fixed in the minds of the devotees.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, like the ritual conventions of each *teyyam*, distinctive costuming and make-up are also precisely followed. Each time, it approximates the ‘same’ form of the previous ‘image’ of the concerned deity. The fully costumed deity without her crown is led to the front of the shrine and seated on a sacralised stool (*pīṭham*), and the final *tōrram* called *urakkal tōrram* is sung. It is important to note that, at this stage, the *teyyam* performer is seated on a special sacred stool (Plate 7.10), is given a sacred crown and then handed a mirror (Plate 7.11). Gazing into the mirror, the performer, now fully costumed and crowned, does not see his own reflection, but seeing the transformation abruptly stands up and receives the sword (*tiruvāyudham*) from the priest (*kōmaram*) becoming the deity. Thus, finally the enshrined insignia melds with the performer to complete the long process of *becoming*. During the performance, *teyyams* may move out of the shrine premise. Sometimes, certain *teyyams* also have their own fixed route through the village, along which people gather to seek blessing from the deity. The deity blesses the devotees verbally by speaking with them (*viśesikkal*) and sometimes gives blessings in the form of ritualised eatable substances (*prasādam*), which can also vary from *teyyam* to *teyyam*. There can also be sacrifice in the form of *gurusi* (artificial blood made of turmeric and lime) or even real ritual sacrifice of animals, which has however nowadays become very rare. Finally, on the *teyyam*’s return to the shrine, the crown is removed, and the sword is returned to the shrine. During this phase, the performer often collapses and eventually returns to his normal self. In this transformation and mediation of *śakti*, various kinds of sacralised media actively form a network of human-nonhuman actors to animate *śakti*. From the ingestion of food, singing of *tōrram*, to kinesthetically moving across different sacred points of the shrine and circumambulating it, the various material media combine to effect a physical and visual transformation of the performing body into the divine body.

## 5 Concluding Thoughts: *Teyyam* as *Gesamtkunstwerk*

As indicated in the beginning of the essay, several *teyyam* ‘artists’ and devotees are hesitant to acknowledge *teyyam* as an art form, primarily from an antipathy towards the lingering cliché of ‘art for the sake of art’. However, many others see *teyyam* as a ritual art (*anuṣṭhāna-kala*). This objection to see *teyyam* as an art as well as its easy inclusion (however with the adjective of ‘ritual’) in the list of arts and crafts of Kerala are two learned responses to the broader postcolonial appropriation of cultural forms and practices in relation to the political frame, such as the nation-state. For an art historian, an etic analytical term that can be suggested (if that is necessary) to engage

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91 On the significance of vision in materiality, see Birgit Meyer, “Media and the Senses in the Making of Religious Experience: An Introduction,” *Material Religion* 4, no. 2 (2008): 124–34, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183408X328262>.

*teyyam* as an art is ‘*Gesamtkunstwerk*’ (total artwork), which Richard Wagner used to elaborate on the ‘concept of a work of art for the stage, based on the idea of ancient Greek tragedy’. This helps to draw attention to an idea of ‘several art forms [that] are combined to achieve a unified effect’.<sup>92</sup> As can be seen from this paper, *śakti* experienced in the context of *teyyam* is a ‘unified effect’ of relationships formed through the (inter)mediation of several multi-sensorial media (from architecture, music, painting, dance etc.) and human senses. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is oriented on ‘one dominant idea, usually either religious or political’, which in *teyyam* is religious but with political overtones.<sup>93</sup>

The dominant idea in *teyyam* is *śakti* which was/is resourcefully appropriated both by powerful and by powerless agents. Connecting to the concepts of mimesis, efficacy, and mediation, *teyyam* is an intra-intergenerational learning and a practice of the making and use of its material-visual assemblages and their effects in the ritual context of *teyyam*. Unlike an architecturally mediated *darśana* (the simultaneous act of seeing the deity and being seen by the deity), in the context of *teyyāṭṭam*, the embodied deity directly blesses devotees, and exchanges offerings with them.<sup>94</sup> *Śakti* when seen through the ‘material turn’, is mediated and animated during *teyyāṭṭam* and is a ritually distributed effect in which both human and nonhuman actors form a network and coalesce into a multi-sensorial experience of divinity.

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<sup>92</sup> Ingrid Macmillan, “Gesamtkunstwerk,” in *Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T031798>.

<sup>93</sup> Ingrid Macmillan, “Gesamtkunstwerk,” in *Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T031798>).

<sup>94</sup> On Darśana, see Diana L. Eck, *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

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Gudrun Bühnemann

## Chapter 8

# Patterns of Dependency in the Buddhist Tantric Iconography of Nepal

## 1 Introduction

Buddhist art from the Himalayan region has become widely known through display in museums and exhibitions. The art from Tibet and Nepal has attracted particular attention and has been idealised as ‘meditational’ and ‘enlightenment art’.<sup>1</sup> In this essay I will focus on representations of Buddhist Tantric deities that do not conform to the cliché of meditational equipoise and tranquility. Instead they show, for example, a Buddhist figure standing on one or more major deities of the Hindu pantheon. I will introduce three major types of artistic representations which illustrate dependency within the context of religious rivalry.

## 2 Patterns of Dependency

The first pattern, which is already familiar from the Buddhist art of India, shows Hindu deities under the feet of Buddhist figures. The second pattern shows a Buddhist deity riding Hindu gods. The third pattern, which became popular in Nepal in the eighteenth century, shows a Buddhist figure emanating Hindu divinities.

### 2.1 Pattern One

The first pattern shows powerful figures of tantric Buddhism posing in a triumphant attitude. Like victorious warriors, they strike a militant stance, with one leg bent and the other one stretched out. They proudly trample their adversaries, who are major gods of Hinduism. The Buddhist figure (Cakra)saṃvara (Plate 8.1), in union with his female consort Vajravārāhī, stands on two Hindu deities. The Buddhist figure places one foot on the Hindu goddess, who is lying on her back, and the other on the Hindu god’s back. Compared to the dominant Buddhist figure, the two Hindu divinities are

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<sup>1</sup> For the interpretation of Buddhist art as ‘meditational’ and ‘enlightenment’ art, see the discussion in Gudrun Bühnemann, “On ‘Meditational Art’ and Maṇḍalas as Objects of Meditation,” in *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies*, ed. Suzanne Newcombe and Karen O’Brien-Kop (London/New York: Routledge, 2020): 423–39.

small in size. The position of their bodies indicates defeat and helplessness. Thus, these images graphically convey the message of the superiority of the Buddhist figures over Hindu gods. Similarly, the Buddhist figure Hevajra (Plate 8.2), embraced by his consort, tramples four-headed Brahmā, Indra, Viṣṇu (also called Upendra) and Śiva, who are known as the four Māras, the wicked ones.

The militant stance assumed by the Buddhist figure is a distinctive feature and part of the iconography of power. It legitimises and authenticates the one treading on the subdued figure or figures. The two variations of the stance (*ālīḍha* and its mirror-image *pratyālīḍha*) have a long history. In certain contexts, according to many texts,<sup>2</sup> in *ālīḍha* the right leg is extended and the left leg retracted with the knee bent. In *pratyālīḍha*, the left leg is extended and the right one retracted. The two stances are already described in a seminal text on the performing arts, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (chapter 10.67cd–72ab). According to that text, an actor assumes *ālīḍha*, for example, when he wants to express the heroic (*vīra*) and angry (*raudra*) sentiments. *Pratyālīḍha* is used when discharging missiles. Another textual source on the performing arts, a section from the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna (khaṇḍa 3, chapter 23.1, 23.11–17ab)*,<sup>3</sup> also describes *ālīḍha* and *pratyālīḍha*. The text specifies that one assumes these stances, for example, when discharging missiles.

While the act of treading on someone clearly indicates the superiority and power of the one who treads, the foot has a double significance in South Asia. As the lowest body part, it is considered impure. Being touched by someone's foot is considered polluting and insulting in non-religious contexts. However, the foot of a divine being can transmit a blessing or convey salvific power, and for this reason one touches the feet of a religious teacher.<sup>4</sup> In the present context, though, this meaning is only secondary.

In many representations the subdued male figure has his hands clasped in the gesture of supplication, the *añjali*. Traditionally, this gesture is formed with both palms joined together and the fingertips facing upwards. The clasped hands are placed either in front of the chest or on top of the head. The *añjali* signals that a figure is a devotee of the one to whom the gesture is made. It expresses respectful salutation and supplication to an authority, and thus a subordinate status.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of some textual references to these stances, see James C. Harle, "Remarks on Alidha," in *Mahayanist Art after A.D. 900*, ed. William Watson (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971): 10–16; John Newman, "Vajrayāna Deities in an Illustrated Indian Manuscript of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990): 124–25, note 4, and Gudrun Bühnemann, *Buddhist Iconography and Ritual in Paintings and Line Drawings from Nepal* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2008): 161–63.

<sup>3</sup> *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāna, Third Khaṇḍa*, vol. 1, *Text, Critical Notes etc.*, ed. Priyabala Shah (Vadodara: Oriental Institute, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> For a recent discussion of concepts about the foot in South Asia, see Jutta Jain-Neubauer, "The Paradox of the Foot: Concurrence of Repugnance and Exaltation," in *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asian, Islamic and Mediterranean Art*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Berlin: EB-Verlag Dr. Brandt, 2020): 251–84.



**Plate 8.1:** Cakrasamvara in union with Vajravārāhī. Stone carving, National Museum, Kathmandu (inventory no. S 186).





**Plate 8.2:** Hevajra in union with Vajrasrñkhalā (Nairātmyā?) trampling on Brahmā, Indra, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Nepal, eighteenth century.

Mythological accounts<sup>5</sup> shed more light on some of the iconographic representations in which a Buddhist figure stands on or tramples Hindu gods. We learn of Hindu gods who were subdued and subsequently converted to the Buddhist teachings. After their defeat, the subjugated gods lose their status and become subordinate to the dominant Buddhist figure. Assigned their duties and taking orders from him, and bound by vows, they function as his servants. They are also given new names. Their new identity is then confirmed by a miniature figure of this presiding Buddha (into whose ‘family’ or ‘clan’ they are integrated) – which figure magically appears on their headgear. The subdued can be assigned the role of protectors of the faithful and the Buddhist teachings, or else be included in the lower ranks of the dominant figure’s entourage. Even so, the forcibly converted continue in a status of dependency on the central Buddhist figure, so that there always remains an inequality of power. One could compare the relationship between the dominant Buddhist figure and the Hindu gods to that of a powerful emperor who has defeated local rulers, who in turn, as feudatory kings, pay homage to him, serve him and follow his orders.

This first pattern, the imagery of Hindu divinities being trod on by Buddhist deities, is already known to some degree from the later period of the Buddhist art of India, where Tantric Buddhism and Hinduism were practiced side by side until the disappearance of Buddhism in the twelfth century.

## 2.2 Pattern Two

The second pattern of depiction illustrating dependency in the Tantric iconography of Nepal shows the subdued deity of a competing religious system serving as the mount and carrier of the Buddhist deity. The background to such representations is the fact that in later South Asian iconography most divinities ride animal mounts or sit on chariots pulled by animals. In one of his manifestations Avalokiteśvara, a major figure in Mahāyāna Buddhism, sits or stands on three or four mounts, each of which is designated by the Sanskrit word *hari*. As Hariharivarivāhana Lokeśvara<sup>6</sup> he sits on the

<sup>5</sup> See the well-known myth of the subjugation of Maheśvara and his entourage by Vajrapāṇi in the Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha, discussed, for example, in David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in South Asia and of Buddhism with ‘Local Cults’ in Tibet and the Himalayan Region* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008): 51–55; Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis* (Oxford: Kiscadale, 1996): 116–28; Robert Mayer, “The Figure of Maheśvara/Rudra in the rñiñ-ma-pa Tantric Tradition,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21 (1998): 273–74, note 7; and Do-Kyun Kwon, “Sarva Tathāgata Tattva Saṃgraha: Compendium of all the Tathāgatas. A Study of Its Origin, Structure and Teachings” (PhD diss., University of London, 2002): part 2, chapter 6, 5–7.

<sup>6</sup> For this divinity, see, for example, Hem Raj Shakya, *Svayambhū Mahācaitya: The Self-Arisen Great Caitya of Nepal*, trans. Min Bahadur Shakya (Kathmandu: Svayambhu Vikash Mandal, 2004): 525–27; David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in South Asia and of*



shoulders of Viṣṇu, a major deity of the Hindu pantheon (Plate 8.3). Viṣṇu in turn rides the Garuḍa bird, his usual mount. Garuḍa is supported by a lion, Avalokiteśvara's mount. In his manifestation as Harihariharihāhana Lokeśvara (Plate 8.4), a serpent (whose position varies) is part of the configuration. Several variations of this representation are known, all of which seem to have originated in Nepal. These images graphically express a hierarchy of divinities, with the Buddhist figure seated on top. The series of mounts that support the Buddhist figure underscores his dominant position. The fact that he uses a major deity of the Hindu pantheon as his mount enhances his status even further. Instead of riding his lion mount, the Buddhist figure's legs straddle the shoulders of the subjugated Hindu god Viṣṇu. The major deity Viṣṇu now serves as his vehicle in a state of dependency. The inequality in status is immediately obvious to the viewer.

### 2.3 Pattern Three

The third pattern shows Hindu divinities emanating from the body of the Buddhist Avalokiteśvara (Plate 8.5).<sup>7</sup> Known as the 'creator Lokeśvara' (Sṛṣṭikartā Lokeśvara),<sup>8</sup> this form of Avalokiteśvara emanates, depending on the work of art, 7 to 15<sup>9</sup> Hindu divinities from different parts of his body. These include the major Hindu gods Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. According to mythological accounts, the Buddhist figure first emanates the Hindu gods and then assigns them their respective duties. Although less domineering in nature, this pattern does in fact illustrate the Hindu divinities' dependency on the central Buddhist figure, which they surround as miniature figures with their hands clasped in supplication awaiting his orders. We find numerous representations of this theme in painting and sculpture, mostly from the eighteenth century.

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*Buddhism with 'Local Cults' in Tibet and the Himalayan Region* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008): 101–3 and Gudrun Bühnemann, *The Life of the Buddha: Buddhist and Śaiva Iconography and Visual Narratives in Artists' Sketchbooks from Nepal. With Transliterations and Translations from the Newari by Kashinath Tamot* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2012): 72–73.

<sup>7</sup> For this painting, dating from 1837 CE, see Gudrun Bühnemann, *The Life of the Buddha: Buddhist and Śaiva Iconography and Visual Narratives in Artists' Sketchbooks from Nepal. With Transliterations and Translations from the Newari by Kashinath Tamot* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2012): 89 (plate 3) and 93.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of forms of this divinity and numerous representations in art, see Gudrun Bühnemann, *The Life of the Buddha: Buddhist and Śaiva Iconography and Visual Narratives in Artists' Sketchbooks from Nepal. With Transliterations and Translations from the Newari by Kashinath Tamot* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2012): 81–102 and Iain Sinclair, "The Creation of Theism Personified: A Conceptual History of the God-Maker Avalokiteśvara," in *Asian Horizons: Giuseppe Tucci's Buddhist, Indian, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, ed. Angelo Andrea Di Castro and David Templeman (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015): 431–78.

<sup>9</sup> The number 14 is standard.



Plate 8.3: Hariharivāhana Lokeśvara. Golden Temple, Patan.





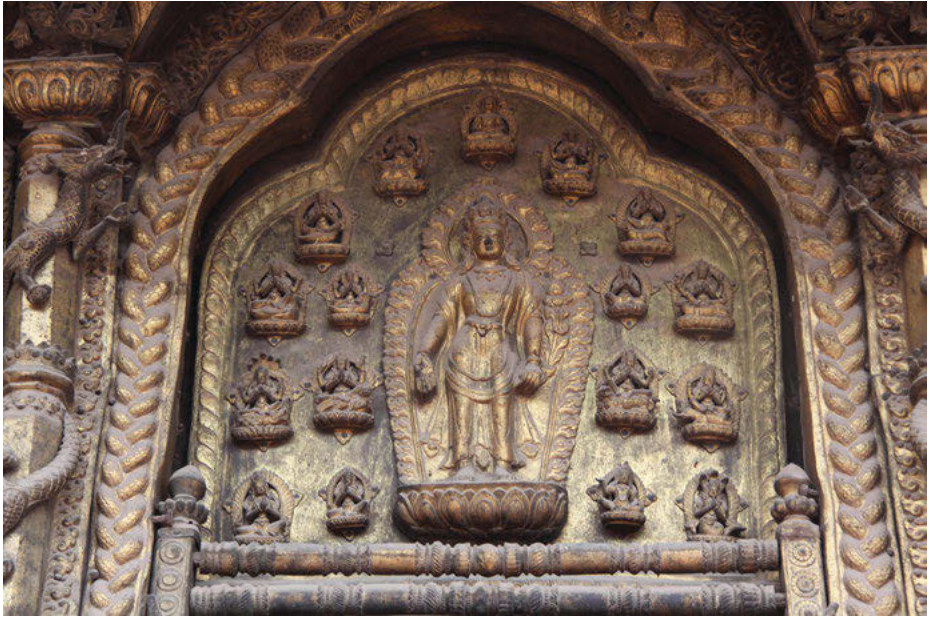
Plate 8.4: Harihariharivāhana Lokeśvara. Jana Bahāl, Kathmandu.





Plate 8.5: Avalokiteśvara emanating eleven deities. National Museum, Kathmandu (S. no. 327).

The most important representation is found in a prominent place, namely on the Golden Window<sup>10</sup> (Plate 8.6) of the (former) Royal Palace of Patan, a historic landmark and now major cultural attraction in the Kathmandu Valley.



**Plate 8.6:** Sṛṣṭīkartā Lokeśvara. Golden Window of the former Royal Palace, Patan.

### 3 Conclusion

In this essay I have introduced three major types of artistic representations which illustrate dependency within the context of religious rivalry. The first pattern shows the subdued deities under the feet of the Buddhist figures. The act of standing on or trampling is a clear demonstration of the dominant figure's power. Indeed, it indicates the defeat of the god who is under the other's soles. The second pattern shows Buddhist figures riding Hindu gods as their mounts and reducing their status to that of mere servants. The third pattern establishes the superiority of the Buddhist figure by depicting him as the creator of the Hindu gods, whom he emanates from the

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Sṛṣṭīkartā Avalokiteśvara on the Golden Window, see Gudrun Bühnemann, "Śiva and Avalokiteśvara: On the Iconography and Date of the Golden Window and Golden Door of Patan's Royal Palace," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 2 (2012): 341–44, with figs. 1, 2 and 2a.

different parts of his body, and who are dependent on him. All three patterns express a clear distinction between ruler and ruled, and an inequality of power.

Among the three patterns found in artistic representations, all of which are backed up by textual descriptions, the first one is especially widespread. I have discussed here its obvious sectarian meaning. But I would also like to mention briefly that some authorities, such as the later Tibetan scholastic Bu ston (1290–1364),<sup>11</sup> have read these representations differently, and offered allegorical interpretations. Accordingly, the figures under the feet of the dominant Buddhist figure represent evil forces or negative emotions that one needs to overcome, such as anger, greed or arrogance. The hermeneutical categories of mundane and transcendent (*laukika/lokottara*) were thus brought into play, reflecting the lower and higher truths in Buddhism. The transcendent Buddhas in the higher planes of existence crush underfoot the lower deities belonging to the mundane level of existence. The allegorical reading of the figures crushed underfoot demonstrates an effort to interpret away the obvious meaning for different reasons. One contributing factor was likely that the message of religious rivalry was no longer understood by practitioners of Buddhism outside of the Indian cultural area – such as ones from Tibet, China and Japan – who revered these Buddhist deities but had little knowledge of the gods of Hinduism.

Some scholars have accepted the allegorical interpretations since they resolved the difficulty in reconciling the Buddhist ideals of compassion and wisdom with pictorial representations of aggression. Thus, we read:

The apparently blunt and cruel humiliation of Hindu deities by Trailokyavijaya and Samvara not only runs counter to logic and historical necessity, but would also represent a real deviation from Buddhist practice, one which is out of character with the Buddhist ideals of compassion and wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion of the *laukika-lokottara* opposition in David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in South Asia and of Buddhism with 'Local Cults' in Tibet and the Himalayan Region* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008): 45–55, 69–74, 77–78, 83–86, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Rob Linrothe, “Beyond Sectarianism: Towards Reinterpreting the Iconography of Esoteric Buddhist Deities Trampling Hindu Gods,” *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2, no. 2 (1990): 18. There is a considerable body of literature on the interpretation of these images, starting from Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography Mainly Based on the Sādhnamālā and Cognate Tāntric Texts of Rituals. Revised and Enlarged with 357 Illustrations*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958 [1924]): 389 (1st ed.: 162–63); the introduction to Benoytosh Bhattacharyya’s edition of the *Sādhnamālā*, vol. 2 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1925–1928): cxxx–cxxxvi, to B.P. Sinha, “Some Reflections on Indian Sculpture (Stone or Bronze) of Buddhist Deities Trampling on Hindu Deities,” in *Dr Satkari Mookerji Felicitation Volume*, ed. B.P. Sinha (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1969): 97–107; Y. Krishan, “A New Interpretation of the Buddhist Sādhana and Buddhist Sculptures Showing Buddhist Gods Trampling upon Brāhmaṇical or Hindu Gods,” *Oriental Art* 38, no. 1 (1992): 15–26, and, more recently, Aparajita Morde, “Power, Politics and Supremacy: Many Meanings of Trampling in Indian Art,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 94 (2013): 162–68. For additional literature on the topic, see Rob Linrothe, “Beyond Sectarianism: Towards Reinterpreting the Iconography of Esoteric Buddhist Deities Trampling Hindu Gods,” *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2, no. 2 (1990): 16.

However, the sectarian meaning of the images is obvious and precedes the symbolic interpretations, which were in part offered by theologians and scholars to defend these depictions against criticism. In other words, I take these images at face value, as visually expressing the Hindu divinities' dependency on the dominant Buddhist deity – as one aspect of religious rivalry. The images discussed here may have been especially meaningful to those who had converted to Buddhism from Hinduism, and as converts were steeped in and knowledgeable about Hindu mythology.

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Adam Hardy

## Chapter 9

# Dependence and Freedom in the Theory and Practice of Indian Temple Architecture

## 1 Introduction

To what extent have the architects of temples in India been constrained by canonical texts? The degree to which any artist can be free from the norms and conventions of their art is a huge question. In the case of an architectural tradition like those responsible for temple building in medieval India, passed down through lineages and from master to pupil, dependent on patronage and large resources, invested with social and political significance, and held to be sacred, the meaning of ‘artistic freedom’ is all the more questionable. The architects of Indian temples, moreover, developed complex architectural languages which I would characterise not so much as ‘strict’ as highly structured. If temples can be considered an art form, then a particular form of temple is analogous to, say, a sonnet in poetry, where creating something new within the given pattern is the whole point, and to stray too far from it is no longer to write a sonnet. Indian temple forms follow certain modes, for each of which is developed a variety of particular types. Typology, a ubiquitous preoccupation of the texts, is also a conspicuous aspect of temple architecture itself from the moment around the fifth century CE when a repertoire of basic shrine types inherited from timber construction began to be translated into masonry. Combining existing types to create new types became a fundamental design principle. Constraints as well as creative possibilities were thus inherent in the tradition, the medium. Someone carrying out the role of a temple architect, though not without agency, was in all these respects dependent. Such dependence must be borne in mind as we examine the more specific question of constraints imposed by texts.

Theoretical treatises on the various branches of knowledge, written mainly in Sanskrit and in verse, proliferated in India from the early centuries CE. They are termed *śāstras* and embody *śāstra*, the rules or science of the given subject. Sections on *vāstuśāstra*, the science of Architecture, were at first incorporated in religious texts, and later into *śilpaśāstras* focusing on building crafts, and more specifically *vāstuśāstras*, texts devoted principally to Architecture. They discuss the planning of towns and villages, palaces, and houses, as well as containing important sections on

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temples. *Vāstuśāstras* also deal with mythological, ritual, and astrological matters along with painting, sculpture, and even dance.

Academic knowledge of these architectural texts dates back to the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> but they remain little understood. Generalisations about ‘the texts’ abound, whether venerating them as a key to ancient wisdom, or dismissing them as abstruse and of no practical use. A widespread assumption is that texts laid down rules that bound the artist, a straitjacket constraining creativity. This notion can be backed up by the tenor of the texts themselves. They promise prosperity, wellbeing, and salvation if their prescriptions are followed, while often warning of dire consequences if they are ignored – though the most conspicuous grim warnings are about respect for the *vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*, a gridded diagram laid out ritually on sites, dealt with in separate sections of texts and having little to do with the actual design of temples.

A contrary view to the one that sees the texts as strict and rigid is put forward by an anthropologist studying contemporary *sthapatis* (traditional architects) in south India. Stressing the flexible and improvisatory character of actual temple building, Samuel Parker writes:

In everyday speech śāstra is typically used by Tamil architects and sculptors, not in reference to books, but to bodies of knowledge. Whether or not that knowledge has been written down, or indeed been objectified in any coarse form, is a secondary matter [. . .] The pragmatic observation to be emphasized in this regard is that many architects and sculptors are honored in their profession as masters of śāstra *without their ever having read a single written version of any śāstra, either in Sanskrit or modern Tamil translation* [author’s emphasis]. This, in fact, is more the rule than the exception. In the domains of concrete practice, knowing śāstra is quite independent of the written word, even though the written word may be one of its contingent, and highly honored, incarnations.<sup>2</sup>

Parker’s argument is persuasive and, though about the present day, weighs against assuming that texts must have been followed strictly in the past. At the same time, while recognising the power of texts to confer authority and prestige, he all but denies them relevance to the making of temples. Appreciation of such relevance, particularly in relation to the past, calls for a focus on architecture, and particularly on design. What we now call ‘design’ is a focus of the texts themselves, even though treated in a way that is rather divorced from material and construction.

My argument in this paper is from the perspective of an architect. It is based on studies of *vāstuśāstra* texts from central, western, and southern India done in collaboration with my Sanskritist colleagues Libbie Mills and Mattia Salvini. From the instructions given in texts it is possible, to various degrees of detail, to draw the architecture of which they speak, which can then be compared with the built record.

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<sup>1</sup> Ram Raz, *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1834).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel K. Parker, “Text and Practice in South Asian Arts: An Ethnographic Perspective,” *Artibus Asiae* 63, no. 1 (2003): 9–10.

These instructions are framed in terms of how to draw a design rather than how to build, seeming to invite an architect to draw while reading or reciting. A study of this kind cannot illuminate questions of agency, dependence, and power-relations among all the people involved in commissioning and building temples,<sup>3</sup> but it does provide a solid basis for discussion of the relationship between theory and practice in temple design.

I shall briefly present examples of temple designs treated in different texts and compare them to actual temples from their respective traditions. The focus will be the ‘shrine proper’ of the temple, the *vimāna* or *mūlaprāsāda* housing the deity, the one essential element of the temple and the part that mainly preoccupies the texts. But first I shall outline a few observations on how texts variously can relate to practice, which will then be fleshed out in the examples.

## 1.1 Texts Reflect Their Time

*Vāstuśāstra* texts claim divine origin, framed as being revealed by the primordial architect (Viśvakarman in northern Indian texts, Maya in southern ones). Nevertheless, the nature of such texts changes. Early ones deal with the general shape and proportion of temples, suggestive of wooden construction and with little sense of detail or style, as in the passages on temples found in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, an astrological treatise of around the sixth century CE. The mature monumental temple architecture of the seventh to ninth centuries was presumably accompanied by a burgeoning of the related textual tradition.<sup>4</sup> Little of that survives, however, and the variety and relative lack of standardisation in temples of that period give the impression that practice far outstripped theory at this stage. The majority of known *Vāstu* texts are from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, the era when temple-building activity reached its apogee. Although surviving manuscripts are invariably later, the original date of texts can generally be deduced because their treatment of temple architecture is detailed enough to recognise the period and region of the temples described. Standard temple types became more prevalent during this period, and texts may have contributed to this phenomenon. This is not to say that they froze the tradition, since, with the passage of time, new standard types emerge in both texts and the built record. Archaic fragments can crop up in later texts, but they stand out in a corpus that evolves as temple architecture evolves. Clearly, to whatever extent texts fix temple designs, they do not do so for all time.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion, based on texts, of the relationships between actors at the higher end of the social scale, see Libbie Mills, “The Master May Wander into Servanthood: The King and his Architect,” *South Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2021): 13–25.

<sup>4</sup> For surviving examples of such texts see Libbie Mills, *Temple Design in Six Early Śaiva Scriptures: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Prāsādalakṣaṇa Portions of the Bṛhatkālottara; the Devyāmata; the Kīraṇa; the Mohacūrottara; the Mayasaṃgraha; and the Piṅgālamata*, Collection Indologie 138 (Pondichery: Institut Francais de Pondichery/École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2019).

## 1.2 It all Depends Which Text

Even once we reach the period when texts describe identifiable temple forms, the ability of texts to constrain an architect varies greatly depending on how close a given text is to practice. Some are so abstract and theoretical that they seem obsessed with classification for its own sake, with no sense of the forms they classify. While many texts are immersed in the architecture of their regional tradition, portions of certain texts, for the sake of comprehensiveness, deal with temple forms from distant places refracted through a limited understanding. The amount of architectural detail explained in texts varies greatly. Some will specify only the essentials of a composition, so that the resulting drawing, if done without elaboration or embellishment, will simply show the basic components, their relationships, and their proportions wherever these have been prescribed. Others will deal with mouldings and ornaments. The degree to which details are explained affects the capacity of a text to influence the making of detail in practice.

## 1.3 A Text Only Ever Provides a Framework

However detailed the verbal instructions, they are still an abstraction, a skeleton without flesh. So much has been left out and so many gaps have to be filled. Some decisions will be determined by the practicalities of materials and construction, some by the techniques, preferences and habits of craftsmen, some by unforeseen contingencies. Many decisions will be made through sheer invention and improvisation, albeit guided by unwritten, visual norms of the architectural tradition. The text provides only the initial diagram, a framework for the creative process. Even in terms of frameworks, texts tend to be incomplete. There are subtleties and complexities that go unmentioned in texts, which could only have been learnt through oral transmission, observation, and practical experience.

## 1.4 Temple Proportions Rarely Follow Texts Exactly

Since recognisable temple designs including known standard types are prescribed in texts, to that extent temples of those kinds do correspond to texts, at least inasmuch as their composition conforms to the framework provided by a text, down to whatever level of detail the text reaches. Beyond compositional arrangement, texts explain, more or less completely, the underlying geometry of the temple and relative proportions of its parts (actual measurement being a separate and less prominent aspect). Often the geometry of an actual temple plan is just as in certain textual prescriptions. This does not mean that the building must have followed a text, firstly because we cannot be sure which came first, and secondly because, for many complex types, a certain geometry is

intrinsic to the particular three-dimensional arrangement of parts. I have not yet found a temple corresponding to a text in all its proportions in elevation, even allowing for the inevitable irregularities of a hand-made object. But texts do give invaluable clues as to what to look for when analysing the proportions of temples, saving us from many blind alleys.

### **1.5 Emanatory Sequences Underlie Both Texts and Practice**

No matter to what extent texts are vehicles of authority and continuity, they undermine any idea of fixity. Typically, their presentations of temple types follow various kinds of sequential logic. Generally progressing from simple to complex, one type develops from another, drawn out in a sequence of emanation. The progression can be simply numerical, more subtly mathematical, or a perceptible bodying forth with each successive form incorporating the previous one. Actual traditions of practice follow the same kinds of evolution, the architectural systems with their implicit rules containing inherent possibilities which the architects extrapolate. Theory and practice develop side by side and symbiotically in this exploration. A fixed form is only ever a moment in an eternity of flux.

### **1.6 Texts Can be Creative**

Texts articulate developments realised in practice, no doubt perpetuating them for a certain time, but can also imagine possible designs that may later, or never, be built. Texts and practice share a way of thinking about architecture, so texts can envisage untried possibilities. They can think ahead to extend a formal sequence or make flights of fancy with no end beyond their own blossoming. Ideas can be tried out freely in words that architects could not build, dependent as they are on patronage, resources and perhaps, paradoxically, texts.

### **1.7 Texts Can Stimulate Creativity**

Rules and frameworks arguably provide a propitious starting point for human creativity, and this is certainly the case for any cultural production overtly based on formal patterns. If the author(s) of a text on temples think ahead to an untried stage of a sequence, to build it is all the more a challenge and an achievement. Where a text imagines a unique and extraordinary concept, if ever it is built the architect will have to summon all their powers of interpretation and imagination, and the result will be something they would not have invented alone, and which could not have been fully foreseen.



## 2 Evolving Temples and Texts in the Nāgara Tradition

An emanatory sequence of the kind just evoked, whereby temple forms emerge and proliferate one from another, stands out especially clearly in the Nāgara traditions of central and western India between the eighth and twelfth centuries, where we witness development from the single-spired Latina form into *anekāṇḍaka* (composite) designs. A particular series of *anekāṇḍaka* temples found in several *vāstuśāstras* is a classic textual example of this kind of sequence, overlaying an ingenious arithmetical game onto the successively emerging compositions. This is the series of twenty-five *sāndhāra* temples (temples with *andhāra* or internal ambulatory) beginning with a type called Keśarī. The numbers game concerns the crowning element of a Nāgara temple, termed *aṇḍaka* (literally ‘egg’). A simple Latina *śikhara* (spire) is *ekāṇḍaka*, ‘with one egg’. The Latina form is really the first egg from which composite forms hatch, but the Keśarī at the start of this series is *pañcāṇḍaka* – with five *aṇḍakas* – and each successive type has to have four more, so that the twenty-fifth type, the Meru temple, ends up with an auspicious 101 *aṇḍakas*. The composers of the text had to think up designs to fit each step. Clearly, they did not have to invent all of them from scratch as they were thinking in parallel with an exploration already underway in practice, albeit without any need to build every permutation systematically and in order.

While the series presents evolving forms, the different versions in which it appears evolve with the times. The earliest exposition, to my knowledge, is the one in chapter 56 of the eleventh-century, central Indian *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (SSD), that great compendium of architectural texts from different traditions. I argue that here the designs suggest a tenth-century origin as they do not include various complexities evident in the eleventh and twelfth centuries,<sup>5</sup> when the dense Śekharī mode became the predominant form of *anekāṇḍaka* Nāgara temple. Some of the types, needed to fill numerical slots, are not fully resolved in three dimensions, and would need to be radically rethought in order to make satisfactory buildings. Chapter 159 of the *Aparājītapṛcchā* (AP), a twelfth-century *vāstuśāstra* from western India, has moved on, and takes account of the full range of mature Śekharī types that had appeared by that time.<sup>6</sup>

5 Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings*, trans. Mattia Salvini (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts with Dev Publishers, 2015): 75–127; Adam Hardy, “Evolving Temples in Evolving Texts: The Keśarī Series of Nāgara *prāsādas*,” in *Proceedings of the 24th Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeology and Art*, ed. Anna Filigenzi (Naples: ISMEO, forthcoming).

6 Adam Hardy, “Evolving Temples in Evolving Texts: The Keśarī Series of Nāgara *prāsādas*,” in *Proceedings of the 24th Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeology and Art*, ed. Anna Filigenzi (Naples: ISMEO, forthcoming), and Adam Hardy, “The Twenty-Five Temples Starting with Keśarī According to the *Aparājītapṛcchā*,” in *Kapila Jnanagarbha – Wisdom Unfolding: Knowledge Offerings in Memory of Dr Kapila Vatsyayan*, ed. Advaitavadini Kaul (New Delhi: DK Printworld, forthcoming 2022).

Texts encapsulate the compositional framework of a design, not the detail or stylistic character, so, in my drawings, I have tried to be diagrammatic without being totally abstract, while avoiding conventions belonging to centuries later than the twelfth. A sample of the *prāsāda* types prescribed in the chapter 159 of the AP are shown in Plate 9.1. The first two, the Keśarī and Sarvatobhadra, are the same designs as in the SSD, designs already well-established by the tenth century among built temples. Nine of the twenty-five types mark actual shifts in the underlying arrangements of parts, the remaining ones being variants of those. In this text, the alternative to a miniature *sikhara* as a crowning element is a *tilaka*, which means a rectangular pavilion crowned by a *ghaṇṭā* ('bell'). A *tilaka* does not count for an *aṇḍaka*. Neither does a pediment of unfurling horseshoe-arch motifs (*gavākṣas*), here termed '*udgama*'. One of these over the *bhadra* (central projection) will not give us an *aṇḍaka*, whereas a half-*sikhara* (*uraḥśṛṅga*) in the same position will do so. These are the rules by which elements are shuffled around to get the required *aṇḍaka* count for a given type.

Number 13 in the series, the Indranīla temple (Plate 9.1, no. 13), has 53 *aṇḍakas*. As almost always in northern texts, we begin with the plan and proceed to the elevation. I have drawn vertical proportions 'by eye' as they are not specified in this chapter. As ever, the plan is conceived as an idealised one with four identical sides, rather than with one side modified to accommodate a doorway, antechamber, porch, etc. The plan is a square divided into sixteen parts, and this is the point in the series where a kind of component appears, the *pratyaṅga* or quarter-*sikhara*. All these temples are presented as *sāndhāra* (with internal ambulatory), but this is by no means compulsory when such types are built:

*ṣoḍaśāmsākavistāre dvibhāgaḥ karṇavistarāḥ |  
nandikā caikabhāgena dvyaiṅśaḥ pratirathas tathā ||159.31||*

In a width of sixteen *aṅśas* (part, *bhāga*), the *karṇa* (corner element) is two *bhāgas* wide. There is then a *nandikā* (minor projection) in one *bhāga*, and a *pratiratha* (intermediate main projection) of two *aṅśas*.

*punar nandī bhaved bhāgaṃ bhadraṃ vedāṃsavistaram |  
samastaṃ samaiṅśkāsaṃ bhadre bhāgo vinirgamaḥ ||159.32||*

Once again, there should be a *nandī* (= *nandikā*) of one *bhāga*, and a *bhadra* (central projection) four *aṅśas* wide.

Everything has matching projection [breadth and depth the same]; in the *bhadra*, the projection is one *bhāga*.

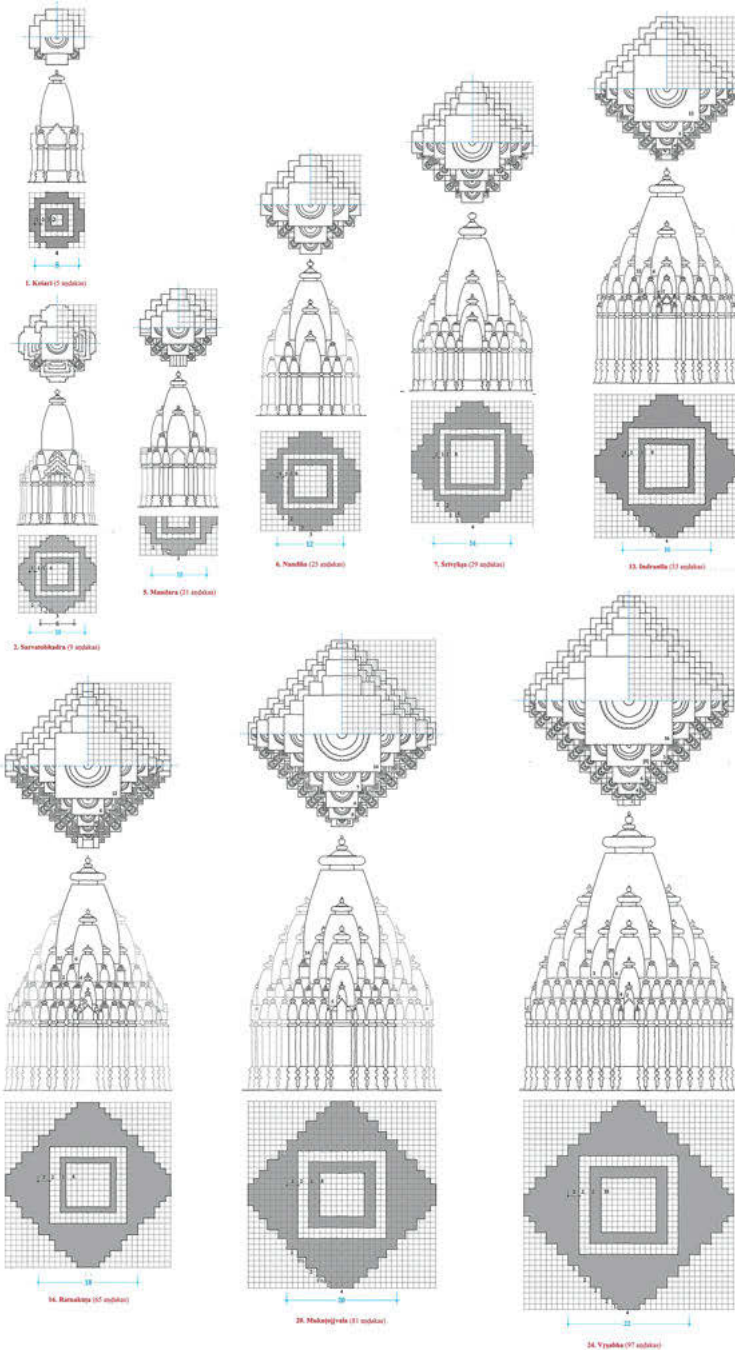
*catuḥṣaṣṭhyaiṅśako garbho veṣṭito bhittibhāgataḥ |  
bāhyabhittir bhaved bhāgā dvibhāgā ca bhramantikā ||159.33||*

The *garbha* (sanctum) is sixty-four *bhāgas* [8x8], enclosed by one *bhāga* of walls.

The outer wall should be one *bhāga*, while the *bhramantikā* (ambulatory) should be two *bhāgas*.

(from AP 159, translation by Mattia Salvini)

The plan is complete, and we proceed to the elevation. Each element of the plan is taken in turn, with specifications given for the corresponding crowning components



**Plate 9.1:** Anekāṅḍaka (composite) types of Nāgara temple: drawn from instructions for ‘the twenty-five temples beginning with the Keśarī’ in chapter 159 of the *Aparājītaṅgachā*.

of the superstructure, in ascending order. The specifications apply to one of each kind of plan element, so we have to bear in mind that there are four corners, eight intermediate projections (*pratirathas*) and so on. The term *śṛṅga* is used here for a miniature *śikhara* (adding an *aṇḍaka*).

*karṇe śṛṅgadvayaṃ kāryaṃ śikharaṃ sūryavistaram |  
nandikāyāṃ tu tilakaṃ pratyāṅgaṃ ca dvibhāgikam ||159.34||*

One should build two *śṛṅgas* in the *karṇa*, while the [main, upper] *śikhara* has a width like the suns [twelve].

In the *nandikā* there is a *tilaka*, and the *pratyāṅga* (quarter-*śikhara*) is two *bhāgas*.

*śṛṅgadvayaṃ pratirathe uraḥśṛṅgaṃ ṣaḍaṃśakam |  
śṛṅgadvayaṃ nandikāyāṃ uraḥśṛṅgaṃ yugāṃśakam ||159.35||*

There are two *śṛṅgas* in the *pratiratha*; an *uraḥśṛṅga* of six *aṃśas*;  
Two *śṛṅgas* in the *nandikā*; an *uraḥśṛṅga* of four;

*dvibhāgaṃ bhadrāśṛṅgaṃ tu śṛṅgārdhe caiva nirgamaḥ |  
karṇe pratirathe caiva hy udakāntarabhūṣitam ||159.36||*

A *bhadrāśṛṅga* (half-*śikhara* on the central projection) of two *bhāgas*; and the projection is half of the *śṛṅga* [i.e. the *śṛṅga* on the *bhadra* projects by 1 module].

In the *karṇa* and in the *pratiratha*, it [the temple] is adorned by *udakāntaras* [recesses – as we would anyway expect].

*indranīlas tadā nāma indrādīsurapūjitaḥ |  
vallabhaḥ sarvadevānāṃ śivasyaṅpī viśeṣataḥ ||159.37||*

It is then called Indranīla, worshipped by the gods starting from Indra.  
It is dear to all the gods, and especially to Śiva.

(from AP 159, translation by Mattia Salvini)

In its architectural components and the relationships between them, the Indranīla corresponds to a widespread type of Śekharī temple that first appeared towards the end of the eleventh century.<sup>7</sup> However, its geometry is not the standard one, built on an initial square of twelve parts, with deeply embedded *nandikās* that are not apparent in the ground plan. The Indranīla works well, but I know of no built examples, so perhaps it remained theoretical. In the text, three succeeding types make variations within the basic framework of the Indranīla, bringing the number of *aṇḍakas* to 61. The number of parts in the plan is then increased to 18 for the Ratnakūṭa type, with its 65 *aṇḍakas*.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See typology in Adam Hardy, “Śekharī Temples,” *Artibus Asiae* 62, no. 1 (2001): 81–137. This type is Type 4 in that scheme.

<sup>8</sup> Type 5 in the scheme referenced in the previous footnote.

*bhūdharasya yathā proktaṁ dvibhāgaṁ varddhayet punaḥ |  
pūrvavad dalasaṅkhyāyāṁ bhadrāpārśve dvinandike ||159.40||*

It [the previous type] is explained to be the Bhūdara; on the other hand, one should increase it by two *bhāgas* [thus 18]. It is the same as before In terms of the number of *dalas* (components, projections), [except that] the two flanks of the *bhadra* [each] have two *nandikās* (minor projections).

*dvibhāgaṁ bāhyabhittis ca śeṣaṁ pūrvaprakalpitaṁ |  
talacchandam iti khyātam ūrdhvamānam ataḥ śṛṇu ||159.41||*

The outer wall is two *bhāgas*; the rest is built as in the previous one.

Thus, the *talacchanda* (plan) has been explained. Listen, then, to the measurements above.

[‘*Urdhvamāna*’ is the usual term for vertical measurements. Here we move on to the elevation, but without measurements.]

*karṇe dviśṛṅgaṁ tilakaṁ śikharaṁ sūryavistaram |  
tilakaṁ dve nandikāyāṁ pratyaṅgaṁ tu dvibhāgikam ||159.42||*

In the *karṇa*, there is a *tilaka* with two *śṛṅgas* [reading downward], and a *śikhara* as wide as the suns [twelve];

Then two *tilakas* in the *nandikā*, and a *pratyaṅga* (quarter- *śikhara*) of two *bhāgas*.

*śṛṅgatrayaṁ pratirathe ṣaḍbhāgā corumañjarī |  
tilake dve punar nandyām uraḥśṛṅgaṁ yugāṁśakam ||159.43||*

There are three *śṛṅgas* in the *pratiratha*; an *urumañjarī* (*uraḥśṛṅga*, half *śikhara*) of six *bhāgas*, two *tilakas* in the *nandī*, and an *uraḥśṛṅga* in four *aśās*;

*nandyām ca śṛṅgatilake tribhāgā corumañjarī |  
dvibhāgaṁ bhadrāśṛṅgaṁ ca ardhe cārdhe ca nūrgamaḥ ||159.44||*

And in the *nandī* there is a *tilaka* and a *śṛṅga*; the *urumañjarī* is three *bhāgas*.

There is then a *bhadrāśṛṅga* of two *bhāgas*; the projection is half in each case [i.e. 1½ for the lowest *uraḥśṛṅga* but one, and 1 for the *uraḥśṛṅga* directly over the *bhadra*].

*ratnakūṭas tadā nāma śivaliṅgeṣu kāmadaḥ |  
praśastaḥ sarvadeveṣu rājñāṁ tu jayakāraṇam ||159.45||*

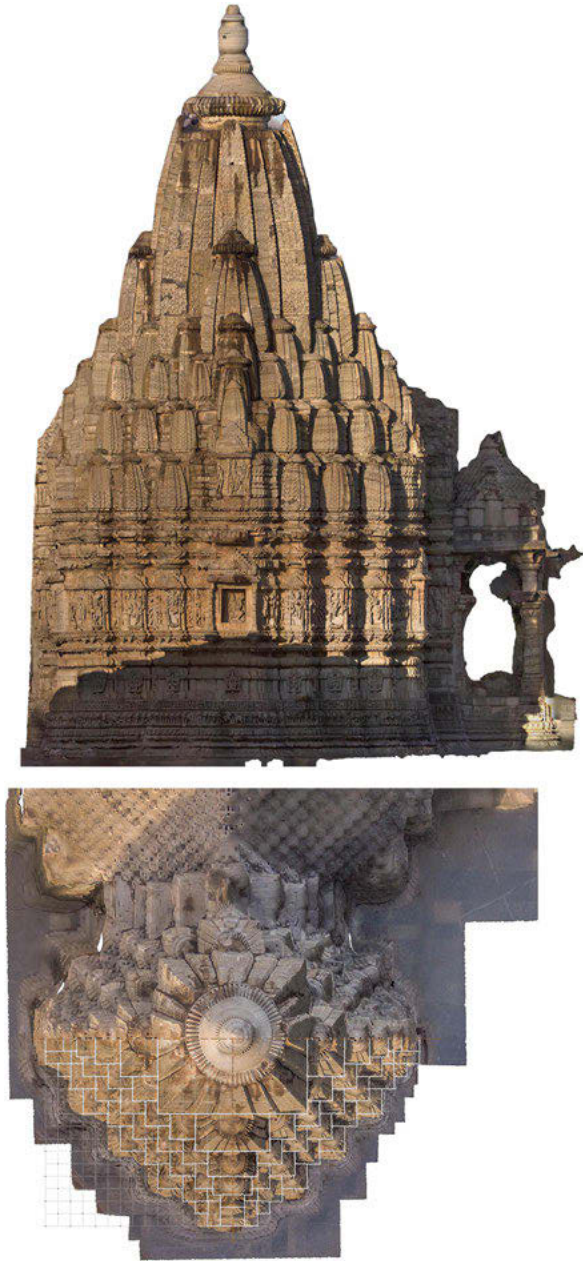
It is then called *Ratnakūṭa*, bestowing one’s wishes in respect to the Śivaliṅgas.

It is praised for all the gods, and it makes kings victorious.

(from AP 159, translation by Mattia Salvini)

The underlying composition represented by the *Ratnakūṭa* became established in western India during the twelfth century, though it was not yet widespread. The *Samadhiśvara* (or *Samiddheśvara*), Chittor (Plate 9.2) cannot be very distant in date from the AP, and its geometry corresponds closely to the *Ratnakūṭa* of the text. In terms of artistic freedom, once we reach this degree of complexity it would be difficult and pointless to invent everything anew, and the framework of a type allows choice of what to do within it.

After the *Ratnakūṭa*, the AP has three direct variants, and then moves on to plans of 20 and 24 parts, as the sequence unfolds towards it culminating 101 *aṅḍakas*. Such plans are not found in Śekharī temples before the fifteenth century, and in this respect the text looks forward, exploring untried possibilities. However, in the text, the basic three-dimensional relationships between components do not change. The last ten designs are not found in practice, and in fact have unresolved gaps that become



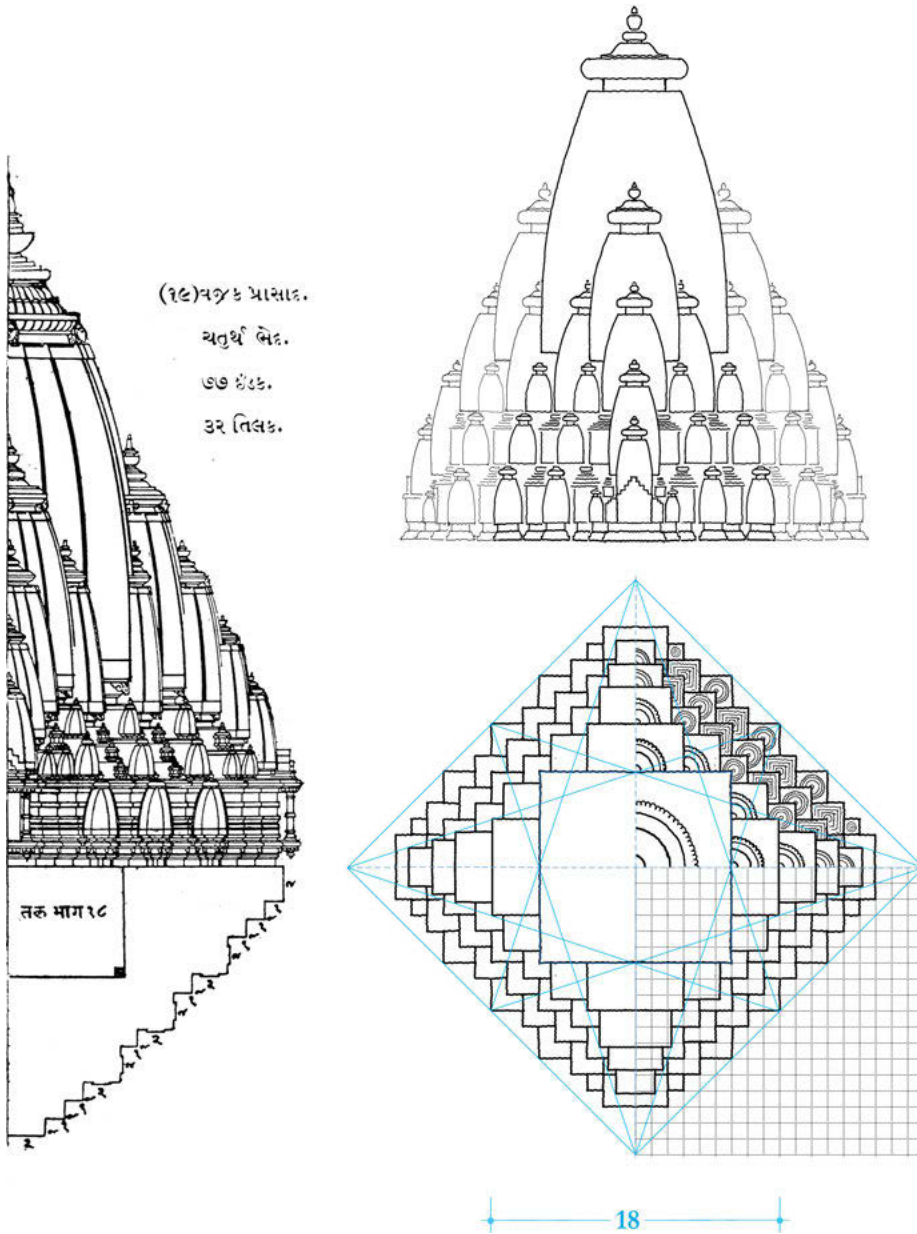
**Plate 9.2:** Samadhiśvara temple, Chittor, Rajasthan (c. third quarter of twelfth century).  
Analysis based on photogrammetric model by Kailash Rao.

visible if we draw the roof plans. In later centuries the continuing Nāgara tradition discovered other forms to build on those plans, and other principles for creating an exponential proliferation of *aṇḍakas*.

As an illustration of how a text can be interpreted in different architectural styles, we may look at an example of how a twentieth-century practitioner of traditional temple architecture interprets another medieval version of the Keśarī series. The *Shilparatnakar* (*Śilparatnākara*, SR), published in 1939 by Narmadashankar M. Sompura, is intended to encourage a revival of traditional Indian architectural principles for their use in practice. It is based on different sources available to the author, some not published elsewhere. Chapters do not identify their respective sources but appear to be faithful to them. They present them both in the original Sanskrit and in a Gujarati translation, illustrated with the author's drawn interpretations of the textual prescriptions. Chapter 6 is on the Keśarī series, and the temple designs that this chapter describes are essentially the same range as in the APP, not more 'advanced', so it seems not to be very different in date, although the technical terminology is not the same. Sompura's drawings do not aim to reflect the dates of the texts. Instead, their style is what for him would have been the contemporary one for traditional temples in Gujarat, familiar to him as heritage from his family, notably through their involvement at Mount Shatrunjaya, Palitana, where expansion of the Jaina temple complex had been prolific through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Elements of this style go back to the fifteenth-century Nāgara resurgence, including the false balconies in the first tier of the superstructure, and the particular treatment of *nandīs* or re-entrant projections. Instead of being conceived as embedded, the crowning pavilions of the latter started to be articulated as thin, protruding *kūṭastambhas* (miniature *śikharas* on pillars), later often dispensing entirely with articulation of the pillar portion, so that *śṛṅgas* and *tilakas* are mere pots and pans on a shelf. These aspects are more than just stylistic features, as they affect the way in which a text can be interpreted in terms of architectural composition.

I can sometimes disagree with N.M. Sompura's reading of the text, and at other times prefer a different choice of interpretation. More fundamentally, his inherited style brings different results from my attempt to present the framework while minimising style, and not to trespass beyond the date of the text. As an illustration, here are the SR's instructions for the Vajraka *prāsāda*, the second variant deriving from the Ratnakūṭa type, with 77 *andakas*. At this point, the temple designs in the SR are very close to those of the AP. N.M. Sompura's drawing and mine based on the same text are compared in Plate 9.3.





**Plate 9.3:** The Vajraka temple type drawn from the Śilparatnākara by N.M. Sompura (left) and Adam Hardy (right).

*vajrakaṅ ca pravakṣyāmi sarvaśobhāsanvitam |*  
*caturasrikṛte kṣetre hy aṣṭāśavibhājite || 6.121 ||*  
 I will describe the beautiful Vajraka [temple].

On a square site divided into 18,

*śālā bhāgadvayā kāryā bhāgaikena ca nirgatā |*  
*pallavibhāgam ekena nirgame 'pi tathaiva ca || 6.122 ||*

the *śālā* (= *bhadra*, central projection) is of two parts and its projection (*nirgama*) is one part. The *pallavi* portion (= *nandikā*, small projection next to *bhadra*) is one part, as is its *nirgama*.

*dvitīyā ca tathā kāryā cānugaṅ ca dvibhāgikam |*  
*nirgame ca samaṅ proktaṅ nandikābhāgam eva ca || 6.123 ||*

The second [*pallavi*] is the same. The *anuga* (= *pratiratha*, intermediate projection) is two parts [wide] and the same in projection. The *nandikā* portion is the same [as the other ones].

*koṅaṅ bhāgadvayaṅ kāryaṅ sthāpayec ca diśāsu vai |*  
*tadūrdhve śikharaṅ kāryaṅ sarvalakṣaṇasaṃyutam || 6.124 ||*

The corner is 2 parts. One should establish it in the directions.

Above that is the beautiful *śikhara*.

*bhadre ca rathikā kāryā hy urucatvāri kalpayet |*  
*naṃdikāyā dvaye caiva śṛṅgaṅ śṛṅgaṅ niyojayet || 6.125 ||*

At the *bhadra* is a *rathikā* (= *udgama* pediment) and a set of four *urus* (*uruśṛṅgas*, *uraḥśṛṅgas*, half-*śikharas*).

In the two parts of the [front] *nandikā* one should position a pair of *śṛṅgas*.

*tadūrdhve tilakaṅ sthāpyaṅ cānuge trayaśṛṅgakam |*  
*tāladvayā ca saṃsthāpyā nandikā tilakāṃkitā || 6.126 ||*

Above that is a *tilaka*. At the *anuga* is a set of three *śṛṅgas*.

The *nandikā* (i.e. the remaining *nandikās*) is to be established with two tiers (*tāladvayā*), decorated with *tilaka*[s].

*koṅe śṛṅgatrayaṅ kāryaṅ upāṅgaṅ vāmadakṣiṇe |*  
*rekhāvistāram ūrdhve ca padānāṅ kārayed budhaḥ || 6.127 ||*

A set of three *śṛṅgas* should be put at the corner, and an *upāṅga* (= *pratyāṅga*, quarter-*śikhara*) to north and south (on either side).

Above those parts, the wise man should make the expanse of *rekhās* (i.e. the lines of the *mūlamanjari* or main *śikhara*).

*śataṅ ca yugavedānāṅ rekhāvistāraḥkalpanā |*  
*saptasaptatyaṅḍakaiś<sup>9</sup> ca prāsādo vajrako mataḥ || 6.128 ||*

The shaping of the *rekhā* breadths is in 144th part (*śataṅ ca yugavedānām*).<sup>10</sup>

The Vajraka temple has 77 *aṅḍas*, [ . . . ]

9 Translator's note: *adhikaiś* emended to *aṅḍakaiś*. The emendation is made on grounds of sense. We already know from verse 4 that the Vajraka has 77 *aṅḍas*.

10 This specifies the *śikhara* curvature.

*dvātriṃśattilakair yukto ghaṇṭākūṭaiḥ samanvitāḥ |  
vajrakam kārayed yas tu vajram patati śatruṣu || 6.129 ||*  
[. . .] and 32 *tilakas* with *ghaṇṭākūṭas* (Sainvaraṇā *kūṭas* [form of the *tilakas*]).

A thunderbolt (*vajra*) falls on the enemies of the man who builds a Vajraka [temple].

(from SR 6, translation by Libbie Mills)

An immediate difference between our drawings is that Sompura has a large shelf in the first tier of the *śikhara*, pushing the crowning elements of the *nandikās* up a level. The crux of our different interpretations lies in the second line of verse 125 and the first phrase of verse 126. Both of us understand these lines as referring to the front pair of *nandikās*, flanking the *bhadra*, and that each carries a *śṛṅga*, his being equal and mine at two different scales (the inner one on the surface, the outer one embedded). Sompura then interprets ‘Above that is a *tilaka*’ as a single *tilaka* over the two *śṛṅgas*, strictly speaking over the outer one, stepping up to meet the second *uraḥśṛṅga* (counting downwards). Having my (more twelfth-century) *śṛṅgas* at the lower level, I feel that each of these calls for a *tilaka*. As the text specifies a total of 32 *tilakas*, eight are need in each *bhadra-to-bhadra* quarter of the superstructure, of which I now need four more, and Sompura six. Having made the first tier into a shelf, for the remaining *nandikās* he can, in his later style, put two little *tilakas* on steps within the second tier, leaving two more to make up his six. Elsewhere he goes as far as three within a single tier, but here needs one on a higher level to meet the quarter-*śikharas*, which always have to be at the same level and scale as the corresponding *uraḥśṛṅgas*. This is rather free with the interpretation of *tāladvayā* in verse 126, but can be justified by the requirement for six more *tilakas*. Luckily, I can get my four remaining *tilakas* within two proper tiers.

### 3 South Indian Texts

Drāviḍa temples in the far south of India are a contrast to Nāgara ones in that the available range of shrine types remains relatively unchanged for centuries. This continuity certainly makes it more difficult to date the texts on the basis of temple composition, or to distinguish later insertions from the ‘original’. Nevertheless, the main body of the surviving texts does seem to fit with the tenth to eleventh centuries,<sup>11</sup> the time when the number of possible conceptual storeys (*talas*, *bhūmis*) in a *vimāna* exterior was extended from four to twelve and more, even if the great majority of built

<sup>11</sup> This observation is based principally on the *Mānasāra*, the *Mayamata*, and the *Diptāgama*. The *Kāmikāgama* is an example of a religious text dealing at some length with temple typology but in a way that is very distant from architectural design and practice. *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (chapters 64–65) and *Aparājitaṭṭcchā* of Bhuvanadeva (chapter 174) deal with Drāviḍa temples with architectural detail, but as if it is something foreign.

examples have no more than two or three. This period corresponds to the height of Coḷa dominance in the south, and the prescribed designs can be most convincingly drawn in a ‘Coḷa’ style.

Basic shrine shape is always an essential aspect for variation in Drāviḍa temples: they are predominantly square, but there is an option for them to be circular, rectangular, apsidal, oval, or octagonal (theoretically also hexagonal), either throughout or just in the upper portions (the lower part remaining square or rectangular). Texts make these options explicit (*Mānasāra* 19.3–4). Virtually all these southern texts follow a common format, with a simple logic of sequence whereby the *vimāna* types begin with one storey and proceed in numerical order to twelve storeys. Rather than starting from the plan and its proportionate parts, the plan exterior is effectively fixed by specifying the relative sizes of the aedicules around its perimeter. The ratio of *garbhagrha* to wall is dealt with in separate passages and is a matter of choice, sometimes quite a wide one (e.g. *Mānasāra* 19.13–15). Proportions in a plan are thus a matter of subdivision into parts rather than of following a grid. Depending on the size of the intended temple, a range of choices is also given for the width to height ratio: the *Mānasāra*, for example (11.7–11.12), gives 1:2 (with the option of increasing or decreasing the height!), 4:7, 1:1½, and 7:10. For each temple type, one is instructed to divide the height from base to finial into to a certain number of parts, a portion of which is then ascribed to each main horizontal subdivision. Depending on the width to height ratio, therefore, the vertical *bhāga* or module may well be different from the horizontal one.

Unlike the Nāgara, the Drāviḍa tradition develops a great variety of moulded bases (*adhiṣṭhāna*), generally treated in separate sections devoted to this feature. Here is another matter of choice for the design of a temple. In contrast to northern texts, moulded elements, including the base, are specified in terms of every small sub-moulding. Where these passages are coherent (and sometimes they have come down to us in a way that looks wrong when drawn) they potentially impose greater restriction than their northern equivalents, though style and certain aspects of shape remain questions of choice or habit. The shape of the crowning dome (*śikhara* in the southern sense) of the temple may be another choice where it is not specified, or where options are explicit. Beyond explicit choices, there are passages, such as this one from the *Mānasāra* (MĀ), which seem to be exhorting the builders to go forth and improvise, and to embellish the temple body to the limits of imagination and funds:

*nāsikāpañjaraiḥ śālākumbhapādādibhūṣitam |*  
*toraṇair nīḍabhadrādi mūle cordhve ca bhūṣitam ||20.32||*  
 It is adorned with *nāsikās*, *pañjaras*, *śālā*, *kumbhas*, columns, etc.  
 The recesses and *bhadras* are adorned from bottom to top with *toraṇas*.

*nānādhiṣṭhānasamyuktaṃ nānāpādair alaṅkṛtam |*  
*nānāgopānasamyuktaṃ kṣudranāsyair vibhūṣitam ||20.33||*  
 [The building] has various *adhiṣṭhānas*, various columns,  
 various *gopānas* and small *nāsīs*.

(from MĀ 20, translation by Libbie Mills)

To illustrate the process of drawing a temple from these texts, we may look at two of the two-storey temple types presented in chapter 7 the *Dīptāgama* (DĀ). This is an Āgama, a text on ritual, with substantial portions devoted to temple design. Unusually, the *Dīptāgama* specifies only one possible width:height ratio, of 1:2, for two-storey temples. If we compare its several alternative two-storey *vimānas* with those of the *Mānasāra* and *Mayamata*, we find much variation in the vertical proportions. The one scheme common to the three texts is a two-storey shrine for which the vertical height is 28 parts, as is the case for first of the first of the *Dīptāgama*'s types, the Svastika (Plate 9.4, left). Horizontal divisions are determined by an instruction to divide the width into six parts (DĀ 7.3–4), each *kūṭa* occupying one part each, the *śālā* two, and each *hāra* one ('adorned with a *hārapañjara*'). Ostensibly, this means the square, domed corner pavilion (*kūṭa*), barrel-roofed central pavilion (*śālā*), and the recessed portion in between (*hāra*), here containing a *pañjara* (horseshoe-arch gabled pavilion). It becomes clear, here and in other south Indian texts, that this ascription of widths is more crucial for defining the divisions of the wall zone than the widths of the corresponding pavilions in the 'parapet' above. This shows how the temple was conceived in terms of full-height aedicules or shrine-images, even where these are not fully articulated by pilasters in the wall. Whereas in northern texts the principal modules of the plan are set

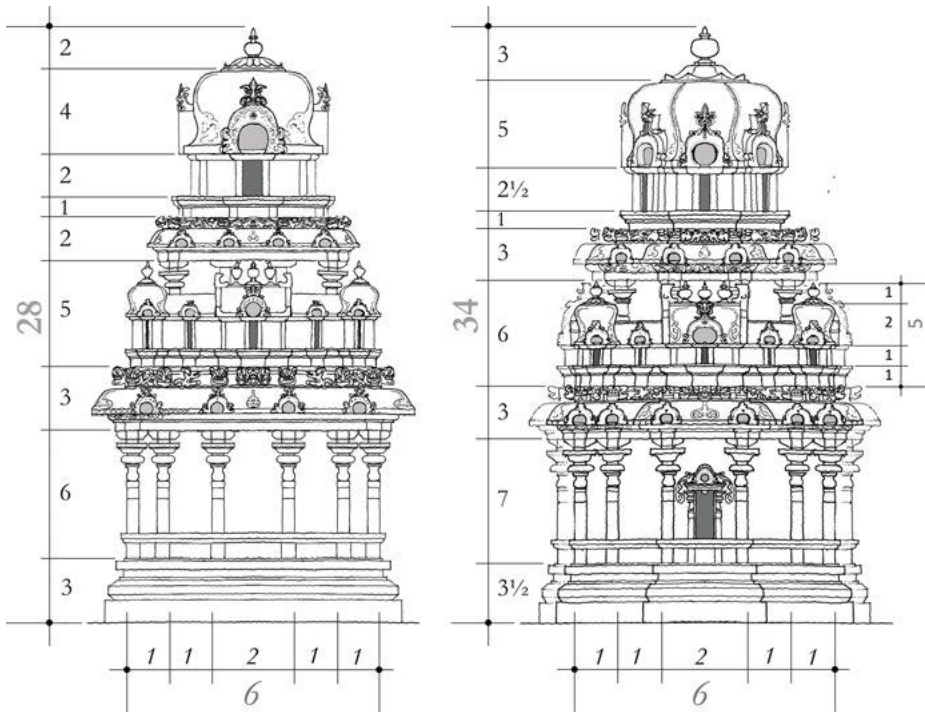


Plate 9.4: Drāviḍa temples: the Svastika and Kailāsa types drawn from chapter 7 the *Dīptāgama*.

out at the foot of the moulded base, in the south the wall zone seems to be the key. This approach ties in with not having a subdivided square as the usual starting point.

Again unusually, the *Dīptāgama* describes only one, simple type of moulded base (*adhiṣṭhāna*) (DA 6.34–36), divided vertically into 23 parts apportioned to the mouldings and sub-mouldings. I have followed that in the drawing. The term ‘*prastara*’ needs defining. It can loosely be translated as ‘entablature’ and consists of the moulded courses representing beam (*uttara*), decorated cornice (*bhūtamālā*, *haṁsamālā* etc.), thatched eaves canopy (*kapota*), and floor (*prati,vyālamālā*) for upper pavilions. Conceptually, the second storey begins above this, though in reality there is generally no actual parapet, and the pilasters of an upper storey appear only above the tops of the *kūṭas* and *śālās* of the storey (*tala*) below. The elevation of the Svastika temple is proportioned as follows:

*vimānotsedhaṃ vibhajed aṣṭāviṃśatisaṃkhyayā* ||7.5||

One should divide the temple height into 28 parts.

*tribhāgābhir adhiṣṭhānaṃ ṣaḍbhāgaṃ pādadairghyakam* |

*tribhāgaiḥ prastaraṃ kuryād ādibhūmau viśeṣataḥ* ||7.6||

The *adhiṣṭhāna* (moulded base) is 3 parts. The *pāda* (‘pillar’, the wall zone with its pilasters) height is 6 parts.

One should make the *prastara* on the first level with 3 parts.

*pañcabhāgordhvabhāgaṃ syād dvibhāgaṃ prastaraṃ bhavet* |

*vedikā bhāgam evaṃ syād dvibhāgaṃ grīvam ucyate* ||7.7||

The upper [*pāda*] level is 5 parts. The *prastara* is 2 parts.

The *vedikā* (railing) is 1 part. The *grīva* (neck) is 2 parts.

*caturbhāgordhvaṃ utsedhaṃ śikharaṃ kārāyed budhaḥ* |

*śeṣaṃ stūpir iti khyātam evaṃ dvitalamānakam* ||7.8||

The wise man should make the *śikhara* (dome) height 4 parts above that.

The remainder [2 parts] is the *stūpi* (finial).

Thus is the apportioning of the 2-storeys.

There follow ‘various features’ (*vividhalakṣaṇam*) for the Svastika:

*caturaśram adhiṣṭhānaṃ caturaśram śikharaṃ bhavet* |

*catuṣkūṭasamāyuktaṃ catuṣśālāsamāyutam* ||7.9||

The *adhiṣṭhāna* is square. The *śikhara* should be square.

There are 4 *kūṭas* and 4 *śālās*.

*pañjarair aṣṭabhir yuktaṃ mahānāsīcaturyutam* |

*prastaraṃ nāsikāyuktaṃ ṣaḍviṃśatikasaṃkhyakam* ||7.10||

There are 8 *pañjaras* [in the *hāras*] and 4 *mahānāsīs* (large horseshoe arch gables in the dome).

The *prastara* has 26 *nāsikās* (small horseshoe arch gable windows in the eaves) (it is difficult to achieve that exact number symmetrically)

*maṇḍapāgre viśeṣeṇa anunāsīṃ prakalpayet* |

*ūrdhve bhūmiṃ caturbhittim sarvālaṅkārasaṃyutam* ||7.11||

One should set an *anunāsī* (?) at the *maṇḍapa* (hall).

The level above has 4 walls (*caturbhittim*), and every adornment.

*pūrvoktaiḥ pādavistāraiḥ pādālaṅkāram ucyate |  
etad vai svastikaṃ nāma sarvadeveṣu योग्यकाम || 7.12 ||*

The column breadths are as given above. The ornament of the column level (*pādālaṅkāram*) has been described.

This is [the temple] named Svastika, suited for all deities.

(from DĀ 7, translation by Libbie Mills)

The instructions yield a pleasant looking *vimāna*. For the corner *kūṭas*, I could have followed the instructions in DĀ 7.28–30 quoted below as these seem to be generally applicable. However, this would make their dome proportions abnormally different from the main dome, so I have chosen to draw a taller *grīva*.

The subsequent type in the *Dīptāgama* is called the Kailāsa (Plate 9.4, right). Exactly the same instructions as the previous ones are repeated for the horizontal proportions. The base is again specified as square, this time (DĀ 7.14) with a projection ‘at the *śālā*’ (*śālānirgamam*), thus forming a *bhadra* and an explicit full-height shrine image at the centre. The *maṇḍapa* (hall) is discussed, and various details including prescriptions for a *toraṇa* (archway motif), which I have followed. The injunction (DĀ 7.18) is to make a fine *torāṇa* at the centre of the *śālā* (*śālāmadhye tu kartavyaṃ toraṇaṃ lakṣaṇānvitam*). Since such *torāṇas* are always in the wall zone, it is clear that ‘*śālā*’ refers to the full aedicule. We come to the ‘height’:

*vimānotsedhaṃ vibhajec catuṣtriṃśatibhāgabhāk || 7.22 ||*

One should divide the temple height into 34 parts.

*tryaśam ardham adhiṣṭhānaṃ saptāśam stambhadairghyakam |  
tribhāgaiḥ prastaraṃ kuryād ūrdhva-pādaṃ ṣaḍaśamakaiḥ || 7.23 ||*

The *adhiṣṭhāna* is 3½ parts. The column height is 7 parts.

The *prastara* is 3 parts. The upper column is 6 parts.

*prāg iva prastaraṃ kuryād vedikā bhāgam eva ca |  
grīvotsedhaṃ dvibhāgārdhaṃ śikharaṃ pañcabhāgikam || 7.24 ||*

One should make the *prastara* as before (3 parts). The *vedikā* is 1 part.

The height of the *grīva* is 2½ parts. The *śikhara* is 5 parts.

*śeṣaṃ stūpīr iti khyātam etad dvitalamānakam |*

The remainder is the *stūpī* (3 parts). This is the apportioning of [this] two-storey temple.

(from DĀ 7, translation by Libbie Mills)

The passage that follows informs us that the upper level also has a central projection, and that the top of the temple is octagonal from the *vedikā* upwards. Finally, there are instructions for the *kūṭas* and *śālās*, followed in the drawing. The proportions of the resulting corner *kūṭa* domes diverge a little awkwardly from those of the main dome. An option is given of making the *kūṭas* octagonal instead of square.

*ūrdhva-pādonnatam yāvat pañcabhāgair vibhājayet |  
bhāgaikam vedikotsedhaṃ bhāgam grīvam udāhṛtam || 7.28 ||*

One should divide up to the height of the upper column into 5 parts.

The height of the *vedikā* is 1 part. The *grīva* is 1 part high.



*dvibhāgaṃ śikharaṃ tasmīn ekāṃśā stūpikā smṛtā |  
 etad vai kūṭasālānāṃ mānaṃ sarvatra lakṣitam || 7.29 ||*  
 The *śikhara* is 2 parts. On that the *stūpikā* is taught as 1 part.  
 This the proportion for all the *kūṭas* and *śālās*.

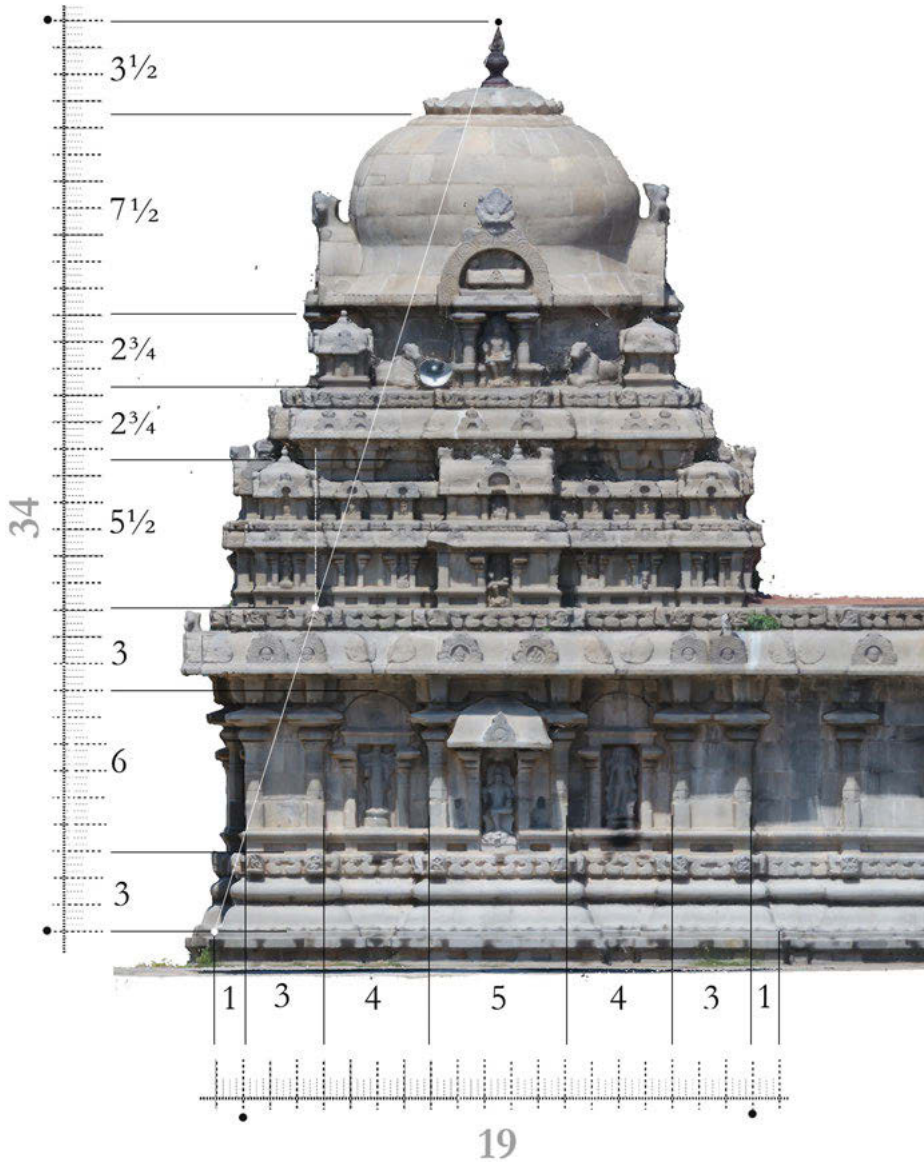
*aṣṭāśraṃ caturaśraṃ vā kūṭānāṃ ākṛtir bhavet |  
 gopurasyākṛtiṃ dhyātvā koṣṭhākārākṛtis tathā || 7.30 ||*  
 The design of the *kūṭas* may be octagonal or square.  
 Having conceived the design of the *gopura* (gateway), the design of the *koṣṭhas* (*śālās*) is the same. (i.e. a *śālā* is, as usual, like the top of a *gopura*.)

*ebhis tu lakṣaṇair yuktaṃ kailāsaṃ tat prakīrtitam |*  
 The Kailāsa is taught with these features.

(from DĀ 7, translation by Libbie Mills)

Turning to built examples, given that two-storey *vimānas* with a height divided into 28 *bhāgas* are a type common to several texts, it seems likely that temples will be found that follow this scheme. Generally, one would expect the texts to furnish clues to ways of doing things rather than total formulae. That is certainly the case with the one two-storey *vimāna* I have so far been able to analyse from an accurate photogrammetric model. This is the eleventh-century Gaṅgaikoṅḍacoḷīśvara temple at Kulampandal (Plate 9.5). Its *kūṭas* and *śālās* are the full-height (*śaḍvarga*) variety, and there are corner *kūṭas* on the top level, which supports a circular neck and dome. Like the Kailāsa type in the DĀ, this temple turns out to have a height based on 34, with a ratio in the first *tala* of 6:3:6 for base: wall:*prastara*, leaving a little more space for the upper portions than the Kailāsa does. In the plan, the wall zone is based on 19 of the same *bhāgas*, with the base projecting one *bhāga* beyond on either side.

Occasional passages in these southern texts show awareness that different texts have different views on some matter, implying choice again, and recognising that there is no one unquestionable authority. In a drawing aiming for authenticity above originality, where there are no instructions for details one tries to make them 'look right'. Textual prescriptions provide general principles and useful rules of thumb for making things look right without having to find out each time what works. Where instructions give something that looks wrong, the visual norms of the tradition are more powerful than the text. All in all, my impression is that these texts are not so much teaching strict rules for making particular kinds of temple, as teaching the versatile rules of the architectural game as an aid to passing on the tradition.



**Plate 9.5:** Gaṅgaikoṇḍačoḷiśvara temple, Kulampandal, Tamil Nadu (early eleventh century). Analysis based on photogrammetric model by Kailash Rao.

## 4 Bhūmija Temples in the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*

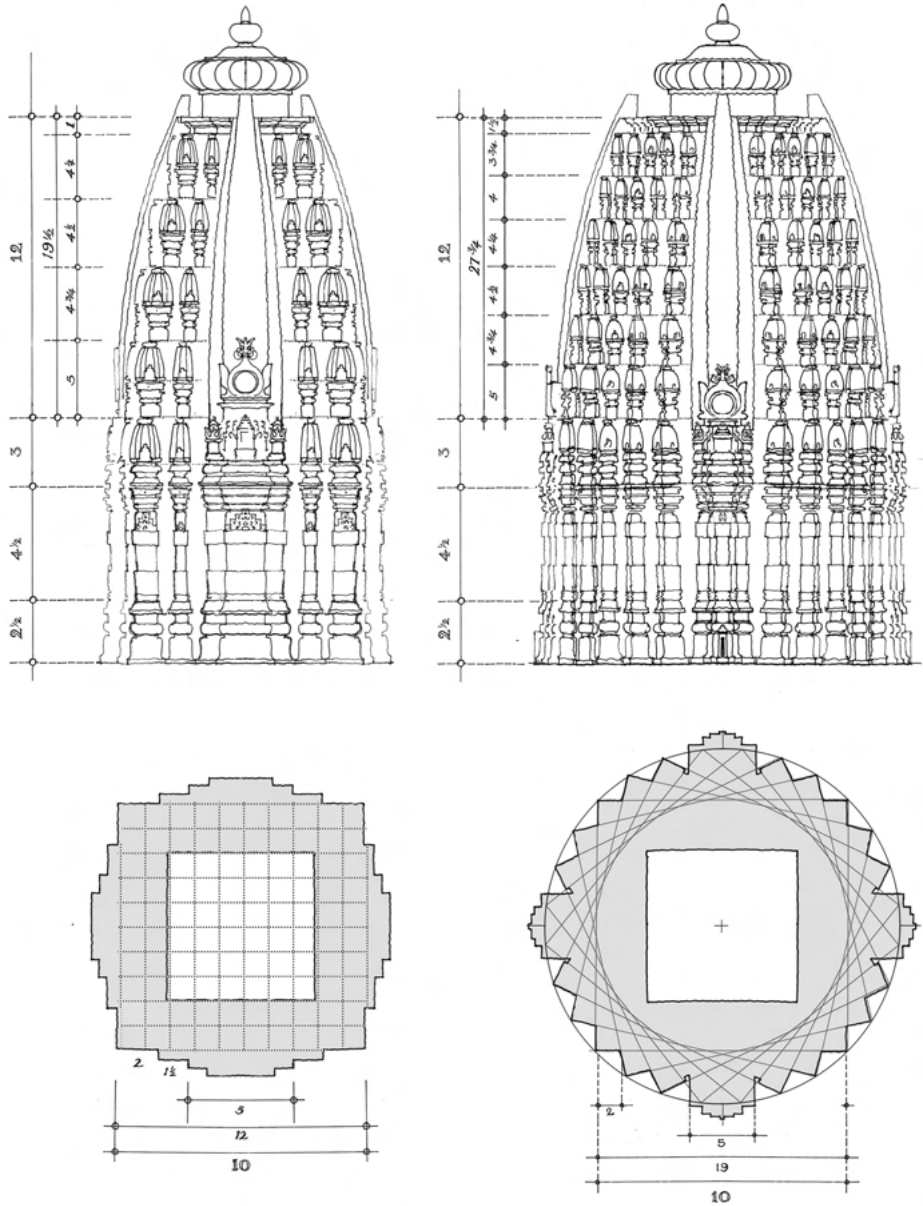
In Central India and in the upper Deccan, around end of the tenth century CE, architects developed a new temple form, brought out from the northern or Nāgara matrix, while totally favoured by the Paramāra rulers of Malwa. The *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* was compiled under the auspices of the famous Paramāra king Bhoja (ruled c. 1010 to 1055).

The Bhūmija is exceptional in being developed within a short time, rather than through a continuous process of transformation as we find in the Nāgara tradition. Once established, its nature did not lend itself easily to a further, gradual blossoming, as its range of underlying shapes was inherent in the basic idea. There are three basic categories of plan, square orthogonal, stellate (but generally keeping the orthogonal *bhadra*), and stellate with eight *bhadras* – four orthogonal and four diagonal. These kinds of plan do appear sequentially in the built record, as in the texts – chapter 65 of the SSD, and in the less detailed and less usable chapter 171 of the AP. However, for each kind, the range of possibilities becomes apparent straight away, rather than gradually being revealed. A specific type can be defined simply by the number of projections (or points in the rotated-square star) and the number of *bhūmis* (levels). The texts set out these possibilities, a few of which become standard in practice, while others remain theoretical.

In the SSD, the chapter on Bhūmija temples stands out for its coherence and its complexity. The argument is tightly woven, with its own mathematical logic. It does not explicitly classify a temple type in terms of the number of projections, or of the number of points of the underlying diagram of a stellate plan, and of the number of *bhūmis*, but has a brain-teasing character demanding that these things should be deduced from its instructions. As the Bhūmija form did not evolve over centuries, the text did not need to incorporate passages from venerated earlier texts, nor account for a myriad of designs created through practice. Rather, without many built examples to draw upon, it could lay out the potential of the system. If surviving Bhūmija temples are relatively close to the prescriptions of the SSD,<sup>12</sup> it is because the theory and practice developed side by side at the outset in a way that would not have been possible in an older and more disparate tradition.

The Malayādri temple (Plate 9.6) is the second orthogonal type presented in the SSD (65.24–37). It represents a type that is probably the most common one found in practice, with five projections in the plan and five *bhūmis*. The SSD explains that the initial square of a Bhūmija plan should always be divided into ten parts or *bhāgas*, of which six are occupied by the *garbhagṛha*. We learn that for the Malayādri type, as for most of the others, the original division into ten should be re-divided to give a new *bhāga*

<sup>12</sup> Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts with Dev Publishers, 2015): 256–60.



**Plate 9.6:** Bhūmija temples: the Malayādri (left) and Śataśṛṅga (right) types drawn from chapter 65 of the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra.

size for the exterior divisions of the plan. The *bhadra* is always five of the *bhāgas* derived for the exterior divisions. The *śikhara* height (in this context measured here from the top of the second storey up to the *vedī*) is given as twelve of the original ten *bhāgas*,

and we are told that this height is to be re-divided to give yet another *bhāga* size for the vertical divisions within the *śikhara*. On the basis of these *bhāgas*, the ascending *bhūmis* are to be reduced from stage to stage by one quarter of a *bhāga*. The respective *bhūmi* heights can be worked out from the overall height that is given. This is the general principle for *bhūmi* heights, followed by all the Bhūmija types in the SSD.

In plan, at least, most surviving examples of this composition have the same proportions as prescribed in the text.<sup>13</sup> The elevation is a different matter, most visibly in the loftier superstructures of built examples. A line drawing of this type of superstructure is engraved on the rocks at Bhojpur, next to Bhoja's unfinished royal temple (Plate 9.7).<sup>14</sup> This is a beautiful illustration of the kind of skeletal framework offered by many of the texts. Measurements were taken at the site for this re-drawing, also allowing one to discover the size of the underlying *bhāgas*. These might never have been stumbled upon without the clues and general principles laid out in the text. Dividing the base width by the standard ten gives the *bhāga* size of the plan square. In terms of the original ten of the plan, the shoulder (*skandha*), the platform created by the *vedī*, prescribed by the SSD as six of the ten for stellate shrines, is here virtually that. Dividing the *bhadra* into the usual five parts gives us a new *bhāga* size which goes twelve times into the width, on the basis of which the *karṇa* is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and the *pratiratha*  $1\frac{1}{2}$ . This pattern of  $2+1\frac{1}{2}+5+1\frac{1}{2}+2 = 12$  is precisely that of the Malayādri. In elevation, the text says that the pillar (*stambha*) portion of a *bhūmi* should be the same height as the *kūṭa* or miniature *śikhara* portion, clearly not the case in this line drawing. The implied width to height ratio of the Malayādri's superstructure is 10:13½, here it is roughly 10:17. In the text, the implied radius of curvature is less than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  times with width: in the drawing is seven times. For the heights of the *bhūmis*, in the drawing it is the entire superstructure up to the *vedī* that is re-divided – by 22. This can be discovered by looking for a *bhāga* size that works for the general principle whereby heights diminish by successively one quarter of a part.

The fifth type of star-shaped Bhūmija temple in the SSD is called the Śataśṛṅga. It has the stellate equivalent of a plan with seven projections (corner to corner), and seven *bhūmis*. The term *śālā* in the Bhūmija context refers to the central *bhadra* projection, which takes the form of a round-gabled embedded shrine with Drāviḍa-esque details. In the instructions for the Śataśṛṅga type, the division of the plan into ten parts happens to be mentioned after its subdivision into 19 parts. The principle of *parivartanā* ('going round the circle') mentioned in verse 112 will be explained presently. One of the subtleties found in practice but entirely missing in the text is the presence,

<sup>13</sup> The plan prescribed in the text is found at the Jāmaleśvara, Jami, at Temple 26, Ashapuri, and a plan drawing for a small Bhūmija temple at Bhojpur. The Māhanaleśvara temple, Menal, is of the same composition, but the plan proportions, based on ten parts, are  $2:1\frac{1}{2}:3:1\frac{1}{2}:2$ , a common scheme in earlier Nāgara temples.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts with Dev Publishers, 2015): 66–69, 254–56.



in the reentrant angles of a stellate plan, of small, pointed projections carrying embedded *kūṭastambhas* (miniature *śikharas* on pilasters, like those of the main projections). These are the equivalent of the *nandikās* in complex Nāgara temples. The text mentions only recesses (SSD 65.113).

*kathyate śataśṛṅgo'tha prāsādaḥ (śubhalakṣaṇaḥ) |  
vallabhaḥ sarvadevānām (śi)vasya (tu) viśeṣataḥ || 109 ||*

Now the Śataśṛṅga temple, having beautiful features, is going to be explained.  
It is beloved of all the gods, especially of Śiva.

*caturaśṛṅkte kṣetre viṃśatyaikonayānśike |  
karṇādvi(rdha)sūtreṇa tato vṛttam atra prakalpayet || 110 ||*

In a square field, subdivided into 19,  
One should then make a circle with a *sūtra* (cord) half the *karṇa*  
[i.e. the radius is half the diagonal, so this is the circle circumscribing the original square]

*karṇā dvibhāgikāḥ kāryāḥ śālā syāt pañcabhāgikā |  
śālāpallavikā cāsya (nirgatā) vṛttamadhyataḥ || 111 ||*

The *karṇās* (corner projections) should be made as two *bhāgas*; the *śālā* (central element) should be five *bhāgas*.

Its *śālāpallavikā* (miniature shrine at the base of the *śālā*) projects from the middle of the circle (i.e. on the cardinal axis).

*dvau dvau pratirathau kāryau dvibhāgāyāmvistṛtau |  
parivartanato vṛttamadhyatā(taḥ) koṇaśālayoḥ || 112 ||*

Two by two *pratirathas* (intermediate elements) should be built, being two *bhāgas* in breadth and depth,  
And should be made between the *śālā* and the *koṇa* (*karṇa*, corner) by going round the circle.

*śālākoṇapratirathāntareṣu syāj jalāntaram |  
ekonaviṃśatiṃ bhāgān tāt bhajet daśabhiḥ punaḥ || 113 ||*

In the intervening spaces between the *pratirathas* and the *śālā* and *koṇa* should be a recess (*jalāntara*),

One should further divide the 19 *bhāgas* into ten.

*garbhaḥ prāgavat tathā bhittiḥ prāgvat khuravaraṇḍikā |  
jaṅghotsedho(tha) bhūtsedhaḥ pūrvavac chikharocchritiḥ || 114 ||*

The *garbha* is as before, and so also the wall and the *khura* and *varaṇḍikā* are as before.

The height of the *jaṅghā* ('thigh', wall), the height of the storey and the height of the *śikhara* are just as before.

*(athābhiste?)merārabhya paṭṭyantam śikharocchritiḥ (tim) |  
bhāgānām aṣṭaviṃśatyā(?) vibhajet pādāhīnayā || 115 ||*

Then, starting from the first storey<sup>15</sup> up to the *paṭṭī* (the *vedī*), one should subdivide  
The height of the *śikhara* into 28 *bhāgas* minus a quarter (27%).

15 Translator's note: Assuming *athādibhū* for *athābhiste*.



*dvitīyabhūmikā tasya kāryā pañcapadocchritā |  
rekhās tu pañca kartavyāḥ padapādocchritā bhuvāḥ || 116 ||*

Its (i.e. the temple's) second storey should be built five *padas* (parts, *bhāgas*) in height. One should build five *rekhās* (i.e. five lines demarcating the tops of the remaining storeys); the storeys should be [successively] one quarter of a *pada* less in height.

*sārdhabhāgocchritā vedī pravidheyāsya tadvidā |  
śālāsya stambhakūṭādibhaktayaḥ śukanāsikā || 117 ||*

He who knows about these things should make its *vedī* one and a half *bhāgas* high. Its *śālā*, the subdivisions of the *stambha*, *kūṭa* and so forth, and the *śukanāsikā*,

*rekhādyaṃ ca kumbhasya prāgvat syāt sarvaṃ apy adah |  
śataśṛṅgam imaṃ kuryād yaḥ prāsādaṃ manoramam || 118 ||*

All that, beginning from the profile (*rekhā*) of the *kumbha*, should be just as before. Anyone who were to build this beautiful Śataśṛṅga temple,

*tasyaikaviṃśatikulā ++++++ |  
kartā kārayitā ceti dvāv etau jagatām prabhoḥ || 119 ||*

For him, twenty-one clans [ . . . ]

The builder and the one who causes him to build, both of them would surely become masters of the world,

*tripuradveṣiṇaḥ syātām niyatam gaṇanāyakau |*

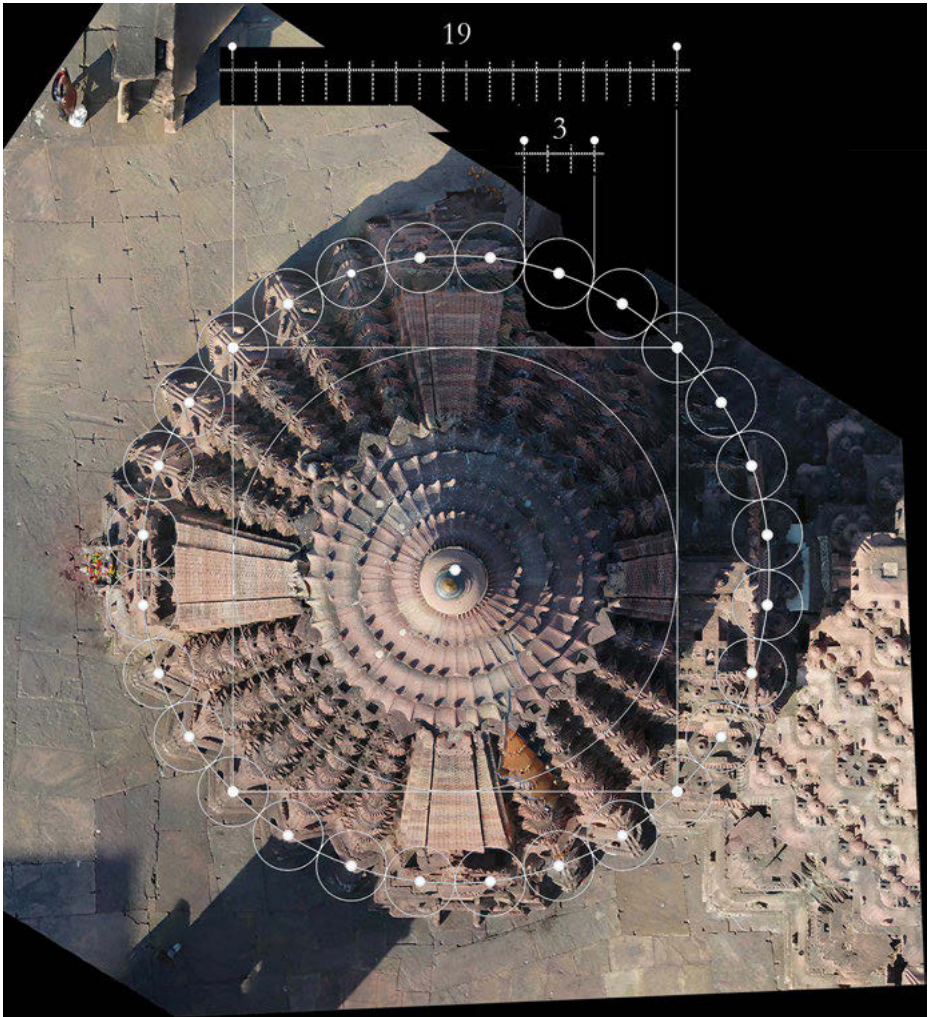
Leaders of the *gaṇa* [mythical dwarf] hosts of the Lord of the Universes, the enemy of the Three Towns.

(from SSD 65, translation by Mattia Salvini)

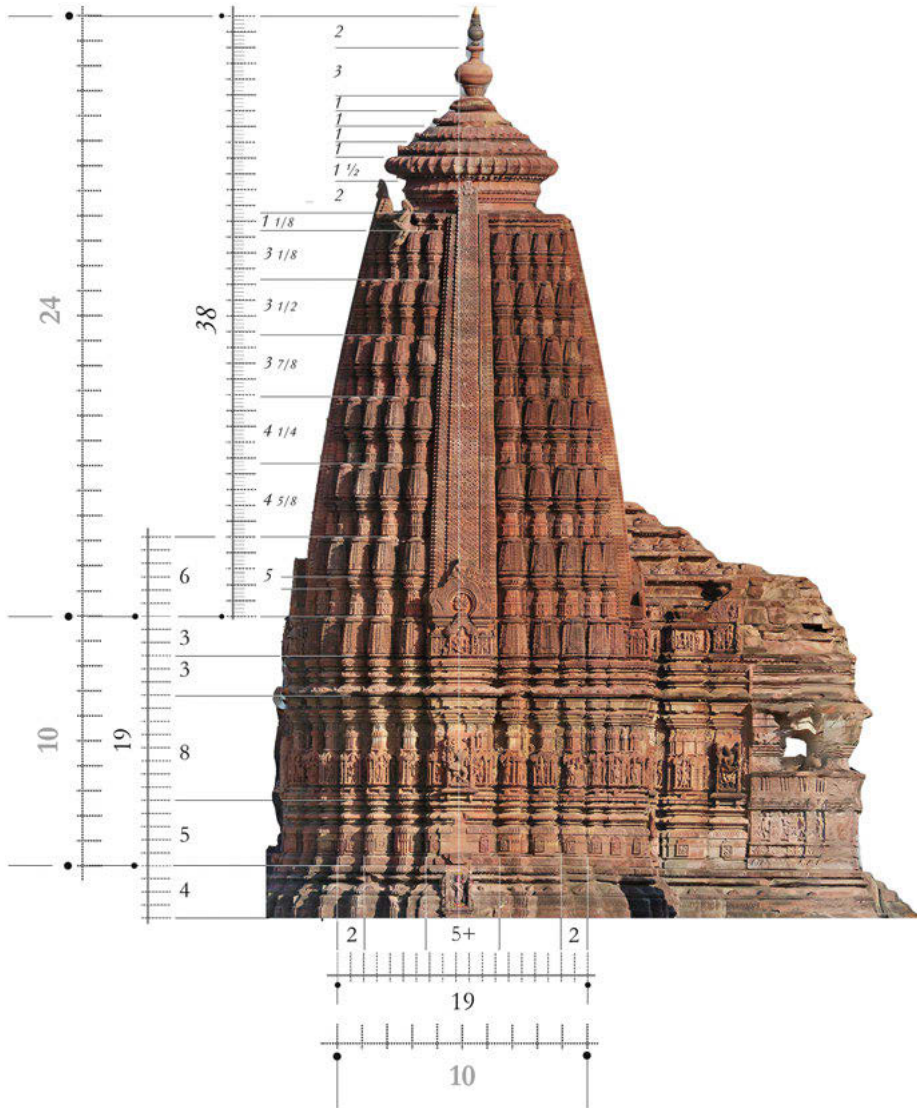
The sequence of Bhūmija stellate plans follows the subtle logic of a particular system of geometry, referred to in the text as *parivartanā*. A cryptic instruction relating to one of the stellate plans presented in the SSD led me to pursue this,<sup>16</sup> and it turns out that the number of *bhāgas* into which the initial square of the plan is subdivided is not arbitrary. Each of those numbers yields a small circle with a diameter corresponding to a whole number, or number with simple fraction (1½, 2¾ etc.), of those same *bhāgas*, a given whole number of which, touching one another like a string of beads, can be placed around the circle circumscribing the initial square or one of the other associated large circles. It can be demonstrated that the mathematical inaccuracies of this phenomenon in a drawing are so small as to be imperceptible. Drawing the plan of the Śataśṛṅga from the instructions in the SSD produces a star with 28 points, not (giving a point on each cardinal axis) 32 points, as one might guess. As we have seen, the initial plan square of 10, is to be re-divided into 19. Around the circum-circle of the initial square will go 28 small circles with a diameter measuring three of those 19 *bhāgas*.

<sup>16</sup> The exploration of the *parivartanā* principle was done in collaboration with Paul Glossop. See Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaśū-tradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts with Dev Publishers, 2015): 260–64 and 278–83 (Appendix 3 by Paul Glossop).

A superb example of the type represented by the Śataśṛṅga of the SSD is found in the Udayeśvara (or Nilakaṅṭheśvara) temple, Udayapur, dedicated in 1080 by Paramāra king Udayāditya. With a photogrammetric model we can show that a star of 28 points is indeed the basis of the plan (Plate 9.8). Following the instruction to re-divide the temple width by 19 (Plate 9.9), the corner element is plausibly two of those, and the central *śālā* just a touch over the prescribed five, no doubt to avoid an extra-wide recess either side. These proportions are taken at the *khura* (hoof) of the moulded



**Plate 9.8:** Udayeśvara temple, Udayapur, Madhya Pradesh, 1080 CE. Analysis of plan based on photogrammetric model by Kailash Rao, showing how it is based on a 28-point star constructed by *parivartanā* ('going around the circle').



**Plate 9.9:** Udayesvara temple, Udayapur, elevation. Analysis, based on photogrammetric model by Kailash Rao.

base (*vedibandha*), as the supporting platform or sub-base (*pīṭha*), omitted in the text, is not counted.

Turning to the elevation (Plate 9.9), and drawing a centre-line, one surprise is that the perfect-looking monument is not quite vertical (the central point in Plate 9.8 is not directly over the finial), but not so far out as to invalidate our analysis. In terms of the ten parts of the temple width, the first *bhūmi* is also ten, and the remaining height of

the temple 24, giving a much more slender superstructure than in the SSD. Rather satisfactorily, the divisions of the first *bhūmi* are apportioned, just as in the plan, by re-dividing the ten *bhāgas* into 19: five for the base, eight for the *stambha* ('pillar' in the wall), three for *chhādyā* canopy plus *varaṇḍikā* mouldings, three for the *kūṭa*. The height of the sub-base is four of the same size of *bhāga*, and the second *bhūmi* six. In the superstructure, the textual rule that each *bhūmi* height should be divided equally between pillar (*stambha*) and *kūṭa* is observed. Thus, the *kūṭa* height of the second *bhūmi* is three *bhāgas*, the same as in the first *bhūmi*.

As in the text, a new subdivision is made from the second *bhūmi* upwards, but all the way to the summit rather than just to the top of the *vedī*. The height of 24 original *bhāgas* is re-divided into 38. Of these, the second *bhūmi* takes up five; so five of these new *bhāgas* equal six of the previous ones. Those five are equally divided between *kūṭa* and *stambha*, the latter having  $1\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  allocated respectively to the shaft and the moulded portion. These divisions correspond to horizontal joints in the heavy stone blocks, and subsequent *bhūmi* heights would have been re-divided by five to measure out their courses of masonry. The remaining *bhūmis* are  $4\frac{5}{8}$ ,  $4\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $3\frac{7}{8}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{8}$  *bhāgas*, with  $1\frac{1}{8}$  for the *vedī*. While the text encourages us to look for reduction by one quarter at each successive stage, here we have  $\frac{3}{8}$  each time, a quicker diminution as well as a loftier tower.

Of the ten-part temple width, the shoulder (*skandha*) platform over the *vedī* is six, as prescribed by the SSD. In the text, the crowning *ghaṇṭā* and all its attendant parts are proportioned by a *bhāga* of their own, related to this *skandha* width. Here, the remaining *bhāgas* of the 38 regulate the heights of these elements perfectly. One further detail is perhaps significant. At the very summit is a finial (*bijapūraka*) made of metal, which looks original. It has a golden tip, tapering to a point, that sits above the line delimiting the 38 *bhāgas*, and the 34 larger *bhāgas* of the whole temple. Beyond measure, might it be an *ākāśa-liṅga* (emblem of Śiva in its ethereal state), preceding the world of manifest form?

The architects working on the theory and the practice of making Bhūmija temples seem to have been conscious of creating a new, distinct and, perhaps for them and their patrons, a superior tradition. This tradition, no more than any other, did not begin with a text and then build. The architectural forms were created as the crafts workshops became established. The authors of the Bhūmija chapter of the SSD developed a typology and system, grappled with the geometrical, numerical and sequential implications, and thought through untried possibilities. Practitioners (probably including the same group of people) realised those possibilities in practice, and, more often, made variations on the well-tried ones and, in their best works, improved them.

## 5 Flights of Imagination

Lastly, let us look at two temple designs that do not form part of a set or a sequence, but are each in their own way unique. The Navātmaka temple of the SSD (Plate 9.10) is presented in chapter 56, after the Keśarī series discussed earlier in this paper. That series, in the SSD's version, while it is not abreast of the sophisticated and more standardised Nāgara types yet to emerge, is notable for its inventiveness in combining already-known composite temple types into a greater whole, a concept characteristic of the tenth century in the Nāgara tradition. The Navātmaka, as an exploration of how to take this game even further, is a *tour de force* of imagined possibilities.

*catuṣṣaṣṭikare kuryāt kṣetre mānaikaviṃśatiḥ(?) |  
saptavargapado garbho bhittiyā saha vidhīyate | 269 | |*

One should build in a field of sixty-four *karas* (cubits?), with a measure of twenty-one (parts, *bhāgas*);

The sanctum (*garbha*) is enjoined in the *pada* (part, *bhāga*) of the seventh row (i.e. is seven parts square), together with the wall.

*syād garbhabhittir bhāgena bhāgenaivāndhakārikā |  
ṣaḍbhāgaṃ karṇavistāraṃ daśadhā pravibhājayet | 270 | |*

The wall of the *garbha* should be one *bhāga*, and the ambulatory (*āndhakārikā*) one *bhāga*.<sup>17</sup>

One should (re-)divide the width of the *karṇa*, being six *bhāgas*, into ten.

*ṣaḍbhīr bhāgair bhaved asya garbho bhittiyā samanvitaḥ |  
bāhyā bhittir bhaved bhāgād bhāgas caivāndhakārikā | 271 | |*

Its *garbha* (i.e. the *garbha* of the *karṇa*, which becomes a *prāsāda* in itself) should be six *bhāgas*, endowed with a wall.

The outer wall (of this corner *prāsāda*) should be one *bhāga*, as also the *andhakārikā*.

*dviḥbhāgaṃ karṇavaipulyam udakāntarabhūṣitam |  
śeṣo bhadrasya vistāraś caturthāṃśavinirgataḥ | 272 | |*

The width of the *karṇa* should be two *bhāgas*, adorned with a recess (*udakāntara*).

The remainder (*śeṣa*) has the width of the *bhadra*, projecting at the fourth *aṃśa*.<sup>18</sup>

*kṣobhayed ardhabhāge tu tadardhena jalāntaram |  
mattavāraṇakair vidyāt stambhair upari śobhitāḥ | 273 | |*

One should stir (?) in half a *bhāga*, and the recess (*jalāntara*) should be half of that.<sup>19</sup>

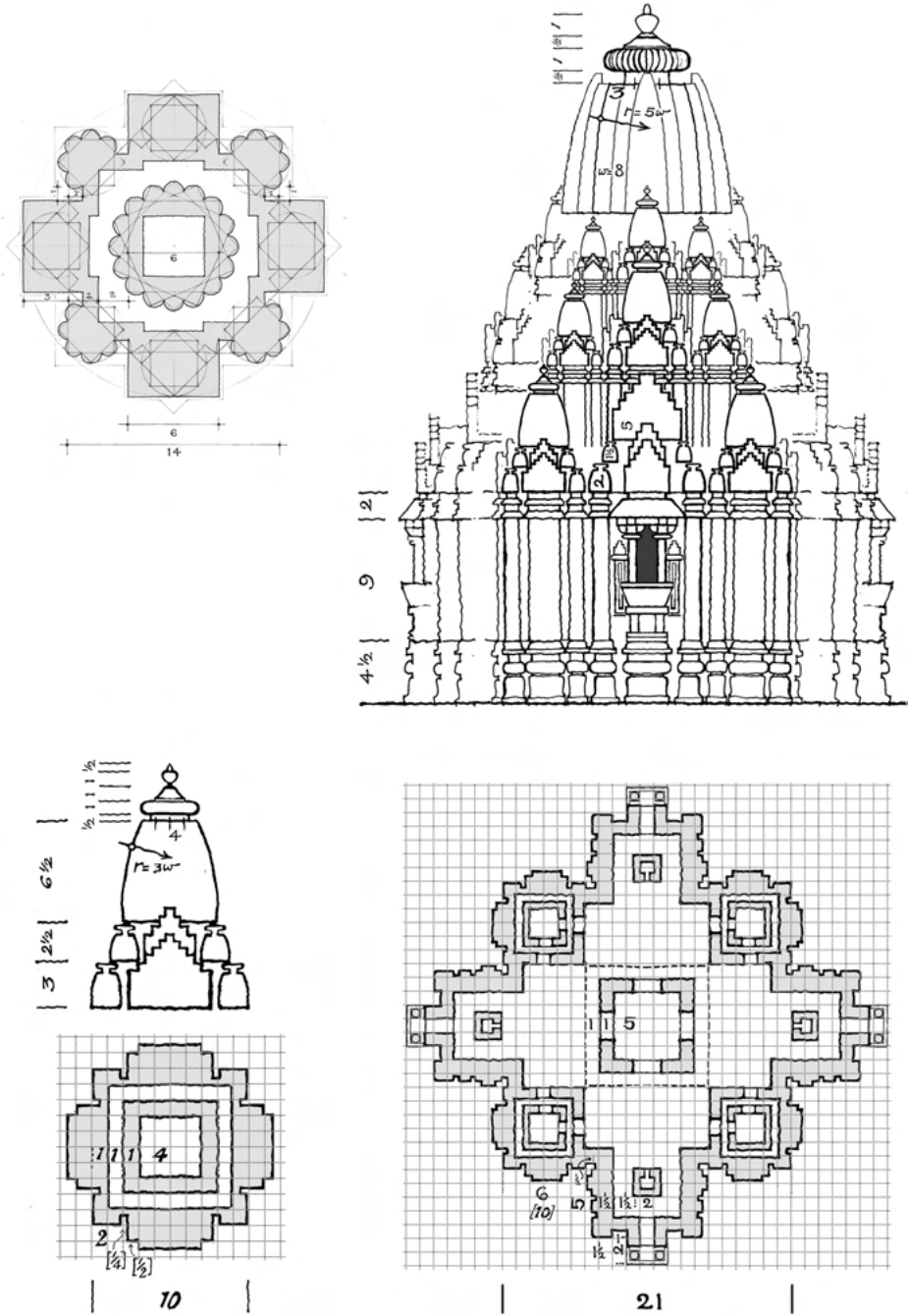
Above, beautified by *mattavāraṇakas* (=?) and pillars, one should know that

*rathikaikā tribhāgena punaḥ sārhadvibhāgikā |  
tāsāṃ parasparakṣepo bhāgo bhāgo vidhīyate | 274 | |*

<sup>17</sup> This is rather a notional ambulatory as it is surrounded by a great, wide interior space.

<sup>18</sup> This is unclear: projecting 4 *aṃśas* would work, but this is contradicted by verse 279.

<sup>19</sup> Assuming that the width of the *garbha*+wall gives the *bhadra* width, which would be typical, one *bhāga* is left between *bhadra* and *karṇa*, so this line seems to mean that you add half a *bhāga* to the sides, or else, perhaps, add half a *bhāga* of embedded side projection: either leaves us with half a *bhāga* for the *jalāntara*.



**Plate 9.10:** Two unusual temples drawn from the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra: the Navātmaka from chapter 57 and the Puṣpaka (plan only, top left) from chapter 56.

One *rathikā* (miniature *sikhara*, equivalent of AP's 'srnga') is in three *bhāgas*, and again (up one level) two *bhāgas* and a half.

Their mutual thrust is enjoined as one and one *bhāga*.<sup>20</sup>

*śeṣaṁ śikharavistāraḥ sārḍhaṣaṭkaṁ taducchrayaḥ |*

*pr̥thaksūtrais triḡuṇitair veṇukoṣaṁ samalikhet | 275 | |*

The remainder has the width of the *sikhara* (i.e. the *sikhara* takes up the remaining space), while its height is six and a half.

With separate *sūtras*, made threefold, one should draw the *veṇukoṣa*.

[Draw the curvature of the *sikhara* with a cord with a radius three times the width.]

*skandhakośāntaram bhāgaś caturbhis tasya bhājayet |*

*gr̥ivārdhabhāgam utsedho bhāgenāmalasārakam | 276 | |*

One should subdivide the distance across the shoulder (*skandhakośa*) into four *bhāgas*.

The *gr̥iva* (neck) should have a height of half a *bhāga*, the *āmalasāraka* (ribbed crowning element) should be one *bhāga*.

*padmaśr̥ṣasta(r̥ṣaṁ ta)thā bhāgaṁ kalaśo bhāgasammitaḥ |*

*ardhabhāgasamo(mu)tsedhaṁ kārāyed bījapūrakam | 277 | |*

The *padmaśr̥ṣa* (lots moulding) should be one *bhāga* and the *kalaśa* (pot) should measure one *bhāga*.

One should make the *bījapūraka* (finial) with a height of half a *bhāga*.

*sarvakarṇeṣu kartavyāḥ kriyāś caivaṁ vicakṣaṇaiḥ |*

Such procedures should be applied to all the *karṇas* by the expert.

(from SSD 56, translation by Mattia Salvini)

Although it has not yet been named, a 'Sarvatobhadra' shrine (Plates 9.1, no. 2) has now been created on each corner. Next, a Valabhī shrine is to be constructed in the middle, following the original *bhāga* size. Unusually, the height of the *garbha* within the Valabhī is specified; as this is only three *bhāgas*, it seems that the Valabhī encases a small, freestanding shrine, sitting within the interior space of the temple. Having created the Valabhī, we are instructed to place two Sarvatobhadra shrines 'above and above', and then to place two Sarvatobhadra shrines in each *karṇa*. One of these has already been placed there, and that 'two' means 'two more' has to be deduced from the width of the uppermost, main *sikhara* form, given as eight.

*diksūtrabāhyabhāgeṣu valabhīm s of | 278 | |*

In the external *bhāgas* of the directional *sūtra* (cardinal axis), one should place a Valabhī.

*nirgame pañcabhāgaḥ syāt tiryak prakṣiptabhāgikāh(?) |*

*asyā dvibhāgiko garbho mādhye bhāgatrayocchritaḥ | 279 | |*

It should be five *bhāgas* in projection, with *bhāgas* strewn transversely.<sup>21</sup>

At its centre, the *garbha* should be two *bhāgas*, and three *bhāgas* high.

<sup>20</sup> This seems to mean the setback of the second level from the edge of the first, i.e. the projections in the second tier sit over the centre of the one below, thus set back by one *bhāga*, and so on upwards.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this means simply that the width is the number of *bhāgas* that result from what has already been given.



*bhāgārdhabhāgaṃ bhittiḥ syāt tatsamā cāndhakārikā|*

*tasyās cāgre vidhātavyaḥ(?) ṣaḍdārukāsamanvitam| |280| |*

The wall should be one *bhāga* and a half, and the *andhakārikā* (ambulatory) should be the same as that.

On its top one should build [. . .] endowed with six *dārukās* (=?).

*ekaikāṃ rathikāṃ sārdbabhāgāṃ karṇeṣu yojayet|*

*śeṣaṃ bhadrasya vistāro bhāgaḥ syād asya nirgamaḥ| |281| |*

One should join to (i.e. place on top of) the *karṇas* one *rathikā* each, being one and a half *bhāgas* (wide).

The remainder (i.e. the pediment of the Valbhī) has the width of the *bhadra*; its projection should be one *bhāga*.

*evaṃ bhadraṃ vi(dvi) bhāgaṃ syāt stambhadvayasamanvitam|*

*valabhāvartayor madhye bhāgam ekaṃ ca viśṭṛtam| |282| |*

Thus, the *bhadra* should be two *bhāgas* [in projection], endowed with two pillars.<sup>22</sup>

Between the *valabha* and the *āvarta* [i.e. between the *bhadra* and the corner of this Valbhī shrine], extending for one *bhāga*,

*tatrodakāntaraṃ kuryād guṇadvāravibhūṣitam|*

*navabhāgocchritā jaṅghā pīṭham asya tadardhataḥ| |283| |*

One should build a recess (*udakāntara*), adorned by a niche (*guṇadvāra*).

The *jaṅghā* should be nine *bhāgas* high, its base (*pīṭha*) should be half of that.

*mekhalāntarapatre ca kuryād bhāgadvayonmite|*

*rathikā syād dvibhāgā ca tataḥ sārdbaikabhāgikā| |284| |*

One should moreover build the two *mekhalāntarapatras* (*varaṇḍikā* mouldings) with a height of two *bhāgas*.

The *rathikā* should be two *bhāgas*, and then [at the next level] one *bhāga* and a half.

*śeṣaṃ śikharavistāraḥ pañcāṃśaṃ śikharocchrayaḥ|*

*uparyupari kartavyaṃ sarvatobhadrakadvayam| |285| |*

The *śeṣa* should have (i.e. ‘the portion left over determines’) the width of the *śikhara*; the height of the *śikhara* is five *aṃśas*;<sup>23</sup>

Above and again above one should build two Sarvatobhadras.

*dve dve ca sarvatobhadre karṇe karṇe niveśayet|*

*diksūtreṣu samasteṣu kriyāṃ evaṃ prakalpayet| |286| |*

Moreover, one should place two Sarvatobhadras in each corner (*karṇa*).

In all the directional *sūtras* one should conform to this procedure.

21 Perhaps this means simply that the width is the number of *bhāgas* that result from what has already been given.

22 ‘Thus’ presumably because it is normal for the pediment to project half as much as the *bhadra* that it sits over.

23 *Śikhara* here means a pediment (termed ‘*śimhakarṇa*’ in this text), i.e. a Valbhī-type pediment, because this central element is a Valbhī.

*vistāra śikharasyaṣṭau bhāgātsyārdhasamucchrayaḥ(?)|*

*pañcavyāseṇa sūtreṇa ++++++ | |287| |*

The width of the *śikhara* should be eight *bhāgas*, and a half (?) [perhaps 9½] in its height.

With a *sūtra* extending for five [times the width, one should draw the profile].

*veṅukośāntaram cāsyā tribhir bhāgair vibhājayet |*

*grīvā ca padmaśrīṣaṇi ca bhāgena syād idam dvayam | |288| |*

One should subdivide the interstice of its *veṅukośa*<sup>24</sup> into three *bhāgas*.

The *grīva* (neck) and the *padmaśrīṣa* (lotus moulding) should be one *bhāga*; for these two,

*pratyekaṁ bhāgikau kāryau kalaśāmalasārakau |*

*ta(na) vātmaḥkāryaṁ kathitaḥ prāsādas tridaśālayaḥ | |289| |*

A *kalaśa* (pot) and *āmalasāraka* (ribbed crowning element) should be built, being one *bhāga* each.

This temple is called *Navātmaka*, the Abode of the Thirty.

(from SSD 56, translation by Mattia Salvini)

Beyond the usual need to work out all the mouldings and ornamental details not mentioned the text, these instructions bring many challenges for someone setting out to build such a temple: how to fit the primary elements together elegantly, how to treat the deep flanks of *bhadras* described entirely from in front; and, not least, how to build such a structure, and how to arrange the beams in a great ambulatory space that has no precedent. The example of the *Navātmaka* temple shows how a text, rather than providing a recipe to be copied unthinkingly, might, in offering imaginative ideas that would demand skill and further invention in order to be realised, be a catylist for the creation of wonderful architecture.

The SSD is particularly rich and varied, and my other example of an architectural dream in words, which I can describe only briefly here,<sup>25</sup> is also from that treatise. It is the *Puṣpaka* ('Flower') temple (SSD 57.141–172), probably not even expected to be built, but conceived architecturally, poetically, and metaphysically. The instructions for the *Puṣpaka* luxuriate in flowery poetry. For example, the wall of the temple should be adorned with 'a garland of celestial maidens (*vidyādhari māla*) with flowers in their hands' (*mālā vidyādhari kāryā puṣpahastair alaṅkṛtā* | : SSD 57.152). Many technical terms for temple architecture already have flower-like etymology: *śrīṅga* ('sprout'), *kanda* ('bulb') *mañjari* ('blossom'), and so on. Here the floral characteristics of a temple blossom in profusion. The plan (Plate 9.10, upper left) is an extraordinary conceit, based on a square rotated to form an eight-point star, with a sixteen-lobed sanctum (*kanda*) within (with sixteen *patras*, literally 'leaves'), surrounded by an ambulatory passage. After making eight 'corners' (*karnaṣ*), each eight-lobed (with eight *dalās*, petals), we are instructed to create massive cardinal projections (*bhadras*) which completely obscure four

<sup>24</sup> *Veṅukośa* is usually the side profile of the *śikhara*, but here it means the shoulder width, or 'skandhakośa'.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Hardy, *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India: Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtradhāra and the Bhojpur Line Drawings* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts with Dev Publishers, 2015): 156–62.

of the petalled ‘corners’. All becomes clear when it is announced that ‘The arrangement of the ground plan for the Puṣpaka should be in the shape of five flowers’ (*puṣpakasya talanyāsaḥ pañcapuṣpākṛtir bhavet*: SSD 57.149). Four of the nine are intended to be hidden. A little later comes a reference to the ‘subtle corners’, no doubt to distinguish these from the gross ones that are visible:

*va(ma)rālagrāsa(ha) makaraiḥ puṣpavidyādhair api |  
sūṣmakarṇasamākīrṇā cāsya jaṅghā vidhīyate | |155| |*

With geese (*varāla*) gorgon-faces (*grāsa*), *makaras*, and with celestial flower beings (*puṣpavidyādhair*), Its *jaṅghā* is to be built overspread with (on?) subtle *karṇas*.

(from SSD 57, translation by Mattia Salvini)

Those parts of the emanating cosmic body are not just embedded but entirely subsumed, somewhere between formlessness and form, as yet unmanifest.

## 6 Conclusion

In our concern to rescue the freedom of expression and individual creativity of artists from another age and world, are we in danger of imposing a modern worldview, perhaps even a late capitalist one? Again, it is worth citing research on contemporary south Indian temple-making practices, conducted by Samuel Parker, who aims ‘to show how they can contribute to a more adequate understanding of ancient South Asian monuments and their aesthetic qualities’:

Without such concrete [ethnoarchaeological] evidence, a contemporary historical imagination, by default, is understandably liable to represent the past as a series of discontinuous, creative innovations produced by individualised creative agents. Even where the names of such agents have not been preserved, as in the case of ancient India, their cosmogonic function is still likely to be presumed in narrative forms that portray discrete temporal discontinuities as primary signifiers of value. However, the rituals of temple production in South India function as a mode of creative practice that diverges profoundly from modern economic mythologies including those of creative personhood (‘possessive individualism’) and intellectual property rights. While these are presently becoming universalised and naturalised through the forces of globalisation, they affect, but do not organise, contemporary practices of temple production.<sup>26</sup>

It is not to deny the agency or worth of temple designers in the past to recognise that their creative genius was collective, not only in the necessarily collaborative creation of a temple, extending far beyond architects, but also in the collective creation of complex architectural languages with inherent possibilities rolled out across centuries. If making a temple was not self-expression but a ritual act, in that context, a text would

<sup>26</sup> Samuel K. Parker, “Ritual as a Mode of Production: Ethnoarchaeology and Creative Practice in Hindu Temple Arts,” *South Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (2010): from the Abstract.

evoke a sense of the divine in a far more subtle and dynamic way than merely proclaiming changeless canons. The textual injunctions call for invention and improvisation, but not towards an arbitrary end. They would relieve individual architects of certain decisions and stimulate results they could never have thought of alone. An artist would participate and act in a seemingly miraculous process, as if the temple were *svayambhū* or self-creating, emerging from a supra-human source.

Architects had to know *śāstra*, the body of knowledge through which they exercised their calling. Some may not have known any *śāstras* even if they knew Sanskrit; but *śāstras* would certainly have helped to transmit *śāstra*, imbibed through the mnemonic effect of verses as the hand drew. Standard temple types became ubiquitous not because of texts, though reinforced by them. The authors of these texts made inventories, and inventions too; they could only provide frameworks, but catalysed creativity and themselves created. Different kinds of text, nearer or further from practice, probably reflect different kinds of authorship, some more architectural, some more priestly, even some more courtly. More architectural texts illuminate and reflect the architectural world and thinking from which they stem. Even the more abstract ones are part of a broader world and way of thinking that temples embody. One way into that world is to draw designs that words in texts convey. This process provides a solid basis for exploring the question of whether temple architects in medieval India were bound by texts. It would be easy if we could simply say that they had to follow texts, which laid down very strict rules; or that these texts were abstrusely theoretical and nothing to do with practice. The answer is more complicated and so much more interesting.

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Sandra Jasmin Schlage

## Chapter 10

# Bound by Tradition?: An Investigation of the Extreme Dependency of Artists on Un-written Artistic Conventions for Dance Imagery in Sculpture and Painting

## 1 Introduction

Dance is omnipresent in India, and Hindu temples in particular are richly decorated with depictions of dancing deities (*ṅṛtta mūrtis*) and of human dancers. While there are detailed iconographic prescriptions for the former group, the *śilpaśāstras* (manuals on the creation of images) give no hints of the latter category. Highly specialised series of dance reliefs depict the definitions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (a treatise on performing arts), especially the description of 108 movement-units called *karaṇas*.<sup>1</sup> But a closer look at other dance reliefs shows that most of those images were constructed in conformity with artistic conventions for these symbolic dance depictions. The striking uniformity of the relief series, which can also be observed in earlier dance murals, suggests that the artists became extremely dependent on those orally transmitted visual markers. This paper examines two genres of dance imagery created within the larger context of the iconographic programmes of religious buildings (mostly Hindu temples). The two genres are, first, bas-reliefs which depict human dancers as symbols for dance in general, and which were not meant as illustration for the above-

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<sup>1</sup> The *Nāṭya Śāstra* is an encompassing manual on performing arts which discusses all elements of drama including dance, music, literature, and architecture. The text is ascribed to a semi-mythological author called Bharata, and its date is subject to scholarly debate. Manomohan Gosh supplies convincing evidence for a date between 200 and 100 BCE (Manomohan Gosh, *The Nāṭya Śāstra: A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Ascribed to Bharata Muni*, vol. 2 [Calcutta (Kolkata): The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1951]: lxxxi–lxxxvi). The most important chapter on abstract dance is chapter four, which includes the definition of 108 movement-units called *karaṇas*. Each *karaṇa* combines leg movements with movements of the upper body and arms, including decorative hand gestures, *hastas*. These units can be combined to longer dance sequences and even complex choreographies (Manomohan Gosh, *The Nāṭya Śāstra: A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Ascribed to Bharata Muni*, vol. 1 [Calcutta (Kolkata): The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1951]: 48). The 108 *karaṇas* were depicted in relief panels in at least three different temples of the middle and late Cōḷa period. The close relationship of text and image is also reflected in the fact that along with the Sanskrit definition, illustrations of the *karaṇa* panels in Citamparam have been included in the best-known Sanskrit edition of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the Gaekwad edition (K. Krishnamoorthy, ed., *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabhāratī by Abhinavaguptācārya, Chapters 1–7 Illustrated*, vol. 1, 4th ed. [Vadodara: Oriental Institut, 1992]).

mentioned, verbally defined movement-units, *karaṇas*. These reliefs shall be compared, secondly, to dance depictions in mural paintings, since these are the only type of painting of which examples have been preserved from the era of the Pallava kings.

The comparison of representative dance depictions provides valuable insights into the question of artistic freedom. In what follows, I will discuss the existence of unwritten stylistic conventions for the visual representation of dance in the context of artistic freedom, focussing especially on the position of the legs, because they were often used as a visual marker for dance in general. A crucial question is whether those rules were restricted to one medium only or applicable to both sculpture and painting. A detailed study of dance imagery may provide some answers to the debate on the significance of authoritative conventions versus artistic freedom. Did sculptors or painters also introduce innovative solutions for dance imagery, or were they bound by tradition? This paper traces the development of the artistic conventions for dance motifs in the Tamiḷ region between Chennai and Madurai from the emergence of visual markers for dance imagery during the early centuries CE to recently created dance sculptures from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## 2 Previous Research

The study of symbolic dance representations in reliefs and murals falls within the broader field of dance iconography, which has been a part of South Asian art historical research from the formation of this academic discipline onwards, although the term has only been in usage during the last three or four decades. Ananda Coomaraswamy's essay *The Dance of Śiva*, published in 1918,<sup>2</sup> already discusses stylistic features of frozen dance movement, although restricted to the iconography of Śiva as the cosmic dancer, called Naṭarāja. However, this iconography tends to be dictated by religious requirements and specifications found in manuals such as the *śilpaśāstras*.

Subsequent scholars emphasised the relationship between text and image in their studies of the *karaṇa* motif. The best-known example of these analyses is *Tāṇḍava Lakṣaṇam. The Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing*<sup>3</sup> by Naidu et al., which was published in 1936, but contains little discussion of the general stylistic features of the *karaṇa* images. Kapila Vatsyayan deconstructed a *karaṇa* series according to stylistic criteria in *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple*,<sup>4</sup> and analysed construction principles

2 Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Śiva. Fourteen Indian Essays* (New York: The Sunwise Turn, INC; London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd., 1918).

3 B.V. Narayanaswami Naidu, P. Srinivasulu Naidu and O.V. Rangayya Pantulu, *Tāṇḍava Lakṣaṇam or the Fundamentals of Ancient Hindu Dancing* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971 [1936]).

4 Kapila Vatsyayan, *Dance Sculpture in Sarangapani Temple* (Madras [Chennai]: Society for Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1982).



of dance images and the importance of an underlying symmetrical grid for the representation of dancing deities, the *ṛtta mūrtis*, in her 1983, book *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*.<sup>5</sup> A different dimension was added to the research of *karaṇa* series by scholars such as Padma Subrahmanyam, who analysed these images from a dancer's perspective. Subrahmanyam's publication, *Karaṇas, Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia* in three volumes<sup>6</sup> included a complete photographic documentation of three Indian *karaṇa* series.<sup>7</sup> However, all of these publications neglect general dance images and largely omit the artists' dependency on stylistic conventions for the representation of dance movements.

A shift towards art historic and stylistic features occurred with Bindu S. Shankar's doctoral thesis, *Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures*.<sup>8</sup> This study discusses stylistic features, the development of the *karaṇa* motif and its symbolism. However, the findings for this specialised dance motif cannot be transferred wholesale to general dance representations, which I shall discuss below. The most relevant publication for stylistic features and the symbolic function of general dance imagery is Yuko Fukuroi's article, *Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples* (2008). In it, she showed that some series of general dance reliefs were constructed by a recombination of repetitive variations of the upper and lower body of the dancing figures.<sup>9</sup> I will apply this theory to the artworks studied in this paper and further develop it, see below section 3.1 *Earlier Southern Dynasties*.

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5 A second edition of this book was published in 1997: Kapila Vatsyayan, *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1997).

6 The most relevant volume in art historic terms is "Historic and Archeological Perspective" (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karaṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]). The photographs of the relief panels are compiled in vol. 3 (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karaṇas, Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 3, *A Visual Elucidation* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]).

7 The oldest *karaṇa* series arranged horizontally is the one in the Rājarājeśvara Temple in Thanjavur, which was inaugurated in 1010 CE. A stylistically similar series is currently located at the Śārangapāni Temple in Kumbakonam. Its place and date of origin are uncertain. The best-known *karaṇa* series is to be found on vertical pilasters inside the gateways of the four *gopuras* of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram (Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" [PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004]: 5–6).

8 Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004).

9 Yuko Fukuroi, "Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples," in *Music and Society in South Asia: Perspectives from Japan*, ed. Yoshitaka Terada, Senri Ethnological Studies 71 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2008): 257–59.

### 3 Analysis of Dance Imagery and the Artists' Dependency on Stylistic Conventions

The following paragraphs contain an art historical discussion of selected dance reliefs and comparable themes in mural paintings with the aim of analysing the extent to which the depiction of dancers is dependent on stylistic conventions and to what degree, metaphorically speaking, artists were/are slaves to these rules. The discussion follows a chronological order to illustrate developments and trends in this field.

In South India, dance scenes were already featured in the earliest relief panels at the Amarāvathī *stūpa*<sup>10</sup> in northern Andhra Pradesh, which was Satavahana territory at the time of the *stūpa*'s construction around 100–200 CE.<sup>11</sup> Depicting dance, such as in a ritual setting or a festival, presented the artists with the challenge of translating continuous movement in three-dimensional space into one (or a series of a few) specific picture(s). A comparison between dancing figures and non-dancers gives rise to the assumption that artists used the leg position of the figures as the most important visual marker to differentiate between dancers and other characters.<sup>12</sup> The most characteristic leg position for dancers is the *ardhamāṇḍalī* pose,<sup>13</sup> in which both legs form a rhombus with feet and knees turned outwards. This pose is usually depicted in frontal view, with most dancers shown from the front and only rarely from the back. A second solution to represent the movement of dancers is by employing a mixed perspective, combining a front with a side view. This mode allows the artist to show a leg movement towards either side while the upper body remains frontal. In this combination, both legs are also bent, but instead of pointing outwards both legs are turned towards the same side.<sup>14</sup> While the first mode emphasises the symmetry of the dancer's body, the second highlights the aspect of movement. It is this second mode that is more frequently chosen in the early dance reliefs at Amarāvathī. The dance scenes depict both male and female performers.

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10 *Stūpas* are Buddhist sites of worship which evolved from a semi-circular mound that contained relics such as the ashes of the Buddha. The iconographic programme of these sites was confined mainly to the surrounding fence (*vedikā*) and gateways (*torāṇas*), and contained symbolic and narrative relief panels.

11 Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1997): 69.

12 Vatsyayan analyses selected dance images from the Amarāvathī *stūpa* and discusses the similarities of those dance movements with *karaṇas* described in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (Kapila Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* [New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Academy, 1977]: 296).

13 Some authors also use the term *maṇḍala sthāna*, and in classical dance the term *aramaṇḍī* is most common.

14 Highly virtuoso movements within this mode are used in subsequent specialised dance imagery, such as the *karaṇa* series, to depict classical dance movements which fall into the *vṛścika* movement unit category described in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*.

### 3.1 Earlier Southern Dynasties

Stone architecture and sculpture emerged in the Tamil region under the patronage of the Pallava kings. Pallava temples, especially the Kailāsanātha Temple in Kanchipuram, are famous for their depictions of the highest variety of dance movements performed by Naṭeśa.<sup>15</sup> Those Naṭeśa statues are large sculptures which mainly adorn the *deva koṣṭas* (niches) of the *vimāna*<sup>16</sup> and the recesses of the *prākāra*-wall which encloses the temple area. Both of the modes of representing dance movements described above were also used to depict the different dance movements of the Naṭeśa sculptures. The *ardhamañḍalī* pose<sup>17</sup> and the mixed perspective in which the legs are shown in profile occur with almost equal frequency. However, there is more variety of motifs which feature leg movements derived from the *ardhamañḍalī* pose than of the mixed perspective. In contrast to the narrative reliefs on earlier Buddhist monuments, which feature mostly human dancers, the Pallava temples do not contain any smaller-scale relief panels, and there are no depictions of human dancers. Mural fragments have also been preserved in some structural and cave temples. Interestingly, their motifs and stylistic features are identical with the same scenes carved as sculptures.<sup>18</sup> This fact leads me to speculate that the same artists might have worked in both genres, and could have freely chosen the medium for their works. It also suggests, however, that artists could choose from only a limited number of motifs for the iconographic programme.

The architecture and sculpture of the Pallava temples influenced the monuments of the Chālukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasties.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find several Naṭeśa statues amongst their sculptures. The rock-cut Kailāsanātha Temple in Ellora (Cave 16), excavated mostly under the Rāṣṭrakūṭa emperor Kṛṣṇa I (r. 757–773 CE),<sup>20</sup> not only contains Naṭeśa statues that follow the southern idiom; the complex also

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<sup>15</sup> The names Naṭeśa vs. Naṭarāja are used to differentiate between Śiva performing a variety of different dance movements, called Naṭeśa, and the most iconic depiction of Śiva as the lord of dance, called Naṭarāja, in a radial composition with standardised iconography which evolved during the early Cōla period (Corinna Wessels-Mevissen, “The Early Image of Śiva Naṭarāja: Aspects of Time and Space,” in *Figurations of Time in Asia*, Morphomata 4, ed. Corinna Wessels-Mevissen and Dietrich Boschung [Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2012]: 311).

<sup>16</sup> *Vimāna* is the term for the tower above the sanctum of a South Indian temple. Its pyramidal shape distinguished the South Indian *drāviḍa* temples from North Indian *nāgara* temples.

<sup>17</sup> This mode encompasses not only positions in which both legs form a complete rhombus, but also poses for which one leg has been lifted from an initial *ardhamañḍalī* position.

<sup>18</sup> Calambur Sivaramamurti, *Vijayanagara Paintings* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1985): 13.

<sup>19</sup> The Kailāsanātha Temple in Kanchipuram was a model for the Chālukya temples at Paṭṭaḍakal which later inspired the rock-cut Kailāsanātha Temple in Ellora (C. Sivaramamurti, *Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature* [New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1994 (reprint)]: 208).

<sup>20</sup> Susan L. Huntington, ed., *The Art of Ancient India. Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York/Tokyo: Weather Hill, 1985): 341.

features small-scale relief carvings which depict Naṭeṣa in different dance positions. In addition, we find similar dance motifs in the mural paintings.<sup>21</sup> The collage in Plate 10.1 compares a dance relief (left) to a mural painting (right). The male dancers in the two niches are partially weathered but the attributes and position of the secondary hands suggest that both are depictions of Naṭeṣa. Both are shown in *tribhaṅga*,<sup>22</sup> which gives their bodies a uniform appearance. The leg movements are derived from the *ardhamāṇḍalī* position: the dancer on the viewer's left supports his body weight with the left leg and lifts his lower right leg so that his right foot touches his left knee, while the dancer on the viewer's right has shifted his weight to his right leg and placed the left foot at some distance from the right foot. The relief also features an arm position typical of dance imagery, in that both dancers have placed their primary right hand on their hips. Unfortunately, the left arms are mutilated. The left-hand dancer in the mural painting resembles the first dancer in the relief. However, he lifts his lower left leg (instead of the right). The body is also in *tribhaṅga*, with the right hand on his hip. In this painting, the left arm is intact. It is bent



**Plate 10.1:** Dance imagery at the Kailāsanātha Temple in Ellora, around 757 to 773 CE; relief carving (left) and mural painting (right), March 2016.

<sup>21</sup> There are at least three layers of paint, of which the earliest seems to be contemporaneous with the temple structure (Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* [New York: Phaidon Press, 1997]: 134). The similarities between murals and reliefs suggest that the original pictures were re-painted and not painted over with different motifs.

<sup>22</sup> This term is commonly used to describe a body position where a bend of the hip is contrasted to leaning the upper body to the opposite side and counterbalanced by a tilt of the head to the initial side. The term cannot be found in Sanskrit manuals and is therefore rejected by some scholars.

and raised, with the hand slightly above head level: another typical arm position of dance images. The dancer on the viewer's right is of special interest to us, since he proves the prevalence of the mixed perspective in smaller dance representations of that time. The upper body and arms are identical to those of the left-hand dancer, but the legs are shown in side view. The dancer's right leg supports his body. It is bent and turned to the dancer's left. The left leg also forms an angle and is lifted in front so that the foot is placed above the other knee.

The architecture and sculpture of the Deccan had a counterinfluence on the art of the Tamiḷ region before the advent of the early Cōḷa idiom. The base of the Mūlanātha Svāmī Temple in Bahur<sup>23</sup> contains one of the earliest relief series with a high percentage of dance images (9 out of 23 panels). In this relief series, the gender of the dancers has changed from male (mostly Naṭeśa in earlier sculptures) to human and female such as the one in Plate 10.2. The photo shows a typical dancer from this series. She is depicted frontally; her right foot is crossed behind the left with her legs in the *ardhamāṇḍalī* pose. The upper body leans slightly to her right, head and face look straight out at the viewer. She has bent her right arm so that she can hold her right hand at chest level with the palm facing the viewer (*patāka*), the left arm is extended diagonally upwards with the hand hanging loose (also referred to as *latā*). Although the dancers are not arranged in a continuous sequence, they have a uniform appearance. All but one display the same position of the legs and feet, and the treatment of upper bodies and faces is similar. A closer look at the series shows that the impression of dance is the result of a combination of only five different positions of arms and hands.<sup>24</sup> There are minor differences of the physical features and the dress and ornaments of the dancing women.

Two near-contemporary paintings of female dancers from the early ninth century (one is shown in Plate 10.3) have been preserved on pillars of the veranda in the Sittannavāśāl Cave Temple. The paintings commissioned by Jaina patrons were created during the Pāṇḍyan period.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the lower bodies of both dancers are

23 The temple was built in the early tenth century CE. Inscriptions that mention Pallava patronage and donations by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Krishna III have also been recorded (Chithra Madhavan, "Bahur, Seat of Learning," *The Hindu*, 19.05.2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/bahur-seat-of-learning/article5809690.ece> [accessed 04.08.2021]).

24 There are four typical arm poses depicted at the Mūlanātha Svāmī Temple, which can also be observed in dance imagery from different periods: 1. The arm hangs loosely by the side of the body (*dolā*); 2. Either hand is placed on a hip; 3. Either hand is held near the chest as *patāka*; 4. An arm is extended diagonally upward with the hand hanging loose (*latā*). A unique arm position in this series, which is not featured regularly in later reliefs, shows one hand kept at shoulder level in *ardhacandra* (palm straight and thumb kept at some distance).

25 This cave temple seems to have two layers of paintings, the earlier of which may be of Pallava origin, while the upper layer originated in the Pāṇḍyan period in the early ninth century, most probably commissioned by a Jaina scholar called Iḷan Gautaman (C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings* [New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986]: 55).



**Plate 10.2:** Relief carving of a female dancer at the Mūlanātha Svāmi Temple in Bahur, early tenth century, September 2016.

damaged beyond recognition. In contrast to the dancers at Bahur, the dancers' bodies in these paintings are bent (probably *tribhaṅga*) and the faces slightly turned to one side with the eyes looking diagonally up or down. However, one dancer holds her arms in the same position as in the relief in Plate 10.2. The other dancer (Plate 10.3) also has her right hand near her chest,<sup>26</sup> while her left arm is held diagonally across her body (called *daṇḍa*, meaning stick, or *gaja*, meaning elephant). This arm position is frequently encountered in later dance imagery.

As the discussion of the two selected examples has shown, artists of the early tenth century seem to have favoured the *ardhamāṇḍalī* position as a visual marker for dancing figures. In contrast to earlier dance positions, which were usually executed by mythological characters, most frequently Nāṭeśa, the dancers depicted in these series are usually human women. The uniform appearance of the dancers in both genres, i.e. relief carvings and mural paintings, suggests a symbolic function and the constructed character of the dance imagery. The analysis of the repetitive leg and arm positions leads me to assume that the dance poses were created by re-combining a limited set of typical arm

<sup>26</sup> Sivaramamurti identifies this as *patāka*, although the thumb is not folded towards the palm and the little finger is bent. Compare C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986): 56.





**Plate 10.3:** Detail of a mural painting depicting a female dancer, Sittannavāsāl Cave Temple, early ninth century.

and leg positions.<sup>27</sup> It seems that artists depended on these prescribed elements, rather than being inspired by actual dance performances. Modes of dance depictions that had been developed earlier, and which might originally have been creative solutions to

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<sup>27</sup> This theory was already formulated by Fukuroi for dance imagery in the *gopura* gateways of the later Cōla period. However, she treated the upper and lower body each as a single static unit (Yuko Fukuroi, “Dancing Images in the Gōpuras: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in South Indian Temples,” in *Music and Society in South Asia: Perspectives from Japan*, ed. Yoshitaka Terada, *Senri Ethnological Studies* 71 [Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2008]: 257–59). My previous investigation of general dance images has shown that splitting the upper and the lower body into individual arm and leg positions and segmenting the remaining body parts furnishes so to speak a modular system that makes it possible to (re-)construct most symbolic dance images (Sandra Jasmin Schlage, “Tanzskulpturen der Cōla-Dynastie” [Master thesis, University of Bonn, Department of Asian and Islamic Art History, 2015]: 47–50).



translate actual dance into visual art, seem to have evolved into visual markers for dance images. It seems that stylistic conventions for the representation of dance were consolidated during that period. The comparison of dancers in relief carvings with those in sculpture shows that the representation of the dancers' bodies also depends on the medium. While the reliefs show dancers frontally with only some bending of the body, extreme *tribhaṅga* is favoured in paintings, in which the heads of the dancers seem to be turned slightly to one side. So the bodies of painted dancers exhibit great flexibility, in contrast to the geometrical proportions and poses in relief series.

### 3.2 The Cōla Period

Relief carvings and small statues from the earlier Cōla period<sup>28</sup> show a continuity of the stylistic conventions developed in the Tamiḷ area, and therefore seem to prove that artists were bound to the usage of general visual markers for the depiction of dancers.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, both earlier modes for the depiction of movement (the *ardhamañḍalī* position and the mixed perspective) are found, for example, at the Brahmā-puriśvara Temple in Pullamangai.<sup>30</sup> However, each mode has become restricted to the depiction of one particular category of figures: movements derived from the *ardhamañḍalī* position are performed by female human dancers; while male, supernatural flying figures are represented in a variation of the mixed perspective, with their bent legs held one behind the other, resulting in an almost horizontal line.

The imperial Cōla kings, starting with Rājarāja Cōla, commissioned at least two highly specialised dance relief series, depicting all 108 *karaṇas* according to the definitions of the *Nātya Śāstra*.<sup>31</sup> The prominence of the *karaṇa* relief series inside the

<sup>28</sup> In this study, I follow the division of the Cōla era into an early (850–985 CE, before Rājarāja Cōla), a middle (985–1070 CE, under Rājarāja and Rajendra Cōla) and a late period (1070–1279 CE, after Rajendra Cōla). While this segmentation might not reflect political or social developments, it corresponds with trends in dance imagery.

<sup>29</sup> Dance reliefs of the early Cōla period were mostly created as bracket figures. Typical examples can be seen in the Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple (Kumbakonam), the Brahmāpuriśvara Temple (Pullamangai) and the Tirutṭoṇḍiśvaram Udaiyar Temple (Tirunamanallur).

<sup>30</sup> This temple is a typical example for earlier Cōla sacred architecture. It consists of a compound enclosed by the *prākāra* (wall), with the temple complex in the centre made up of an *ardhamañḍapa* (pillared hall) joined to the *vimāna*. Its iconographic programme and decorative figures are also typical for the time of its creation. For a synopsis of the development of the iconographic programme see Anna Slaczka and Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, "Cōla Bronzes in the Context of the History and Culture of Tamil Nadu," *Art of the Orient* 5 (2016): 115.

<sup>31</sup> Those series are found at the Rājarājeśvara Temple in Thanjavur and at the Śṅgarapani / Śārangapani Temple in Kumbakonam (the original location is uncertain). Both series are arranged horizontally and should be viewed in clockwise order. In contrast to the general dance reliefs, the *karaṇa* reliefs feature both modes for the depiction of movement (*ardhamañḍalī* position and the mixed perspective). The dancer in both series is male. In Thanjavur, the dancer has four arms and the attributes

*vimāna* of the Rājarājeśvara Temple in Thanjavur (inaugurated in 1010 CE) diverted attention from the general dance reliefs at the temple compound and also from the (still well-preserved) murals that include dance scenes, which are located on the walls of the circumambulatory on the first floor of the *vimāna*.<sup>32</sup> While the *karāṇa* reliefs decorate the interior wall of the passage, the mural paintings are on its outer wall and fill fifteen niches which correspond to the *deva koṣṭas* on the outside of the building.<sup>33</sup>

Amongst these murals are two typical dance scenes. Plate 10.4 shows a section of a larger mural which depicts three dancers. Interestingly, this is a mixed group of two female and one male dancer. The depiction of mixed-gender dance groups is rare, not only in paintings but also in reliefs. Nevertheless, the group has a harmonious and uniform appearance. All dancers hold their bodies in *tribhaṅga* with the head tilted and slightly turned to the viewer's left. Each lifts their flexed right arm while holding their hands in *ardhacandra* near their heads. The left arms are also bent, and each dancer holds a lotus flower slightly below chest-height beside their body. The dancers' legs are not entirely visible, but the leg movements seem to be derived from the *ardhamanḍalī* position. Both female dancers lift their flexed left legs, while the position of their lower bodies might be that of the dancer on the left at Ellora in Plate 10.1. The most interesting feature of the mural is the male dancer's leg position. The legs form the *ardhamanḍalī* but seem to be shown from the back, while his torso is twisted at waist level so that his upper body faces the viewer, like the upper bodies of the female dancers. There is another mural which shows two female performers dancing to the accompaniment of a heavenly orchestra, led by Śiva who plays the cymbals.<sup>34</sup> Both dancers are depicted in the same position: their legs are in the *ardhamanḍalī* pose with their right feet in back *svastika*, reminiscent of the dancers at Bahur. Their upper bodies are in *tribhaṅga*, the heads almost straight but turned to the dancers' left. The hands of both dancers show the *alapadma* gesture, in which the fingers are opened like a lotus blossom. Their right arms are slightly bent, and the hands lifted above head level, while their left arms are flexed and the *alapadma* hand is at hip level close to the body. The *alapadma* gesture close to the head becomes typical in later dance imagery, but the depiction of the *alapadma* of the lower hand is exceptional.

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which he holds in some of the *karāṇa* reliefs clearly identify him as Śiva. Opposed to the symbolic dance reliefs, which represent dance in general, each dancer is meant to depict a movement unit. The definition of that action is represented by one characteristic picture. In the context of Buddhist narrative reliefs, Dehejia calls this mode of depiction 'Monoscenic Narratives' (Vidya Dehejia, "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," *Art Bulletin* 72, no. 3 [1990]: 378).

<sup>32</sup> The Cōḷa murals had been covered by another layer of Nāyaka paintings from the seventeenth and eighteenth century which has been successfully removed while maintaining those pictures.

<sup>33</sup> Basil Gray and Douglas Barrett, *Treasures of Asia: Indian Painting* (New York: Skira, Rizzoli, 1963): 44.

<sup>34</sup> For a sketch of the scene discussed in which the positions of the dancers and musicians are clearly visible see C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1986): 65.



**Plate 10.4:** Mural painting inside the *vimāna* of the Rājarājeśvara Temple in Thanjavur, inaugurated in 1010 CE.

During the late Cōla period, the emphasis in temple architecture shifted from a focus on the centre and the vertical dimension of the *vimāna* to a focus on the horizontal extension of the temple complex; at the same time the height of the *gopuras*, the gateway towers, increased.<sup>35</sup> Earlier horizontal relief series of dance motifs or mixed motif series including dance imagery continued to decorate the bases of *vimānas*, *maṇḍapas* and *prākāras* of some temples. In addition, vertical series of both general dance imagery and specialised series of *karāṇa* reliefs were adapted to the new temple structures and filled the gateway openings of *gopuras*, arranged on vertical pilasters on both sides of the entryway. Academic research has mostly focussed on the four *karāṇa* series inside the *gopuras* of the Natarāja Temple in Chidambaram. Nevertheless, the depiction of this motif, which is based on textual sources (the reliefs in the East *gopuras* in Chidambaram even include the verses derived from the *Nāṭya Śāstra* engraved above each panel), is rather an exception to the rule, and the majority of the vertical series feature general dance images.<sup>36</sup> Most of these horizontal and

<sup>35</sup> R. Mahalakshmi, “Temples and Sculptures,” in *A Concise History of South India. Issues and Interpretations*, ed. Noburu Karashima (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014): 158.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Fukuroi documented the motifs of three vertical series at Kaṁpahareśvara Temple in Tribhuvanam, the Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple in Kumbakonam and the Somanātha Temple in Palayarai (Yuko Fukuroi, “Dancing Images in the Gōpurās: A New Perspective on Dance Sculptures in

vertical series of general dance images have a uniform appearance owing to the choice of a common mode of depiction, namely dance positions derived from the *ardhamanḍalī*. As discussed above, by applying Fukuroi's study and by further segmenting the dance images into the smallest possible units (head, torso, individual arms and legs), it was possible to show that those dance motifs were mostly constructed by a combination of these elements. Some dance relief series of the late Cōla period have been delicately carved and show much detail, especially in the ornamentation of the dancers, such as the horizontal series in Chidambaram and at the Airāvateśvara Temple in Darasuram. It seems that in addition to those constructed general dance figures, some typical poses from the *karaṇa* series were copied as well. A striking feature are several dancers who perform virtuous dance movements by lifting their legs even above the horizontal line. However, a closer look at these positions reveals that they also follow a common underlying construction principle, and that the lifted leg functions as a radius (rotated either clockwise or anti-clockwise).<sup>37</sup>

Plate 10.5 shows a segment of a horizontal relief series which adorns the base of the *prākāra*-wall of the Śivakāmasundari Temple,<sup>38</sup> which forms part of the temple complex in Chidambaram. The series can be split into groups of three persons, usually a female dancer flanked by two male musicians. The female dancer is shown from the front; her legs are in the *ardhamanḍalī* position with both feet placed firmly on the ground. Her upper body and face are almost straight. The arm positions and *hasta* display some similarities with those of the female dancers in the mural painting in Plate 10.4. The dancer lifts her flexed right arm, keeping her hand close to her large side bun. Although there are many depictions of *alapadma* hands from the late Cōla period, this *hasta* again bears a closer resemblance to the *ardhacandra* gesture. In contrast to the dancers in the Thanjavur mural, who hold a lotus close to their chests, this dancer has placed her left hand on her hip, which is more common for general dance depictions. This relief series shows that Shankar's observation of the development of *karaṇa* series is also applicable to general dance reliefs: the dancers are highly ornamented and delicately carved and there is a great emphasis on stylistic perfection.<sup>39</sup> However, the dance appears more static and the body positions look rather like poses instead of creating the illusion of movement. Two main factors enhance this impression: first, the dancers are enclosed

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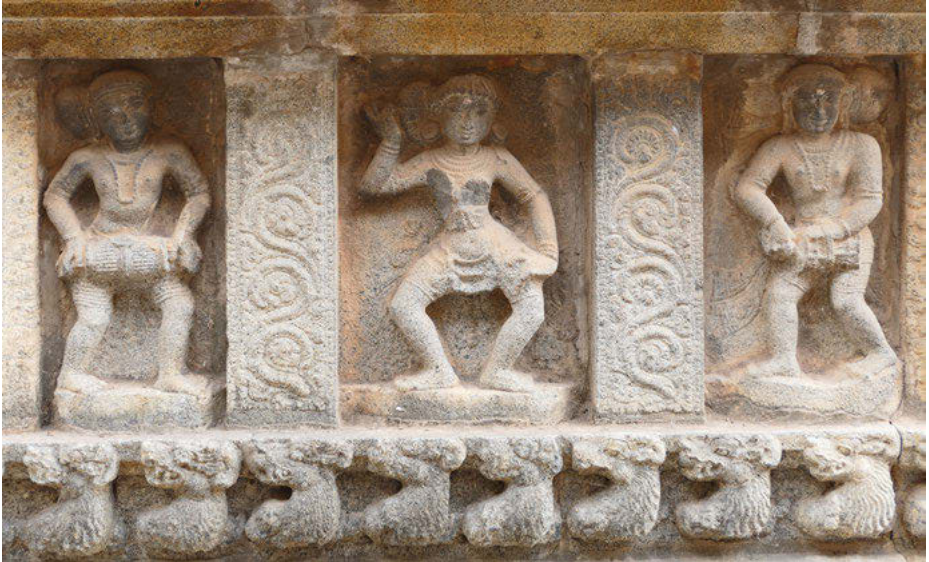
South Indian Temples," in *Music and Society in South Asia: Perspectives from Japan*, ed. Yoshitaka Terada, *Senri Ethnological Studies* 71 [Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2008]: 259–67.

37 This construction principle was noted by Vatsyayan as part of her analysis of geometrical aspects of sculptures of dancing deities (Kapila Vatsyayan, *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts* [New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1997]: 121).

38 The Śivakāmasundari Temple consists of a temple complex including *maṇḍapa* within a high *prākāra*-wall decorated with dancers and musicians, and a small *gopura* as entryway. The construction of this temple started under Kulottunga I (r. 1070–1125 CE) (S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Later Chola Temples* [Faridabad, Haryana: H.K. Mehta at Thomson Press (India) Ltd., 1979]: 21).

39 Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004): 108.

in small boxes which limit their physical movements; and second, dance depictions have become highly dependent on the representation of a perfect *ardhamañḍalī* position. It almost seems as though despite their high artistic qualifications, the artists had become slaves of a huge canon of stylistic conventions for the depiction of dancers – rather than showing dance movements.



**Plate 10.5:** Relief panel of the dance series on the *prakāra* of the Śivakāmasundari Temple at the Naṭarāja temple complex in Chidambaram, March 2015.

The comparison between dance reliefs and dancers in murals suggests a continuation of the different characteristics observed during previous reigns for each respective format: carvings usually show dancers frontally with their bodies appearing rather static, while the murals depict more flexibility within the bodies. Another interesting observation is the preference for female dancers in general dance imagery, although the first *karāṇa* series seem to be linked to mythology, and depict the god Śiva as dancer.

### 3.3 Vijayanagara to Marāṭhā Patronage

While the political instabilities and a lack of patronage during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries led to a decrease in newly created dance imagery, the artistic production

under the patronage of the Vijayanagara,<sup>40</sup> Nāyaka<sup>41</sup> and Marāṭhā<sup>42</sup> rulers again featured a wide range of dance motifs. The artists working for the Vijayanagara emperors adopted architectural and decorative features which had originated in the Tamil area between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>43</sup> and evolved this style as the architectural idiom of the entire empire. They mainly enlarged pre-existing temple complexes by adding further *prākāras* around the temples, and featuring even higher *gopuras* and free-standing halls, such as thousand-pillared *maṇḍapas* or *kalyāna maṇḍapas* (wedding halls for the deities).

These new architectural structures again included general dance depictions as part of the iconographic programme and for decoration. Many of the newly created *gopuras* display series of dance reliefs in their entryways. Due to their vertical arrangement on pilasters, which is similar to the four *karaṇa* series inside the outer *gopuras* of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram, research has focussed on the question whether those series are precise depictions of the 108 *karaṇas* described in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*.<sup>44</sup> However, as in the vertical series of the late Cōla period discussed above, the

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40 The Vijayanagara dynasty established a Hindu empire which spread over southern India from its establishment in 1340 CE onwards, contemporaneous with the Muslim kingdoms in northern India. The empire reached its greatest extension under Krishnadevaraja (r. 1509–1529 CE), who was an important patron of architecture and art, including in the Tamil region (Noburu Karashima, “Vijayanagar and the Sultanates in the Deccan,” in *A Concise History of South India. Issues and Interpretations*, ed. Noburu Karashima (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014): 188–91).

41 During the fifteenth century, most of the Vijayanagara empire was administered by military leaders, the Nāyakas. After the destruction of the capital city Vijayanagara in the battle of Talikota in 1565 CE, most Nāyakas ruled almost independently. The territories of the influential Nāyakas of Gingee, Thanjavur and Madurai covered large parts of the Tamil area. Those rulers were also generous patrons of art and architecture (Noburu Karashima, “Vijayanagar and the Sultanates in the Deccan,” in *A Concise History of South India. Issues and Interpretations*, ed. Noburu Karashima [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014]: 192).

42 The Marāṭhā dynasty (1676–1855 CE) claimed the Thanjavur area after a battle between the Nāyakas. Although most of the political power was transferred to the British after 1762 CE, the Marāṭhā rulers remained the main power in cultural terms, and were active as patrons of various art forms (Werner Kraus, “Indien als Bilderbuch. Einhundert Company-School-Gouachen aus dem Besitz der Kunstbibliothek des Lindenau-Museums Altenburg,” in *Indien als Bilderbuch. Die Konstruktion der Piktorensken Fremde – Einhundert indische Gouachen um 1800 aus Lindenaus Kunstbibliothek* [Altenburg: Lindenau-Museum, 2011]: 12).

43 Researchers either stress the Cōla origin (George Michell) or Pāṇḍya influence (Leslie C. Orr) of these elements, see George Michell, “Chapter 4. Chola and Neo-Chola Temple Architecture in and around Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu,” in *Re-Use. The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks; London/Singapore: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012): 87 vs. Leslie C. Orr, “Cholas, Pandyas, and ‘Imperial Temple Culture’ in Medieval Tamilnadu,” in *The Temple in South Asia*, ed. Adam Hardy (London: British Academy, 2007): 122.

44 The dance reliefs especially within the east *gopura* of the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvannamalai are considered to be adaptations of the Chidambaram series by Subrahmanyam (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karaṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]: 200). Shankar also notes great similarities, although she

general dance depictions dominate, and even series that re-use earlier *karāṇa* motifs incorporate other motifs as well. The choice of format (panels on vertical pilasters) therefore seems to be dictated by the nature of the architectural element which contains the dance series, rather than by the content (*karāṇa* vs. non-*karāṇa* reliefs).

In addition to these vertically arranged dance relief panels, new horizontal relief series also adorn the base of the newly created *maṇḍapas* as well as selected *prākāra* walls. A distinctive dance motif, which from the Vijayanagara period onwards became very prominent, especially for horizontal series, is the depiction of folk dancers who perform a stick dance.<sup>45</sup> These dancers cross their sticks in a variety of intricate patterns and so form unbroken chains of dancing figures. There are also some single stick dancers in individual niches as part of vertical series. The stick dance motif is not only depicted in relief carvings, but also in mural paintings. A comparison of the stylistic features and development of this motif will exemplify general trends in the depiction of dancing figures during the Vijayanagara to Marāṭhā periods.

Plate 10.6 shows a typical example of the stick dance motif in relief carving from the period of direct Vijayanagara rule under Krishnadevaraja's patronage.<sup>46</sup> The panels decorate the base of the *maṇḍapas* of the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvannamalai.<sup>47</sup> Female dancers in two different positions (one is the mirror image of the other) are combined to create long decorative lines of dancers. The photo shows three women. They alternately lift their flexed left or right leg from the *ardhamāṇḍalī* position by pulling the knee upwards. Their upper bodies are bent strongly (*tribhaṅga*): the upper body leans towards the lifted knee, while the head is bent towards the opposite side with the face slightly turned away and looking down. This position enables the dancers to cross their own bodies with both arms. The upper arm is bent above the head so that the stick held in it reaches behind the dancer's back, while her lower arm is mildly flexed and diagonally crosses the

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finds the panels at Tiruvannamalai more ornate, but static (Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" [PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004]: 118–19). Both authors see a derivation from the earlier style (in Chidambaram and Tiruvannamalai) in the series at the Vṛddhagiriśvara Temple in Vriddhacalam, in which two dancers performing different movement units are frequently shown in one panel (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karāṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]: 200, and Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" [PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004]: 130–31).

<sup>45</sup> The stick dance motif already appears in the relief series on the Nṛtta sabhā of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram. However, in this instance the dancers, instead of crossing their sticks hold them in front of their bodies. A stick dance performance in which the sticks are crossed is depicted as part of the horizontal series on the *prākāra* wall of the Airāvateśvara Temple in Darasuram.

<sup>46</sup> The series portrays various topics including different dance motifs. The stick dance scenes are the most frequently depicted theme.

<sup>47</sup> The oldest dateable structures of the temple within the second *prākāra* were created as early as 1030 to 1040 CE. Building activities at this temple continued throughout the centuries and the *maṇḍapas* and *gopuras* may have been built around 1570 CE (Bindu S. Shankar, "Dance Imagery in South Indian Temples: Study of the 108 Karana Sculptures" [PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004]: 111–13).



torso. The dancing women are arranged so that each crosses her counterpart's upper and lower sticks. In this way, any number of dancers can be combined in an unbroken chain. The most remarkable feature of this dance motif is the similarity of the dancers' body positions with the Cōla mural in Plate 10.4.<sup>48</sup> The earlier mural already featured the lifted legs, the strongly bent upper bodies and slightly turned faces. Although these earlier dancers are already arranged in a line, the crossed arms holding sticks have not yet been introduced. The lines of stick dancers might be a further stage of earlier general dance motifs. However, the artists of the Vijayanagara period might have been inspired by dance motifs in different media (such as murals), rather than by relief carvings.<sup>49</sup>



**Plate 10.6:** Relief depicting stick dancers as part of a horizontal series at the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple in Tiruvannamalai, early sixteenth century, August 2016.

<sup>48</sup> A similar arm position was already employed in the depiction of two stick dancers in one panel at the Airāvateśvara Temple in Darasuram (late Cōla period). A short line of dancers who already exhibit the strongly-bent upper body and lifted legs décorates the inner walls of the *gopura* of the Koodisvarar Temple at Tirukkodikaval. However, those panels and their labels may be a later insertion.

<sup>49</sup> From the Vijayanagara period onwards, artists depicting dance were inspired by visual sources from different regional traditions. Most decorative dance figures without props (sticks or drums) are depicted in a dance position derived from the *caturaśra* stance. Knees and feet are turned outwards, with the feet wide apart and one knee bent more than the other, so as to create the illusion of movement. This mode of artistic representation originated in the Karṇāṭaka region, and was also employed at Vijayanagara temples of the empire's central area (compare: Vidya Kumari Shimladka and Choodamani Nandagopal, "Reflections of the Past: Foot Prints of the Deśi Tradition in Dance Sculptures of Karnataka," lecture given at the 'Second International Conference on Global Business, Economics, Finance and Social Sciences [GB14Chennai Conference]', Chennai, 2014).

It is highly interesting to compare the stick dance relief panels to a mural painting of the same subject, which is on the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* of the Vardhamāna Temple at Tiruppattikunram near Kanchipuram. The mural paintings at this Jaina temple were created during the seventeenth century<sup>50</sup> and are therefore approximately one century younger than the relief series at the Aruṇacaleśvara Temple.<sup>51</sup> The dancers in Plate 10.7 are similarly arranged in a row. However, instead of creating an uninterrupted line by each dancer crossing one stick with the one before her and one with the successive dancer, these performers are arranged in pairs, with the same two dancers crossing both upper and lower sticks. The upper bodies of the dancers are turned to alternating sides, but not bent as extremely, and their heads are simply turned sideways and shown in profile. They again hold their upper arms bent above their heads, with the stick in their line of sight. But instead of crossing the dancers' bodies, their lower arms hang down, and each one crosses the stick held in her lower hand with that in her partner's lower hand. The most striking feature is the rendition of the legs. In place of the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position, both legs are turned in the opposite direction of the face and arms, so that the body performs a 180 degree turn. The legs are placed one behind the other. The dancers are almost upright, and both legs are only slightly bent. Although they are shown in profile, and the entire dancer is shown in a mix of stances, this leg position is not identical with the second mode for dance depictions described in section 3.1. This mural suggests that painters of the Nāyaka period took greater liberties in the depiction of the popular stick dance motif. Especially remarkable is that they did not find it necessary to show the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position of the legs to emphasise the fact that the women are engaged in dance.<sup>52</sup>

I will conclude this discussion of pre-modern dance imagery with the analysis of another stick dance relief panel, which belongs to the series on the first *prākāra* wall of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram. The reliefs depict various mythological motifs together with the dance scenes, featuring both classical and folk forms. These panels

50 George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India: Vijayanagara and Successor States*, The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 230–32.

51 Sivaramamurti suggests a much earlier date for the paintings. He believes they were commissioned by the Vijayanagara general Irugappa in the late fourteenth century. However, he also notes similarities to later Nāyaka murals (Calambur Sivaramamurti, *Vijayanagara Paintings* [New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1985]: 28). The similarities in content and style with later paintings make George Michell's dating the more compelling one.

52 Miniature paintings of the same period also include dance motifs. Different collections variously feature dancers depicted with or without the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position of the legs. This suggests that there were fewer stylistic conventions for dance depictions in paintings during the Vijayanagara to Marāṭhā periods. A good example are the paintings of three different categories of dancers, all of whom are shown with their feet placed apart, but no *ardhamaṇḍalī* position (Werner Kraus, "Einhundert indische Gouachen," in *Indien als Bilderbuch. Die Konstruktion der Pittoresken Fremde – Einhundert indische Gouachen um 1800 aus Lindenau's Kunstbibliothek* [Altenburg: Lindenau-Museum, 2011]: 92–94).



**Plate 10.7:** Mural painting of stick dancers at the Vardhamāna Temple in Tirupurathikunram.

seem to be a creation of the nineteenth century; they also display stylistic similarities to Marāṭhā images.<sup>53</sup> The stick dance relief in Plate 10.8 is the central panel of a sequence of three stick dance motifs.<sup>54</sup> It appears almost like an engraving of two dancers in the stick dance mural in Plate 10.7. Their legs are shown in profile, both slightly bent and turned outwards. In contrast, the torso and face are shown frontally; both bend slightly inwards. They hold their arms in the opposite direction to the legs, and cross their sticks above their heads and at hip height respectively. However, the carving conveys a greater sense of movement than the mural, since the legs are more bent, and especially the dancer on the viewer's right also executes an elegant bend of her upper body and head.

A comparison between this relief and the Nāyaka mural can lead to the assumption that the artists might have been inspired by the stick dance motif which already

<sup>53</sup> According to Subrahmanyam, the patrons might have been late Madurai Nāyakas, as episodes connected to the Minākṣī Temple in Madurai are depicted. Alternatively, they may have been commissioned by Nagarathār patrons (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karaṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]: 184).

<sup>54</sup> There are two more stick dance panels depicting pairs of female performers. However, the other two reliefs show entirely different dance positions. Two dancers have their legs facing each other and cross their sticks at knee and chest level respectively. The third panel shows an extraordinary dance movement for which the dancers are shown each with one knee and one foot on the ground. All three panels employ a mixed perspective, showing the legs in profile and the torso from the front.





**Plate 10.8:** Relief panel depicting two stick dancers on the first *prākāra* wall of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram, nineteenth century, March 2015.

existed in painting, and that they simply transferred it to a different medium. However, a closer look at the other relief panels provides a more differentiated insight into the artists' work. There are three stick dance panels which feature entirely different positions. In total, the relief series includes around 35 dance motifs. In addition to the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position, which is not always depicted statically and symmetrically, but often with more relaxed knees and the feet at an angle instead of pointing sideways, there are frequent depictions of dance movements that deploy a mixed perspective. Furthermore, several dancers are performing movements that adapt the *ālīḍha* and *pratyālīḍha*<sup>55</sup> postures, which is a unique feature of this series. In comparison to earlier relief series, the artists who created the panels took greater liberties in how they depicted dance movements. They were not bound by earlier stylistic conventions, but depicted a larger variety of movements by not only using established ways, but also creative new movements including the *ālīḍha* and *pratyālīḍha* variations.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Two positions in which one leg is extended from the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position to the side so that it forms a straight line. This position is often part of the iconography of wrathful deities, but also frequently used in today's classical dance traditions.

<sup>56</sup> The depiction of many dance movements which are not derived from the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position, and a rather relaxed performance of the position with mildly flexed legs invites speculations on the dance technique during the nineteenth century. To what degree did dancers aim to achieve a perfectly symmetrical *ardhamaṇḍalī* position? A discussion of this question exceeds the scope of this article.

But these artists did not achieve the stylistic perfection and uniformity of, for example, the late Cōla artists. The bodies they depict are frequently not in proportion and disharmonious, and their decorations are rather simple.

Dance imagery underwent an interesting development during the Vijayanagara and the Marāṭhā periods. During the initial stages of Vijayanagara patronage, artists seem to have been extremely dependent on earlier stylistic conventions, which has even led some scholars to speculate about a kind of Cōla revival in the arts.<sup>57</sup> The first depictions of the stick dance motif are virtual copies of earlier panels. Under Nāyaka patronage, the mural paintings at the Vardhamāna Temple bear testimony to a new artistic freedom with innovative solutions in the depiction of dance. This freedom seems to have spread to artists working in other media. Nineteenth-century dance panels such as those in the first *prākāra* of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram also feature dance depictions that are less formalised.

### 3.4 Modern and Contemporary Dance Imagery

The subsequent development of dance imagery during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is closely connected to the discourse on (classical) dance and its role in Tamil society. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, classical dance, which had traditionally flourished both within the ritual context of temples and at royal courts, as well as at elite social events, increasingly lost its traditional forms of patronage and became associated with prostitution. A complex interplay of socio-political factors led to the official ban of temple dance in Tamil Nadu in 1947. The so-called revival of the dance in the mid-twentieth century brought traditional dance forms, now performed especially by higher-caste dancers, to urban stages. This process was partially connected to the nationalist movement, which promoted pan-Indian ancient traditions.<sup>58</sup> Dancers and dance scholars now developed a special interest in demonstrating the antiquity and unchanged traditions of the art form. This led to a new interest in historic dance representations in temples (both in visual art and written accounts) and the study of Sanskrit sources such as the *Nāṭya Śāstra* in connection to the dance tradition of Tamil Nadu. Against this background, it is not

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However, early videos of South Indian dancers show that they placed less importance on the precision of this position than it is common in most contemporary classical dance traditions.

57 George Michell, “Chapter 4. Chola and Neo-Chola Temple Architecture in and around Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu,” in *Re-Use. The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks; London/Singapore: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012): 86–106.

58 The various factors which eventually led to the ban of dancing in temples and the dedication of dancers (*devadāsīs*) are discussed in detail in Teresa Hubel, “The High Cost of Dancing: When the Indian Women’s Movement Went After the Devadāsīs,” Department of English Publications, 134, 2005, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/englishpub/134> [accessed 02.04.2022].

surprising that the *karāṇa* reliefs caught the attention of dancers and dance scholars, as I discussed above in paragraph, 2. Previous Research.

The renewed interest in classical dance increased the popularity of dance depictions in visual arts, especially from the late twentieth century onwards. A typical example from popular culture are the three-dimensional statues of dancing humans and deities on the outer walls of the VGP Golden Beach Resort in Chennai. The female dancers are mostly 3D-adaptations of *karāṇa* panels from the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram, while the male dancer – a four-armed manifestation of Śiva – seems to be inspired by the *karāṇa* series in Thanjavur and Kumbakonam. It seems that this decoration is intended to create a traditional and exquisite atmosphere for the famous resort.

A characteristic example for a typical dance motif being included within a modern narrative relief series can be seen in Plate 10.9. The panel is one of the series in the Cilappatikāram Art Gallery at Poompuhar, which depicts the events of this so-called Tamil epic.<sup>59</sup> It shows the dancer Mātavi in her first solo performance. The venue resembles a temple *mandapa*, although the curtain in the background might be borrowed from a modern stage. The dancer is depicted frontally with a straight body and face. Her limbs form symmetrical shapes, such as the perfect *ardhamanḍalī* with both feet placed firmly on the ground. She holds her hands in front of her lower torso in the shape of a bowl, which signifies the holding of flowers as an offering. This gesture is called *puspapuṭa*, and is used at the beginning of performances. It is the typical marker of the first *karāṇa*, Talapuṣpapuṭa. The depiction of this meaningful movement-unit is therefore an appropriate choice to represent a dancer's first solo performance. It is obvious that the artist closely followed earlier depictions of this movement.

A comparison to the corresponding panel of the first *karāṇa* at the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram shows that in it, the position of the female dancer is almost identical.<sup>60</sup> However, the relief at the Cilappatikāram Art Gallery lacks the subtle *tribhaṅga* of the dancer's body in Chidambaram, and therefore looks more static. Mātavi's maiden performance is not only the subject of a traditional relief panel. The *Cilappatikāram* was also illustrated in a popular comic book, 'Kannagi. Her love conquers all', in the Amar Chitra Katha series. The comic features two pictures of Mātavi's dance.<sup>61</sup> In both cases her body is bent, which highlights her elegance. The impression of movement is enhanced by the fact that she is not shown frontally. The position of her legs is closer to

<sup>59</sup> The *Cilappatikāram* was written by the Jaina author Ilango Adigal prior to the fifth century CE. It is considered a major work of Tamil literature. One of the main characters is a dancer called Mātavi. Therefore, dance scenes are necessary for a visual representation of the storyline (R. Dhandayudham, "Silappathikaram: The Epic," in *Indian Literature* 18, no. 2 [1975]: 24–25).

<sup>60</sup> For a photograph of this panel see Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karāṇas, Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 3, *A Visual Elucidation* (Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003): 2.

<sup>61</sup> Lalitha Raghupathi, *Kannagi. Her Love Conquers All*, Amar Chitra Katha 666 (Mumbai: Amar Chitra Katha, 1975): 5.



**Plate 10.9:** Relief panel of Mātavi’s first dance performance at the Cilappatikāram Art Gallery in Poompuhar, late twentieth century, February 2020.

the mixed perspective for the representation of movement, although it is not a typical example, and the legs are only mildly flexed. It seems that the artist chose an individual solution for the representation of dance and decided not to follow the stylistic conventions for traditional dance imagery. Therefore, it is likely that artists in popular media enjoy more artistic freedom for dance imagery than artists who work in traditional genres and who might be required to create a traditional appearance for their artworks.

The most ambitious projects regarding the creation of new dance imagery belong to the category of *karaṇa* series. Although they do not fall within the remit of this study, which focusses on general, symbolic representations of dance, I will briefly discuss them, as they represent general trends within the larger field of dance imagery. The dancer and dance scholar Padma Subrahmanyam has designed a new horizontal series of 108 *karaṇa* panels, which has been implemented with minor variations at two different locations.<sup>62</sup> Each relief carving shows Pārvatī and Śiva frozen in two

<sup>62</sup> The first series was created by Subrahmanyam for the Uttara Chidambaram Nataraja Mandir in Satara (Maharashtra). It was completed in 1994 and officially inaugurated in 1997 (Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karaṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* [Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003]: 215–16). The other series in black granite belongs to the Bharata-Ilango Foundation for Asian Culture at Pattipulam near Chennai, which also includes a shrine



different positions of each movement-unit.<sup>63</sup> The sources for the positions are the three Cōḷa *karāṇa* series, the descriptions of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* and Subrahmanyam's danced reconstructions of the *karāṇas*. Although there are some innovative choices in the perspective and body position for selected movements, the style resembles the earliest *karāṇa* series in Thanjavur, with some influences from the Chidambaram series on the depiction of the female dancer.<sup>64</sup> This choice might be motivated by the wish to prove the authenticity of the danced reconstruction through similarities to the historical relief series. A general motivation, which is in accordance with the Sanskritisation of classical dance during the twentieth century, is to emphasise the great antiquity of the dance tradition of the Tamil region – a tradition that is said to go back approximately two thousand years – and to create the impression of a continuous and almost unchanged transmission, beginning with the *Nāṭya Śāstra*.

The 108-*karāṇa* theme has not only been recreated in relief panels, but was also adapted to mural painting. One series decorates the ceiling of an outer *maṇḍapa* close to the eastern entrance of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram. Plate 10.10 captures the first two *karāṇa* paintings of this series. The movement-units are performed by a four-armed manifestation of Śiva (in contrast to the Cōḷa relief carvings in the *gopuras*, which feature a two-armed female dancer). Śiva is dancing on a circular platform or rather pedestal, which creates the impression of living statues caught while dancing.<sup>65</sup> Śiva's secondary pair of hands hold his attributes: *damaru* (right) and flame (left). Śiva's pose on the left resembles Mātavi's portrayal in Plate 10.9, although his hands are held one above the other instead of forming the bowl shape, and his left foot stands only on tip-toes. This is not surprising as both show the same initial *karāṇa*. The performer (again Śiva) on the right is also shown in the *ardhamaṇḍalī* position, with a little distance between both feet and his arms hanging loosely as in the *dolā* pose alongside the body. The pictures on the ceiling could be painted versions of earlier *karāṇa* series.

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for Bharatamuni, the author of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (Ashish Khokar, "Temple for Bharatamuni," *The Hindu*, 26.04.2018, <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/dance/padma-subrahmanyams-tribute-to-natya/article23681439.ece> [accessed 02.04.2022]). Although the relief panels, which were completed in 2019, show the same motifs, they are twice the size of the earlier Satara panels (this information is based on an in-situ board, photographed on 16 February 2020).

63 For photographs of all *karāṇa* panels designed by Subrahmanyam for the Sattara series see Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karāṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 3, *A Visual Elucidation* (Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003).

64 For the description of her creative process see Padma Subrahmanyam, *Karāṇas: Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia*, vol. 1, *A Historic and Archeological Perspective* (Chennai: Nrithyodaya, 2003): 210–16.

65 The murals show striking similarities to 108 statues of Śiva performing the *karāṇas* of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* at the Kadavul Hindu Temple, on Kauai, Hawaii (Kauai's Hindu Monastery, "Slideshow – Kadavul Temple," Kauai's Hindu Monastery [2021], [https://www.himalayanacademy.com/view/kadavul\\_main-slideshow](https://www.himalayanacademy.com/view/kadavul_main-slideshow) [accessed 25.08.2022]).



**Plate 10.10:** Paintings of Śiva's performance of *karana* one and two on the ceiling of an outer *maṇḍapa* of the Natarāja Temple in Chidambaram, August 2016.

Apart from a few exceptions, they closely follow the conventions for *karana* series of the Cōla period.

To sum up, it seems that artists choose whether or not to apply earlier stylistic conventions for the depiction of dance according to the context. An architectural setting which should create a traditional atmosphere, such as a temple or an elegant venue or institution for the propagation of traditional values, might be decorated with dance imagery that is bound to ancient stylistic conventions. This is especially true for traditional genres such as statues, reliefs, and mural paintings. My comparison with the Amar Chitra Katha comic book showed that popular media require less specifications and feature more creative solutions in how they represent dance. The same applies more generally in the case of modern or contemporary art in all genres, where there are even abstract adaptations of the dance theme. It therefore seems that patrons or artists deliberately choose whether or not dance depictions are bound to traditional stylistic conventions, depending on which message they wish the dance imagery to convey.

## 4 Conclusions

Looking back on my initial observations on the emergence of stylistic conventions for dance imagery, it seems that artists developed two different modes as an artistic solution to the challenge of how to translate dance movements into two-dimensional images, namely a frontal *ardhamāṅḍali* position and a mixed position with the legs shown in profile. However, within a few centuries what started as a creative innovation seems to have developed into a set of unwritten rules. Although there are minor differences between dance motifs in reliefs and mural paintings, stylistic conventions were prevalent in both genres and the specifications increased considerably up to the late Cōla period. The combination of stylistic perfection and an almost static appearance of the dancers creates the impression that artists were almost slaves to these norms.

From the Vijayanagara period onwards, artists adapted this earlier Tamiḷ style, including specifications for dance imagery, in a slightly different context and sometimes connected to a different symbolic meaning. However, previous conventions continued to be strictly applied, especially in relief carving. We find creative artistic solutions in the depiction of popular dance motifs, such as the stick dance in mural paintings of the Nāyaka period. This way of thinking seems to have spread to artists who created temple sculpture. The nineteenth-century dance reliefs around the *sanc-tum* of the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram do not exclusively feature panels which closely adhere to stylistic conventions, but also include innovative perspectives and body positions from classical and folk dance.

A closer look at the dance imagery of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries reveals that especially relief carvings and sculpture consequently applied traditional stylistic conventions. As discussed above, this seems to be a conscious choice by artists who want to convey a religious or political message through these dance images. Comparing this voluntary adherence to earlier norms to the situation of the artists of the Vijayanagara empire who consistently applied earlier Tamiḷ conventions leads to a new interpretation. Instead of being slaves to century-old stylistic conventions, artists at different points in time might have freely chosen their adherence to visual conventions, to imbue their work with symbolic meaning and an aura of antiquity.

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Amy Heller

## Chapter 11

# Dependencies and Artistic Freedom in the Context of Himalayan Conservation Projects

## 1 Introduction

The issues of dependencies as voluntary or involuntary constraints as well as restrictions of artistic freedom have been little studied in relation to Tibetan Buddhist art and ritual practices in Tibet and the Himalayas.<sup>1</sup> In the present essay, the focus will be an examination of three case studies of conservation projects, in Tibet, India and Nepal, which gives an opportunity to appreciate how issues of dependencies developed in each project and how these were addressed in the local context. Despite the diverse political and social situations in each country, we observe a consistency in the solutions adopted to resolve these issues. Each project developed a protocol in cooperation with the local populations as distinct strategies in the context of the concepts of dependencies; all three conservation projects promoted re-use of original structures and original materials as well as respect for the religious function of the buildings. All three projects took place within the context of a living Buddhist sanctuary which implies intangible dependencies related to the religious ideals. As conservation expert G. Wijesuriya has explained,

Buddhist concepts such as impermanence are critically important in understanding and characterising Buddhist heritage, as they have implications for conservation. A colleague from Bhutan<sup>2</sup> has argued, “that the ancient Buddhist doctrine of impermanence and change of all things in existence and the natural acceptance of decay forms a confrontation with the International approach of conservation.”<sup>3</sup>

What is the context of such dependencies, both tangible and intangible, in Tibetan Buddhist art and architecture? In Buddhist art it is recognised as a normative rule that

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Olaf Czaja had planned to make a presentation on “Visualizing Dependency through Tibetan Art: An Investigation into Legitimacy and Authority” in the workshop “Dependency, Inequality and Material Culture,” organised by Julia A.B. Hegewald and Martin Bentz, on 13.02.2019. See: <https://ea-aaa.eu/workshop-dependency-inequality-and-material-culture/> [accessed 07.03.2022]. Unfortunately, he had to cancel his participation in the conference.

<sup>2</sup> This was a presentation by P. Dukpa in 2002 at the course on ‘Preservation and restoration of wooden structures’, held in Nara.

<sup>3</sup> Gamini Wijesuriya, “Introduction,” in *Asian Buddhist Heritage, Conserving the Sacred*, ed. Gamini Wijesuriya and Sujeong Lee (Rome: International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, 2017): 3. I thank Sanjay Dhar for drawing my attention to this important collection of essays.

traditional artists are dependent upon strict obligations to respect and adhere to traditional rules of iconometry and iconography, etc. The Indian iconometric tradition developed in the *Purāṇas* of the Gupta period (fourth to late sixth century CE) and *Śilpaśāstras* of the medieval period (seventh to eighth century CE).<sup>4</sup> The long-established Indian iconographic traditions are stipulated in texts, some of which dating from the late eleventh to twelfth century CE were translated into Tibetan already in the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Tibetan manuals of canons of body proportions and iconometry have a long history as authoritative sources, both due to their dependence upon earlier Indian texts as well as their wide diffusion in Tibet at least since the seventeenth century thanks to widespread use of xylographic copies.<sup>6</sup> Even so, although specifically decreed in many cases, as early as the twelfth-century prescriptive texts, there are Indian manuscript illuminations where one may observe the artists restricted their palette to a set group of available colours, repeated throughout the manuscript, rather than follow the established norms of colour. In the words of Jeremiah Losty, specialist of Indian manuscripts, '[t]here can be no doubt that the artist was deliberately restricting his colour range, and indeed colouring his subjects in accordance with his scheme rather than iconographical demands.'<sup>7</sup>

This shows that, although the normative rules are known, in practice, the requirements are not always respected, as exemplified by this twelfth-century Indian Buddhist manuscript. Certainly, many similar manuscripts were brought to Tibet and the Himalayas by Indian *pandita* as didactic tools but also by pilgrims. Even though many ancient texts as references were to be found in Buddhist monasteries throughout the Himalayas and Tibet, one may observe the profound artistic and aesthetic metamorphosis which has gradually occurred over the centuries in the Himalayas and Tibet.<sup>8</sup> In our study of the conservation projects, there are two principal issues which emerge:

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4 Kathleen W. Peterson, "Sources of Variation in Tibetan Canons of Iconometry," in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Publishers, 1980): 239–48.

5 Gudrun Bühnemann, "Some Remarks on the Date of Abhayākaragupta and the Chronology of His Works," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 142 (1992): 120–27.

6 Christoph Cüppers, Leonard van der Kuijp and Ulrich Pagel, *Handbook of Tibetan Iconometry, A Guide to the Arts of the 17th Century*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 28 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012). This book represents the late seventeenth century treatise promoted under the auspices of the Dalai Lama's theocracy in Lhasa.

7 Jeremiah Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: The British Library, 1982): 32.

8 To maintain the conceptual focus on these conservation projects, this essay avoids discussion of twenty-first century contemporary artists and artisans in Nepal, Tibet and in the Tibetan diaspora whose paintings, sculptures, installations, videos are extremely heterogenous, reflecting unprecedented artistic freedom as well as great variation in regard to constraints imposed by Buddhist concepts and iconographic/iconometric rules, specific technical requirements due to media (cast alloys, copper repoussée, cement from early moulds). See Amy Heller, "Tibetan Artists and Tibetan Identity: Who's Who and Since When?" *The Visual Culture of Tibet and the Himalayas – Studies in Tibetan Art, Archaeology, Architecture, Cinema, and Photography from Pre-History to the 21st Century*, ed. Amy



First, the conceptual context: discrepancies arise in the ‘philosophy/credo’ of the conservation project due to the religious nature of the buildings. The so-called Western philosophy of conservation of murals makes emphasis on the consolidation, repair and conservation of the extant murals, excluding repainting which, according to the so-called ‘Western ethics’ of conservation is tantamount to the falsification of history.<sup>9</sup> For Buddhists, however, the methods of conservation will diverge from international standards. According to Dorjee Tshering, Director General Department of Culture, Bhutan, ‘[w]hile there is a realisation that a heritage symbol needs to be kept authentic, an object used in worship such as a statue, painting or a mask is considered an embodiment of a living deity. Such an object requires embellishment and improvement to be made worthy of commanding faith and devotion.’<sup>10</sup> For example, the local devout Buddhists ask, ‘How can we worship a ‘deformed’ God?’<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, there is the belief that ‘the ultimate goal of thought and action should be to earn merit and attain actualisation or Buddhahood, not only for oneself but also for the good of all living beings. Thus, for any conservation activity dedication of merit is important so the deed will not be wasted.’<sup>12</sup>

Modern documentation of Himalayan murals has indicated that over time, in the past, there were historic interventions intended to refresh and repair rather than to supplant a respected original. However, the opposite is also the case. Central to Buddhist philosophy is the concept of impermanence of all phenomena, to which paintings and sculptures are no exception. This has led to complete white-washing over ancient murals in some sanctuaries due to the desire to produce anew excellent quality works of art to bring greater merit to the entire community and to all sentient beings.

Secondly, the material context: the obligation to use local traditional materials versus ‘improved’ (i.e. modern) materials in conservation projects. In particular, the perspective of valorisation of traditional local materials of the Himalayas (such as conglomerate rock ‘arga’, see below) in conservation strategies versus imported, ‘modern’ substances (synthetic resins) which potentially have longer duration. This is

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Heller and Leigh Miller, 30.05.2020, <https://www.asianart.com/articles/iats2/index.html> [accessed 07.03.2022].

9 John Sanday, “The Wall Paintings of Thubchen Lo Manthang, Upper Mustang: In Defence of History,” *Orientalism* 43, no. 3 (2012): 77.

10 Dorjee Tshering, “Relationship of Conservation to the Functions of Monuments with Reference to Buddhism in Bhutan,” in *Art of Merit. Studies in Buddhist Art and Conservation*, ed. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo and Sharon Cather (London: Archetype Publications/Robert H.N. Ho Foundation Centre for Buddhist Art and Conservation at The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2013): 222.

11 John Sanday, “The Wall Paintings of Thubchen Lo Manthang, Upper Mustang: In Defence of History,” *Orientalism* 43, no. 3 (2012): 77.

12 Dorjee Tshering, “Relationship of Conservation to the Functions of Monuments with Reference to Buddhism in Bhutan,” in *Art of Merit. Studies in Buddhist Art and Conservation*, ed. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo and Sharon Cather (London: Archetype Publications/Robert H.N. Ho Foundation Centre for Buddhist Art and Conservation at The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2013): 224.

particularly noticeable in architectural conservation. Mural painting conservation/consolidation may require scientific analysis prior to any intervention, using investigative techniques and substances that are not local, but which are compatible with the local mural paintings. It is also significant that the traditional mineral pigments are no longer easily available for contemporary painting conservators.

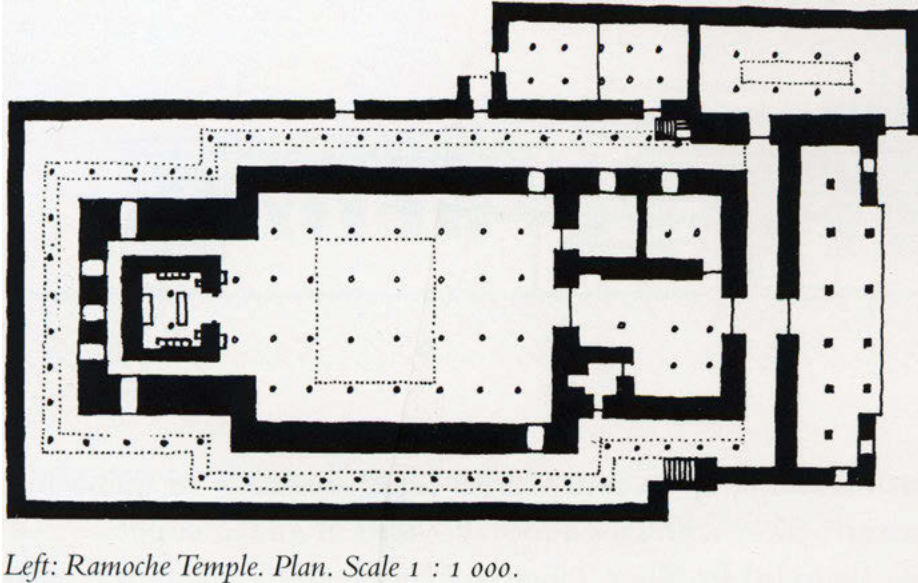
As a tangent stemming from these two principal axes, in this essay we will examine three conservation projects which show the pertinence of these concerns in contemporary projects (2000–2020).

## 2 Conservation in Lhasa, Tibet: The Ramoche Temple (2004–2006)

Ramoche temple is one of the most ancient sanctuaries in Lhasa, capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, China. More than a millennium old, the construction of its core shrine is traditionally attributed to the reign of Tibet's first historical ruler, Songtsen Gampo (r. c. 629–50 CE). According to later legendary tradition, Buddhism was first introduced to Tibet by Songtsen Gampo's two foreign wives, the princesses Wencheng (d. 680) from China and Bhrikuti Devi from Nepal, said to be responsible respectively for the construction of the Ramoche and the Jokhang, the two largest and historically most important temples in Lhasa. Ramoche has been listed as a key cultural relic under the protection of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government since 1962. It is recognised as a national historical monument of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Situated about 500 meters north-east of the Jokhang, Ramoche houses a community of about 120 monks and is a popular destination for pilgrims. It is oriented on an east-west axis, with the entrance in the east (Plate 11.1).

Gradually expanded over time, the temple underwent four major stages of construction. The earliest temple consisted only of the principal shrine surrounded by its circumambulatory corridor. The holiest relic, the Ramoche 'Jowo' Buddha (a statue representing the historical Buddha Shakyamuni), is enshrined here. The main hall was constructed some time between the late eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. As the monastic population increased – particularly after the monk Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) founded the Gelugpa monastic school in the late fourteenth century and Ramoche became affiliated with the Gelugpa teachings – the main hall was enlarged to its present dimensions and protector shrines were added near the front entrance.

The 'Great Fifth' Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–82), made Lhasa the capital of Tibet as of 1642. According to his autobiography, after renovating and enlarging the Potala Palace in the mid-seventeenth century, he embarked on a renovation pro-



Left: Ramoche Temple. Plan. Scale 1 : 1 000.

**Plate 11.1:** Ground plan of Ramoche temple, scale 1: 1000.

gramme at Ramoche in about 1673.<sup>13</sup> At this time, he commissioned mural paintings for the walls of the principal shrine, and the construction of a new chapel dedicated to the Sixteen Arhats, replete with clay statues surrounding a central altar: this was to be built on the roof directly above the Jowo Buddha, with a gilt-copper roof and a circumambulatory corridor surrounding the chapel. The Fifth Dalai Lama's list of commissioned works details the names of Nepalese copper-smiths and Tibetan artisans who were engaged for this work.<sup>14</sup> Adjacent to the roof chapel, apartments were also constructed as a secondary residence for the Dalai Lama and his immediate entourage during the major Buddhist holidays.<sup>15</sup>

Since Ramoche is situated on the longitudinal axis of the Potala, the Dalai Lama would have been able to see the Potala from the centre of town while performing the ritual circumambulation of the Ramoche Arhat Chapel (Plate 11.2).

<sup>13</sup> Guiseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1949): 208, and David Jackson, *A History of Tibetan Painting*, *Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens* 20 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1996): 201–3.

<sup>14</sup> Christoph Cüppers, "Newar Craftsmen Employed by the Early dGa' ldan pho-brang Rulers," in *Kesar Lall: A Homage on the Occasion of his Bura Janko*, ed. Corneille Jest, Tej Ratna Kansakar and Mark Turin (Kathmandu: Marina Paper, 2004): 30–34.

<sup>15</sup> Today the distance of Ramoche requires perhaps ten minutes by automobile, however in the seventeenth century, travel from the Potala to the Ramoche was made on horseback for the Dalai Lama and dignitaries. But protocol also dictated a procession to accompany with requisite luggage, cooking equipment, etc., thus avoiding daily travel during the month-long festivities was a good idea.



**Plate 11.2:** Circumambulation corridor of Arhat chapel, Ramoche Temple, Lhasa, 2006.

Although Ramoche suffered much damage during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), it was partially restored and opened for worship in 1985. The upper roof and the roof chapel, however, remained inaccessible due to damage. In 2004, an official conservation project was initiated for the conservation of the upper roof terrace, the roof chapel as well as the circumambulation corridor of the Ramoche.<sup>16</sup> As Ramoche is in the vicinity of the Jokhang, which was included in the extended zone of the Potala on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage protection zone since 2000,<sup>17</sup> the project protocol stipulated that the work was to be carried out using traditional Tibetan architectural techniques and materials, conforming to UNESCO guidelines.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the protocol stipulated the participation of Tibetan as well as Han workers and this writer was appointed to oversee progress, in collaboration with Tibetan and Chinese architects specialising in conservation. The Ramoche roof project was a collaborative effort, between the Swiss Federal Government (Department of Foreign Affairs and Swiss Federal Office of Culture) and the Government of China (National Cultural Relics Office) and the government of the Municipality of Lhasa (Foreign Affairs Office and Cultural Relics Office). In 2004 the Swiss Federal Councillor, Pascal Couchepin, made an official week-long trip to the PRC in his capacity as Minister of Culture, and visited Lhasa to attend the signature of the agreement pledging Swiss funds (CHF200,000 or US\$180,000) to support the restoration work. It was the first time that Beijing had authorised a foreign government to undertake work to preserve Tibetan heritage.<sup>19</sup>

The conservation project started in spring of 2005 with strict respect for security during construction and weekly inspection by the Tibetan architect Mi Nyag and visits by Qu Yan, the Chinese conservation architect mandated by the Lhasa Cultural Relics office. A local maintenance committee of both monastic and secular residents was also created to participate in the supervision of the project. Two unanticipated situations developed. Upon inspection, it was apparent that many wooden ceiling beams of the library underneath the upper roof chapel needed to be replaced before any construction on the roof could commence. This also meant a revision of the projected budget as wood is very expensive in Tibet. The replacement beams were selected

<sup>16</sup> See Amy Heller, “The Ramoche Restoration Project, Lhasa,” *Orientalia* 39, no. 6 (2008): 85–87.

<sup>17</sup> See UNESCO World Heritage Centre, “Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa,” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/707/> [accessed 07.03.2022].

<sup>18</sup> ‘The Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention (2013) require that the physical authenticity of a historic building and its context should be preserved in relation to design, materials, workmanship and setting. The use of traditional materials and building techniques maintains the physical authenticity of the place, in addition to the pleasing visual impact.’ (UNESCO Office in Beijing, “Practical Conservation Guidelines for Traditional Courtyard Houses and Environment in the Ancient City of Pingyao” [Paris/Beijing: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNESO Beijing Office, 2015]: 28, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234621> [accessed 07.03.2022]).

<sup>19</sup> To my knowledge, it is the only time that a foreign government was authorised to collaborate in a conservation project in Tibet Autonomous Region; foreign academic agreements with Norwegian, Austrian and French universities were ongoing during 1995–2008, then ceased.

from aged wood (rather than new wood) to be compatible with the other elements of the ceiling. Also, the Chinese conservation architect had developed a technique for more durable roof maintenance by including a protective layer of synthetic resin in the earthen roof. The traditional Tibetan method for roof waterproofing is a technique where arga, a crushed conglomerate rock which includes calcium carbonate in its components, is crushed, then impounded into the existing roof and coated with oil. This technique requires regular maintenance to assure total impermeability but it is well adapted to the very dry climate of Tibet.<sup>20</sup> The monks and the local residents' committee decided therefore to petition the Cultural Relics department to refrain from the use of synthetic resin and exclusively adhere to the Tibetan traditional technique. This petition was sent from Lhasa Cultural Relics bureau to the national Cultural Relics authorities where it was approved. This resulted in a slight delay of the roofing procedure, while the restoration of the circumambulation corridor proceeded smoothly. The Ramoche Roof Conservation project was successfully completed in late autumn of 2005, a conclusion ceremony was celebrated in April 2006 (Plate 11.3).



**Plate 11.3:** Ramoche roof terrace upon completion of waterproofing of terrace, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication, September 4, 2004: Professor Richard Ernst, Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry of 1991, on the composition of arga rock he personally analysed: Microscopically it is a complicated sedimentary composite containing Feldspar, eg.  $KAlSi_3O_8$ , and possibly  $Al_2O_3$  (Bauxit), Iron oxide, Calcium Carbonate, a typical sedimentary material. Possibly there are some more minor components present. It is a material difficult to accurately characterise as it is quite inhomogenous.

### 3 Mustang: Conservation of the Two Principal Sanctuaries of Lo, the Capital of Mustang District, Nepal (2000–2020)

This is a long-term project of mural conservation and architectural repair and consolidation in two royal sanctuaries in the centre of the Mustang capital funded and organised by American Himalayan Foundation (AHF) at the request of Mustang King (Gyalbo) and local authorities, both religious and secular. This project was first initiated in 1994, it was in full swing from 2000–2020.

#### 3.1 Historical Background of the Sanctuaries

The foundation of the sanctuaries as royal temples occurred in mid-fifteenth century, in the context of the local ruler's patronage of great religious hierarchs from Tibet, who were monks and/or abbots of the Sakya monastic school. The Sakya school was founded in the late eleventh century in southern Tibet and a branch school named 'Ngor' was very prominent in the fifteenth century due to the charisma and exceptional intellect of the founder Ngor Chen, Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456). He personally visited Mustang where he was sponsored by the sovereign of Mustang A ma dpal. The two sanctuaries of the capital are both Sakya foundations, reflecting the iconographic and conceptual basis of this monastic school. Byampa temple was completed earlier and Thub chen temple was completed 1472.<sup>21</sup> A major earthquake is documented in 1505 which may well have caused some damage to the sanctuaries.<sup>22</sup> Already in 1663, historic documents confirm a considerable renovation of Byampa sanctuary.<sup>23</sup> There was also a renovation in Thub chen in 1815.<sup>24</sup> All in all, there is evidence of persistent use from the fifteenth century foundations to the twentieth

<sup>21</sup> Roberto Vitali, *A Short History of Mustang (10th–15th Century)* (Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2012): 179, 190, passim.

<sup>22</sup> The degree of damage to the sanctuaries during the vast Himalayan earthquake devastation in 1505 is minimal according to Roberto Vitali, *A Short History of Mustang (10th–15th Century)* (Dharamsala, Amnye Machen Institute, 2012): 224, however David Jackson considered this a major seismic episode, centered in Mustang, see David Jackson, "The Great Western-Himalayan Earthquake of 1505: A Rupture of the Central Himalayan Gap?" in *Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the IATS, 2000*, vol. 1, *Tibet, Past and Present*, ed. Henk Blezer (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 147–59.

<sup>23</sup> Roberto Vitali, "On Byams pa and Thub chen lha khang of Glo sMos thang," *Tibet Journal* 24, no. 1 (1999): 3–28.

<sup>24</sup> Roberto Vitali, "On Byams pa and Thub chen lha khang of Glo sMos thang," *Tibet Journal* 24, no. 1 (1999): 11.



century despite gradual deterioration of certain murals and walls. Over time, there developed a need for repair by architectural consolidation as well as conservation efforts in regard to the damage to the clay sculpture, major paint loss on portions of murals, on some walls complete loss.

To summarise the major issues of the sanctuaries in Mustang: while some murals were intact or showed little evidence of damage, several walls were not. Given that the original iconographic programme was lost in some cases, the question was how to bring the state of the sanctuaries to the satisfaction of the local population as well as local religious authorities and their sovereign, who exercised hereditary rule directly as heir of the sanctuaries' founders in the fifteenth century. How to respond to their request 'We want a place to worship, we don't want a museum'? This remained a subject for debate during the course of the lengthy conservation programme, particularly from 2012 to 2014, with divergencies in the opinions of certain 'foreign' experts.<sup>25</sup> Over time, the debate subsided, largely due to the firm commitment and supportive attitude of the Mustang sovereign in conjunction with the local religious authorities and the local population to pursue and not abandon the conservation efforts within their living sanctuaries.

The temples' walls are adorned with floor-to-ceiling murals, with ceilings measuring 7.4–8 metres in height. Some show miniature deities enveloped within tendrils of vines and exquisite flowers. Others depict *maṇḍalas*, huge complex concentric circles and successive squares within the circles; each *maṇḍala* represents the palace of a Buddhist meditation deity and the entourage of assistants, replete with gold and brilliant colours (Plate 11.4).

The literary accounts over the centuries are unanimous to declare the exceptional beauty of these murals and the mastery of the artists in the sculptures and paintings of the sanctuaries of Lo. In particular, a special technique is the application of additional layers of colour to intensify the contrast and enhance the brilliance of others. Artists valued the use of the addition of a paste to emphasise outlines of crowns and jewellery as well as certain textile motifs. The paste is coated with realgar on which gilding is applied, creating a raised gold line. Thus, this technique, which in appearance corresponds to *pastiglia*, results in an enhancement of the volume. According to the local traditional painters, in former times they would use animal glue mixed with *tsampa* (roast barley flour) to make the paste; in modern times, the recipe changed and instead of *tsampa*, the animal glue is mixed with clay.

There are inherent difficulties specific to Mustang. As is typical in a Himalayan kingdom, the altitude is high, the geographic location lies on the seismic fault of the

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<sup>25</sup> See John Sanday, "The Wall Paintings of Thubchen Lo Manthang, Upper Mustang: In Defence of History," *Orientalism* 43, no. 3 (2012): 77–78; Christian Luczanits, "Bringing a Masterwork Back to Life?" *Orientalism* 45, no. 2 (2014): 184–86; Edward Wong, "Buddhists, Reconstructing Sacred Tibetan Murals, Wield their Brushes in Nepal," *New York Times*, 23.02.2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/world/asia/in-nepal-buddhists-reconstruct-tibetan-murals.html> [accessed 07.03.2022].



**Plate 11.4:** Conservation of mural paintings with scaffolding in Jampa Lhakhang, Mustang, 2005.

Transhimalaya, the climate is harsh with extreme differences of temperature from dawn to mid-day and midnight – all potential stress factors. Contrary to Tibet, however, there is only a sparse population of approximately 1500 people as constant residents inhabiting a relatively flat plain of the capital city and its surroundings. The altitude did not impede trade – on the contrary, local pigments are few. Orpiment (yellow in Jampa), indigo (in Jampa), malachite, azurite, lapis lazuli, realgar and cinnabar all came from afar. It is most probable that the lapis lazuli was originally mined in Afghanistan and subsequently imported to Lo.

Characteristic features of the architecture of the two temples are structures built of stone and mud bricks, built on stone for the first few meters and then rammed mud, while some temples only use rammed mud bricks. The walls plastered with local earth (two to five layers), then an underlayer to allow paint (priming layer); clay statues have a ‘skeleton’ of wooden twigs as infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> Such statues may be constructed and integrated into the architecture of the temples.

<sup>26</sup> See also Plate 2.15 in the chapter by Birgit Angelika Schmidt in this volume, showing the construction stages of Buddhist clay statues.

### 3.2 Mustang Long-Term Work Protocols: Technical and Social

Scientific analysis of the pigments, their cleansing of surface dirt or soot due to butter lamp smoke nearby, elimination of fungus and repair of cracks and erosion due to damp were programmed; these tasks were progressively all accomplished by painting conservators during the mural conservation process; conservation architects analysed the water supply, water seepage into the temples and the structural specifications and defects in order to repair and amend them when necessary.

The lengthy programme of restoration work additionally fostered another inspiring purpose: training a group of local residents to rebuild and restore their own treasures. The King himself insisted on participation of the local population prior to actually starting the conservation project and his requirement was fully respected by the American Himalayan Foundation (AHF), the sponsor for the project.<sup>27</sup>

AHF mandated John Sanday Associates (JSA), a Nepalese company specialised in architectural/engineering consultancy to begin the work in Thubchen *gonpa*. The JSA team trained a local workforce of sixty members, including carpenters, masons, plasterers and labourers, and successfully revived the skills in Gyang construction (rammed earth construction) in the area.<sup>28</sup> Founded by John Sanday, a British architect based in Kathmandu, JSA was in charge of the whole project – architecture and wall conservation from 1994–2008. The painting conservation started in 1998 under the direction of Rodolfo Lujan Lunsford, assisted by the painting conservator Luigi Fieni.<sup>29</sup> He subsequently became director of the wall painting section as of 2004, under the supervision of John Sanday Associates.

Fieni encouraged and continued the programme to mentor local trainees in modern conservation science, explaining basic chemistry and complex conservation techniques to erstwhile traditional farmers. By 2008, at least forty people had been trained as conservation specialists, engaged to work in Mustang in their local temples

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27 The American Himalayan Foundation (AHF) through the National Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), formerly the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, see: <http://johnsandayassociates.com.np/conservation/lomanthang-drainage-and-historic-city-wall-repair-programme/> [accessed 07.03.2022].

28 <http://johnsandayassociates.com.np/conservation/lomanthang-drainage-and-historic-city-wall-repair-programme/> [accessed 07.03.2022].

29 See Luigi Fieni, “The Restoration of Murals in the Maitreya Temple of Mönthang,” in *The Wonders of Lo: The Artistic Heritage of Mustang*, ed. Erberto Lo Bue (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2010): 108–21; Luigi Fieni, “The Restoration in the Mahamuni Temple of Mönthang,” in *The Wonders of Lo: The Artistic Heritage of Mustang*, ed. Erberto Lo Bue (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2010): 122–33; Luigi Fieni, “Mustang – Jampa Lhakhang 2001–2011 and 2017,” <https://www.luigifieni.com/conservation/nepal-jampa.html>; Luigi Fieni, “Mustang – Thupchen Gonpa 1999–2004,” <https://www.luigifieni.com/conservation/nepal-thupchen.html> [both accessed 07.03.2022].



**Plate 11.5:** Tashi cleaning a *maṇḍala* in the east wall of Jampa, 2005, ‘Nepal Mustang Trainees 2005’, 2005.

and subsequently, due to the expertise acquired, they have also worked elsewhere in Himalayas (Plate 11.5).<sup>30</sup>

As a result of this community instruction in the art and science of conservation, the sacred temples of Mustang have been slowly and steadily reborn and revitalised. This has led to the full restoration of some damaged or lost mural sections, in accord with the spiritual aspirations of the inhabitants, their king and the local religious and secular authorities. The lacunae of the iconography and iconometry were assessed by the two most important religious hierarchs of the Sakya monastic school, and their recommendations were strictly followed. Less onerous decisions were made in an assembly comprising the inhabitants of Lo, or a representative of each family; the assembly’s decisions were determined by popular vote.

This democratic preservation ethic, virtually unique to Mustang, has resulted in a climate where devotions and worship may continue untrammelled as work inside the sanctuaries has become part of their daily lives during the past generation of inhabitants (1994–2022). In the Thupchen temple, all deities to be painted anew on the blank walls were chosen by eminent religious authorities: HH Sakya Trizin himself and later on his son HH Sakya Trichen (Plates 11.6, 11.7). It was originally a Sakya temple,

<sup>30</sup> <http://johnsandayassociates.com.np/conservation/gompa-and-chhorten-programme/> [accessed 07.03.2022].





**Plate 11.6:** Thubchen Lhakhang, Buddha east wall before cleaning, 2011.



**Plate 11.7:** Thubchen Lhakhang, Buddha east wall after cleaning and conservation, 2011.

it still is a Sakya temple. Thus, in the opinion of local religious and secular authorities, these two two Sakya hierarchs are the most appropriate to determine how to complete the iconographic program and how to bring an auspicious ambiance for worship.<sup>31</sup>

## 4 Ladakh, Basgo Temple Conservation Project: Urgent Intervention (2005–2006)

The Basgo Temple has historic importance as a sanctuary within the ruins of a royal complex in central Ladakh. This sanctuary is part of this sixteenth century royal foundation (Plates 11.8, 11.9). The sanctuary had been consistently in use for more than three hundred years with occasional short periods of disuse. Over time, the foundation of the temple has gradually shifted, rendering the main columns in the hall out of plumb. At the start of the intervention, the columns were supported by additional props. However, contrary to typical Tibetan Buddhist sanctuaries where years of butter lamp use leave deposits of soot obscuring the murals, in Basgo's Maitreya temple the brilliant chromatic intensity and quality of the paintings were evident, despite major structural cracks through several panels. Further, rainwater seepage had left dried mud encrusting large portions of the murals.<sup>32</sup> The immediate goal was the consolidation of plaster and painted layers, filling of losses and cracks by mural conservator Sanjay Dhar, cleaning and finishing by Art Conservation services (Sree Kumar Menon and Maninder Singh Gill in 2005–6). The Basgo site was nominated to the World Monuments Watch list of 100 most endangered sites as an acute situation requiring emergency conservation of walls and murals alike.<sup>33</sup>

The sponsorship of the project stems from a purely local initiative: the Basgo Welfare Committee raised funds and then received support from NIRLAC (Nangyal Institute for Research in Ladakhi Art and Culture), established in 1985 by the Royal Family, under the auspices of the Queen Mother and the King of Ladakh. NIRLAC's programmes aiming at the revitalisation of traditional skills and knowledge are significantly contributing to local awareness of the importance of the preservation of

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix I for detailed description of the technical and artistic procedures followed in Mustang.

<sup>32</sup> Sanjay Dhar, "Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India's Ladakh District," in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 288.

<sup>33</sup> See World Monuments Fund, "Basgo Gompa (Maitreya Temples)," last updated February 2019, <https://www.wmf.org/project/basgo-gompa-maitreya-temples> [accessed 07.03.2022], and Sanjay Dhar, "Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India's Ladakh District," in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 286.



**Plate 11.8:** Basgo Fortress.



**Plate 11.9:** Basgo Fortress.



heritage as elements from the past that today provide Ladakhis with a sense of identity.<sup>34</sup> At present in Basgo, a significant part of the paintings are still in their original condition thanks to the local initiatives and action to impede deterioration and to ensure that the conservation process would be both systematic and scientific. The awareness of the Basgo Welfare Committee had broad implications for the future of the temple. Those involved in the Basgo conservation project decided together to use Basgo as a potential example of methodology for the conservation of mural paintings in Ladakh. In the words of Sanjay Dhar, the project of the Maitreya temple at Basgo could ‘build a matrix for traditional conservation methodology and expertise through community participation and scientific conservation techniques.’<sup>35</sup> (Plate 11.10).

Local community participation and efforts by individuals and organisation ensured a multidisciplinary approach involving an architectural conservator, soil specialists, structural engineers and painting conservators.

Dhar has made an overview of projects in India with special focus on Basgo. He wrote: ‘As a result of overprotection and lack of communication between the authorities and the community, conservation is seen as antidevelopment. There is also the element of devotion and the desire to offer the best to the gods, which leads religious communities to take down damaged sections of structures and rebuild.’ This approach results from a lack of information about the potential of conservation. Dhar also raised the issue that also sometimes well-meaning dilettantes raise funds for conservation projects then leave the sites in worse condition. Such situations create mistrust within the community and compromise future work.<sup>36</sup>

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**34** Vanessa Kredler, “Desert Winds of Change: High-Altitude Ladakh’s Responses to a Global Challenge,” *ICME Papers 2003*, ICME 2003 Annual Conference: Cultural Traditions in Danger of Disappearing in Contemporary Society – A Challenge for Museums, Sibiu, 26.–30.09.2003, [https://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME\\_2003\\_kredler.pdf](https://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME_2003_kredler.pdf) [accessed 07.03.2022]; Sanjay Dhar, “Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India’s Ladakh District,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 296.

**35** Sanjay Dhar, “Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India’s Ladakh District,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 286.

**36** Sanjay Dhar, “Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India’s Ladakh District,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 286.



Plate 11.10: Mural Painting of Buddha (after), Saha-Chamba Lhakhang.

## 4.1 Basgo: Long-Term Community Involvement

In 1976 the Youth Dramatic Club (from c. 1987 on the Basgo Welfare Committee) were two initiatives where the people anticipated and validated the key principle that the ‘[. . .] [r]esponsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it [. . .]’ as per the Nara Document on Authenticity.<sup>37</sup> The Basgo Welfare Committee has one nominated member from every household in the village with equal voting rights on all issues, irrespective of landholding or social hierarchy.

## 4.2 Project of Chamba Lhakhang at Basgo

The buildings are constructed on a hillside inside the walls of a citadel with remains of a royal palace and houses of ministers and nobles, thus this site has great historical importance. The main assembly hall of the temple measures 9.6 x 9 metres, the ceiling height is 5.4 metres. The most notable feature of Basgo is the colossal sculpture in clay of Maitreya, ten meters in height, surrounded by murals, and a nearby smaller chapel as well with murals (Plate 11.11). As Dhar explained, ‘[t]he proposed model is based on international conservation practice and adheres to the various guidelines, charters, and projects that have been accepted as standards in the practice of conservation internationally.’<sup>38</sup> In this respect, the Basgo project has a broader conceptual view. Dhar concluded, ‘[w]e used the opportunity to document the paintings, to undertake much needed emergency measures and to develop a treatment methodology after extensive testing of materials and techniques. Most important, through a series of dialogues, on- and off-site, with all residents of Basgo, the concepts and problems of cleaning, reintegration of the pictorial surface and ethics and norms of conservation were introduced to the local community.’<sup>39</sup> (Plates 11.12, 11.13).

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37 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICMOS), “The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)”: 46, <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf> [accessed 07.03.2022].

38 Sanjay Dhar, “Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lhakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India’s Ladakh District,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 289.

39 Sanjay Dhar, “Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lhakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India’s Ladakh District,” in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 289–90.





**Plate 11.11:** Chamba Lhakhang, Basgo, colossal sculpture in clay of Maitreya.



Plate 11.12: Chamba Lhakhang, Basgo, east wall, before cleaning in 2001.





Plate 11.13: Chamba Lhakhang, Basgo, east wall in 2017.

According to Dhar, the following twelve-point protocol was developed:

1. Detailed architectural drawings and condition assessment of the structure.
2. Geological survey of the stone and soil of the hill on which the temple is located.
3. Contour mapping of the surrounding area up to 100 metres, for a better understanding of water drainage in and around the site, as well as for developing the site map and future planning.
4. Detailed analysis of the mud and mortar samples used in the construction of the Chamba Lakhang and some of the structures in the citadel, specifically, the surviving bastion walls.
5. Detailed analysis of soil samples taken from the vicinity of the site and of the traditional building materials used in the region, to determine the best clay mixtures at the time of conservation.
6. Stratigraphic study of the paint layer and mud plaster.
7. Examination of the paint layer in ultraviolet light.
8. Microscopic analysis of surface patterns (brushstrokes, etc.) of the paint layer to understand the process of paint application and the artist's deliberate play with textures and effects and to determine the nature of deposits on the paint surface.
9. Study of cracks and crevices in the walls to ascertain insect and other biological activity, as well as the layering and deterioration within, using an auriscope (otoscope).
10. Establishment of safety parameters for the use of chemicals and solvents to clean the pictorial surface.
11. Analysis of the properties of the mud bricks used in the wall to determine water absorption rate, clay adhesion, and so on, for the purpose of developing the materials and methodology for conservation.
12. Correlation of the condition of the paintings with the architectural assessment of structural and building-related problems. This was done by superimposing the architectural assessment drawings over the graphic documentation of the wall paintings. This was important for developing a combined strategy for the conservation of the paintings and the structure of the temple.<sup>40</sup>

## 5 Concluding Remarks

In the project in Lhasa, Tibet, local materials were prioritised in a spirit of compatibility with the techniques and materials used in the original work, maintained at the request of the local community and the monks. In the project of the sanctuaries of Mustang, the

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<sup>40</sup> Sanjay Dhar, "Documentation and Emergency Treatment of Wall Paintings in the Chamba Lakhang (Maitreya Temple): Developing a Methodology to Conserve Mural Paintings in India's Ladakh District," in *Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road*, ed. Neville Agnew (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010): 288.



long duration of the project, all in all close to 22 years, has resulted in progressive changes in the strategies of conservation, repair and repainting. The latter have been accomplished increasingly by local inhabitants trained as conservators whose repainting of certain sections is accomplished under the guidance of the highest religious authorities concerned. The revival of the ancient traditional techniques of construction and the learning of the conservation and painting techniques to be applied in the sanctuaries have represented a considerable metamorphosis in the local communities, accompanied with great levels of voluntary participation and collaboration. In the project in Basgo, Ladakh, which was an acute situation, taking advantage of the community resources developed earlier, the community participation which had been growing prior to the acute need provided a basis for concerted reflexion and participation in the conservation procedures. These were conceived and conducted in many respects in full observation of the ethics and norms of international conservation.

To conclude, the complexities arising in each situation reflect the local context but the debate remains on-going: what is the extent of architectural restoration or consolidation which is appropriate? What is the extent of restoration to recover lost sections of murals, retouching or repainting which should be permitted on historic wall paintings in sanctuaries in active use by the community? To what extent are twenty-first century conservation projects in the Himalayas obliged to be dependent on external constraints of ‘minimum intervention’ or, on the contrary, to be dependent upon Buddhist religious concepts and customs prevailing in the community? These three projects allow us to glimpse the complexities in the development of their respective conservation strategies, their relative dependencies upon local norms and international conservation ethics as well as their relative emancipation from such dependencies.

## 6 Appendix I. (Quotation from UNESCO 2015 Practical Conservation Guidelines [. . .] Pingyao)

In order to conserve the authenticity of a historic building, a ‘minimum intervention’ approach is required, in which the owner undertakes as much work as required to maintain and upgrade the building without negatively impacting on its important values.<sup>41</sup> This approach was first outlined in the Venice Charter (1964) and is still widely used as a basic principle by conservation professionals. Principle of Authenticity: The Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention (2013) require that the physical authenticity of a historic building and its context should be preserved in relation to

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<sup>41</sup> UNESCO Office in Beijing, “Practical Conservation Guidelines for Traditional Courtyard Houses and Environment in the Ancient City of Pingyao” (Paris/Beijing: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNESO Beijing Office, 2015), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234621> [accessed 07.03.2022].

design, materials, workmanship and setting. The use of traditional materials and building techniques maintains the physical authenticity of the place, in addition to the pleasing visual impact. The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) raises the importance of authenticity in its socio-cultural context. The physical properties of traditional materials and techniques have been tested over generations for their effectiveness in keeping the building cool or warm, preventing damp and mold, and providing seismic stability. Respecting the traditional construction system will allow the building to be preserved for a long time. At the same time, using traditional materials and crafts generates employment for traditional crafts persons and workers, and also preserves the traditional knowledge in these fields.

**Principle of Integrity:** It is important to maintain the organic relationship between all components of the courtyard buildings and its setting. The tangible and intangible value of a courtyard building is reflected in the character of a building, which must be maintained in its conservation. The context and setting of a place is as important as its physical fabric. The location of a place forms part of its significance and value.

**Principle of Continuance:** The original function of the building must be respected, and may be adjusted and adapted with consideration of environment, social and economic benefits.

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Kanika Gupta

## Chapter 12

# Countering Cerebral Invasions: Sculptors Against Dependencies

## 1 The Anonymous Indian Sculptors and Their Dependencies

The study of power politics through the ages reveals that the hegemon relentlessly discover, devise and deploy various tools of dominance and governance. Art has been eyed as one of the possible tools for this purpose, and the makers of art as the potential slaves, controlled through force or finance, to handle this tool for their masters. The polity and the religion have used it collectively or against each other in every civilisation. In the Indian context, one more controlling device has been employed to handle this tool from ancient times onwards, and that is the cerebral hegemony.

Indian art tradition, though one of the greatest in the world, has not given the legitimate status to the artist community; to sculptors in particular in the purview of this paper. In every phase of Indian art history, we come across various agencies that deny the supreme position to the creator in the aesthetic activity, and assign it instead either to the patron, the religious leaders, the theoreticians or to the deity itself who is considered to be the originator of that art. It is strange and disgraceful that the creators of the most exceptional masterpieces of Indian sculpture are not known to the world. But it is most heartening that the non-conformists from the sculptors' community averted this cerebral invasion for generations. Though the system tried to impose religious demands or a strictly codified grammar of sculpture on the practicing artists, these masters evaded the conspired dogma through their creative genius and personal parole. I intend to substantiate this thesis with the case studies of Bharhut (second century BCE) and early Ellora (sixth century CE).

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## 2 Bharhut

It is impossible to discuss Bharhut art<sup>1</sup> without taking note of Pauni sculpture.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately as the case is, we are left today with but two pillars from the many that must have adorned the Buddhist *stūpa* at Pauni, datable to 250 BCE. It is evident that the sculptors who exerted themselves at Pauni moved away from that site after probably finishing the work at the *stūpa*. The prospect of further substantial work at that site was not very evident to them and reasonably enough, the sculptor guilds responded positively to the call for carvers for the massive project soon to be undertaken at the site of Bharhut in central India. A stylistic analysis of the sculptures at Pauni and at Bharhut leaves no doubt that the same sculptor guilds were active at both centres.

Kannal and I have argued elsewhere<sup>3</sup> that sculptors and sculptor guilds in ancient India were not too numerous and that this led to sculptors travelling frequently in search of commissions. Obviously, these sculptors could not have survived without their daily bread. The fact that they shifted places often, with or without their families, implies that they stuck to carving despite the limited commissions that came their way.

Alas, it is possible that apart from the two pillars from Pauni, we may never know of the themes and creative devices employed by the carvers there. Fortunately, the sculpture of Bharhut present us with the opportunity of delving into the mind of the sculptors.

The *stūpa* of Bharhut was the first of its kind undertaken at Bharhut, not just in terms of the size of the monument, but also for the creative intentions of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in their willingness to adorn the pillars and the gateway with a profusion of imagery. The *saṅgha* acted like the indirect patron. It was the Buddhist establishment that conceived of this structure and then set themselves to the task of collecting donations from the laity for its realisation. As the inscriptions convey, the donations were made by a range of people from different professions and cities. It was ultimately the *saṅgha* who collected these. They were the keepers, and it was their responsibility to ensure the completion of the project, irrespective of the size of the total donations. Each donor could donate any desired amount, but how were these uneven amounts to be used? These were the decisions which only a central authority could take.

From the inscriptions of Bharhut, it is possible to discern roughly two types of donations: one for the making of a *suci* and the other for the making of a *thabho*.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that the donated amount for each of these categories could not have been equal at all times. Much flexibility must have been permitted by the *saṅgha* to make donations easy

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1879).

<sup>2</sup> Bhalchandra Shantaram Deo and Jagat Pati Joshi, *Pauni Excavation* (Nagpur: Nagpur University, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Deepak Kannal and Kanika Gupta, *Lupadakhe: Unknown Master Sculptors of Ancient India* (Delhi: Mandala Books, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> A *suci* is a horizontal stone slab, and a *thabho* a vertical stone slab used in a Buddhist *stūpa*.



and profuse.<sup>5</sup> Understandably, the undertaking and completion of the task of making a *stūpa* like Bharhut could not have been accomplished unless the decision-making powers rested on a central authority. The donations were received from the laity, but they were collected by the *saṅgha* which surely promised to the donors an inscription at an appropriate place.

All the carved pillars of the Bharhut *stūpa* discovered till date indicate that the entire programme of sculptural carvings forms a unified whole. The entire scheme of the carvings and their theme were dictated by a single authority. The term *navakammika*, a Buddhist entity documented in *Vinaya Piṭaka* as well as Bharhut inscriptions (and at many other early Buddhist sites), denotes a monk who functioned as a liaison between this central authority, most likely a small group from among the *saṅgha*, and the sculptor guilds working at Bharhut. *Navakammika* was a person, probably a man, who did not directly participate in the carving process; he was not a sculptor; his function was to convey the Buddhist stories and myths that the *saṅgha* wished to be carved. It was the function of the sculptor to give a visual form to these stories. And for this he must inevitably invent some visual devices and a sculptural language. It is in these that the genius of the Bharhut sculptors manifests itself.

## 2.1 The Story of Erapata Nāga

I shall here attempt to demonstrate the artistic paradigm of Bharhut sculptors with some examples. Snake bites and the cult of snake worship have persisted in Indian culture from earliest recorded history. It was a phenomenon which could not be ignored by the Buddhists and every attempt was made to assimilate the cult within its fold. The story of Erapata *nāga* (Plate 12.1), with its various references in many Buddhist textual sources, is a reflection of this assimilation.<sup>6</sup> According to a version of the story, which is dated to a period after Bharhut sculpture but corresponds completely with the visual depiction, a monk is reborn as Erapata *nāga* due to a misdeed. In order to find Buddha in this birth, the *nāga* creates a poem or verse (*gāthā*) with questions which only the Buddha can answer. He asks his daughter to dance over his hoods repeating these *gāthās* till one day they are correctly answered. The Buddha, realising that a young Brāhmin, Uttara in one version and Nārada in another, wishes to attempt to solve the verses, gives him the correct solution. On hearing the answer from the Brāhmin, the *nāga* realises the presence of the Buddha and in excitement strikes the water of Ganga,<sup>7</sup> thus bringing about a flood. The *nāga* then visits the Buddha and receives his teaching.

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5 Several other possibilities of making donations possible have been proposed by Sushma Trivedi and other scholars for many early Buddhist sites in the edited volume: Anand Singh, ed., *Dāna: Reciprocity and Patronage in Buddhism* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2017).

6 A *nāga* is a snake.

7 Ganga is the river Ganges.

In the hands of the Bharhut sculptor, the story is narrated visually in a way that brings its Buddhist essence to the focus. The character of Erapata is depicted thrice, once in his zoomorphic form with his daughter standing on his hood, the second time in human form with his daughter and perhaps his wife, and the third time in front of a Sirisa tree, worshipping Buddha in his aniconic form. The repetition of character here suggests a change in space along with the unfolding of the narrative. The right-hand two-thirds of the panel depict the *nāga* territory, and it is done in great detail with numerous water lilies filling the entire space. Not an inch of space is left out in this section and yet the viewer does not get a sense of *horror vacui* since the other section does not display that feature. A distinct diagonal pathway or stream in the panel has two trees and even birds in it and it leads the eye to the Bodhi tree. Is this a suggestion to the next plane that Erapata takes which leads him to the Buddha, wanting to leave his own marine life and body behind? Because we see Erapata outside of the water when he bows to the tree. In the previous two depictions all the characters, including the Brāhmin who solves the *gāthā*, are half submerged in water, suggesting the *nāga*'s sphere of influence. Or has the sculptor carved the entire panel flooded already with the enchantment of the *nāga*, thus highlighting that sentiment, the emotional peak of the story?



**Plate 12.1:** The story of Erapata *nāga*, Bharhut, Indian Museum Kolkata, Accession Number 265.

Must we not attempt to read this panel metaphorically as well, bestowing it with the power of *vyañjana*<sup>8</sup> (suggestion) and *rasa-dhvani* (aesthetic pleasure in a literary expression), instead of simply seeing it as a literal depiction of the elements in the story, restricting ourselves to *abhidhā* (primary meaning)? A sense of celebration and abundance pervades the panel, highlighting the sentiment to which the sculptor wished to draw its viewer's attention. Restraining ourselves to a literal reading of this panel would do immense injustice not just to the master sculptor, but also to our own imaginative faculties.

The diagonally composed path gives a sense of turmoil, outside as well as inside the mind of our protagonist Erapata. Unlike many other panels from Bharhut, everything here is quite grounded and has a sense of gravity. Yet human figures in the water retain a floating lightness, unlike Erapata who is completely on firm ground. This groundedness is definitely a conscious choice made by the sculptor, in order to convey the change that Erapata goes through in his mind, visually coming out of the waters to receive the Buddha's teachings on secure and strong grounds. A masterpiece technically as well as in its creative use of sculptural devices which take the viewer on a journey to *rasa-dhvani*, this panel is a rare artistic achievement of a master sculptor working at Bharhut.

## 2.2 The Vidura Paṇḍita Jātaka

There is only one pillar among all of what remains of Bharhut today, which has a single narrative carved on it from top to bottom. Two sides of this pillar are carved, one of which has *Vidura Paṇḍita Jātaka* in four sections on the entire length of the pillar (Plates 12.2, 12.3).<sup>9</sup> The topmost portion shows *yakkha* Punnaka in conversation with *nāga* princess Irandati as they fall in love.<sup>10</sup> On one side she peeps out of her window and then she appears again in front of the *yakkha*. A tiny lion face right behind the *yakkha* and another animal face (perhaps an owl?) in front enhance the forest milieu in which the lovers meet. The section below this shows two men standing in front of a *nāga* couple. It is probable that this depiction takes the viewers to a later part of the narrative, in which Punnaka *yakkha* has already won Vidura *paṇḍita* over dice from king Dhananjaya of Kurus. After the adventure depicted in the episode below this

<sup>8</sup> These three terms, *abhidhā*, *vyañjana* and *rasa-dhvani* are part of the ancient linguistics theory proposed by Bhartr̥hari (arguably second century BCE) and developed further by Ānandawardhan (ninth century CE) within the context of *rasa* or aesthetic pleasure. We encounter the *rasa* theory for the first time in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* attributed to Bharata (Manomohan Ghosh, *The Nāṭyaśāstra: A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Ascribed to Bharata Muni* [Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950]). For Indian linguistic theory of Bhartr̥hari refer to K. Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning* (Chennai [Madras]: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> A *Jātaka* is a previous life-story of the Buddha.

<sup>10</sup> In ancient India, a *yakkha* was a male nature spirit.



**Plate 12.2:** *Vidura Paṇḍita Jātaka*, Bharhut, Indian Museum Kolkata, Accession Number 257 (upper panel), 258 (middle panel).





**Plate 12.3:** *Vidura Paṇḍita Jātaka*, Bharhut, Indian Museum Kolata, Accession Number 258 (middle panel), 259 (lower panel).

panel, he has brought Vidura in front of the *nāga* king. The left-hand portion establishes the palace scene, the residence of the *nāga* king. Below this panel is the most important scene, which has all the dramatic elements. The sculptor gives it maximum space, and the inscription naming this *Jātaka* is placed below it. The narrative within this panel begins from the bottom in which Vidura holds the tail of Punnaka's horse tightly as they both fly away. Above this, Punnaka holds Vidura upside down to threaten him. And finally, Vidura conquers Punnaka's heart with his sermons. The groundedness on the above two sections is intentionally absent in this panel, since the protagonists fly away and Punnaka attempts to throw Vidura off a mountain peak upside down. All of this happens above earthly realms and there is a sense of chaos that pervades the panel, again reflecting Punnaka's tumultuous state of mind when he no longer wishes to kill Vidura for the sake of the *nāga* princess. In the story, Punnaka attempts to frighten Vidura in many ways but fails every time. However, the sculptor chooses to depict the instance with Vidura turned upside down, perhaps mirroring Punnaka's heart. Vidura's standing up straight again and victorious also acts as a visual metaphor for Punnaka's heart set on the right path by Vidura, thus itself turning upside down, imitating Vidura's bodily action in the image. It is indeed a clever choice made by the sculptor which encourages its viewer to read beyond the obvious in the image, thus also encouraging the laity to themselves undergo a similar change within themselves as they witness this scene, circumambulating the Bharhut *stūpa*. This visual device is the magic that the sculptor adds in the narrative, turning an act into a metaphor complementing the intended Buddhist teaching.

The lowermost panel (Plate 12.3) is unfortunately now broken, but shows Punnaka seated in a palace with his horse behind him. It is possible that here he is engaged in the game of dice with king Dhananjaya. In this panel, like the first two from above, the symmetry returns along with order, in composition as well as on the terrestrial sphere. The viewer's attention is however invited most importantly to the episode carved at eye level, with diagonal visual elements enhancing turmoil in the panel, as in the mind of its protagonist, Punnaka and the viewer. It would be erroneous to imagine that these choices are accidental. In fact, they convey that this master sculptor was not simply a carver, but a mind on fire never satisfied with mere representation.

## 2.3 Unidentified Scene

Another panel from Bharhut has an arguably unidentified depiction (Plate 12.4) in which a ceremony seems to be underway along with four female dancing figures. The four dancing figures have been identified as *apsaras* with specific names in the inscriptions given below the panel.<sup>11</sup> The viewer immediately gets a sense of a celebration brimming

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<sup>11</sup> *Apsaras* are celestial female beings, referred to in many ancient Indian texts, including the *Vedas*.

with people. The sculptor achieves this effect within the small frame provided by juxtaposing human figures over each other. With this overlapping he is also able to create receding space without using a single background element, apart from a tree now almost lost. The left-hand half of the image has a group sitting in a circle, apparently a group of musicians. In this group a female with her back towards the viewer has a child seated on her lap, probably a girl. This tiny detail, along with another very young girl seen on the right-hand side dancing in the foreground, adds a touch of playfulness, very sensitively thought of and rendered. It was quite easily possible to carve festivities with a dance without such an eye for detail but then, that would have simply been just another dancing scene. What makes this panel special is the charming child's play placed right in the centre of merriment. Without the children's presence it would have looked more like a music and dance recitation, done to impress. It is in fact being done here in merriment and joy. It is the presence of a seemingly insignificant element of children that gives this panel a most delicate and rare, blithesome disposition.



**Plate 12.4:** Dancing Scene, Bharhut, Indian Museum Kolkata, Accession Number 273.

Is it not the sculptor who deserves to be celebrated for these subtle layers which add tremendously to the stories he was told to depict? This master sculptor is condemned to remain unknown to us forever. We know nothing about him apart from the sensitive works he has left for us to admire and celebrate, and also celebrate his remembrance.



### 3 Early Ellora – The *Dvārapālas*

The scheme of doorkeepers, *dvārapālas*, in the early caves of Ellora, when examined stylistically, reveal a distinct pattern. The anatomy as well as physiognomy suggest the hands of a single guild.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, there was one guild which received the commission for the ‘doorkeeper’ images to be made for some of the early caves, that is, caves number 2, 3, 4, and 7. This means that the programme of these caves, all of which belong to the earliest phase of Ellora, was conceived together.

The nature of this commission conveys something of the manner in which division of labour was sought in the making of these caves. It also establishes further the role of the *sutradhāra*, an entity that has been much discussed in scholarship.<sup>13</sup> It is inevitable that a central authority must take the decisions of allotting such commissions in order to maintain homogeneity in the sculptural depictions in the cave. This central authority had the title of *sutradhāra*. In case of our doorkeepers, he chooses a single guild for all the caves being conceived at that time. This choice has the obvious advantage of attaining a certain intended symmetry in the images of the *dvārapālas* in all the caves under discussion. Perhaps the *sutradhāra* also thought that a guild well practised in carving only a specific kind of image would be more efficient and even take less time in completing their work.

All these considerations would enable one to imagine that the task that lay in front of this guild in the early caves of Ellora was more labour-based than creative. After all, was the carver not expected to carve out similar images in all these caves, in the exact same placement? In such a case the sculptor seems to have acted more like an artisan. Were there any special privileges that he would have enjoyed in case he carved an exceptional *dvārapāla*, which, though did not quite look like a replica of the others, performed its task of a doorkeeper suitably if not better? Would the sculptor be rewarded for such creativity? Or was this creativity even permitted, if not condemned? The scheme of the *dvārapālas* under consideration shows that a certain distinction in the images was definitely not condemned. But one would wonder if his attempts at creativity were at all rewarded.

I have attempted to trace the hands of a single sculptor guild which worked on the *dvārapāla* images of caves 3 and 7 elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Taking the methodology of stylistic analysis further, it is possible to add the *dvārapāla* images of Ellora cave number 2

<sup>12</sup> Deepak Kannal and Kanika Gupta, *Lupadakhe: Unknown Master Sculptors of Ancient India* (Delhi: Mandala Books, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Ram Nath Misra, *Ancient Artists and Art Activity* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975); Ram Nath Misra, *Outlines of Indian Art: Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Dancing and Drama* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2014); Ram Nath Misra, *Silpa in Indian Tradition: Concept and Instrumentalities* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2009). A *sutradhāra* basically is one who controls. He is a decision-maker. The term has been used in Indian theatre and sculpture.

<sup>14</sup> Deepak Kannal, and Kanika Gupta, *Lupadakhe: Unknown Master Sculptors of Ancient India* (Delhi: Mandala Books, 2019).

(Plate 12.5) and 4 (Plates 12.6, 12.7) to this list. This precisely is the contribution of stylistic analysis as an intrinsic art-historical methodology, that even in the absence of any written record, one is able to ascribe a body of work to a single guild or sculptor, whose any trace of existence is otherwise completely obliterated, that is, apart from the works he carved. Taking this further within the Indian context, when the doorkeepers of these four caves from Ellora are examined, one is rather pleasantly surprised. This guild was given the task of making the same image in all these caves. The guild could have simply completed the task at hand in the shortest time by replicating the images. They would have probably received the same remuneration that they did, had they not applied themselves to any further stress on their creative nerves. And yet, what one comes across is a marked evolution: not just progression in the quality of carving, but also in the image as a creative work of art. As if this sculptor and his guild were adamant at not simply mastering the art of carving in the living rock of Ellora, but also wished to convey a range of ideas within the image they worked on. Against all odds, here was a guild, perhaps led by a master sculptor, who had greater ambitions and was not merely content by the commission of carving doorkeepers.



**Plate 12.5:** *Dvārapala* images of Ellora cave number 2.

Compare the work of this guild with that of a later guild working at Ellora which Kannal has arguably labelled as the ‘Space Filler’ guild.<sup>15</sup> This guild worked in many caves

<sup>15</sup> Deepak Kannal has referred to this guild in his lectures and talks which remain unpublished till date. One such lecture, in which he refers to the ‘Space Filler’ guild of Ellora, was delivered on 22 September 2020, for Shree Designz, Bengaluru, organised by R.H. Kulkarni, Professor of Art History, Bengaluru.



**Plate 12.6:** *Dvārapala* image of Ellora cave number 2, left side of the doorway.





**Plate 12.7:** Dvārapala image of Ellora cave number 2, right side of the doorway.

including cave 27, 15 (Plate 12.8, Gaṅgādhara Śiva), 11 and 12 in ninth century CE. This guild carved more images compared to our master guild under discussion. And yet there is no evolution in their work, be it in skill or creative inputs. Their works are quite distinct and the bad quality of sculpture they consistently created has been noted by Kannal. Surely, they were reimbursed of their work which they carried out for quite some time and in many caves at Ellora.



**Plate 12.8:** Gaṅgādhara Śiva, Cave 15, Ellora, the work of the space filler guild.

Compare this with the work of the sixth century CE master sculptor of these *dvārapāla* images. Such a spirited personality, fired with creative energies and the strength of a vision, was indeed needed, when the sculptor's work hardly received more notice than that of labour. Paid off for a day's work and obliterated from existence otherwise, this master sculptor refused to submit to this destiny. Resisting the cerebral invasion that dictated certain iconographic elements and production of replicas of images, to be calculated and valued only in their number, this Ellora master sculptor refused to see his work as mere mathematics, in which a certain number of images carved converted into a specific amount of money.

## 4 Sculptor Names as Historical Records

R.N. Misra has contributed tremendously by painstakingly collecting every single reference to a sculptor's name in ancient Indian textual sources of a diverse range. However, can an artist be understood and appreciated without any reference to his work? All the textual references refer to artists as mythical characters who, as is the case with the carpenter Kokāsa, can pull off impossible tasks like creating a flying machine. There are other cases in which artists are mentioned but the text does not mention any artefact that can be ascribed today to the mentioned name. None of the textual artist names can be corroborated with any inscriptional evidence. Sometimes, as Misra has mentioned, even female family members are mentioned, for instance, daughters-in-law who contributed to art-making as a family pursuit. Since daughters were married off into a different family, the daughter-in-law was taught the tradition. And yet, we do not know a single work of architecture or sculpture which can be attributed to any name mentioned in the texts, mythical or otherwise.

It is also being increasingly mentioned in scholarship that Indian sculpture is full of sculptor names in inscriptions, especially at sculptural sites like Khajuraho and Badami, which have hitherto been ignored.<sup>16</sup> Based on such inscriptional evidence, the anonymity of the Indian sculptor is being called a myth which is now fading away. A re-examination of this evidence will prove that such claims cannot be taken seriously. Certain panels carved in the Cālukyan sites are mentioned with a single name, with just a name and without any further information (Plate 12.9).<sup>17</sup> It is most certain that it is the sculptor that is mentioned on these panels. In many cases a name appears only on a single piece of carving, maybe two, and is not repeated again. This is also not very unlikely. It is highly possible that a sculptor has been named only once or twice. But how does that help us? What can one know simply because a certain person carved one image? There is no other image ascribed to that person for a comparison. We do not know where this person came from, where he learnt the art of carving. How did his work transform or stay unchanged over a period? Where was he placed in the hierarchy of the sculptor's guild? And where did he go after making this image? All that we know is a name alone. Does that take away his anonymity? By only knowing his name next to one carving we know as little about the sculptor as we would if that inscription did not exist. Surely no one expected the artefact to create itself, on its own, as if by magic. It was obviously created by someone. But we do not know what else that someone did and what became of him. And in this situation, one is forced to re-think. Is this what

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<sup>16</sup> Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell, *The Unfinished: Stone Carvers at Work on the Indian Subcontinent* (Delhi: Roli Books, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> On a panel depicting Śiva in fierce form, there is an inscription below the image which mentions Chengama as the sculptor. This information was provided by R.H. Kulkarni, Bengaluru, who has also contributed the accompanying image for this reference. I am indebted to him for his support.





**Plate 12.9:** Śiva in fierce form, with an inscription mentioning Chengama as the sculptor, Pattadakal, Karnataka.



recognition meant to that sculptor or was it the last resort of the artist to leave a mark on his creation, the only possible way?

At Badami one finds sculptor names on a separate wall with lines marked next to them, as if to keep a count of the number of days they were at work, perhaps to calculate their wages. Their names are not written next to their works. Such inscriptional evidence goes a step further, in delineating that their work was treated more like everyday labour and not art. Apart from attempting to trace the regional origin of the mentioned names, as done by Padigar,<sup>18</sup> it is not possible to celebrate the creativity of an individual. And without such a recognition, one is indeed left to wonder: what could have kept up the inspiration levels of the sculptor when he could hardly hope for anything beyond a day's salary and the following day's work?

## 5 Insane and Ingenious: Vestiges of the Masters of Indian Sculpture

Insanity is an important ingredient for the making of a master, especially when the world is driven by a system that fails to support or appreciate ingenuity. The two master sculptors discussed here could not have achieved what they did had they lacked any trace of it. While there were sculptors who simply fulfilled a task, satisfied with executing their carvings without any creative spark submitting to the order of the day, Indian sculpture would not have been shaped the way it was, if not for the master sculptors who struggled, fought and refused to surrender to their dependencies on the patrons and the texts. Textual references in the hands of these two sculptors breathed a new life and opened themselves afresh, and without their brilliance these stories would have simply been dull representations. The patrons' egos would have been satisfied, the money would have been paid anyway, the stars and the moon would have continued to shine. But it was the sheer lunacy of a handful of sculptors that created masterpieces of Indian sculpture. Perhaps it was the sheer necessity of giving meaning to their own existence, whose names, alas, have no longer survived. – May their works remain till the end of sun and moon.

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<sup>18</sup> Srinivas V. Padigar, "Craftsmen's Inscriptions from Bādāmī: Their Significance," in *Ellora Caves: Sculptures and Architecture*, ed. Ratan Parimoo, Deepak Kannal and Shivaji Panikkar (repr. Pune: Aprant Publisher, 2018 [1988]): 305–312.

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Jennifer Howes

## Chapter 13

# The Story Tellers of Mysore: Regime Change and the Musarrati Performance Artists of Tipu Sultan's Court

## 1 Introduction

What happens when performance artists who hold positions of prestige within a royal court are cut away from their source of patronage following an annexation or invasion? This question is increasingly being asked by historians who study the impact of British imperialism on the traditions of female courtiers who served within South Asian kingdoms. Such studies examine the different ways that women from courtly communities adapted to their new circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes they were forced to seek employment from Europeans and other times their traditions were criticised by Christian missionaries for being immoral, leading to the colonial misconception that these professional singers, dancers and musicians were little more than prostitutes.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the first documented community of female performance artists to undergo this shift from high-status courtiers to the dependents of Europeans were the 75 women, described as 'Gain or Mussuruttis for their accomplishments in playing singing etc',<sup>3</sup> from the court of Tipu Sultan of Mysore. They were placed under East India Company house arrest in May 1799 and remained in British custody until their deaths. Before May 1799, they lived and served within the inner court of Tipu Sultan of Mysore at Srirangapatna. The word 'Gain' means 'singer', while the title 'Mussurutti' probably comes from the Urdu word 'musarrat', meaning joy or delight.<sup>4</sup> This paper is an attempt to piece together what happened to these performers, the story tellers of Tipu Sultan's court, when this shift in power occurred.

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1 For example, see the work of Lata Singh, "Courtesans and the 1857 Revolt: Role of Azeezun in Kanpur," *Indian Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (2007): 58–78; Angma Dey Jhala, *Courtly Indian Women in Late Imperial India* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008); Priya Atwal, *Royals and Rebels: The Rise and Fall of the Sikh Empire* (London: Hurst, 2000), and Radha Kapuria, *Music in Colonial Punjab: Courtesans Bards and Connoisseurs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

2 Tiziana Leucci article in this volume.

3 British Library, IOR/HJ/461: 146. Reproduced as figure 1 in Jennifer Howes, "Tipu Sultan's Female Entourage under East India Company Rule," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 4 (2021): 855–74.

4 For the rest of this paper, aside from quoted passages, I will refer to this group of women as Musarratis.

In the late eighteenth century, the Musarrati performance artists were part of a community of about 600 women who lived inside Tipu Sultan's palace at Srirangapatna. Along with the other women of Tipu's court, they fulfilled important roles within a complex royal culture. After the Fall of Srirangapatna in May 1799, when British and East India Company troops besieged the capital of Mysore Kingdom, the courtly infrastructure that supported these women was abruptly replaced by a European bureaucracy that had no understanding of their performance traditions. The East India Company viewed the women of Tipu's court as an administrative expense, and arranged accommodation, food and clothing for their care, whilst claiming to have liberated them from the clutches of a cruel, controlling tyrant. By claiming to be the benevolent liberators of the women, the East India Company failed to acknowledge the Musarratis' court role as entertainers and story tellers.

When the Sultanate kingdom of Mysore was conquered in 1799, it had only existed for four decades. Haidar Ali Khan, the father of Tipu Sultan, was originally a military commander in the army of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, the Hindu king of Mysore. In 1762 he deposed the Wodeyar king and founded the Mysore Sultanate. After Haidar Ali's death in December 1782, Tipu Sultan succeeded his father to Mysore's throne. Both Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan were seen as a threat to Britain's overseas empire because they worked closely with the French and employed mercenaries from France in their armies. On 4 May 1799, at the close of the Fourth Mysore War, the British stormed the capital at Srirangapatna and Tipu Sultan died in the assault. His death was immediately followed by a spree of looting and pillage at the hands of British and the East India Company soldiers. The descendants of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, the ruler that Haidar Ali deposed in the early 1760s, were identified and the British crowned Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, a five-year-old boy, as Mysore's new king on 30 June 1799.<sup>5</sup> The Wodeyar family's recovery of Mysore's throne came at a huge cost. One of the numerous financial conditions that the East India Company imposed on the Wodeyars was to fund the maintenance of Tipu Sultan's imprisoned family.<sup>6</sup> Patronage of Tipu's family, including the female singers and dancers of Tipu's court, was reduced to a bureaucratic exercise, funded by the Wodeyar Mysore State, and administered by the East India Company.

To understand the changing circumstances of the Musarrati women, this paper begins by examining what we know about their roles within the Mysore Sultanate's inner court in the late eighteenth century, when it appears that they, along with their slaves and attendants, made up nearly half of the palace's female inhabitants. After

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<sup>5</sup> James Salmond, *A Review of the Origin, Progress and Result of the Decisive War with the Late Tipu Sultan in Mysore* (London: Luke Hansard, 1800): Appendix D, no. 2, enclosure 15 (unpaginated).

<sup>6</sup> Account of the remaining members of the families of Tipu Sultan and Hyder Ali removed from Mysore to Vellore, July 1800–May 1802, British Library, IOR/F/4/113/2126, 4, 24A-24M; James Salmond, *A Review of the Origin, Progress and Result of the Decisive War with the Late Tipu Sultan in Mysore* (London: Luke Hansard, 1800): Appendix D, no. 2, enclosure 1.

looking at their roles alongside those of the other female courtiers inside Tipu's palace, I will then look at their lives in the early years of the nineteenth century, when the East India Company exiled them from Mysore Kingdom. They were moved over three hundred kilometres east of Srirangapatna, to Vellore Fort, in the Company controlled territory of Madras Presidency. Finally, I will look at two intriguing albums of Company paintings from Vellore that document the continuation of the Musarratis' performance traditions in the 1820s and 1830s. It was never a priority for the East India Company to document the roles and actions of these women, but there is sufficient information inside colonial sources to demonstrate that the Musarratis, the story telling performance artists of Tipu Sultan's inner court, kept their traditions alive by giving performances to the thousands of Mysorean citizens who followed them to Vellore. These exiles from Tipu's Mysore were a receptive audience that gave the Musarratis a sense of purpose and encouraged them to continue practicing their traditions whilst living under the East India Company's disinterested control.

## 2 The Women under Sultanate Rule

The Musarrati women of Tipu Sultan's inner court came from a diverse range of places and cultural traditions. Little is known about them before 1799, and even today, scholarly accounts of women under Mysore Sultanate rule are dominated by British colonial prejudices that were reinforced in the nineteenth century. For example, in the published testimony of James Scurry, an East India Company soldier who was captured by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan in 1780, he described how he, and other European prisoners, were forced to marry 'a number of young girls, who had been driven from their relations out of the Carnatic'.<sup>7</sup> His account of his imprisonment was not published until 1824, but Scurry's descriptions of the dispossessed female citizens of Mysore and their forced marriages to foreigners galvanised the received British view that Tipu and his father were the ruthless victimisers of women. By promoting this attitude, the British partially justified their actions at Srirangapatna in May 1799 by claiming that the soldiers who looted Tipu's capital were actually liberators of Mysore's female citizens.

The earliest known account of the Musarrati women was written by a French man, probably in the late 1770s. Maistre De la Tour served as Haidar Ali Khan's Commander and Chief of Artillery. In his account of the court's activities, he described the entertainments he witnessed inside the palace at Srirangapatna.<sup>8</sup> His book, *The History*

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<sup>7</sup> James Scurry, *The Captivity, Sufferings and Escape of James Scurry, who was Detained a Prisoner during Ten Years in the Dominions of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Saib* (London: Henry Fisher, 1831): 118.

<sup>8</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the*

of Ayder Ali Khan, was published in Paris in 1783 and translated into English in 1784. He described the women who took part in these court performances, which were typically given to male audiences during ‘a set supper’.<sup>9</sup> He also gives brief descriptions of the plots of these performances and of the costuming of these all-female actors, singers, and dancers.

De la Tour claimed that the women were the finest performers in India on account of Haidar Ali ‘procuring, among this class of women, those who are most remarkable for their beauty and talents.’<sup>10</sup> The costumes worn by the women were made of light, gold-embroidered cloth and they wore jewellery that literally covered them from head to toe,

[ . . ] they are covered with jewels: their head, their neck, their ears, their breasts, their arms, fingers, legs, and toes, have their jewels; and even their nose is ornamented with a small diamond [ . . ].<sup>11</sup>

The most beautiful of these women were the dancers, who de la Tour praised as being talented enough to perform ‘on the theatre of the Opera at Paris.’<sup>12</sup> The story lines of the performances conjure up grand evenings of music, dance and theatrics that centred around titillating plots, authored by the Musarratis, about women deceiving men. They always had ‘a number of set pieces ready in rehearsal to be played at a moment’s notice’.<sup>13</sup> The plot lines were typically ‘pieces of intrigue [ . . . featuring] women who league to deceive a jealous husband, or young girls that conspire to

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*Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784).

<sup>9</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, with Historical Notes*, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 43.

<sup>10</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes*, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 40.

<sup>11</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes*, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 41.

<sup>12</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes*, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 42.

<sup>13</sup> Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes*, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 43.

deceive their mother'.<sup>14</sup> The songs that accompanied the performances, when given in a single voice, were 'almost always the complaint of a lover', whilst those sung by a group were more joyful.<sup>15</sup>

The first British document to describe all the women of Tipu Sultan's palace at Srirangapatna, dated 1800, gives a totally different perspective of the Musarrati women. It was compiled in the months immediately following Tipu Sultan's death, at a time of upheaval, when Mysore's courtly traditions had been thrown into disarray. The author of the 1800 report was a young Orientalist scholar named Thomas Marriott who was appointed by the East India Company to manage the women's affairs. He was selected because he had studied some of the languages spoken inside the palace.<sup>16</sup> To facilitate his work, the women of Tipu's court 'adopted' him as a brother so they could communicate with him without impropriety.<sup>17</sup> Marriott's 1800 report gives a detailed breakdown of the different kinds of women inside Srirangapatna Palace and became the basis for the Company's early policies on how to deal with them. He counted 601 women as residing permanently inside the palace and listed them as either members of Tipu Sultan's private entourage, or as belonging to the entourage of his deceased father, Haidar Ali. There were 51 'Women called Gain or Mussurrutties' in Tipu Sultan's entourage and a further 23 from Haidar Ali's.<sup>18</sup> Those from Tipu's entourage were waited upon by 124 'attendants and slaves', while the 23 women from the Haidar Mahal had 40. Collectively, the 75 Musarrati women in the palace had 164 attendants and slaves, meaning that of the palace's 601 female inhabitants, 238 worked as, or were in service to, this important group of singers, actresses and dancers.<sup>19</sup> The 1800 report describes the high status, 'unmarried' Musarratis as the second most important group of women inside the palace. The only women to hold higher status than them were the high-born wives of Tipu

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14 Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 41.

15 Maistre De la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs Concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 42.

16 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 169–78.

17 George Annesley Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt*, vol. 1 (London: F.C. and J Rivington, 1811): 401.

18 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 176–77. Reproduced in Jennifer Howes, "Tipu Sultan's Female Entourage under East India Company Rule," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 4 (2021): 861–62 as figures 1 and 2.

19 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 169–78, 176–77.



Sultan and Haidar Ali who were married to the kings according to Islamic law.<sup>20</sup> Right up until 1821, the Musarratis were ranked in colonial reports as second in importance only to the widows of Tipu Sultan and Haidar Ali.<sup>21</sup>

Supporting hundreds of women inside the palace was a key part of Tipu Sultan's statecraft. The 1800 report describes the women of the palace as coming from a broad range of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, with most of them originally coming from Mysorean Hindu families. The next largest group of women were 'the purchased slaves from Constantinople, Georgia, etc.', followed by 'Moor-women from Arcot, Tanjour, Hyderabad, Gurrumconda etc'.<sup>22</sup> The resulting assemblage of female courtiers represented 'different parts of the world' and brought to Tipu Sultan's innermost court 'the singular knowledge of the manners of the harem of Persia, of Delhi, and of many other Mussulmaun kingdoms.'<sup>23</sup> The performance traditions practiced by the women were not described in Thomas Marriott's report, but one can assume that, based on the varied regions and cultures that these female courtiers came from, they were not trained in a single, conservative tradition. The Musarrati performance artists most likely represented numerous traditions that were all valued at Srirangapatna, and which made their set pieces, as described by Maistre de la Tour, more exciting, varied and potentially recognizable to the multicultural guests that they entertained.

Descriptions of how the women ended up as courtiers at Srirangapatna are documented in Thomas Marriott's 1800 report. Some were purchased as slaves, while others were 'supplied' from families that 'the Sultaun had either put to death or held in Confinement to obtain their wealth'.<sup>24</sup> There were also women in Tipu's court who 'were seduced or rather purchased by his money and promises of promotion to their needy parents or brothers.'<sup>25</sup> It is certainly fair to say that the women in Tipu's court did not independently choose to be there. However, the Musarrati women held high status positions within his court at Srirangapatna. Through their different backgrounds, the women of Tipu's court represented a microcosm for life beyond the palace's walls, reflecting the languages and cultures that the kingdom was connected to.

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20 Marriott, Thomas, Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 176–77.

21 Augustus Andrews, Muster Roll of the Ladies Residing in the Hyder Mahal and in Tippos Mahal Compiled by Augustus Andrews, Paymaster of Stipends at Vellore, 1821, British Library, IOR/F/4/881/23029: 71 and 78.

22 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 169–70.

23 George Annesley Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt*, vol. 1 (London: F.C. and J Rivington, 1811): 401.

24 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 169.

25 Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461:170.

Thomas Marriott's 1800 report also raised the importance of food and drink to the inner court. His listing of the female courtiers included those who were responsible for the preparation of different sorts of food to the palace's inhabitants and guests. Everything from the preparation of bread and rice to the careful curation of sweets was attended to by women who specialised in distinct culinary areas. Female cooks and chefs had been an important part of courtly life in Deccan Sultanate kingdoms since the sixteenth century. When the East India Company laid siege to Srirangapatna, and Tipu Sultan's private library was looted, an illustrated manuscript on this very topic was sent to London. The *Ni'matnama* of Sultan Ghiyath Shahi of Mandu (r.1469–1500), translated into English as 'The Sultan's Book of Delights', was probably acquired by Tipu Sultan's father, Haidar Ali, nearly three centuries after it was composed.<sup>26</sup> Frequently described as a cookbook, the *Ni'matnama* is a court manual that is full of miniature paintings of the Sultan of Mandu observing the preparation of delicacies by his female courtiers. Their varied complexions and styles of dress show that the women of Mandu's inner court came from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The courtly ideals described in the *Ni'matnama* were copied at the Mysore Sultanate, which also styled its inner court at Srirangapatna through the presence of women from different cultural groups. The human presence of these hundreds of female courtiers from many communities, both within Tipu's kingdom and beyond its borders, were an important feature of his identity. His knowledge of other cultures was also enriched and expressed by the contents of his private library. New research on the estimated 2000 manuscripts that the British looted from the library at Srirangapatna show that Tipu and his father assembled these collections from the libraries of other powerful men.<sup>27</sup> Just like the women of his court, Tipu's manuscripts were taken from conquered territories or were given to him to gain favour. What is important here is, just like the women who served inside Tipu Sultan's inner court, the manuscripts represented the customs and cultures that he assimilated into his kingdom.

The Musarrati women were not the only performance artists inside Tipu Sultan's inner court. A further 48 individuals, also mentioned in Thomas Marriott's report of 1800, were classified as 'Khan Khawas' performers. He described them as the 'second class' of unmarried women, whose role was to 'attend the Sultan on his visits to the

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26 *Ni'matnama* of Sultan Ghiath Shahi. Mandu, c. 1500, British Library, IO Islamic Ms.149. For a translation and full facsimile of the *Ni'matnama*, see Norah Titley, *The Ni'matnama Manuscript of the Sultans of Mandu: The Sultan's Book of Delights*. (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005). Ursula Sims-Williams has suggested that the Mysore Sultanate acquired it from the royal library of Bijapur, see "Nasir Shah's Book of Delights," British Library Asia and Africa Studies (Blog), 21.11.2016, <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/11/nasir-shahs-book-of-delights.html> [accessed 11.03.2022].

27 Ursula Sims-Williams, "Collections within Collections: An Analysis of Tipu Sultan's Library," *Iran* 59 (2021): 287–307.

Mahal'.<sup>28</sup> Their 'second class' ranking is reflected by them having fewer servants and attendants than the 'first class' Musarrati women. The 48 Khan Khawas women had 43 servants and slaves between them, so just under one each, while the Musarratis had at least two servants each. The Khan Khawas performers provided entertainment expressly for the sultan inside of his palace and were most likely regarded as his sexual property. Their confinement indicates that they did not write and perform for larger audiences, also suggesting that for a woman to hold status at court she required a more public role.

Bearing one of Tipu Sultan's children, particularly a son, could also increase a woman's status at court. This is what happened to Roshani Beigum, a Musarrati who was the mother of Tipu Sultan's eldest son, Fateh Haidar. She was originally from the fortress-town of Adoni, and became part of the inner court at Srirangapatna, along with her sister, when Tipu Sultan was still a prince.<sup>29</sup> Although many of the women of Tipu Sultan's inner court bore him children, it is misleading to believe that the women of the harem were his sexual playthings. Nearly half of the women in the palace were not from Tipu's entourage, but rather, were his father's courtiers, who he was duty bound to take care of. Amongst them were the mothers of Tipu Sultan's half-siblings, and the nursemaids who cared for them as children. Tipu Sultan supported these women after Haidar Ali's death to maintain his family's honour.

### 3 The Transition to East India Company Rule

In May 1799 the women residing inside Srirangapatna's Palace were placed under house arrest and the Musarrati performers, along with the other women of the palace, began a relationship of dependency with the East India Company. In Britain, the violent military actions of the East India Company's and the King's armies during the Siege of Srirangapatna were questioned. The Fourth Mysore War had been a costly battle that affected the East India Company's profitability, and its shareholders in London complained about losing money on their investments. To validate the extortionate price of this military action, the Company portrayed itself as the enlightened liberator of Mysore, who rescued its citizens from the grip of a ruthless tyrant.

It is impossible to know what really happened to the women of Tipu Sultan's inner court in the chaos that ensued in 1799. After the Fall of Srirangapatna, British

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<sup>28</sup> 29 of the Khan Khawas women were from the Tipu Mahal and 19 were from the Haidar Mahal. Marriott, Thomas. Report to Josiah Webbe Regarding the Female Inhabitants of Tipu Sultan's Palace at Srirangapatnam, 2 July 1800, British Library, IOR/H/461: 176–77.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Howes, "Roshani Begum, Dancer Turned Rebel from Tipu Sultan's Court," British Library, Untold Lives (Blog), 27.04.2021, <https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2021/04/roshani-begum-dancer-turned-rebel-from-tipu-sultans-court.html> [accessed 11.03.2022].

soldiers were encouraged by their commander, Major-General David Baird, to overrun the capital in what has been described as ‘a four-day orgy of looting, pillage and rape’.<sup>30</sup> Colonial sources acknowledge that David Baird’s troops went out of control,<sup>31</sup> but because military accounts of the Siege of Srirangapatna were recorded from a Western perspective, nothing is said about whether British soldiers mistreated the women inside Tipu’s palace. An eyewitness account authored by Ensign George Rowley tells us that the owners of houses and zananas ‘of the principal officers of the Sul-taun [who] were killed or wounded in the assault [. . .] were plundered; and jewels to an incredible value were obtained by some individuals of the army.’<sup>32</sup> The only account to mention the women of Tipu’s palace in the aftermath of the Siege is a letter dated 10 May 1799, six days after Tipu Sultan’s death, written by Major Gabriel Dove-ton. He reports from a location over a hundred miles away that the ‘Palace and Women’s Apartments, my people say, were not blown up and the Sul-taun’s family [and] Women of the Haram, [. . .] were protected from injury.’<sup>33</sup> The Governor General at Kolkata, Richard Wellesley, removed David Baird from command of British troops at Srirangapatna and appointed his younger brother, Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, to take over. It would have been a tremendous insult to Baird to be superseded by a junior officer, and an injustice that this young man would take the credit for the work of dismantling Tipu’s kingdom.<sup>34</sup> One of Arthur Wellesley’s first acts as Srirangapatna’s commander was to place a five-year-old child, a descendant of the dispossessed Wodeyar family that was overthrown in 1762, onto the throne of Mysore Kingdom. The coronation of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III was part of the British agenda to quash Tipu Sultan’s court at Mysore. Arthur Wellesley also arranged, between 1799 and 1802, for Tipu Sultan’s sons, followed by the women of the palace, to be exiled from Mysore Kingdom. They were sent to Vellore, and were imprisoned inside its fortress, in Madras Presidency. The sons of Tipu Sultan were moved first, and the hundreds of women of Srirangapatna’s inner court followed them in 1802. Immediately before the women’s overland transport to Vellore commenced in May of that year, Arthur Wellesley issued these instructions to the commander of the soldiers who oversaw the operation.

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**30** Hermione Almeida and George Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2005): 159.

**31** Richard Wellesley, Letter to Henry Dundas, Fort St George, 7 June 1799, British Library, Mss Eur D623/24: 20–22.

**32** George Rowley, “Journal of the Second Siege of Seringapatam Kept and Written by the Late Ensign G. Rowley of the Madras Engineers, Who Was Present during the Whole Siege,” in *Reports, Correspondence and Original Papers on Various Professional Subjects Connected with the Duties of the Corps of Engineers, Madras Presidency, Arranged by Capt J.T. Smith*, vol. 4, ed. John Thomas Smith and J.H. Bell (Madras: The Scottish Press, 1856): 130.

**33** Gabriel Doveton, Letter to Henry Wellesley, Rayakottai, 10 May 1799, British Library, Mss Eur D623/21.

**34** Martin R. Howard, *Wellington and the British Army’s Indian Campaigns* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2020): 63.

You will be so kind as to take care to prevent all interference with the women by the officers and soldiers under your command.

Your knowledge of the customs and prejudices of the Country must point out to you how very unwilling they are to be looked at: an attempt to see them can never succeed, & will only serve to gratify a vain curiosity if it should, and I therefore hope that it will be prevented if possible.<sup>35</sup>

Whilst it is impossible to know whether any of the women of Tipu Sultan's inner court were violated by soldiers in 1799, we do know that many of the soldiers who supervised the transport of the women in 1802 were also present during the Siege of Srirangapatna. One wonders if Arthur Wellesley had doubts about the women's safety at the hands of these same men.

In late June 1802 the female courtiers' relocation to Vellore was complete. John Goldingham, the same East India Company engineer who designed Government House Madras, was placed in charge of building two sets of apartments for the women inside Vellore Fort. One set was for the women of Tipu Sultan's entourage, and the other was for Haidar Ali's entourage. The creation of these two separate sets of apartments mirrored the arrangement of the women's accommodation inside the palace at Srirangapatna.<sup>36</sup> To this day, the apartments that Goldingham built at Vellore are still known as the Tipu Mahal and Haidar Mahal, with the Tipu Mahal today serving as living quarters for the Tamil Nadu State Police. The British regarded Goldingham's mahals as an improvement over the women's previous accommodation at Srirangapatna and believed that it would improve their quality of life.<sup>37</sup> As for the sons of Tipu Sultan, they were placed inside pre-existing buildings inside Vellore Fort. Along with their private retinues, they lived there until August 1806, when in response to the Vellore Mutiny of July 1806, they were transferred to Kolkata. The same complex of buildings that Tipu's sons lived in from 1799 to 1806 was where the Sri Lankan king of Kandy, Sri Vikrama Kannaswamy and his entourage were interned, following their exile to Vellore Fort by the East India Company in 1816. Other political prisoners that were placed in Vellore Fort in the early nineteenth century included the family of Kattaboman Nayak of Panjalamkuricchi.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Letter from Arthur Wellesley dated 30 April 1802 to the commanding officer. Arthur Wellesley, Private letters and copy correspondence of Col Arthur Wellesley relating to Tipu Sultan's establishment at Srirangapatnam and the move to Vellore, 1800 to 1802, Wellington Archives Southampton, 1/115, last letter in file 2 (not paginated).

<sup>36</sup> Letter from A. Anderson to Arthur Wellesley describing the condition of buildings inside the fort at Srirangapatnam. Arthur Wellesley, Private letters and copy correspondence of Col Arthur Wellesley relating to Tipu Sultan's establishment at Srirangapatnam and the move to Vellore, 1800 to 1802, 5 May 1802, Wellington Archive, University of Southampton. 1/116, file 1 of 3.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Henrietta Clive to Edward Clive, 16 March 1800, in Nancy Shields, *Birds of Passage* (London: Eland, 2009): 115.

<sup>38</sup> List of all persons confined by the East India Company in Vellore Fort, 1823, British Library, IOR/F/4/886/23065.

When Tipu Sultan's sons and female courtiers were exiled to Vellore Fort at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were followed there by thousands of Mysorean citizens. Recent studies have estimated that about 6,000 Mysoreans followed Tipu Sultan's entourage to Vellore in the early nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> A report written in August 1806 counted 1,812 'servants and adherents' of Tipu Sultan as permanently residing in the pettah of Vellore, the market area of the city that was located beside the Fort's only entrance.<sup>40</sup> The Mysoreans living in the pettah area were those who were most closely connected with the exiled entourage inside the fort. For example, at least four of the pettah's residents were the daughters of Tipu Sultan who wanted to live near their mothers and brothers. These daughters, Ullmeer Ulnissa Begum, Fatima Begum, Budi Ulnissa Begum and Noor Ulnissa Begum, would have been permitted regular contact with their mothers inside the fort.<sup>41</sup> Mysoreans of lower status would have lived in other areas of Vellore or in the town's outskirts. These thousands of exiled Mysoreans were the audience that the Musarrati women performed to at Vellore. One role of the Musarratis was to represent the royal household's womenfolk at important festivals and lifecycle events, particularly marriages. Because the East India Company had no interest in their courtly skills of song, dance and story telling, the women had a perfect cover for causing subversion within Vellore's Mysorean community whilst living under the control of their new imperialist masters. As the story tellers of Tipu's exiled court, the Musarratis performed their intriguing shows to Vellore's thousands of Mysorean citizens. The East India Company's indifference towards their traditions meant that they were free to script plays and write songs relating to their topical new circumstances.

Immediately before the 1802 move from Srirangapatna to Vellore, Thomas Marriott thought that he had reduced the number of women to be transported by almost half, from 601 to 345.<sup>42</sup> However, when the move began in May 1802, he reported that their numbers had unexpectedly increased, with over 200 new women being secretly introduced to the mahals.<sup>43</sup> A flurry of letters ensued between Thomas Marriott at Srirangapatna and Thomas Dallas, the commander at Vellore Fort, who was waiting to receive the women inside Goldingham's newly constructed mahals. Dallas saw the

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39 Jane Hathaway, *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective* (London: Praeger, 2001): 96.

40 Col Robert R. Gillespie, Report on Vellore after the Mutiny, August 1806, British Library, IOR/H/509: 163–79.

41 Thomas Marriott, Report on Tipu Sultan's Daughters at Vellore, Friday 8 Aug 1806, British Library, IOR/H/508: 280–84.

42 Thomas Marriott to Arthur Wellesley, 27 March 1802, p.1. Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/112, file 3.

43 Thomas Marriott to Thomas Dallas, 9 May 1802. Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/116, file 1 of 3.

introduction of the new women as ‘an improper and unnecessary expence’,<sup>44</sup> but Marriott parried that, ‘I could never have got them from Seringapatam, but by force, had I not allowed their new slaves to accompany them [ . . . ] The only way I see of getting rid of them [the newly introduced women], except by force, is to dismiss them from the Mahal whenever their mistresses die.’<sup>45</sup> In the end, the female courtiers got their way and the newly introduced women were received at Vellore. When the transport was completed in June 1802, there were 583 women living inside the newly constructed mahals of Vellore Fort.<sup>46</sup> Whilst their introduction was seen by Dallas as a scheme that took advantage of ‘the Company, who’s bounty has been so liberally extended to every branch of the Families’,<sup>47</sup> Marriott impressed upon his superiors that in their previous lives at Srirangapatna, ‘Tippoo allowed all the first class or Musruties two slaves each during his life – but [ . . . ] many vacancies occurred & the only terms on which the Women would give up their old slaves, were that they should be replaced by new ones’.<sup>48</sup>

By 1806, the number of inhabitants of the Tipu and Haidar Mahals of Vellore Fort had increased even further. There were now 790 individuals inside the mahals of Vellore Fort, including 47 children that the women had ‘adopted’.<sup>49</sup> There is little information about individual women from Tipu’s court in colonial records. However, there is occasional mention of Roshani Beigum, the mother Fateh Haidar, Tipu Sultan’s eldest son. In a report dated 1804 it says that after the 1802 move to Vellore, she adopted a girl named Goolzeib ‘as her pupil and looks upon [her] as her daughter.’<sup>50</sup> The girl would have been one of the 47 children that were introduced into the mahals after the 1802 transport. Such adoptions were a common practice amongst professional singers and dancers in South Asia,<sup>51</sup> suggesting that the women were trying to conduct themselves in the manner that they had lived in Tipu Sultan’s court.

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44 Thomas Dallas to Thomas Marriott, 7 May 1802, p.1. Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/116, file 1 of 3.

45 Thomas Marriott to Thomas Dallas, 9 May 1802, p.2. Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/116, file 1 of 3.

46 Account of expenses from the 1802 move: Account of the remaining members of the families of Tipu Sultan and Hyder Ali removed from Mysore to Vellore, July 1800–May 1802, British Library, IOR/F/4/113, 2126: 105.

47 Thomas Dallas to Thomas Marriott, 7 May 1802, p.1. Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/116, file 1 of 3.

48 Thomas Marriott to Thomas Dallas, 9 May 1802 Wellington Archive, Southampton University, 1/116, file 1 of 3: 2.

49 There were 14 boys and 33 girls. Thomas Marriott, List of the women and children living in the *mahals* of Vellore Fort. 28 August 1806. British Library, IOR/H/508: 180–81.

50 Thomas Marriott, Report on the Four Eldest Sons of Tipu Sultan at Vellore, April 1804, British Library, IOR/H/508: 347.

51 Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 205.



As the story tellers of Tipu Sultan's inner court, the Musarratis would have provided Vellore's exiled Mysorean community with entertainment that recalled their previous lives at Srirangapatna. Analyses of the court proceedings at Vellore in the weeks immediately before and after the Mutiny of July 1806 tell us that the women of Tipu's court were actively participating in a busy wedding season in the months preceding the Mutiny, when four of Tipu Sultan's daughters were married inside the fort.<sup>52</sup> The celebrations for each of these weddings would have lasted for several days and featured performances of music and dance to large crowds inside the fort. In other words, the Musarrati women of Tipu Sultan's exiled court held a prominent public platform that they could use to foment dissent amongst the exiled Mysorean community. They were trained to script and perform storylines of intrigue and deception so it was predictable that they would prompt their audiences to antagonise the East India Company's sepoy soldiers.

The Vellore Mutiny of July 1806 was the most violent uprising within the East India Company's army to predate the Indian Rebellion of 1857. One of the most frequently cited causes of the Vellore Mutiny was a dispute over the sepoy soldiers' uniforms.<sup>53</sup> This reason, which was identified in the early nineteenth century, still dominates discussions on the Vellore Mutiny's causes right up to the current day, as can be seen by an exhibition on the Vellore Mutiny that was held inside the Fort Museum, featuring a display of sepoy uniforms.<sup>54</sup> Closer examination of the original 'Court of Enquiry' into causes of the 1806 mutiny indicates that the dispute over uniforms was merely the most visible layer of a broad spectrum of taunts directed at the sepoys.<sup>55</sup> One court entry describes 'the numerous moorpeople inhabitants of the Pettah [. . . who] began to poison the minds of the troops by observing that such dress was very bad and improper',<sup>56</sup> while another says that '[t]he thousands of adherents of Tippoo's House assembled, and uncontrolled in the populous Pettah at Vellore, will ever furnish powers to disseminate the most destructive tales.'<sup>57</sup> Other court testimonies say that the sepoys were antagonised by 'Tippoo's people and the village people [who told them that they] would not continue them in their cast, or give them rice or water or let them have their daughters in marriage' if they wore their East India

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52 Thomas Marriott, Report on Tipu Sultan's daughters at Vellore, Friday 8 August 1806, British Library, IOR/H/508: 280–84.

53 William Cavendish Bentinck, *Memorial Addressed to the Honourable Court of Directors by Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Containing an Account of the Mutiny at Vellore, with the Causes and Consequences of that Event, February 1809* (London: John Booth, 1810): 71.

54 Photo by S.S. Kumar, taken in 2006, reproduced by Vikhar Ahmed Sayeed, "Behind the Mutinies," *Frontline Magazine*, Feb 17 2017, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/books/behind-the-mutinies/article9511453.ece> [accessed 11.03.2022].

55 Testimonials of the 'Court of Enquiry' at Vellore, July–August 1806, British Library, IOR/H/507 and 508.

56 Account of Shaik Ahomed Sepoy, 21 July 1806, British Library, IOR/H/508: 382–83.

57 Report by J.F. Cradock, July 25 1806, British Library, IOR/H/507: 412.

Company uniforms.<sup>58</sup> The Mysoreans at Vellore most likely criticised the sepoy's uniforms because they were proof of their subjugation to the East India Company, which was Tipu Sultan's enemy. The sepoy's uniforms marked them as outsiders who were willfully excluded from any sort of family life at Vellore because of their traitorous employment. Mocking their uniforms was merely part of a broader public lambasting.<sup>59</sup>

Although the Musarratis were skilled at telling stories of intrigue and trickery, none of them were interrogated about whether their performances contributed to the Vellore Mutiny. They were never questioned about the content of their performances in the months, weeks and days immediately before July 1806. The court records after the mutiny identified the exiled citizens of Tipu's Mysore, particularly those who lived in Vellore's pettah area, who would have attended the wedding celebrations in the fort, as collectively spreading the derisive tales about the sepoy soldiers. It is reasonable to assume that the Musarratis scripted the sepoy's characters of derision in the numerous wedding performances they gave inside Vellore Fort.

## 4 After the 1806 Mutiny

None of Tipu Sultan's family members inside the fort were held accountable for the 1806 Vellore Mutiny. The sons of Tipu were exiled to Kolkata in August of that year, but a Supreme Court ruling at Calcutta in 1807 'exculpated [the sons of Tipu Sultan] [. . .] from exciting the Mutiny'.<sup>60</sup> The decision to exile them to Calcutta was justified,

[. . .] so that they may during the rest of their lives dwell quietly and in Peace – which they could not have done so well at Vellore, from its proximity to Mysoor; where every one inclined to disturb the Peace would have taken their names.<sup>61</sup>

The Company blamed Vellore's Mysorean residents for prompting the sepoy's mutiny. The Musarratis' role as story tellers who could feed this antagonism was never addressed. Although they were not implicated in 1806 mutiny's events, exiling Tipu's sons from Vellore to Calcutta was a colossal punishment. All hope of resurrecting

<sup>58</sup> Testimony of Shaick Hamed Sepoy, Weds 30 July, 1806, British Library, IOR/H/508: 216.

<sup>59</sup> For more on the women's role in provoking the Vellore Mutiny of 1806 see Jennifer Howes, "Tipu Sultan's Female Entourage under East India Company Rule," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 4 (2021): 855–74.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Thomas Marriott to his parents. Quoted in a letter from his mother, Elizabeth to Warren Hastings, 13 April 1807 (Randolph Marriott and Elisabeth Marriott, Copies of letters to and from Warren Hastings, 1762–1808, British Library, Mss Eur C133/2: 90).

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Thomas Marriott to his parents, quoted in a letter from his mother, Elizabeth, to Warren Hastings, 13 April 1807 (Randolph Marriott and Elisabeth Marriott, Copies of letters to and from Warren Hastings, 1762–1808, British Library, Mss Eur C133/2, f. British Library, Mss Eur C133/2: 90–91).

Tipu's legacy through his sons and heirs was quashed. The women remained at Vellore for the rest of their lives, never to see their sons and their families again.

In 1821, a detailed report was compiled at Vellore that listed the women who permanently resided inside the fort. Created with the help of the eunuchs who still lived with the women, the 1821 report classified them, using ledger style tables, so that the East India Company could clarify the cost of their allowances, known as rhatibs. The tables ranked them according to their status within the Tipu or Haidar Mahals of Vellore Fort and describe a payment system resembling the pay bands of East India Company soldiers or civil servants. It gives the names of the women and is titled with the British military term, 'muster roll'.<sup>62</sup> Of the 431 surviving women on the 1821 list, 52 were categorised as Musarratis. To the East India Company, this title was now a perfunctory, administrative categorisation that determined their level of maintenance, and not a name for skilled performance artists from Tipu Sultan's court (Plate 13.1).

One would think that the passing of time, the Company's bureaucratic treatment of the women, and the devastating exile of their sons to Calcutta might have crushed the spirits of the imprisoned Musarratis. However, in two albums of Company Paintings from Vellore, one created in the late 1820s and another in the mid 1830s, there are pictures of these women taking part in festivals and celebrations. They could no longer refresh their numbers by introducing new pupils, but the girls that they adopted between 1802 and 1806 were now young women who were trained in the performance traditions of Tipu Sultan's court.

The first of these two albums, dating from the late 1820s, is today in the British Library's collections in London.<sup>63</sup> The second album, painted in the mid 1830s by an artist named Yellappa, is currently in a private collection.<sup>64</sup> Neither of the two albums are dated, but their contents make it possible to determine when they were made. The 32 drawings inside the British Library Album are on watermarked paper bearing the dates 1823 and 1826, and the kinds of people shown in the album were representative of Vellore Fort's administration before the early 1830s.<sup>65</sup> For this reason, the British Library Album most likely dates to the late 1820s. The 34 paintings inside the Yellappa Album

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<sup>62</sup> Augustus Andrews, *Muster Roll of the Ladies Residing in the Hyder Mahal and in Tippos Mahal, Compiled by Augustus Andrews, Paymaster of Stipends at Vellore*, 1821, British Library, IOR/F/4/881/23029: 71–78.

<sup>63</sup> British Library, Add.Or.39–70.

<sup>64</sup> The privately owned Vellore Album by Yellappa was last sold at Sothebys London on 24 April 2013 (sale L13220, lot 106). See Lucien Harris, "Bespoke: Painting to Order in 1830s Calcutta and Vellore," in *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*, ed. William Dalrymple (London: Bloomsbury/Philip Wilson, 2020): 118–37. Yellappa's portrait, at folio XXXIV of the album, is reproduced on the book's back cover.

<sup>65</sup> British Library, Add.Or.67 and 68, depicts the clerks and orderlies who worked for the paymaster of Stipends at Vellore Fort, a role that was abolished in 1834. See Papers on the abolition of the office of Paymaster at Vellore, and reports of the Committee to investigate the expenses of that office, Jul 1835–Jan 1835, British Library, IOR/F/4/1485/58544: 29.



British Library Album are duplicated in the 1830s Yellappa Album.<sup>68</sup> Amongst these duplicated paintings is one of the Musarrati women. The one in the British Library Album is labelled 'Kunchinee or Dancing Girls', while the identical picture in the Yellappa Album is titled 'Mussulman Dancing Girls'.<sup>69</sup> Both pictures show three young women on the left, dressed in richly embroidered, floor-length red and blue gowns with matching, silver-edged dupattas across their shoulders and heads. They wear large amounts of gold jewellery. On the right side of the picture there is an older woman, wearing simpler clothing and no jewellery, holding a handkerchief in a story telling gesture. She is most likely their teacher or 'directress'.<sup>70</sup> Between her and the three younger women are five young men wearing simple white attire and turbans, playing musical instruments. The three youthful women could be the children that were adopted before 1806, who by then were young adults trained in the performance traditions of Tipu Sultan's exiled court (Plates 13.2, 13.3).



**Plate 13.2:** 'Kunchinee or Dancing Girls', Vellore, late 1820s.

<sup>68</sup> The following folios are repeated in the two albums. BL Add.Or.41 is Yellappa No.VIII; BL Add.Or.44 is Yellappa Nos.XI and XII; BL Add.Or.45 is Yellappa No.VII; BL Add.Or.47 is Yellappa No.IX; BL Add.Or.54 is Yellappa No.III; BL Add.Or.60 is Yellappa No.XXVII; BL Add.Or.62 is Yellappa No.XXVIII; BL Add.Or.63 is Yellappa No.XVIII.

<sup>69</sup> British Library Album, Add.Or.62; Yellappa Album, No.XXVIII.

<sup>70</sup> This is the term used by Maistre de la Tour, *The History of Ayder Ali Khan, Nabob Bahder: Or, New Memoirs concerning the East Indies, With Historical Notes, by M.M.D.L.T. General of Ten Thousand Men in the Army of the Mogul Empire, and formerly Commander in Chief of the Artillery of Ayder Ali, and of a Body of European Troops in the Service of that Nabob*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1784): 40.





**Plate 13.3:** Holi procession at Vellore, late 1820s.

The same young women reappear in the British Library Album in a picture of a Holi procession. The 'Kanchani'/Musarrati women, their dupattas protectively draped across their shoulders, hold their bodies with one hand raised forward, in the pose of story tellers. Standing near to them are musicians, their skin and outfits covered in paint. The festival of Holi originates from a story about Krishna, but for the women of Tipu Sultan's



**Plate 13.4:** Detail of the Holi procession showing the Musarratis.

court, who now served a community rather than a king, there was not a sectarian issue with them taking part in a festival that many today regard as ‘Hindu’ (Plate 13.4).

In the Yellappa Album there is another picture of the Musarratis performing in a procession.<sup>71</sup> Titled ‘Procession of a Mussulman Marriage’, there are ten women, dressed in the same style as in the other pictures, at the centre of a night-time procession, surrounded by fireworks and torches. The buildings in the background indicate that the procession was taking place inside Vellore Fort. Four of the Musarrati women are at the very centre of the picture, singing to the crowd while standing inside large red baskets that are held up high in the manner of palanquins. Two more clusters of Musarrati women appear in the crowd, on either side of the red baskets. These two clusters of women are standing at street level and are encircled by attentive audiences (Plate 13.5).



**Plate 13.5:** Muslim wedding procession inside Vellore Fort showing ten Musarrati women performing.

The Yellappa Album differs from the British Library Album because it assigns sectarian labels to its subjects. While the British Library Album from the late 1820s only contains a picture of dancers labelled as ‘Kanchanis’ and shows them in another picture as taking part in Holi celebrations, the Yellappa Album from the 1830s identifies the same women, in an identical picture, as Muslims. The Yellappa Album has another picture of a different group of women that are identified as ‘Hindoo

<sup>71</sup> Yellappa Album, No.XX. Another version of this picture, reproduced here as Plate 13.5, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.39/30-1987).



Dancing Girls'.<sup>72</sup> They are dressed in saris with large pleats at the front of the skirt and they wear short sleeved blouses that expose the torso. It is the sort of attire associated with Devadasis or with the dress of classical Bhāratnāṭyam dancers today. Other pictures inside of the Yellappa Album show these Hindu dancers taking part in identifiably Hindu processions.<sup>73</sup> The paintings inside the Yellappa Album from the 1830s, and the captioning of these images, identifies two separate performance traditions at Vellore along sectarian lines, indicating that one group of female performers were Muslim and the others were Hindu. The earlier British Library Album from the late 1820s does not contain drawings of Hindu dancers and shows Muslim performers taking part in a Holi procession. Perhaps the patron of the 1830s album instructed Yellappa to differentiate between Hindu and Muslim performances at Vellore. It could also be that the distinctly Hindu community of female dancers at Vellore in Yellappa's drawings were from the entourage of the exiled King of Kandy, who was a Hindu. It is certainly notable that there are no pictures of dancing girls who are labelled as Hindu, nor are there pictures of the King of Kandy and his entourage, in the British Library Album.

The interior of Vellore Fort provides the backdrop for the crowd scenes in the Yellappa Album, regardless of whether the performers were categorised as Hindu or Muslim. The women of Tipu's court were not permitted to go beyond the walls of the fort, so the location of the Musarrati women's performances, inside the fort, must have made it into the conventional location for all such large events in the nineteenth century. The fort was a place of incarceration where the East India Company imprisoned royal households, making it the home of Vellore's highest status residents. This location became the main stage for royal performances within Vellore, featuring the lavish music and dance programmes of these exiled courts.

The women of Tipu Sultan's imprisoned court gradually died off. Every time the East India Company discovered that a woman had died inside the mahals of Vellore Fort, their allowances were cut back to reflect their reduced numbers.<sup>74</sup> In a tremendous show of resistance, the women tried to stop their allowances from being reduced by hiding the deaths of at least 25 individuals inside the mahals. These unrecorded deaths were discovered by the East India Company in 1834 and were posthumously recorded as entries in a ledger. For each deceased woman listed on the table, under the column where her date of demise was meant to be recorded, an identical entry was given, saying, 'died many years ago but the date cannot be ascertained'.<sup>75</sup> The women's

72 Yellappa Album, No. XXIII. Another version of this picture is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.39/25-1987).

73 Yellappa Album, No. II, shows a 'Procession of Sivah'. Another version of this picture is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.39/28-1987).

74 East India Company General Correspondence, Despatches from East India House London to Madras, British Library, IOR, E/4/897: 125–16.

75 Papers on the abolition of the office of Paymaster at Vellore, and reports of the Committee to investigate the expenses of that office, Jul 1835–Jan 1835, British Library, IOR/F/4/1485/58544: 102–6.

refusal to be treated as mere numbers on a spreadsheet was a permanent source of frustration for the East India Company, and this exasperation comes through in the passive aggressive way that the dates of their deaths were entered in this table.

## 5 Conclusion

After Tipu Sultan's death on 4 May 1799, the women of his palace abruptly went from being part of a pre-colonial court to being detained indefinitely by a colonial trading company. Forced to adapt to rules imposed by men with no understanding of the Mysore Sultanate's courtly traditions, these hundreds of women were moved to Vellore Fort, where they remained under house arrest for the rest of their lives. As professional performers and story tellers, the Musarratis had the training and confidence to become the spokeswomen of Tipu Sultan's inner court. They remonstrated their concerns to the outsiders who now controlled their lives, a role that even the highest-ranking women of the exiled court, the legal wives of Tipu Sultan and Haidar Ali, were incapable of doing.<sup>76</sup>

The East India Company's arrangements for the women were limited to the provision and measurement of food, shelter and clothing. The funding for this was extracted from the new Wodeyar Kingdom of Mysore, and was implemented by East India Company employees, with the Fort Adjutant at Vellore overseeing their internment after their arrival in May-June 1802. In the early years of their captivity, perhaps through the intercession of Thomas Marriott, the young scholar who advised on their care, the women were able to introduce new servants, slaves and students to the mahals of Vellore Fort. In early 1806, just before the Vellore Mutiny, the women's allowances were cut, and their care under the East India Company veered away from how they were expecting to be treated.<sup>77</sup>

The first recorded evidence of the Musarratis' protestations against their new colonial masters was in 1802, when the women forced through the introduction of over 200 newcomers into their entourages. Other incidents of protest continued over the following decades, such as the hiding of at least 25 deaths within the mahals to stop their allowances from being cut. When the bodies of the dead women were finally discovered in 1834, the East India Company regarded this act as a grotesque deception at the hands of women, who 'are often extremely petulant and troublesome [. . .] I have warned them that the probable consequence of such behaviour will be the en-

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<sup>76</sup> For one example of such remonstrations, see A Andrews to Chief Secretary at Fort St George, Nov 1820. British Library, IOR/F/4/881/23029: 41–42.

<sup>77</sup> Jennifer Howes, "Tipu Sultan's Female Entourage under East India Company Rule," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 4 (2021): 866–67.

tire stoppage of these extra Rahtibs'.<sup>78</sup> The women, particularly the Musarratis, attempted to improve their lives under house arrest by deploying unusual tactics that took their European captors by surprise. The Company's response was to view them as 'petulant and troublesome',<sup>79</sup> and to accelerate their treatment as a perfunctory, administrative expense.

The East India Company struggled to control these 'outrageous' women, but to Vellore's exiled Mysorean citizens, the Musarratis were a source of information and entertainment. For these thousands of exiles, who held the Sultanate kingdom of Mysore in living memory, the women continued, through their court traditions, to hold power and influence. With their story telling abilities, the Musarratis were perfectly positioned to defame the Company's sepoy soldiers, and to plot the return of the Mysore Sultanate, which would hand power to their sons. The Vellore Mutiny was a historical flashpoint when the Mysoreans at Vellore unsuccessfully attempted to reinstate Tipu Sultan's dynasty, and it is unlikely to be a coincidence that it occurred after numerous performances by the Musarratis were held inside the fort.

The British at Vellore had little interest in the Musarratis, and no curiosity about how their traditions might have facilitated an ideological link between the deceased king and the exiled citizens of Mysore. Even though Tipu was dead, his capital looted and his subjects exiled, the Musarratis practiced traditions suffused with the ideologies of the court that they were trained to be part of. Because the East India Company's apparent control over these women lacked any engagement with their courtly roles, the women were, literally, free to act as the undetected mouthpiece of a subversive court culture for several decades.

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<sup>78</sup> Letter from G.M. Stewart at Vellore to the Chief Secretary of Govt, Fort St George, 11 Nov 1834, British Library, IOR/F/4/1485/58544: 97.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

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Pratyush Shankar and Snigdha Srivastava

## Chapter 14

# Indigenous Modernities in Dependent Princely States: Design of Public and Civic Spaces in Baroda

## 1 Background

Company rule in India, which began in around the eighteenth century, dominated the majority of the Indian sub-continent and was also marked by complex arrangements of power and administration. After the mutiny of 1857 the British crown took direct control over the affairs of the country. However, the British managed to rule a vast country such as India due to a sophisticated arrangement of indirect rule; wherein certain long-standing princely states were allowed to manage their affairs, as long as they could swear their allegiance to the British crown. This also meant that the princely states were dependent on the British crown for protection, financial and other major policy matters. This extreme dependency of the princely states on the British crown for their existence at times created an environment of mistrust or defiance and at other times was marked by constant negotiation and even co-operation.

The princely state of Baroda not only defied the British crown during many a moment, but also through its own initiatives managed to create a counter-colonial narrative. But more interestingly the state of Baroda, under the leadership of its king Sayajirao Gaekwad III, undertook massive social and education reforms, as well as commissioning civic buildings and public places that completely transformed the nature of the city of Baroda between 1880 and 1910.

This form of indigenous modernity was managed and executed by hiring freelance Indian and European engineers, botanists and librarians: thereby totally bypassing the British Empire. This paper wishes to explore the nature and form of these transformations in the city as related to design of botanical gardens and museum as public places. The paper will try and articulate the unique formation and design of these spaces, and how it was a result of complex negotiation with and at times defiance of the British colonial rulers. The dependencies of the princely state on the British colonial rulers in fundamental matters of security and economy was an overarching condition that influenced the conception and formation of these public projects.

## 2 Indirect Rule in India

Colonial powers had begun to expand their territory in India as early as the sixteenth century. Trade and commerce being their main objective, it was not until the seventeenth century that the East India Company began forming colonies for settlement purposes. By the time the British began establishing their initial territories in India, the Mughal powers were under decline with no political stability in the country, which left the smaller regional powers to war amongst themselves for control of the Indian subcontinent. The British took advantage of the fact that there was a lack of an efficient singular political system, by substituting it with their own. The Company rule in India, fuelled by economic and political objectives, began by annexing territories to expand their empire. After their success in Bengal and South India, the British devised a system of alliance with the local rulers based on mutual benefits, where the British administration gave a political stability and legitimacy to the native rulers along with protection, and in return the local kingdom would turn into a vassal state under British administration.<sup>1</sup> Company rule recognised the authority and power of the native rulers and included a certain amount of flexibility in its administrative system in order to have a better hold over the vast and diverse Indian subcontinent. This concept of indirect rule came to be convenient and efficient, as it incorporated indigenous methods of urban governance while providing an overarching imperial administrative system. This relationship with the native states allowed the British to become a suzerain power, while the vassal states pledged their sovereignty to them. The period after the mutiny of 1857 saw the formalisation of the policy of indirect rule. As the political control was taken away from the East India Company and India came under the control of the British crown, the policies of indirect rule became clearer and centralised, unlike the strong decentralised nature of governance during the company period.

### 2.1 Political and Legal Groundwork

After the mutiny of 1857, the British devised two different strategies for control of the Indian sub-continent. In certain parts of the country, based on political or economic contingencies, they completely annexed the region and ruled the same directly. For example, large parts of Northern Indian Gangetic plains apart from prominent coastal regions were directly ruled by the British. However, more than five hundred princely states were also indirectly ruled by them.

The system of indirect rule in India allowed the colonial powers an immense political and economic advantage. A state under indirect rule was expected to provide

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Herbert Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764–1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).



military support to the British and was not permitted to have its own independent army. These army contingents formed part of the British army which were used against external threats and also to curb internal unrests. The British also offered military support to their allied states to settle disputes with rival regional powers, which became one of the biggest incentives of allying with the British. Apart from military resources, the British legally bound the indigenous states through treaties, *sanads* and official letters. Treaties defined the terms of the alliance with the native states and were often unilaterally issued. Forming treaties with Indian rulers would allow them access to resources for the purpose of trade, and the British also acted as third-party negotiators to settle disputes between native rulers. The degree of dependency of a given state, on the British, was defined by the nature of the alliance and by the British policy on intervention. The latter, however, was not very well defined. It was based on convenience and often came from a strategic standpoint, depending on the importance of a given state. Policies of absolute non-intervention, like the ring-fence policy, did not require the British to interfere in the state's internal matters. However, states under subsidiary alliance with the British had varying intervention policies.<sup>2</sup> In order to ensure the smooth transition of power after treaties were signed, residents were stationed in the states to monitor and oversee the administrative activities and intervene wherever necessary.

## 2.2 Scientific and Post-Enlightenment Ideologies

The East India Company's initial venture into the Indian subcontinent was motivated by commercial gains, and only later was it compounded with moral and political objectives. The aftermath of the Industrial Revolution and the post-Enlightenment era, saw a rapid increase in the scientific, technological and intellectual breakthroughs in the European states that came to be tried, tested and perfected in the British colonies. These methodologies helped establish a degree of control over Britain's colonies and to impose a sense of order in a foreign landscape.

In the eighteenth century, when a first rudimentary form of indirect rule was being established, the British government realised the importance of knowing and understanding the territory they were ruling, in order to govern it better. With the political framework in place, it was important to collect, record and classify data on their territories and people. Under the colonial perspective, the process of state building required standardising data and procedures, which gave rise to the need for centralised institutions. The process of acquiring data on their vast and diverse Indian colony began by the necessity to understand its geographical terrain, and to record this data via maps, which ultimately became an instrument to control, define and solidify

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<sup>2</sup> William Lee-Warner, *The Native States of India* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1910).

boundaries unilaterally. This act of unilateral mapping was the fundamental building block on which was mounted a highly dominant relationship of the British Empire with the princely states, leading to extreme forms of dependencies.

Maps and surveys became a dominant tool for conveying the complexity of the vast terrain which became an archive of knowledge that was used for political expansion as well as military operations.<sup>3</sup> Cartography, as a practice, was still being refined and developed in the West, and different methods were being implemented to survey the land. India became an experimental ground to try and test out these methods.

The larger question of control and hence dependencies can also be understood from the perspective of usage of science and technology by the British Empire in India. Institutionalisation of these practices by the establishment of the Survey of India, the Census of India, etc. became the vehicle by which the Indian territory was recorded and controlled. This gave the colonisers a massive advantage over the native princely states and helped them have total control over their political and economic spheres.

### 3 Indirect Rule and Princely States

Following the 1857 mutiny, the British devised the system of indirect rule, wherein the native Indian rulers governed their semi-independent territories under the direction and discretion of the British government. Such a system was established in order to efficiently run such a large country and to prevent subsequent breakouts of national rebellions. Whereas this period was referred to as one of direct control, many precolonial states in India that had a subsidiary alliance with the East Indian Company were now indirectly ruled by the British Crown.

During the indirect rule, the Indian rulers were allowed to have autonomy on matters of day-to-day administration and most internal affairs while they enjoyed the protection from the British Empire. They however had to give up their right on external matters including defence, taxation and communication. These traditional rulers had to pay allegiance to the British Empire, and work towards supporting their rule; in return they could keep their title and limited autonomy. The major princely states during this period were Baroda, Mysore, Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Gwalior, all of which were directly connected to the central government.

Strong control in areas of defence, foreign policy and economy left little room for manoeuvring for the princely states. However, many states carved out opportunities through defiance or negotiations in areas of civic and public infrastructure to create new forms of institutions. The British were not much encouraging of these initiatives as it did not much serve their purpose, however many states deftly implemented

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

many new reforms and established new spaces. Many of these policies and initiatives were independent of the British policies and often driven by the interest of the rulers. Quite often the prince elect would take a personal interest in introducing policies and certain practices that he felt were needed for the welfare of the subjects of his state. Such initiatives included matters of health care, education, civic improvement or social reforms that helped create larger public good. This enhanced the prestige of ruling class and often made them very popular amongst the citizens of the state. It is not surprising that this period was marked by many interesting urban planning and design practices that seem to have evolved independent of the British colonial intent and due to the partial autonomy enjoyed by the princely states.

## 4 Princely Cities: Spaces of Dependencies

There were a total of 570 princely states in India before 1800, and by the time indirect rule was formalised, the British crown was indirectly ruling some 175 of them. The capital cities of these princely states received much attention, as here would be the seat of power with the palace and court life in and around it. Many of the capitals of these states flourished during these periods both in terms of demographic growth and also by the way of quality of urban infrastructure, its public space and architecture. Amongst the capital cities, some stood out for their remarkable urban development initiatives and make for interesting studies. The prominent cities of these states were Mysore, Baroda, Jamnagar, Gwalior, and Hyderabad, to name a few.

The rulers of the princely states, by virtue of their privileged status were mostly connected with the high-ranking British officers and their families, western elites and public intellectuals. They and their extended families were often abreast with the western world through their frequent travels for either education, medical treatments or recreation. The encounters between these rulers and the west during this period (especially the from the 1890s to 1920s) led to some interesting initiatives in India. Often these rulers came back fresh and excited about the new ideas and practices they would have encountered in Europe or America, and would try and implement them in their home states.

### 4.1 Indigenous Modernities as a Reaction to Dependencies

There is some literature to suggest that some of these princely states made rapid progress in ensuring public services, education, health care and even civic planning. Many British chroniclers referred to such states as being 'progressive and ideal', whereas the underlying belief was that they unleashed a western form of modernity (through mimicry) in their respective states and hence it was only natural that they were more progressive.

Homi Bhabha counters such simplistic generalisations and introduced the idea of ‘almost but not quite western’; meaning a kind of modernity that definitely is inspired from the West, but takes a new turn in the way it gets naturalised in the ethos of the Indian context.<sup>4</sup> In some case, this modernity becomes the means of creating a counter-colonial narrative in the princely states.<sup>5</sup> States such as Baroda in Western India, Mysore in Southern India and Gwalior in Central India managed to introduce series of reforms in policies and practice as related to the rights of its citizens, education, health care and also urban planning and design. The reforms that affected cities and their growth were usually related to overall organisation of the city, planning of water reservoirs outside the limit of the city, planning and design of public gardens, zoological parks, market buildings, landmarks such as clock towers, water bodies, palace compounds, schools, colleges, city level courts, libraries and museums.

The overall impact of such initiatives on the form of these cities was substantial, as it led to a very different organisation of spaces in comparison with the cities that were under direct rule of the British. The importance given to public places and institutions apart from overall land use made these cities special, and even today one can experience their distinct spatial structures. Many prided themselves on their well-formed and legible city fabric representing the best of Indian traditions (in terms of lively markets streets, religious institutions and water bodies) and western influence (university building, public gardens and market buildings).

The period between 1880 and 1920 was also marked by a very active role of professional engineers, architects, horticulturists and gardeners who were appointed to the service of the princely states. Many of them were abreast with international trends and were quick to make full use of the patronage they enjoyed in these princely cities. Away from the gaze of the direct British rulers, they developed close bonds with the kings and their ministers, and were instrumental in bringing about massive changes in the city fabric.

The princely rulers had access to foreign specialists and professionals through the Public Works Department (PWD), and it was standard procedure for princely states to be formally assigned PWD architects and engineers to develop public infrastructure. However, quite a few princely rulers ignored these standard procedures of hiring personnel from British institutions and circumvented the entire process by hiring professionals independently and not necessarily in consultation with the British. The Maharaja of Baroda hired independent specialists and architects to bring about major urban and cultural reforms. Robert Chisholm and Charles Mant were two such British professionals who were hired as consulting architects for the Baroda State. As an act of defiance, princely rulers would also hire non-British professionals outside

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4 Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (1984): 125–33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778467>.

5 Manu Bhagavan, “Demystifying the ‘Ideal Progressive’: Resistance through Mimicked Modernity in Princely Baroda, 1900–1913,” *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): 385–409.

the PWD for projects across their states. Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel, a landscape gardener from Germany, who was also a member of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew near London, was hired to develop public parks and gardens in Baroda; later on he worked in Mysore and Bihar. William Borden, an American librarian, was invited by the Maharaja to establish a system of public libraries across the state. The fact that an Indian civil engineer and city planner, Sri Visvesria, was considered for the design and implementation of water works project in Baroda State, is a good pointer towards this defiance.

## 4.2 The Case of Baroda

Baroda (now Vadodara) was amongst the most important princely states during British rule in India. Baroda witnessed major social and cultural reforms towards the end of the nineteenth century. This period was also marked by major urban transformation in the city of Baroda. The origins of medieval Baroda can be traced to in sixteenth century, when a location close to an ancient town (Vadapadraka) was used to establish a walled city with four gates. Soon the walled city was inhabited and was taken over by the Gaekwads in 1720s. It remained with the Gaekwads till independence of India.

Baroda State in the western-most part of India was established in 1721 by Maratha general Pilaji Gaekwad. The state of Baroda came into complete existence after the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803–1805). Whereas the East India Company had managed to control much of Gujarat, the Gaekwads of Baroda made a separate peace treaty with the British, by entering into a subsidiary alliance which acknowledged British suzerainty and control of the state's external affair in return for retaining internal autonomy. Divided into smaller kingdoms, the Marathas inherited their administrative system from the Mughals, which was an elaborate bureaucratic system. The princely state of Baroda was only formed after 1866, when the British Residency unified these smaller kingdoms under a single princely state in the aftermath of the Second Anglo-Maratha war. The British intervention for the control of political power over Western India resulted in the formation of one of the largest princely states, spanning over an area of approximately 8182 square kilometres, sharing its boundaries with the Rajput in the North, the Malwa in the East and the Maratha in the South. It went on to be ranked as the second highest in the British system of princely classification. Baroda State was under the governance of the Gaekwads when they signed the treaty with the British officials, but their political relations were subsequently marred by turbulence.

### 4.2.1 The Rebel State

Baroda State encountered major tension with the British government from time to time in matters of autonomy of administration and finances. These run-ins with the British only made Baroda State more powerful and autonomous, as it was able to take advantage of the confusion and constant infighting within the British administrations. One such series of events is historically remembered as the ‘Baroda Crisis’. It was a mark of the beginning of events that strained the relations between the British regime in Baroda, and the local ruling authorities. The crisis was a manifestation of the clash between two differing political systems, and went on to become a national crisis, causing a rift between the government of Bombay and Calcutta.<sup>6</sup> The crisis further aggravated their political ties with the rulers of Baroda State, where the local rulers openly defied British ideology and authority, and some became key individuals responsible for introducing numerous modern reforms.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, ruler of Baroda from 1875 to 1939, was one such individual, who notably came to be known for revamping the social and educational face of Baroda. He became notoriously popular among the British when he refused to follow protocol at the Durbar (coronation ceremonies designed to declare the reigning British monarch the ‘Emperor’ or the ‘Empress’), failed to bow and turned his back on the Emperor and the Empress. This show of defiance brought him under British scrutiny, and they sought to stop his anti-colonial activities. However, his ideology made him one of the most enlightened rulers of India who introduced a number of reforms in the city that made Baroda one of the progressive cities of nineteenth-century India. He travelled extensively around the world, and would always be on the lookout for new ways to improve his state. He understood that the results of western modernity could not be simply mimicked in India, rather it was imperative to initiate internal improvements that were distinctive to their own particular context. Maharaja Sayajirao’s defiance of the colonial supremacy was a turning point in the history of the state, where he recognised the need for things to change from a political as well as a social standpoint, which helped shape the distinctive image of the city.

### 4.2.2 Transformation and Reforms

The state of Baroda under Gaekwad Maharaja Sayajirao III experienced major changes around the turn of the twentieth century, affecting all sections of the society. The influence of western thoughts, ideas of modernity, education and liberal values were the core of these reforms. Sayajirao in the year 1902 enacted the law for widow remarriage,

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<sup>6</sup> I.F.S. Copland, “The Baroda Crisis of 1873–77: A Study in Governmental Rivalry,” *Modern Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (1968): 97–123.

a landmark achievement for that time, and went on to introduce major state-level reforms in the Indian Penal Code such as the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, Primary Education Act etc. to name a few.

Baroda thus became the first territory of either the native states or British India to provide free schooling to all its citizens. The Department of Public Instruction was established in 1875, and the state government initiated a programme of free, mandatory education for both sexes and all castes. Anglo-vernacular schools taught up to four grades and prepared children for admittance into high schools, while vernacular schools taught in Gujarati, Marathi, or Urdu at the primary level.

At the same time and equally importantly, the Gaekwad launched a library movement in Baroda, which was fully established by 1922 with the assistance of W.A. Borden. The Gaekwad created the Baroda Library Department, which included a Central Library, numerous district libraries and reading rooms, traveling libraries which would take books to those areas where permanent collections had not yet been created, and a class on libraries to teach people how to work and use such an institution.<sup>7</sup>

The Countess of Dufferin Hospital, which was established in 1886, replaced the old state hospital from the Countess of Dufferin Fund. This Fund was established by Lady Dufferin, Vicereine of India (1884–1888), with the aim of improving medical healthcare in the country, primarily for women and children. The hospital was constructed to mark the Viceroy's visit to Baroda. Major Charles Mant, a military engineer, was appointed by the Maharaja to design the hospital. He was also responsible for designing numerous civic and governmental structures in Baroda, including the State Library and, most significantly, the royal residence – Lakshmi Vilas Palace.

In 1906, soon after his return from a trip to America and England, Gaekwad launched a spate of transformative reforms in the state. By 1908 a modern banking institution (Bank of Baroda) was established to promote trade and commerce within and outside the state. The bank took over the function of the state treasury and went on to become one of the most successful banks in India. By 1890 a major reservoir for supply of drinking water to the city was constructed further upstream at Ajwa. This earthen dam was five kilometres long and 196 feet tall, and a major civil engineering project at that time. Its sixty-four gates ensured an uninterrupted water supply to the city of Baroda. Till today this reservoir is crucial for water supply and flood control in the region. The 1920s began with a proposal for a new 'democratic' constitution for the state, articulated in a remarkable document by Manubhai Mehta.<sup>8</sup> The birth of Baroda University after a series of false starts was the logical outcome of a concerted effort by the ruler and his minister to create institutional structures that would endure and create long-lasting public goods. A university carved out of the existing

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7 Manu Bhagavan, "Demystifying the 'Ideal Progressive': Resistance through Mimicked Modernity in Princely Baroda, 1900–1913," *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): 385–409.

8 Manu Bhagavan, "The Rebel Academy: Modernity and the Movement for a University in Princely Baroda, 1908–49," *Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 3 (2002): 919–47.



Baroda College (that was governed by the Bombay University) was the beginning to establish the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, and a huge step in reconfiguring the social and physical fabric of the city. Both the university and the creation of a large public garden in the form of Kamati Baug had a profound impact on subsequent urban development of Baroda City (Plates 14.1, 14.2). These were just two of the many urban initiatives taken by the Gaekwads; the others included an artificial lake in the city, designed markets, water reservoir to bring fresh water to the city, public gardens, libraries and reading rooms, auditoriums, court and hospitals. The initiatives of the Baroda State can be summarised through the following larger constructs.



**Plate 14.1:** Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, designed by Robert Chisholm.

#### 4.2.3 Creation of Civic Spaces

Indian medieval cities were known for their lofty palaces, markets and community level spaces that were used by the citizens. However, Baroda State made a conscious attempt to create new kinds of spaces that transcended the boundaries of the community in a kind of modern public sphere that were for all. This idea of creating a public sphere was largely informed by an earnest quest on part of the state to create a new form of citizenship that is responsive and enlightened. The state showed its zeal in



**Plate 14.2:** Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, a hybrid of European spatial planning and Indian construction techniques.

establishing these public spaces, much through their own initiatives while referring to the best of international practices of modern city building. This local pride was very much the outcome of the state's dependencies on the British colonial masters. The state was bound on matters of foreign affairs and defence to the colonial powers, while swallowing its own self pride and esteem. City building became the perfect antidote to these sentiments of helplessness and loss of control, and establishment of public places was not as much to please the colonial masters but quite often was an assertion on the part of princely states.

One of the first public spaces to come up in the city was the Sayaji Baug, which was essentially a botanical garden, which housed exotic as well as indigenous flora. The idea of a garden as a public space itself was derived from the West, but was eventually designed to suit its local context. It was built on the banks of the river Vishvamitri by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III in 1879 and spanned over an area of 113 acres. It was the largest garden in Western India. The garden was modelled very much like the botanical gardens in Europe, with its rich variety of plant species and a zoological section with exotic animal life. Right in the heart of this garden, a museum housing the personal collection of the Maharaja was added as a public structure. The museum was organised using the prevalent international methods of documenting and cataloguing artefacts. Soon the museum became an integral part of the civic spaces of the city (Plates 14.3, 14.4)



**Plate 14.3:** Museum in the garden: a window to the world.





**Plate 14.4:** Museum: a mix of styles and techniques.

The garden symbolised the progressive and scientific outlook of the rulers of Baroda, and it became a vehicle to introduce the modern outlook through the understanding of the natural world. It was built along the Maharaja's vision of a progressive state, but in coalition with the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew, Surrey.<sup>9</sup> It encouraged the citizens to view the different variety of plant and animal species organised in various sections, to spend time in unspoilt nature and wonder at the exotic collection of artefacts from the various journeys of the king. The garden in the princely states of India in the 1880s became the symbol of modernity and a window to the world. (Plate 14.5)

#### 4.2.4 Break Away from the City

While examining the evolution of the city of Baroda it becomes amply clear that a conscious departure was made for urban expansion away from the old fortified city. The state made a deliberate and planned effort to move the new city away from old city for

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Bowe, "Some Kew-Trained Gardeners and the Gardens of Baroda, Gujarat, India," *Garden History* 34, no. 2 (2006): 192–205, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25472340>.



**Plate 14.5:** The garden as a civic space of the city with a pavilion in the centre.

a fresh start, while using the modern urban design and planning technique to refer to the best of international urban space making. This was much in contrast with the other old cities of India, such as Ahmedabad where the citizens were reluctant to leave the confines and comfort of the traditional spaces of the old city and opposed introduction of modern technologies such as sewerage and water supply infrastructure.

Although a large portion of the city's population inhabited the fortified city on the eastern banks of river Vishvamitri, colonial urban development began at a considerable distance from the old fortified city. The walled city can trace its origins back to early sixteenth century under the Gujarat Sultanate. Under the sultanate rule, Baroda grew to be a prominent city along the trade route.

Baroda continued to thrive as a city without any external disturbances until the advent of the Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent in 1526. Emperor Humayun's initial attempts to invade Gujarat were unsuccessful, until Akbar conquered Gujarat finally in 1573 and made Baroda into a Sarkar or a district under the viceroy of Gujarat, which was now a part of the Mughal empire. Mughal rule for Baroda was generally uneventful in terms of political warfare, but the city did grow outside the fortified walls, with the necropolis coming on the outskirts of the fortified city to include various tombs and *dargahs*. With the Marathas making frequent forays into Gujarat and with the Mughal power in decline, a lot of battles were waged to gain control over Baroda. Various

factions within the Maratha empire began forming for control over portions of Gujarat until finally in 1734, the Gaekwads captured Baroda, effectively ending the Mughal rule. In 1752 The Gaekwads of Baroda formally acknowledged the sovereignty of the Peshwas of Pune. In the eighteenth century, the Gaekwads established themselves as virtually independent rulers, recognising the suzerainty of the Maratha Empire. Baroda was then named the capital city of the Gaekwad state. With this came a large population influx which allowed the city to expand beyond its walled boundaries. In 1802, the Treaty of Bassein, which was signed between the East India Company and the Maratha Peshwas of Pune, required the Marathas to accept and acknowledge British authority, officially ceding all their territories to the Company. Baroda became part of the Bombay Presidency as a capital city of the princely state of Baroda, ruled by the Gaekwads under British sovereignty.

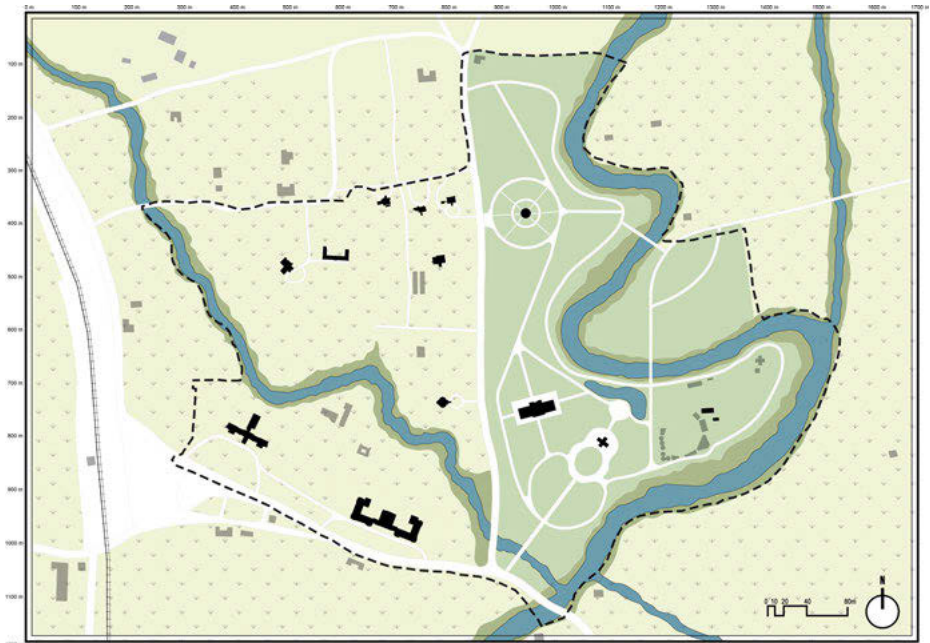
City development under colonial rule in many parts of the country neglected the indigenous settlement patterns in order to make a physically and symbolically distinct colonial city. Physical segregation or a break away from the native city was usually motivated by the underlying principle of forming a city that was to be ethnically, socially and architecturally distinct. This disparity often helped define boundaries, but also served as a symbolic gesture to ascertain a self-important authenticity merely by contrast to the local indigenous architectural practices.<sup>10</sup> Under the East India Company, British engagement in the Indian subcontinent was predominated by military, economic and commercial gains. Hence, the British initially looked at Indian cities as military or trading outposts. Military settlements or cantonments were among the first interventions to come up in prominent cities as a means of establishing a military and administrative network. In Baroda, the cantonment was established after the Treaty of Bassein was signed and a resident was appointed for the city. Since Baroda was a princely state under a subsidiary alliance with the British, it secured an autonomous existence within the British Empire. Baroda was allowed to conduct its own internal affairs without much British interference but still had to adhere to state policies set up by the colonial government. But not until after 1857 were the policies of indirect rule in Baroda formalised.

Initially, infrastructure development in Baroda under the governance of the Gaekwads was limited to setting up the cantonment and the railway line, which was exclusively used by the British. After the 1857 mutiny, with the transfer of political power from the East India Company to the British Crown, came certain policy level revisions that allowed Baroda to grow as an autonomous state. The cantonment and the residency, initially built to the north of the city, was located at a considerable distance from the walled city. This physical segregation of the colonial military settlement defined the extent of the 'new and modern' city's boundaries. With the advent

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Architext Series (London: Routledge, 2007).

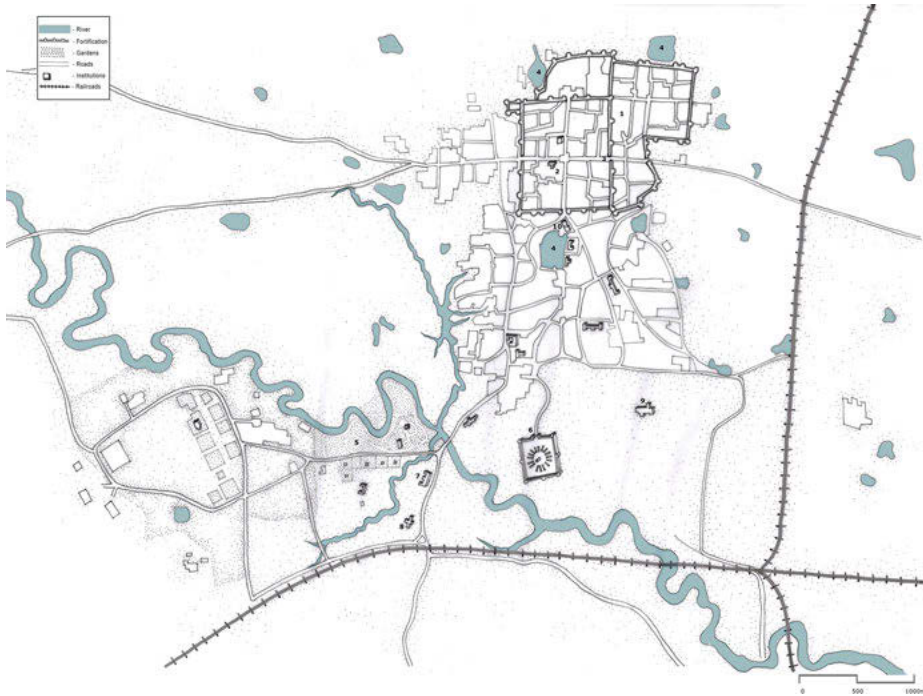
of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, city planning and urban infrastructure development became more centred on public needs, but modelled after a modernised western city. With the new Public Works Department (PWD) being established in 1855, which institutionalised settlement planning and building practices, city infrastructure grew by leaps and bounds. The PWD, as a formal institution, was also responsible for appointing officials to serve as architects or engineers for princely states. But the Maharaja hired specialists independently who implemented his vision of a progressive city. Baroda saw the introduction of a variety of urban civic infrastructure, such as public gardens, hospitals and educational institutions, which were solely for the benefit of the local population. With the railway station and the cantonment already set up, the Maharaja decided to move his idea of a modern city to the same location, with the intent of creating a modern identity of the city. The development that came around the station and the cantonment was mainly institutional in nature and paved way for the formation of an institutional precinct (Plates 14.6, 14.7).



**Plate 14.6:** The institutional precinct around the station comprising of the garden, university and the museum.

This precinct included a large botanical garden, educational institutes and the railway station. This area defined the northernmost boundary of the city, adjacent to the river. An important gesture towards making Baroda a contemporary city was the relocation of the royal palace. The royal residence, which was originally located within





**Plate 14.7:** The overall plan of the city of Baroda shaped by the transformation between 1880 and 1920.

the old city, was moved outside the city walls, further to the west. In terms of its site and setting, it was modelled very much like the Victorian palaces. The Lakshmi Vilas Palace in Baroda was set amidst a vast expanse of manicured land with designed avenues leading to it. But the palace itself was one of the earliest experiments in Anglo-Indian architecture – an architectural language that was said to be the fusion of European and Indian (mainly Mughal) architectural styles. In the late nineteenth century, the Maharaja introduced various social, administrative and political reforms within the state and spent the better part of the century developing infrastructure for it. The city expansion, which effectively began from the cantonment, started moving towards the walled city with civic infrastructure such as hospitals, central jail and an administrative precinct coming up.

The architecture of Baroda that emerged during this period seems to be a hybrid; deploying the European classical spatial planning (Maharaja Sayajirao University Arts Faculty, Museum, Dufferin Hospital) traditions along with local construction techniques such as load-bearing brick walls, squinches and domes. The site and setting of these buildings was very much similar to others in colonial cities in India that used the surrounding open spaces to frame the buildings, while the high ground and plinth often created a monumental impact.

### 4.2.5 Valuing the Tradition

The most interesting feature of the development and modernisation of Baroda city was an acknowledgment of tradition and history. Unlike many modern efforts of city development and architectural production, it was very much conscious of the old city. This was also an example of a kind of native assertion that eventually helped to mobilise a counter-colonial narrative. For example, an old water tank on the edge of the city, Sursagar, that had been in use for centuries, was revived and made relevant to modern times through a major urban design and development exercise around the water tank. This project is a good example to understand the approach of the princely state towards city development and allows us to understand how at all the times the reformers were trying to introduce modern amenities and features in the city, all the while acknowledging and balancing the historicity of the city. New functions were added around a historic tank. Far from being a community tank with strong religious significance, it began to take shape as a civic space for the whole city. Creation of such civic or public spaces was significant from the point of view of the establishment of a modern city. Sayajirao III was not the only person around that time promoting such ideas. Sociologist and urban planner Patrick Geddes was also advocating similar ideas of ‘gradual changes’ in sync with local traditions and environment. Patrick Geddes was a Scottish botanist and sociologist who had spent substantial time in the Indian subcontinent. He was commissioned by many different princely states to prepare reports on the state of urbanisation along with suggested strategies of urban development. In his report on the city of Baroda he makes the following observations – ‘Around city’s tanks, we have not only a natural civic centre, which we as town-planners would most wish develop, but one which is plainly in process of this evolution already and for years past.’<sup>11</sup>

These views were distinct from the ones of the British colonial state in India. The British ideally wanted to develop new settlement away from the old Indian settlement. They did not want to deal with the messy conditions of the old cities, in fact they completely neglected and ignored the same. The old Indian city was left to decay and fossilise in the early colonial era, as the British were more interested in developing the cantonments, the civil lines, the mall and the areas around the gymkhanas and polo grounds.

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick Geddes, *A Report on the Development and Expansion of the City of Baroda* (Baroda: Lakshmi Vilas Press, 1916): 29.

## 5 Conclusions

The overall arrangement of the indirect rule and the administration of the princely states by the British Empire created extremely unfavourable conditions for the Indian rulers. They were totally at the mercy of the British Empire on fundamental aspects of state administration such as defence, economic exchanges and foreign policies (relationships with other Indian princely states). In domestic matters such as succession, taxes and infrastructure development, the level of interference was also high. These conditions often led to most princely states totally surrendering all their autonomy in most matters; many royal families (such as the ones in some states of Rajasthan) withdrew into their own personal indulgences with scant regard to overall development of the state. However, some powerful states like Baroda developed a sophisticated counter-colonial attitude, not through open rebellion but through subtle defiance, negotiations and investment in public projects. These states often bypassed the British agencies and directly started dealing with professionals from across the globe (and not only from Britain). They invested in the ideas of modernity that were contextual to the actual realities on the land. Modern projects of infrastructure, legal, financial, education and civic nature became the vehicle to bring about social change in the state.

The form of modernity was indigenous and extremely sensitive to the real need of the people. It cannot be seen merely as being a mimicked condition of the East trying to copy western modernity. The transformation that took place in this period had a long-lasting impact on the city, its institution and its citizens. Even till date the institution and spaces that were created during this tough phase of dependencies continue to endure and are omnipresent in the contemporary city as well.

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# Glossary

**abhidhā** (Sanskrit) The primary or conventional meaning of an expression.

**ācāram** (Malayalam) Ritual conventions and practices.

**ācārya** (Sanskrit) Jaina teacher, mendicant scholar, leader of an ascetic group.

**adhishthāna** (Sanskrit) Moulded base of a temple, palace, etc.

**adṛshyaśakti** (Sanskrit: *adṛśyaśakti*) Invisible power.

**Airāvateśvara Temple** Royal Śiva temple constructed in the late Coḷa period under Rājārāja II. The *maṇḍapa* attached to the *vimāna* is conceived as a chariot and the entire complex features a vast variety of dance imagery.

**alapadma** (Sanskrit) A *hasta* (hand gesture in dance) which resembles a fully opened lotus flower.

**ālīḍha (sthāna)** (Sanskrit) The right leg is stretched to the side from the *ardhamāṅḍalī* position, the heel touching the ground. This position gets used e.g. in sculpture for the depiction of movements (of wrathful deities).

**Āḷvārs** Twelve canonical Viṣṇu devotees.

**Amarāvathī Stupa** A famous South Indian *stūpa* in northern Andhra Pradesh. It was located in the Satavahana territory at the time of its construction around 100–200 CE.

**amour courtois** (French) ‘Courtly love’. An idealised and often illicit form of love with a highly stylised code of conduct between lovers, in which a knight or courtier devotes himself to a revered noble woman who is usually married and feigns indifference to preserve her reputation. *Amour courtois* was celebrated in the literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

**aṅḍaka** ‘Egg’, referring to miniature *śikhara* (*śṛṅga*, *kūṭa*) in the superstructure of a Nāgara temple.

**anekāṅḍaka** (Sanskrit, adjective) Composite (referring to the form of a Nāgara temple).

**añjali** (Sanskrit) A gesture formed with both palms joined together and the fingertips pointing upwards as an expression of respect and devotion.

**antarāla** (Sanskrit) Vestibule; intermediary compartment between shrine and hall.

**Anti-nautch Movements** ‘Anti-dance movements’, from the Hindi term *nāc* ‘dance, dance recital’. These were some groups of European and North American Christians, who together with some Westernised Hindu and Muslim Indian associations, tried to abolish the professional dancers, their masters and musicians, and consequently the practice, transmission and performances of their art, because they claimed that it was immoral.

**anugraham** (Malayalam) Blessing.

**anushṭānakarmangaḷ** (Malayalam) Embodied ritual.

**anuṣṭhāna-kala** (Malayalam) Ritual ‘art’.

**anuṣṭhānam** (Malayalam) Established religious custom.

**apsaras** (Sanskrit) Celestial female beings who are mentioned in many ancient Indian texts, including the *Vedas*.

**archanāmaṇḍapa** (Sanskrit) Pillared hall in a temple.

**ardhacandra** (Sanskrit) ‘Half moon’, *hasta* (single hand gesture) used in dance.

**ardhamaṇḍalī (aramandī)** (Sanskrit) Basic position and marker for dance in temple reliefs. Both feet are turned outwards with a little gap between the heels. The knees are bent and point outwards. In this position the legs form a rhombus.

**ardhamaṇḍapa** (Sanskrit) A pillared hall (*maṇḍapa*) which is adjacent to the entrance of the *vimāna*.

**arga** A crushed conglomerate rock which includes calcium carbonate in its components.

**arhat** (Sanskrit) Signifies in Buddhism a being who is far advanced on the way to enlightenment and has attained a state of perfection.

**Aruṇacaleśvara Temple** A famous Śiva temple in Tiruvannamalai. The temple complex has been expanded by successive dynasties. Most of the dance images fall into the Vijayanagara period.

**aṣṭadikapālas** (Sanskrit) The eight guardians of the cardinal directions.

**Āṭavallāṅ** (Tamil) ‘The one excellent in dance’ or Kūttāṅṭavaṅ ‘the god of the dance’, the ‘dancing Śiva’.

**aṭayālam** (Malayalam) Sign.

**atiyā!** (Tamil) ‘She (who is) at the feet’, a female ‘servant-devotee’.

**atiyān** (Tamil) ‘He (who is) at the feet’, a male ‘servant-devotee’.

**āṭṭam** (Tamil) Dance.

**aṭutta muṛai kaṭavār** (Tamil) ‘Those who have the obligation of the next rotation’.

**Avalokiteśvara** (Sanskrit) The name of a Bodhisattva.

**avatāra** (Sanskrit) Incarnation, a manifestation of a deity.

**Bailaderas, Bayladeras, Bayadère, Bajadere, Bagliadera, Bayaderka** (Portuguese and derivations in other European languages) ‘Female dancer’. The term was absorbed into several European languages and referred both to the local Indian temple and court dancers, and to the characters of Indian dancers in European operas and ballets they inspired.

**balipīṭha, balikallu** (Sanskrit, Kannada) Offering platform or altar in a Jain temple complex.

**bandha** (Sanskrit) ‘Link, connection, bond, affiliation, union, bondage, contract.’

**basti, basadi** (Sanskrit, Kannada) Term used to refer to Jain temples in Southern India, especially in Karnataka.

**baug** (English version of the Urdu/Hindi *bāgh*) A garden.

**betel** (Portuguese) A leaf used to prepare the Indian *pan*, which is a mix of spices and areca nuts chewed for its digestive, refreshing and aphrodisiac properties.

**bhadra** (Sanskrit) Central projection in a temple wall.

**Bhagavatī** (Sanskrit) Polite form or honorific term to address a female deity.

**Bhaktas** (Sanskrit) Followers of the *bhakti* movement.

**bhakti** (Sanskrit) ‘Attachment, participation, fondness, faith, love, devotion’. A devotional form of love and worship directed to a Hindu deity. The *bhakti* movement was a devotional movement which, between the sixth and the seventh century, permeated many Indian creeds.

**Bhāratanāṭyam** (Sanskrit) A Hindu form of Indian classical dance that originated in modern-day Tamil Nadu.

**bhūmi** (Sanskrit) Tier or conceptual storey of a temple.

**Bhūmija** (Sanskrit) Temple mode first appearing in central India and the Deccan from around 1000 CE.

**bhūta** (Sanskrit: lit. ‘ghost’) Spirit with divine powers, might refer to venerated entities (spirits, deities, ancestors etc.) of Tulunadu in Karnataka. The term *bhūta* (also spelled *būta* or anglicised as ‘bhuta’) refers, among other things, to a multi-layered phenomenon including a complex belief system.

**Bisnagua** (Portuguese) The name of the capital city ‘Vijayanagar or Vijayanagara’ of the homonymous empire (today in Karnataka state), which the Portuguese spelled Bisnagua.

**bottu** (From the Tamil *poṭṭu*) Pendant.

**Brahmā** (Sanskrit) A major Indian deity.

**Brahma, Brahmadeva** (Sanskrit) A divinity, *yakṣa* or *kṣetrapāla*; typically placed on pillars in Jaina temple complexes in southern and south-western Karnataka.

**Brahmāpurīśvara Temple** The Brahmāpurīśvara Temple in Pullamangai, which is dedicated to Śiva, was most likely built under Parāntaka I. The architecture including dancers as bracket figures is typical for the early Cōla period.

**Brahmastambha** (Sanskrit) Temple pillar topped by a representation of Brahmadeva.

**Brahmin** (Sanskrit, from Brāhmaṇa) Male member of the highest caste in the four-fold *brāhmanical* caste system. In the past, their occupation consisted mainly in the performance of rituals in teaching, and in serving as ministers in the royal courts and as judges and magistrates in the tribunal courts.

**British Resident** Officer appointed by the British colonial state to oversee the affairs of the princely states.

**caitanya** (From Sanskrit *caitanya*) Divine energy.

**(Cakra)saṃvara** (Sanskrit) A Buddhist tantric deity.

**caṇḍāla** (Sanskrit) A term for a ‘lower-’caste man.

**Candragiri** (Kannada; from Sanskrit: Candragiri) The smaller hill at Shravanabelgola, Karnataka, locally also known as Choṭā Pahār or Cikkabeṭṭa/Cikkābeṭṭā.

**cantonment** A military settlement or station in British India.

**caturmukha** (Sanskrit) Four-faced icon or shrine.

**caturmukha basti** (Sanskrit and Kannada) Four-faced temple with doors on all four sides.

**caturvīṃśati tablet** (Sanskrit) Carved slab depicting twenty-four Jinas; usually one large Tirthaṅkara, surrounded by images of the twenty-three other Jinas; the same as *caubīsī*.

**caubīsī** A table depicting the twenty-four Jinas; the same as *caturvīṃśati* tablet.



**Chālukya** The name Chālukya refers to three related dynasties. The Eastern Chālukyas ruled parts of South India from the seventh to the tenth centuries CE. Their reign included several military conflicts with the Pallava dynasty.

**chhādyā** (From Sanskrit *chādyā*: to be sheltered) Stone canopy or awning.

**chuttumatil** (Malayalam) Outer wall.

**Cilappatikāram** (Tamil) First work considered as part of the Tamil twin-epics (fourth to sixth centuries CE), written by Illango Adigal (most probably a Jaina). It contains valuable information on dance, as one of its main characters is the dancer Māṭavi.

**Cōla** (Tamil) One of the three dominant regional powers during the Caṅkaṁ period (approximately 100 BCE to 300 CE). The medieval Cōla dynasty from the Kāviri delta region ruled parts of Southern Asia between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

**Company** ‘Company’ is a short form, which refers to the East India Company, which was chartered by the English government.

**Company paintings** Term originating in the mid-twentieth century for hybrid painting styles by Indian artists for European, usually British, clients.

**contrahere** (Latin) ‘To put together’, ‘to unite’.

**courtesan** (From the Italian) *cortigiana*, ‘a female courtier’. In Renaissance Italy and Europe, a class of cultivated unmarried women who formed part of the intellectual and political retinues in the aristocratic and royal courts. Courtesans were proficient artists and poets.

**dasī** (Sanskrit) Female servant-slave.

**daimyōs** (Japanese) Feudal lords.

**ḍamaru** (Sanskrit) A small hourglass-shaped drum which symbolises the sound that created the universe. Usually depicted in the upper right hand of Naṭarāja.

**dāna** (Sanskrit) Donation, gift, offering.

**daṇḍa** (Sanskrit: lit., ‘stick’) Arm position in dance. The arm is extended straight forward like a stick.

**dargah** (Urdu) Tomb or shrine of a Muslim saint.

**darśana** (Sanskrit) The simultaneous act of seeing the deity and being seen by the deity.

**dāsa** (Sanskrit) Male servant-slave.

**dehatyāga** (Sanskrit) Body abandonment.

**deva koṣṭha** (Sanskrit) A niche between two pilasters on the exterior wall of a shrine or temple which contains a statue (or relief) of a deity.

**deva** (Sanskrit) Divine being, deity, god.

**devadāna** (Sanskrit) Donation, gift, or offering to the gods made forever, an act that is definitive and irreversible.

**devadāsa** (Sanskrit) A deity’s male servant-slave.

**devadāsī** (Sanskrit) Servant of god. A female dancer whose life was dedicated to serving a deity or a temple.

**devagaṇikā** (Sanskrit) A deity's courtesan.

**devakula** (Sanskrit) A deity's lineage; to be affiliated, to join, to be part of a deity's lineage or clan.

**dēvan** A term for a male divine figure.

**devī (dēvi)** (Sanskrit) A female divine being, a goddess.

**dharma** (From the Sanskrit *dhṛ*) To carry, hold up, lead, guide; it designates first of all that which is firmly established, natural or juridical law, custom and that which is right, fitting, necessary and proper. It has been translated as 'divine law'.

**dhvajastambha** (Sanskrit) Flag pole.

**Digambara** (Sanskrit) 'Sky-clad', the group of Jainas whose male mendicants reject clothing and go naked; more prominent in central and southern India (in contrast to the Śvetāmbara, who wear simple white cotton robes)

**dikṣā** (Sanskrit) Initiation ceremony.

**dīpastambha** (Sanskrit) Light pillar in a Hindu or Jaina temple.

**dolā** (Sanskrit) 'Swing', a *hastā* (double-hand gesture) where the arms and hands hang down relaxed on both sides of the body.

**Drāviḍa** (Sanskrit) Generic term for South Indian temple style. Typical features are the pyramidal shape of the *vimāna* and from the late Cōḷa period onwards huge *gopuras*, gateways with towers.

**Dravidian** The cultural zone of Drāviḍa (South Indian) culture.

**dupatta** (Derived from Sanskrit) Shawl worn around the shoulders and sometimes over the head as part of women's clothing in India.

**durbar** (Derived from the Persian *darbār*, 'king's court') Coronation ceremony designed to declare the reigning British monarch the 'Emperor' or 'Empress' of India.

**dvārapālas** (Sanskrit, abbreviated form of *dvārapālakas*) Doorkeepers.

**dvikūṭācala** (Sanskrit) Temple consisting of two shrines; double or twin temple.

**ekatala** (Sanskrit) Single-storey building.

**fuyo-de** (Japanese) Term for blue and white Kraak ware.

**Gain** (Possibly from the Kannada word *gayaki*) A female singer.

**gaja(hastā)** (Sanskrit) Arm position in classical Indian dance. One arm crosses the torso diagonally to the other side in resemblance of an elephant's trunk. Hence the name *gajahastā*, which literally means 'hand of an elephant'.

**Gaṅgā** South Indian dynasty which ruled from about 350 to 1000 CE.

**Gaṅgādhara Śiva** Referring to the *brāhmanical* god Śiva who captured the river goddess Ganga in his hair.

**gaṇikā** (Sanskrit) An accomplished and distinguished female artist and courtesan.

**garbhagrha** (Sanskrit) 'Womb chamber', sanctum of a temple (often simply called *garbha*, 'womb').

**gāthā** (Sanskrit) Poem or verse.

**gavākṣa, kūdu** (Sanskrit) Horseshoe-shaped arch; opening or ornament.

**gentio** (Latin) Heathen, pagan.

**ghaṇṭā** (Sanskrit) 'Bell'; crowning member, bell-shaped or (in Bhūmija temples) cushion-shaped.

**Gommaṭeśvara** Son of the first Jina, Ṛṣabhanātha; model of an ascetic; also known as Gommaṭa or Bāhubali.

**gonpa (gompa)** name for a Buddhist temple in Nepal.

**gopura** (Sanskrit) Gateway to temples surmounted by pyramidal towers, a special feature of Drāviḍa temples. Derived from the Sanskrit root 'gup', which means 'to guard'. Sometimes transcribed as *gōpura*, but 'ō' is not part of the Sanskrit alphabet and 'g' does not exist in Tamil.

**gosu-akae** (Japanese) Term for coloured porcelains.

**gosu-de** (Japanese) Term for blue and white porcelains.

**gramadevata** (Sanskrit) Village deity.

**guru** (Sanskrit) Master, teacher, preceptor.

**gurukula** (Sanskrit) To be affiliated, to join or be part of one's teacher's lineage or clan, in the Indian traditional system of training and learning in the teacher's home.

**gurusī** (Malayalam) Artificial blood made of turmeric and lime used in *teyyam*-like rituals of Malabar, South India.

**haifuki-ho** (Japanese) A new cupellation technology adopted from Korea, resulting in a high purity of the silver.

**haijin** (Chinese) Ban on Chinese private overseas trade.

**hāra** (Sanskrit) Section of a 'cloister' between miniature pavilions in a Drāviḍa temple superstructure.

**harem** (From the Arabic *ḥarīm*) A sacred inviolable place in the household, reserved to the female members of the family.

**hastā** (Sanskrit) Symbolic hand gesture in dance. Some dance scholars also use *mudrā*, which is usually used for hand gestures of sculptures. The term *hastā* is used for dance sculptures and *mudrā* for other sculptures.

**hasti-hastā** (Sanskrit) Ornamental railings at both sides of steps at entryways of temple, palace, and rarely of houses.

**Hevajra** A Buddhist tantric deity.

**Holi** The Hindu festival of colours, held in spring and involving large processions where paint is thrown at participants.

**Hoysala** (Kannada) South Indian dynasty, which ruled from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries.

**Indra** (Sanskrit) A Hindu deity.

**Jātaka** (Sanskrit) Previous life stories of the Buddha.

**Jina** (Sanskrit) ‘Conqueror’, ‘spiritual victor’, the twenty-four enlightened teachers of each world age; same as Tirthaṅkara.

**jinālaya** (Sanskrit) Jain temple.

**Kailāsanātha Temple (Ellora)** A unique rock-cut temple at Ellora, cut into the living rock of the mountainside. The temple was constructed under the Rāṣṭrakūta king Krishna I (r. 757–783 CE) and is dedicated to Śiva.

**Kailāsanātha Temple (Kanchipuram)** Royal Pallava temple dedicated to Śiva. The temple, which is located in Kanchipuram, was built under Rājasimha I (r. 700–725 CE). It is known for its great variety of Nāteśa sculptures.

**kalam** (Tamil) ‘a unity of land measurement’.

**kalaśatara** (Malayalam) A raised altar built close to the *teyyam* shrine. In requirement for ritual performances, offerings (*kalaśam*) such as toddy are kept in earthen pots on this altar. The Kalaśakkāran is the person(s) in charge of arrangement of the *kalaśatara*. During the *teyyam* performance this altar is decorated with flowers, leaves and especially with tender coconuts.

**kalyāṇa maṇḍapa** (Sanskrit) Pillared-hall for the annual wedding ritual of the deity.

**Kanchani** A female dancer. A prostitute.

**kāṇi** (Tamil) ‘Allowance’.

**kapōta** (Sanskrit) Pronounced roof moulding or cornice in South Indian temples.

**karaṇa** (Sanskrit) A movement unit in dance which combines the movement of the lower and upper body. The earliest description of 108 of these movement units is contained in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

**karṇa** (Sanskrit) Corner element in a temple plan.

**kāval** (Malayalam) Protection ensured by people or religious figures/material.

**kāvu** (Malayalam) A Malayalam term for sacred groves.

**kāvumāṭṭam** (Malayalam) Transfer and emplacement of a deity from one sacred grove to a different one.

**kere basti** (Kannada) ‘Tank temple.’

**khaḍgāsana** (Sanskrit) Posture of abandonment; posture adopted by a standing and meditating Tirthaṅkara; same as *kāyotsarga*.

**Khan Khawas** Unmarried women from the Mysore Sultanate courts of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan who performed music and dance exclusively for the sultan.

**Kimpuruṣa** (Sanskrit) One of the lower figures in the *sankalpa* (conception) spectrum of Hindu tradition. It has a horse head, three eyes, a protruding tongue and a crown with a combination of cobra-crescent motives.

**kinrande** Porcelain with polychrome and gilded decoration.

**ko-akae** (Japanese) Coloured porcelain ware, produced specifically for Japan.

**kōlakkāran** (Malayalam) *Teyyam* performer.

**kōmaram** (Malayalam) Oracle/priest in rituals related to *teyyam* or *teyyam*-like ritual ‘performances’ in the region of Malabar.

**ko-sometsuke** (Japanese) Blue and white porcelain ware, tailored for the Japanese market.

**kōvil** (Tamil) King’s palace, temple.

**koyma** Representative of the regional political body or council.

**Krishna** कृष्ण (Sanskrit); Incarnation of the Hindu god Viṣṇu.

**ḷṣetrapāla** (Sanskrit) Guardian of a temple compound, Hindu or Jaina.

**ḷṣetrapāla pīṭha** (Sanskrit) Shrine or sacred precinct of the guardian of the temple complex.

**kula** (Sanskrit) Lineage, clan.

**kūṭa** (Sanskrit) Miniature domed pavilion in a Drāviḍa temple superstructure; miniature *śikhara* in a Nāgara temple superstructure (alternative to *śrīḷga*).

**kūṭastambha** (Sanskrit) Miniature *śikhara* on a pillar form (*stambha*).

**latā** (Sanskrit) ‘creeper’, arm position in dance, where the arm is extended diagonally upwards in a relaxed manner.

**liang** (Chinese) Ingots worth 50 *taels*.

**Lija system** Chinese social organisation system on village level, established under the Ming for tax collection etc.

**liṅga** (Sanskrit) ‘Sign’, the phallic symbol that, in a Śaiva context, represents the essence of the god Śiva.

**Liṅgāyats/Viraśaivas** (Sanskrit) Followers of a religious and social movement which arose in Karnataka in the twelfth century.

**mahādvāra** (Sanskrit) ‘Large gate’, main entrance gate to a temple compound.

**mahal** (Derived from Sanskrit *mahālaya*) A mansion or palace. The living quarters for a set of people.

**Mahāmastakābhīṣeka** (Sanskrit) ‘Great Head-Anointing Ceremony’, conducted by the Jainas on large statues of Gommaṭeśvara.

**mahāpātakaḷ** (Sanskrit) Grand sin.

**Maitreya** (Sanskrit) The Buddha of the future.

**mānastambha** (Sanskrit) Free-standing Jaina pillar, usually crowned by four representations of a seated or standing Jina.

**maṅḷala** (Sanskrit) Lit. circle; symbolic diagram in Hindu and Buddhist Tantric cosmology and an instrument of meditation.

**maṅḷala sthāna** (Sanskrit) Sometimes used as synonym for the *ardhamaṅḷali*. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* there must be a wider gap between the heels.

**maṅḷapa** (Sanskrit) Temple hall, pavilion.

**mantra** (Sanskrit) A syllable, word, sound, phrase, mystical formula of invocation, sacred utterance, incantation; it is repeated in order to aid concentration by someone praying or meditating. Practitioners believe it to have religious, magical and spiritual powers.

**mantramūrtis** (Sanskrit) A group of five important *teyyams* who are propitiated to enhance the magical powers.

**marakkāl** (Tamil) A unity of land measurement.

**Marāṭhā** (Marathi) The Marāṭhā dynasty (1676–1855 CE) claimed the Thanjavur area after a battle between the Nāyakas. Although most of the political power was transferred to the British Empire after 1762 CE, the Maratha rulers remained influential in the cultural area.

**maṭha** (Sanskrit) Indian religious institution or monastery.

**meykkīrtti** (Tamil) The panegyric part of an epigraphic inscription.

**Mita** Incan practice of forced labour in pre-Hispanic times.

**mukhathezhuth** (Malayalam) An intricate make-up, literally ‘writing on face’.

**Mūlanātha Svāmī Temple** This Śiva temple at Bahur (near Pondicherry) dates to the ninth to tenth centuries CE and was most likely a Pallava foundation. The base contains relief carvings of female dancers.

**muṛai** (Tamil) ‘work done in rotation’; the right to perform a particular qualified task.

**Musarratī** (probably from Urdu) Unmarried women from the Mysore Sultanate courts of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan who performed music and dance to mixed male and female audiences.

**nāga** (Sanskrit) Serpent, snake.

**nāgakal, nāgaśila** (Sanskrit) Snake stone.

**Nāgara** (Sanskrit) Generic term for the north Indian temple style.

**nāgarāja** (Sanskrit) Snake king.

**nandikā** (Sanskrit) Small projection from the re-entrant angle of a Nāgara temple plan.

**Nandīśvara Dvīpa** (Sanskrit) Eighth island continent of the Jaina cosmos.

**nāstik** (Derived from Sanskrit *nāstika*) Heteropraxic tradition that negates the mainstream theistic conceptions.

**Naṭarāja** (Sanskrit) Derived from *naṭa*, which means dancer/actor and from *rāja*, which means king; literally ‘Lord of dance’, one of the manifestations or *mūrtis* of Śiva. The Naṭarāja icon can be distinguished from general Naṭeśa images by the standardised iconography.

**Naṭeśa** (Sanskrit) Śiva as the Lord of dance, called Naṭarāja, following a radial composition. The name is derived from *naṭa*, which means dancer/actor and from *īśa*, which means master, lord.

**naṭṭuvaṇār** (Tamil) ‘He who belongs to the dance’; ‘he to whom the dance belongs’, a dance and music master, the director of a dance troupe, the conductor of a dance recital.

**Nāṭya Śāstra** (From the Sanskrit *nāṭya*, which means ‘dancing, acting, miming, playing music, singing, etc.’ and from *śāstra*, meaning precepts, rules, manual, compendium, book, treatise.) A Sanskrit treatise on the performing arts compiled by the sage Bharata around the fourth century CE.

**navagrha** (Sanskrit) The nine planetary deities.

**Navakammika** A liaison between the Buddhist religious body and the sculptors working for them.

**Nāyaka** (Sanskrit) The Nāyakas had initially been military leaders who administered districts of the Vijayanagara empire. After the Vijayanagara's defeat in the battle of Talikota in 1565, most Nāyakas ruled virtually independently. The territories of the Nāyakas of Gingee, Thanjavur and Madurai covered large parts of the Tamil area.

**Nāyaṅmār** (Tamil) Sixty-three canonical Śaiva devotees.

**nianhao** (Chinese) Official reign marks of Chinese emperors, used to determine dates.

**nibandha** (Sanskrit) To tie, to bind, to fasten, to chain, to fetter, to join, to unite, to connect, but also to appoint, to fix upon.

**niyama** (Sanskrit) Rules or conventions.

**niyama niṣṭhe** (Sanskrit: *niyamaniṣṭhā*) Keeping rules and regulations.

**nōmbu** (Tamil) Fasting.

**nṛtta mūrti** (Sanskrit) Deity whose primary iconographic feature is a dancing posture or movement.

**Pagoda** (Portuguese) Indian temple, place of worship. The term derives from the name of the Hindu Goddess Bhagavatī (Sanskrit), pronounced by the Portuguese as 'Pagoti'. During the colonial period, the term was used for a local place of worship or any shrine. Today, it mainly refers to a multi-roofed temple structure.

**Pallava** (Tamil) Royal dynasty which had its roots in the Guntur district of Āndhra. They ruled the northern parts of the Tamil region from their capital Kāñcipuram between the fourth and the ninth centuries CE.

**paḷḷimarai** (Malayalam) Wooden banner.

**pañcakūṭacala** (Sanskrit) Five-shrined temple.

**paṇḍita** (Sanskrit) A learned man, generally assumed to be a Brāhmin in most Indian texts.

**Pāṇḍya** (Tamil) The southernmost of the three dominant regional powers during the Cankarṇ period (approximately 100 BCE to 300 BCE). They subsequently ruled the southern parts of the Tamil area contemporary with the Pallava rule in the northern regions.

**paṇi** (Tamil) Work.

**pañjara** (Sanskrit) 'Cage', miniature pavilion in Drāviḍa architecture, crowned by a horseshoe-arch gable (*nāsī, nāsikā*).

**pañku** (Tamil) Share allotted for a service received.

**parapūrvikanmār** (Malayalam) Ancestral divinities.

**pardaos** (Portuguese) An Indian gold coin.

**parivartanā** (Sanskrit) 'Going around the circle', geometrical procedure for constructing stellate plans.

**pastiglia** (Italian) Pastework for low relief decoration, that can later be coloured or gilded.



**patāka** (Sanskrit) Single hand gesture with palm and all fingers stretched. This gesture is also used as *ṅṭṭa hastā* in pure dance.

**peṭṭah** (Derived probably from Tamil *peṭṭai*) The suburb of a fortress.

**pīṭha(m)** (Sanskrit) A sacralised stool or seat.

**poimukham** (Malayalam) False face or mask worn by some *teyyams*.

**poṭṭukattu** (Tamil) 'The tying of the *poṭṭu* pendant': the ceremony of tying a golden pendant around the neck of a young girl consecrated to the deities in the temples.

**pradakṣiṇā** (Sanskrit) Ritual circumambulation around a venerated object or building in a clockwise direction.

**pradakṣiṇā patha** (Sanskrit) Circumambulation path in a Hindu or Jain temple.

**prākāra** (Sanskrit) Enclosure wall of a Hindu or Jain temple.

**prāna** (Sanskrit) Breath.

**prasada(m)** (Sanskrit, Tamil) Grace, an offering to the gods graciously given back to the devotee with the deities' blessings.

**prāsāda** (Sanskrit) Temple, shrine of a temple, including its superstructure.

**pratyālīḍha** (Sanskrit) Dance posture. The left leg is stretched to the side from the *ardhamāṇḍalī* position, the heel touching the ground. This position is e.g. used in sculpture for the depiction of movements (of wrathful deities).

**pratyāṅga** (Sanskrit) Quarter-*śikhara* in a Nāgara superstructure.

**Princely State** A Princely State was a political state in British India that was a sovereign entity of the British empire. It was not directly governed by the British, but was subject to a subsidiary alliance with the British.

**puja** (From the Sanskrit *pūjā*) Reverence, honour, homage, adoration, offering, worship.

**puṇya** (Sanskrit) An auspicious and pious act, generating important merit.

**Purāṇas** (Sanskrit) Narrative collections of genealogies, myths and legend, part of the sacred scriptures of Hinduism.

**puṣpapuṭa** (Sanskrit) *Hasta* (hand gesture) in which both hands symbolise the holding of a flower basket.

**ragi** A form of millet.

**rāja** (Sanskrit) King.

**rājadāsa** (Sanskrit) A king's male servant-slave.

**rājadāsī** (Sanskrit) A king's female servant-slave.

**rājakesari** (From Sanskrit) A standardised unit of land measurement, introduced by Rajaraja as royal standard.

**rājakula** (Sanskrit) A king's lineage.

**Rājarājeśvara Temple** Royal temple built by Rājarāja Cōja which was completed in 1010 CE at his capital Thanjavur. The temple is dedicated to Śiva and was at the time of completion the highest building in South Asia.

**rasa-dhvani** (Sanskrit) A term introduced by the Kashmiri ninth-century CE scholar Ānandvardhan in his book *Dhvanyāloka*. It refers to aesthetic pleasure in a literary statement.

**Rāṣṭrakūṭa** A royal dynasty which ruled a vast area of the Indian subcontinent including the Deccan and northern tip of the Tamiḷ area between the sixth and tenth centuries CE.

**ratha** (Sanskrit) Festival chariot of a Hindu or Jaina temple.

**rhatib** (Arabic) Stipend, wage.

**Rudra** (Sanskrit) 'The roarer, the one who shouts'. One of the epithets of the Hindu god Śiva.

**Rudraganikā** (Sanskrit) Rudra's courtesan.

**rutt jatra** (From the Sanskrit *ratha yatra*) A chariot festival. The chariots were taken in a public procession during the socio-religious ceremonies in the temples.

**Śaivas** (Sanskrit) Followers of the Hindu god Śiva.

**Śaivism** (From Sanskrit) Form of Hinduism in which Śiva is the principal deity.

**śakti** (Sanskrit) Divine power.

**śālā** (Sanskrit) Miniature barrel-roofed pavilion in a Drāviḍa temple superstructure; also, the central projecting element in a Bhūmija temple.

**sallekhanā** (Sanskrit) Jaina voluntary religious death by starvation.

**saṃskāra** (Sanskrit) Ceremony of refinement, improvement and transformation; a ritual of passage.

**sanads** Certificates, deeds or testimonials of protection or recognition.

**saṅgha** (Sanskrit) Buddhist religious body.

**saṅkalpa** (Sanskrit) Conception of a notion.

**sari** (Hindi) *sārī*; typical Indian women's garment, consisting of a long unstitched piece of cloth, usually worn in combination with a short, tight-fitting blouse.

**śāstra** (Sanskrit) Body of knowledge in a given field; a canonical treatise.

**servo vostro** (Italian) A formal, complimentary closing whose literal meaning is, 'I am your servant'.

**seva** (Sanskrit) Service for the deities in shrines.

**śudra** (From the Sanskrit *śūdra*) Servant. One of the main caste groups, constituted by the hereditary labouring class who serve the higher castes.

**śikhara** (Sanskrit) Temple tower of a north Indian (Nāgara) Hindu or Jaina temple.

**śilpaśāstra(s)** (Sanskrit) Technical manuals for artists/artisans. These contain information on art and architecture, governing forms, statues, icons, stone murals and dance. The most important one for dance imagery is the *Cītrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.

**sine qua non** (Latin) An essential condition, a thing which is absolutely necessary.

**Sirisa** Name of a tree, also called East India Walnut.

**Śiva** (Sanskrit) ‘The Auspicious One’. One of the most popular Hindu gods, who is the focus of worship of Śaivas, along with Vaiṣṇavas and Śaktas (a main denomination of *brāhmanical* Hinduism), especially popular in South India.

**Slaves of God** Holy devotees of medieval South India.

**Smārta** (Sanskrit) Followers of *Smṛti*; a philosophical movement in Hinduism that derived from the *Puranas*.

**smrtis** (From the Sanskrit *Smṛti*) ‘That which is remembered’; a body of Indian written texts.

**sōpāna** (Sanskrit) Entrance steps.

**sprezzatura** (Italian) A disdainful attitude, unaffected and effortless elegance, careless grace, unpretentious dignity, pride, nonchalance.

**śramaṇa** (Sanskrit) Non-*brāhmanical* religions.

**śrī-kōvil** (Derived from Sanskrit *śrī* and Tamil *kōvil*) The innermost, holiest shrine (*sanctum sanctorum*) of a temple.

**Śrīvaiṣṇavas** (Sanskrit) Followers of a subset of Hindu Vaiṣṇavism in which the goddess Lakṣmī (Śrī) and the god Viṣṇu are venerated together.

**śrīga** (Sanskrit) Miniature *śikhara* (*śrīga, kūṭa*) in the superstructure of a Nāgara temple.

**śrutakevalin** (Sanskrit) Enlightened being (*kevalin, arhat*), who knows the Jaina scriptures (*śruta*).

**stambha** (Sanskrit) Pillar.

**sthānam** (Sanskrit) Hierarchically organised institutional offices.

**stūpa** (Sanskrit) Buddhist monument with a dome-like superstructure which contains relics or other sacred content. It is derived from the burial mound. It is a memorial and symbol of the Buddha and of Buddhism.

**suci** A horizontal stone slab used in a Buddhist *stūpa*.

**śuka-nāsa or śrī-mukha** (Sanskrit) The frontal projection of a gable.

**sutradhāra** (Sanskrit) The one who controls, or a decision-maker. The term is used in Indian theatre and sculpture.

**svadharmā** (Sanskrit) ‘A person’s duty, individual duty’; the duty of each person concerning her/his own profession, caste, sex, condition and age. See also *dharma*.

**Śvetāmbara** (Sanskrit) ‘White (cotton) clad’, a group of Jaina ascetics where the male mendicants wear simple white robes (in contrast to the Digambaras, who go naked)

**tala** (Sanskrit) Tier or conceptual storey of a temple (esp. Drāviḍa).

**talapāli** (Malayalam) The band of twenty-one snake charms made of silver which is tied over the forehead and represents the twenty-one teachers (*gurūs*) of the *teyyam*.

**taliccērip peṅṭuka!** (Tamil) 'The distinguished ladies of the temple quarters.' The courtesans and artists mentioned in an inscription from the beginning of the eleventh century at the imperial temple of Siva as Srīrājarājadēva, 'The Emperor God', at Tañcāvūr, in Tamil Nadu.

**Tamiḷ** A Dravidian language which is spoken in South-East India. The term also refers to the ethnic group who are speakers of that language.

**tanque** (Portuguese) Water tank, pool.

**tantri** (Sanskrit) Brāhmin priest.

**tara** (Malayalam) A stone base.

**taravād** (Malayalam) Ancestral house.

**tevaṅār makal** (Tamil) 'The deity's daughter'. The courtesans and artists mentioned in a number of medieval Tamil epigraphical inscriptions.

**tevaratiyā!** (Tamil) Lit., 'She (who is) at the deity's feet', a deity's female servant-devotee: the courtesans and artists mentioned in a number of medieval Tamil epigraphical inscriptions.

**tevaratiyān** (Tamil) Lit., 'He (who is) at the deity's feet' a deity's male servant-devotee.

**teyyakkāvu** (Malayalam) Sacred grove where a *teyyam* deity is ritually emplaced.

**teyyārādakar** (Malayalam) The castes that worship *teyyam*.

**teyyāṭṭakkār** (Malayalam) The castes that perform *teyyam*.

**teyyāṭṭam/teyyam** (Malayalam) Hindu ritual tradition in north Malabar, India. *Teyyam* means 'god' and *teyyāṭṭam* means the 'dance of god.' The dancer embodies gods/goddesses or spirits of deceased ancestors. Even if primarily 'Hindu', *teyyam* attracts devotees from other religions, too. Although *teyyam* is patronised by all castes, the performers come from 'lower' castes.

**thabho** A vertical stone slab used in Buddhist a *stūpa*.

**tilaka** (Sanskrit) Miniature pavilion in superstructure of a Nāgara temple, crowned by a *ghaṅṭā* (bell).

**tiṅṭal** (Malayalam) Ritual pollution by contact/proximity between persons of two different castes.

**tīras** (Malayalam) A ritual performance in southern Malabar.

**Tirthaṅkara** (Sanskrit) 'Conqueror', 'spiritual victor': the twenty-four enlightened teachers of each world age; same as Jina.

**tiruvāyudham** (Malayalam) Sacred sword.

**torāṇa** (Sanskrit) Elaborate gateways in the four cardinal directions which provide access to the *stūpa* area.

**tōram** (Malayalam) Songs that are sung during *teyyam* performance and it contains the biography, heroic acts etc of *teyyam*.

**tribhaṅga** (Sanskrit) Triple-bend body position where the bending of the legs is counterbalanced by bending the upper body in the opposite direction, while the neck and head lean in the same, original direction as the legs.

**trikūṭācala** (Sanskrit) Triple-shrined temple structure.

**trīśūla** (Sanskrit) Trident, such as the one carried by the Hindu god Śiva.

**troubadours** (French) Bards, poets, singers, minstrels; in medieval times a class of wandering poets who flourished in southern France from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. They composed songs in complex metrical forms, principally on themes of courtly love.

**tsampa** (Tibetan) Roast barley flour; used to make a paste to create volume for paintings.

**Tuḷunāḍu** Southern district of the Canara (Kanara) region; also known as South Kanara, Dakṣiṇa Kannaḍa (Jille) or Tuḷudēśa.

**upapīṭa** (Sanskrit) Lower base.

**uraḥśṛṅga/uruśṛṅga** (Sanskrit) Half-śikhara emerging from the ‘chest’ of a Nāgara superstructure.

**uralanmār** (Malayalam) Village council.

**Vaiṣṇavas** (Sanskrit) Followers of the Hindu god Viṣṇu.

**Vaiṣṇavism** Form of Hinduism, in which Viṣṇu is venerated as principal divinity.

**Vajravārāhī** (Sanskrit) A Buddhist tantric goddess.

**varaviḷi** (Malayalam) In *teyyam* performances, this is the calling or invoking of a deity.

**Vardhamāna Temple** A Jaina temple in Tiruppattikunram near Kanchipuram. The temple is well-known for its seventeenth-century mural paintings which feature some dance scenes.

**vāstuśāstra** (Sanskrit) Traditional science of architecture in India; canonical Sanskrit text on architecture.

**vedikā, vēdika or vedī** (Sanskrit) Stone fence or railing, e.g. around a *stūpa*; often decorated with relief panels; later also a moulding representing a railing.

**vēli** (Tamil) A unity of land measurement.

**veḷiccapāṭ** (Malayalam) Oracle in *teyyam* performances.

**veḷḷāṭṭam** (Malayalam) Elaborate *tōḍṛam* performance of a *teyyam*.

**veśyā** (Sanskrit) An accomplished and distinguished lady artist and courtesan.

**Vijayanagara** The Vijayanagara dynasty based in the Deccan was a major empire which dominated Southern India between the fourteenth and seventeenth century CE.

**vimāna** (Sanskrit) The main structure of the South Indian temple which contains the sanctum and is typically surmounted by a pyramidal tower.

**Vinaya Piṭaka** A Buddhist text, one of the three parts that make up the *Tipiṭaka*.

**Vinḍhyagiri** (Sanskrit) The larger hill at Shravanabelgola, Karnataka.

**vīra** (Tamil) Hero. In Dravidian Tamil Nadu, related to hero worship in the form of *vīrakkal* (hero-stones). Such stones are also found in Kerala, which had Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* cults which used the institution of *vīra*. Both *vīra* worship and the *teyyam* tradition feature heroes as gods. Hence *teyyam* can be seen as a later continuity of hero worship in the form of animated spirit possession.

**vīrapuruṣhan** (From Sanskrit *vīrapuruṣa*) Apotheosised warrior.

**Vīraśaivas** (Sanskrit) Followers of Vīraśaivism; often considered a subgroup of Śaivism but in fact a distinct religion whose focus is on the veneration of the *liṅga* (sign of Śiva); for this reason its followers are also known as Liṅgāyats.

**viśesikkal** (Malayalam) In the *teyyam* ritual, this is an act of speaking with the deity who blesses the devotees verbally.

**Viṣṇu** (Sanskrit) The Pervader, the Sustainer; one of the major Hindu deities.

**vitāna** (Sanskrit) Temple ceiling.

**vṛścika** (Sanskrit) Scorpion; term used for movement units which feature a leg position that resembles the thorn of a scorpion.

**vyañjana** (Sanskrit) Suggestion; a term used in ancient linguistic theories for the suggestive power of an expression.

**Western Ghats** Mountain range in South India, running parallel to the west coast.

**yakṣa** (*yakkha*) (Sanskrit, Pali) Male nature spirit in ancient India; an attendant and guardian deity associated with a Jina.

**zamindāri** (Hindi and Urdu *zamīndāri*, from Persian *zamīndār*); a wealthy Indian aristocratic landowner collecting taxes for the Moghul Emperors and other kings.

**zanana** (Persian) The area of a house, mansion or palace where women reside.

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# Notes on Contributors

**Gudrun Bühnemann** is professor of Sanskrit and Indic Religions in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. After receiving her PhD in Buddhist Studies and Indology from the University of Vienna, she spent extended periods of time as a post-doctoral researcher at Pune University in India and at Nagoya and Kyoto Universities in Japan. Her research was supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, among other organizations. She has published extensively on South Asian (especially tantric) iconography and ritual. Her recent books include, *Śākyamuni's Return Journey to Lumbinī (lumbinīyātrā): A Study of a Popular Theme in Newar Buddhist Art and Literature* (Lumbini International Research Institute, 2015) and *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (First Indian edition, revised, as a single volume, Aditya Prakashan, 2016).

**Kanika Gupta** is an art historian, trained dancer and filmmaker. She did her master's degree in art history at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, and has recently submitted a PhD at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, on the ancient Indian motif of the female and the tree. She has authored the book *Lupadakhe – Unknown Master Sculptors of Ancient India* (2019) and several research papers on Ancient Indian art. She has worked on several research projects, such as the documentation of Ananda Coomaraswamy's and Kapila Vatsyayan's personal collections for the Cultural Archives of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, and assisted Professor Deepak Kannal in the content writing for thirty-five modules on 'History of Indian Sculpture', for e-pathshala, Online Post-Graduate Diploma Course, University Grants Commission, Government of India. She is a guest faculty member at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and Kurukshestra. Currently, she is collaborating with the Ethnography Museum of Ljubljana, Slovenia, on a project focussing on their Indian collection.

**Adam Hardy** is Emeritus Professor of Asian Architecture at Cardiff University, UK. After training as an architect at Cambridge University in the 1970s, he worked for architectural practices in the UK and France before becoming obsessed by Indian temples and working in academia. While teaching architecture, he did his PhD on how temples developed in Karnataka between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, published as *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation* (1995). Subsequent publications include *The Temple Architecture of India* (2007) and *Theory and Practice of Temple Architecture in Medieval India* (2015). From 1996 to 2016 he edited the journal *South Asian Studies*, and he has been president of the European Association of South Asian Archaeology and Art (2015–2017). He has led several research projects and has been involved in temple conservation and in the design of new temples.

**Julia A.B. Hegewald** is professor of Oriental Art History and head of the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History at the University of Bonn. She was reader in Art History at Manchester (2007–2010), a postdoctoral fellow at the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg (2005–2007) and a research fellow at University College Oxford (1998–2005). She holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London. Her books include *Water Architecture in South Asia: A Study of Types, Developments and Meanings* (2002), *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual* (2009, 2018), *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience* (2010), *In the Shadow of the Golden Age: Art and Identity from Gandhara to the Modern Age* (2014), *Jaina Painting and Manuscript Culture: In Memory of Paolo Pianarosa* (2015), *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asian, Islamic and Mediterranean Art* (2020), *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala* (2021) and together with Subrata K. Mitra, *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Anxiety and Integration* (2012).

**Amy Heller** teaches Tibetan Art and Architecture in the Institute for Science of Religion, University of Bern. Since 1986, she has been affiliated with the Paris CNRS Tibet team of the Center for Research on the Civilisations of Eastern Asia (CRCAO). 1974 BA cum Laude at Barnard College in Art history, 1980 Diplôme de Langue et Civilisation Tibétaine at INALCO, Paris and 1992 Diplôme de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, IVe section, Philology and History, Paris. Visiting professor at Sapienza Università of Rome (2006, 2008) and Centre for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University (2007–2013). Her books comprise *Tibetan Art* (1999), *Tibetan Buddhist Art* 西藏佛教藝術 (2007), *Early Himalayan Art* (2008) and *Hidden Treasures of the Himalayas, Tibetan manuscripts paintings and sculptures of Dolpo* (2009); edited books: *Discoveries in Western Tibet and Western Himalayas* (2007), *The Arts of Tibetan Painting* (2012) and *Visual Culture of Tibet and the Himalayas* (2020).

**Tiziana Leucci** is professor and senior research fellow at the Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Paris. She graduated in Indology and History of Performing Arts at the University of Bologna, Italy, and was trained in ballet and modern dance at the National Academy of Dance in Rome. Formerly lecturer of Italian language and literature at Madras University, from 1987 to 1999 she conducted research in South India on the Bharatanatyam and Odissi dance styles, which included studying and performing them under the guidance of a number of hereditary temple and court artists. In 2000, she moved to Paris where she received a PhD in Social Anthropology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. She has co-organised international conferences and authored a book on the construction of the figure of the Indian dancer (*bayadère*) in European literary and theatrical productions. She co-edited a volume on the cultural, political and artistic relations between India and Italy. At present she is co-ordinating a research project on the 'Connected histories of dance', at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Paris-Nord. Since 2010, she has been teaching Bharatanatyam dance at the Conservatoire de musique et danse 'Gabriel Fauré', Les Lilas-Est Ensemble (France).

**Tiziana Lorenzetti** holds a PhD in the History of Indian and East Asian Art from the University of Genoa (Italy). Awarded an Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship, she was postdoctoral fellow at the National Museum Institute of the History of Art (New Delhi). She was also awarded the National Scientific Qualification (Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale) for an associate professorship (2012) by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research. A lecturer in Indian Art and Culture at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza', research associate at the University of Manchester (UK), she has collaborated with a number of Italian, European and Indian Universities and institutions. She has carried out a number of academic surveys in many states of India, also collaborating on international research projects. Among her publications are a number of articles and the following two books, *Understanding the Hindu Temple. History, Symbols and Forms*, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (SAAC), Berlin 2015, and *Hindu Sculpture. Religion Mythology and Art at the Archaeological Museum of Khajuraho*, Sampark Publishing House, Calcutta 2016 (2nd ed.).

**Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali** is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History (AIK) and the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) at the University of Bonn. He is also a teaching assistant for Islamic Art and Material Culture in the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History. His research is concerned with Indic and Islamic material and visual culture of the Indian Ocean littorals with a focus on South Indian littorals.

**Sandra Jasmin Schlage** obtained her bachelor's degree in Asian Cultures and Societies – India and Cultural Anthropology from the University of Cologne (Germany). During her master-degree studies at the Department of Asian and Islamic Art History, University of Bonn (Germany), she specialised in South Asian art and wrote her master's dissertation on dance sculptures of the Cōla dynasty. This study forms the

basis of her present doctoral research on dance reliefs of the Tamil region. Currently, Sandra Jasmin Schlage works as a research associate and lecturer (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin) at the Department for Asian and Islamic Art History at the University of Bonn. Her research interests centre around dance forms of Asia and visual arts of South India, especially sculpture. She has combined her academic studies with intensive training in classical Indian dance (Bharatanāṭyam) in both Germany and India.

**Birgit Angelika Schmidt** is a graduate conservator and research fellow at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum, National Museums in Berlin). She is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Near Eastern Archaeology at the Freie Universität Berlin. The topic of her dissertation is the clay-based production of sculptures from Buddhist archaeological sites along the northern Silk Road (Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, People's Republic of China). Many of these sculptures are part of the so called 'Turfan Collection' at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst. Her studies focus on the investigation of the material properties and technical aspects of manufacturing these sculptures, as well as their stylistic appearance. She is also interested in historical networks, and so in this research project is attempting to use local observations to identify transregional connections and similarities with regard to the production of these sculptures.

**Pratyush Shankar** is professor and dean of the School of Environmental Design and Architecture (SEDA), Navrachana University, Vadodara. He was the acting dean of Architecture and head of the Undergraduate Program at CEPT University, Ahmedabad, and has been teaching Urban History and Design for many years. He has authored the book entitled *Himalayan Cities: Settlement Pattern, Public Places and Architecture*, published by Niyogi Publishers, New Delhi, in 2014. He is presently also a guest professor at the Mundus Urbano Program at the Architecture Faculty of the TU Darmstadt, Germany. He was awarded a senior Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship in 2015 and was hosted at the University of Bonn, Germany. His forthcoming publication with Oxford University Press is titled *History of Urban Form: India*. Pratyush Shankar runs a design practice along with his academic interests. He was awarded the 22nd JK Cement Architect of the Year award 2013 in the Residence Design Category.

**Snigdha Srivastava** is a practicing architect and a graduate of the Masters programme of Architectural Conservation from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi. She currently works as an associate at Pratyush Shankar and Associates, Vadodara and is a part of the CityLabs India team. Under CityLabs India, she has assisted in writing workshops and field-based workshops. She was a research assistant for Pratyush Shankar for his forthcoming publication with Oxford University Press titled *History of Urban form: India*.

**Daniel Suebsman** is a researcher and author with focus on East Asian porcelain from the fourteenth century to the present day. He received his doctorate in Oriental Art History from the University of Bonn and has worked for the Hetjens-German Museum of Ceramics, for the Dresden State Art Collections and as a consultant in the art trade. Since May 2020, he has been a research associate at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne.



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