

THE CHOLA TEMPLE

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THE CHOLA TEMPLES

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Darasuram (10 0 46 , 59”N;79 0 21 , 25 ,, E) is located 5 km from Kumbakonam, almost at its outskirts. As mentioned above Kumbakonam is directly connected by road and rail from Chennai. Among these monuments the Brihadlsvara Temple at Thanjavur has been inscribed in the World Heritage List by UNESCO.

These monuments are open to public daily from sunrise to sun set. Photography of the exteriors of the monuments by using still cameras without stand, with synchronised flash is permitted. All other forms of photography/videography require permission from the Superintending Archaeologist,Chennai Circle,Archaeological Survey of India, Fort St. George, Chennai-600 009.

HISTORY

The Cholas of Thanjavur (ninth to twelfth centuries) were great conquerors, who were not only paramount in south India but for some time extended their sway as far as the river Ganga in the north and brought Sri Lanka, a part of Burma, the Malayan peninsula and some islands of south-east Asia under their influence. They were also mighty builders, who erected a large number of temples in their empire, some of them constituting the finest specimens of south Indian architecture. Inheritors of the Pallava tradition, the edifices also reflect the power and genius of their authors.

Karikala, the early Chola emperor of the Sangam age, is lost in legendary grandeur. It was several centuries later that Vijaya, in circa 850, established a small kingdom around Thanjavur, which developed into a gigantic empire under his successors. In the time of Aditya and Parantaka, the son and grandson respectively of Vijaya, there was a great temple-building activity. Parantaka ruled for forty-eight years. Bearing such heroic titles as viraiolan and samarakesari, he extended his dominions by conquests. As the conqueror of the Pandyas, who ruled further south at Madurai, and of Sri Lanka he was styled Maduraimalam-konfa, i.e., one who captured Madurai and Sri Lanka. He was a great devotee of Siva in the Chidambaram temple, which he covered with gold. That he was also a great scholar and patron of literature is suggested by his title pandita-vatsala. He had sons who inherited his qualities but were

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unfortunately short-lived. His eldest son, Rajaditya, while almost defeating the Rashtrakuta king, Krishna III, died on the battle-field on his elephant at the moment of victory. His younger brother was Gandaraditya, whose queen, widowed early with a little child in her arms, was a pious lady, remarkable for her generous practice of building and endowing temples.

This was a weak period in Chola history, when Krishna III asserted his power in Tondai-mandalam, and, the son of Gandaraditya being just a babe, Arinjaya, the younger brother of Gandaraditya, ascended the throne. But he soon lost his life on the battle-field in trying to regain the lost territory from the Rashtrakutas. His son, Sundara-Chola, who succeeded him, was a great warrior and a just ruler. Like his grandfather Parantaka, he was a great patron of literature. His last days were clouded by the sad assassination of his war-like eldest son Aditya. His second son, Rajaraja, was then a youth, accomplished and powerful; but the nobility of Rajaraja was such that even though desired by his subjects, he refused to ascend the throne, as his uncle Uttama-Chola, the son of Gandaraditya, now quite grown up, longed for it. Rajaraja eventually succeeded Uttama-Chola.

Rajaraja I, known as Rajakesari Arumolivarman, ascended the throne in 985 and was probably the greatest of the Chola emperors. His military triumph, organization of the empire, patronage of art and literature and religious tolerance are partially eclipsed by the achievements of his son Rajendra, who was a great military genius. As the Chola kingdom had just recovered

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from the onslaught of the Rashtrakutas, Rajaraja started his reign, with military campaigns to strengthen his position. He brought low the Keralas, Pandyas and Simhalas, overcame the western hilly tracts, Mysore and Garigavadi. He also overcame the Chajukya king Satya-Sraya, the large treasures captured from whom were utilized in the enrichment of the temple as Thanjavur. As a sagacious conqueror, Rajaraja gave his daughter Kundavai in marriage to Vimaladitya, whose elder brother Saktivarman, the Eastern Chalukya king, was under his protection. He sent his son Rajendra to Kalinga and established a pillar of victory on the Mahendra hill. With his mighty navy, Rajaraja conquered the Maldives, besides a number of other islands, and crippled the power of the Cheras known for their naval strength. He was a great builder and erected at Thanjavur the magnificent temple known as the BrihadiSvara or RajarajeSvara.

Rajaraja was followed by his equally brilliant son Rajendra (1012-44), undoubtedly the greatest ruler of his line, who asserted his power in Sri Lanka, the Chera and the Pandya countries and Vanavasi and overcame the Chalukya Jayasimha. He then turned his eyes to the north in his desire to bring to his kingdom the waters of the sacred river Gaiiga by the might of his arm. In less than two years, Rajendra successfully overcame the Eastern Chalukya territory, Kalinga and Dakshina-Kosala and overcome the Pala king Mahipala of east India.

To celebrate his triumph, Rajendra created 'a liquid pillar of victory 5 (jalamaya-stambha) in his new capital at Garigaikondacholapuram, 'the city of the Chola, the bringer of the Ganga 5 . In a gre&t irrigation

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tank, now in ruins, the waters of the Ganga were poured from pots brought by the vassal-kings as the only tribute demanded by the emperor, who then assumed the title of Gangaikondachola, 'the Chola king who brought the Ganga'. As thanksgiving, he erected a large temple in honour of Siva, also known as the Brhadlsvara, at his capital.

Rajendra then utilized his mighty navy for attacking and subduing the Sailendra king Sangramavijayottuhavarman of Srivijaya (Sumatra-Java). A number of place-names mentioned in his inscriptions have been understood as connoting places mostly in Malaya, included in the empire of Srivijaya. His conquest of Burma, the islands in the Eastern Archipelago, Sri Lanka, Lakshadweep and Maldives clearly proves the efficiency of his unparalleled naval power. His great scholarship and literary attainments earned him the title Parvata-Chola. The marriage of his daughter Ammangadevi to his own nephew, the Eastern Chalukya king Rajaraja, shows his diplomatic genius. The child born of this marriage was the great Rajendra-Chola Kulottunga.

Kulottunga succeeded his maternal uncles Rajadhiraja and Virarajendra in 1070 and ruled over a large empire that combined the Chola and Chalukya dominions. He was powerful not only on land but on sea. His power was felt even in distant Kalihga. Vikrama-Chola succeeded Rajendra-Chola.

Kulottunga II, the son of Vikrama-Chola effected elaborate renovations at the temple at Chidambaram. This building-activity was sustained in the reign of his son Rajaraja II (1150-73), whose title Rajagambhira

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is recorded in the mandapa of the Darasuram temple. The growing zeal of the royal house in Saivism is manifest in the stories of the Saiva saints at Darasuram.

Rajaraja's nephew, Rajadhiraja, was followed by Kulottunga III, the last of the great Chola emperors, who, by his power and personality, checked the forces of disruption that had been steadily eating into the vitals of the empire. He was a great builder, and his region is marked by several additions to the glorious chapter of Chola architecture. His hand is evident not only in the Kampaharesvara temple at Tribhuvanam, the most important monument of his reign, but also at Kafilchi, Madurai, Chidambaram, Tiruvarur, Tiruvilaiyur (Jaimarudur and Darasuram).

ARCHITECTURE

To understand the architecture of the Chola temples, it is essential to know something of the pre- and post-Chola architecture. The Pallava temples of the seventh to the ninth centuries, the earliest in south India, have certain features which differentiate them from the later ones. As Jouveau-Dubreuil has very clearly illustrated, the niche, the pavilion, the pillar- and pilaster-corbel and the horseshoe-shaped windows (kudu), among others, are the most important factors which help in the ascertainment of the dates of the monuments.

A B

Fig. 1. Miches: A, Pallava ; B, Chola. (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

1 G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Archeologie du sud de l'Inde*, pt. i (Paris, 1914), pp. 71-145.

ARCHITECTURE

A typical niche (fig. 1) in the earlier Pallava rock-cut monuments at Mahabalipuram and in the Kailasana temple at Kanchipuram is rather wide, and the makara-torana decoration on the niche-top is flat, the floriated tail of the makara overflowing on the sides; but in a Chola niche, as in the later Pallava ones, the space is narrower and the decoration on the niche-top more round. The simulated railings for the pavilions on monuments at Mahabalipuram are quite different from their Chola counterparts. The kusumakuta (fig. 2) which at the Mahabalipuram monuments has a shovel-headed finial

Fig. 2 Kudus: A, Pallava; B, Chola ; G, Vijayanagara.
(After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

Fig. 3. Pillar-capitals: A, Pallava; B, Chola; G, Vijayanagara .
Top row, oblique view; bottom row, side view . (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

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A B

Fig. 4. Pillars: A, Pallava ' B, Chola } C,

(After Jouveau- Dubreuil)

C

Vijayanagara.

develops a lion-head in the Chola monuments, and this continues thereafter.

The capital of the pillar (figs. 3 and 4) and pilaster in the Chola monuments, rectangular with its sides cut off in a slant at 45°, has the central portion projecting. It is from this that the later Vijayanagara lotus-corbels develop. It is easily seen that without the central projecting block the Chola corbel is not essentially different from the early Pallava one, where the same angle also occurs in addition to the rounded corbel.

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AUCMmCTURE

The central shrine in the Pallava structural temples, like the Kailasanatha at Kailasapuram, is prominent and the gopura is quite dwarfish. In the early Chola temples the shrine is magnified, and in the time of Rajaraja and his successors it becomes colossal, as one notices in the temples at Thajjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram, Darasuram and Tribhuvanam. The gopura in the early Chola temples, though larger in size than in the Pallava ones, is still comparatively short, and it is only in the late Chola period that gigantic gopuras come into being and dwarf the central shrine.

The earlier Pallava dvapa-palas (door-keepers), with a very natural look and mostly with a single pair of arms, are replaced in the Chola structures by those with a fierce mien and four arms, the ones in the Thajjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram temples being typical examples : they carry the triiula (trident) on their crowns, bear tusks protruding from their mouths and strike terror with their knit eye-brows, rolling eyes and hands always in the tarjani (threatening) and vismaya (wonder) attitudes.

In the large Chola temples, long flights of steps from the sides lead to the platform, whence one enters the sanctum; the balustrade is massive, curls up at the end and is decorated on the exterior. Alternating koshta-pafijas and kumbha-pafijas (fig. 5) form a regular feature of the decoration, and the niches are flanked by pilasters crowned on the top by a curved roof-moulding adorned by two kudus with crowning lion-heads. The base of the entire series of these niches has jaft-decoration and at corners and intervals there are makara-heads with

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Fig. 5. Koshtha-panjara (left portion) and kumbha-panjara (right portion). (After Jouveau-Dubreuil)

warriors in action issuing from their mouths. The pavilions are usually two panjaras flanking a said (wagon-roof pavilion), the former with a single finial and the latter with three. The kumbha-panjara itself shows stages of development, and the earlier and simpler ones, which we find in the early Chola temples, become more decorative and developed in the later ones.

ARCHITECTURE

Separate mandapas, which form a regular feature in the late Chola and Vijayanagara temples, with a number of pillars adorning them, are not so prominent in the early Chola structures, though the front of the temple is a long mandapa for different forms of bhoga- worship. A large courtyard and small shrine against the enclosure-wall at the cardinal and inter-cardinal points for the dik-palas (guardians of the directions) form a feature in the early Chola examples.

The following pages describe three of the most important Chola temples, viz., the two Brihadisvara temples, respectively built by Rajaraja I (985-1012) and Rajendra (1012-44) at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, and the Airavatesvara temple, built by Virarajendra (1063-69) or Rajaraja II (1150-73) at Darasuram.

BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE, THANJAVUR

Thanjavur attained prominence under the Cholas in the ninth century, Vijayalaya, the first great ruler of the dynasty (850-71), having captured it and made it his capital. The Brihadisvara temple is a symbol of the greatness of the Chola empire under its author, emperor Rajaraja (985-1012), whose splendour it reflects. The long series of epigraphs incised in elegant letters on the plinth all round the gigantic edifice reveals the personality of the emperor.

The Brihadisvara temple (pi. I) is a monument

S'

dedicated to Siva, whom the emperor established here and named Rajarajesvaram-udayar after himself. As we gather from the inscriptions running throughout the plinth, the king, on the two hundred and seventy-fifth day of the twenty-fifth year of the reign (1010), presented a gold-covered finial to be planted on the top of the vimana of the temple.

The temple is the most ambitious of the architectural enterprises of the Cholas and is a fitting symbol of the magnificent achievements of Rajaraja. The endowments that he made for his temple were numerous and in his munificence he was joined by not only the members of his family but high officials and noblemen. Several large images in bronze and gold were presented to this temple, and their ornaments, described in detail in the inscriptions, give a vivid picture of the contemporary jewellers' art. Even though most of the images and all the jewels have now disappeared.

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there are still some exquisite bronzes, representing Nataraja, Tripurantaka, Devi and Ganesa, to give an idea of what great art-treasures were originally housed in the temple. True to his surname, Sivapadasekhara y Rajaraja spared nothing for embellishing and endowing the great institution, and in this his sister Kundavai and other members of his family fully associated themselves. The endowments, together with the mention of even small weights and measures, the custom and method of receiving, maintaining and paying amounts or interest on amounts of donation for the regular conduct of special items of worship or for burning a lamp and similar details, give a vivid idea of the economic conditions of the time.

Fine arts were encouraged in the service of the temple: the sculptures, the paintings in the dark passages of the sanctum and even the inscriptions in elegant Chola Grantha and Tamil letters give an idea of the great art that flourished under Rajaraja. Dance and music were greatly cultivated and were equally employed to serve the temple: every evening it was at once an entertainment and a ritual that the townsfolk, assembled in the mandapa, witnessed and enjoyed during the ceremony of the waving of lights and the chanting of the Veda and Devaram hymns. Cooks, gardeners, flower-gatherers, garland-makers, musicians, drummers, dancers, dance-masters, wood-carvers, sculptors, painters, choir-groups for singing hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, accountants, watchmen and a host of other officials and servants of the temple—all are referred to in the inscriptions as having been

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endowed with adequate grants of land. Taking just a single fact, that Rajaraja constructed two long streets (talichcheri) for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the temple, we can well imagine the lavish scale on which he endowed the temple and its functions. The annual income from the lands set apart for the temple alone is estimated as one hundred and sixteen thousand kalams of paddy. The emperor's presentations in silver, gold and cash, not to mention various other gifts, form a staggering account of liberality.

The temple is constructed of granite, mostly of large blocks, a rock which is not available in the neighbourhood and had therefore to be brought from a distance—itself a colossal task. The plinth of the central shrine is 45*72 square m, the shrine proper 30*48 square m and the vimana 60*96 m high. On the massive plinth, covered throughout with inscriptions, there are niches on three sides in two rows, containing representations of deities such as Siva, Vishnu and Durga. On the southern wall the lower niches contain Ganesa, Vishnu with Sri-devi and Bhu-devi, Lakshmi, a pair of dvapa-palas (pi. II G), Vishnuanugraha-murti, Bhikshatana (pi. II A), Vrabhadra, a pair of dvapa-palas, Dakshina-murti, Kalantaka (pi. III) and Natesa. In the lower niches on the west are Hari-Hara, Ardhanarisvara, a pair of dvapa-palas and two Chandra-sekharas, one with and the other without halo. On the north, in the lower series, are Ardhanarisvara, Gangadhara, a pair of dvapa-palas , Vrabhadra (without the usual moustache but with a sword and shield),

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Alingana-Chandrasekhara (pi. II B), Siva holding a sula (spear), a pair of dvāra-palas, Sarasvati, Mahishamardinn and Bhairava. Of these, the first and last pairs of dvāra-palas and the first and last four forms in niches are on the front porch of the temple, while all the rest are on the main walls of the vimāna. The top series shows a number of Tripurantakas repeated in each niche. In the small circular space of the niche-tops are again carvings of deities like Ganesa, Vrīshavahana, Bhikshatana, Narasimha, Varaha, etc.

As we enter the temple from the east, there is a flight of steps leading to a pillared mandapa, which is a later addition, so that originally the dvāra-palas on either side and the princely warriors in the niches faced the visitor. Apart from the mandapa and the steps leading to it, there are two other flights of steps on the north and south, as also between the front porch and the main shrine on either side. The Nandis on the vimāna, seated sideways but with their heads turned to the front, remind us of their counterparts at Mahabalipuram.

The stone constituting the huge sikhara, which is said to weigh 81.284 tonnes, is popularly believed to have been raised to its present height by being dragged on an inclined plane, which had its base at a place known as Sarapallam (‘elevation from depression 5’), 6.44 km away.

The vast inner courtyard of the temple is about 152.40 x 76.20m and is surrounded by a cloister. At the entrance there are two gopuras, widely separated from each other, the first larger but the second one better

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decorated. The carvings on the latter, guarded by two monolithic dvadra-pdilas, illustrate Saivite stories like the marriage of Siva and Parvati, Siva protecting Markandeya and Arjuna winning the pasupata weapon. Beyond the gopuras, in the court facing the central shrine and under the canopy of a mandapa added in recent times, is a huge monolithic Nandi, indeed a fitting vehicle for the colossal linga installed in the central shrine, the height of which is more than 3.66 m. As is stated in the inscription, this linga was called adavallan, 'one who can dance well', and dakshina-meru-vitankan —names associated with the deity at Chidambaram, whom the Cholas greatly revered, and, adopted by them for this linga, which is also known, after Rajaraja, as Rajarajesvaramudayar.

The dark passage surrounding the sanctum of the temple contains important specimens of sculptural art. Here there are three colossal sculptures, respectively located in the south, west and north and representing Siva as holding a spear, seated Siva carrying a sword and trident and with fierce mien and Siva with ten arms dancing in the chatura pose as Vishnu plays the drum and Devi sits in padmasana with a lotus-bud and rosary in her hands.

The entire wall-space and ceiling of the passage were originally covered with exquisite paintings, most of them now obscured by a coat of painting executed during the Nayaka period in the seventeenth century. The original paintings, have almost been exposed. On the western side, the entire wall-space is occupied by a huge panel in which Siva as Dakshina-murti is shown seated

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on tiger-skin in a yogic pose approximating the maharaja-Hid with the paryahka-bandha or yoga-patta across his waist and right knee, interestedly watching the dance of two apsarases (celestial nymphs), while Vishnu, dwarf ganas and other celestial musicians play on the drum and other instruments (pi. IV), a few princely figures watch the scene and two saints, Sundara and Cheraman, hurry to the spot on elephant and horse. Up and further away is depicted a temple (architecturally a typical early Chola one) with Nataraja enshrined in it, outside which are seated princely devotees. Further down is painted the story of how Saiva came down in the form of an old man with a document in his hand to establish his right to carry away Sundara on his marriage-day to his abode at Tiruvennainallur. Still below is a lively scene of women cooking and food being served during the marriage-festivity. Beyond this, on the other side of the wall, is a large figure of Nataraja dancing in the golden hall at Chidambaram with priests and other devotees on one side and a stately prince, obviously Rajaraja, and three of his queens with followers including kanchukis and other attendants carrying rods of office behind them. On the opposite wall are some charming miniature figures of graceful women. A little further up is Rajaraja with his guru Karuvur Devar (pi. V). Beyond this, on the wall opposite the northern one and facing the passage, are five heads peeping out of a partially-exposed painting.

The entire northern wall is covered by a gigantic figure of Tripurantaka Siva on a chariot driven by Brahma. Tripurantaka, accompanied by Karttikeya

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on peacock, Ganesa on mouse and Kali on lion, with Nandi in front of the chariot, is in the alidha pose of a warrior with eight arms, all carrying weapons and in the act of using a mighty bow to overcome a host of aggressive and fearless demons with their womenfolk clinging to them. This painting is the greatest masterpiece of the Chola artist, distinguished by its power, grandeur, rhythm and composition and unparalleled by any contemporary painting or sculpture.

This representation of Siva shows the earlier Pallava tradition, as in the Chola period Tripurantaka generally stands in the abhanga and sometimes in the tribhanga pose, with one of his legs planted on the head of either the dwarf Apasmara or a lion. This great panel portrays several sentiments in one; the heroic sentiment in the expression on Tripurantaka's face and form and in that of the vigorous rakshasas in action; the emotion of pity in the sorrowful faces of their women clinging to them in despair; the spirit of wonder in the paraphernalia of gods surrounding Siva; and the sense of the grotesque in the attitude of the dwarf ganas and of Ganesa hastening on his mouse. The Cholas being great warriors and conquerors, and Rajaraja himself the greatest of them all, it is in the fitness of things that the theme of Tripurantaka, the mighty warrior-god, is glorified here, virtually as the keynote of the Chola power.

The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinewy and the expression vivid and true of life; above all, there is an ease in the charming contours of the figures. They constitute the most valuable document of the painter's art during the days of the early

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Cholas, and it is interesting to note that all the grace of south Indian classical painting that is seen in the earlier Pallava paintings at Sittannavasal, Panamalai and Kanchipuram is continued in the present series.

The highest achievement in plastic art in the Chola period is revealed in the fine series of the one hundred and eight dance-poses carved all around the inner walls of the first floor of the temple. They form an invaluable document in the history of Indian art and are the predecessor of the labelled dance-poses on the Chidambaram gopuras, with the important difference that at Thanjavur, Siva himself, the lord of dance (Nataraja), is depicted as the dancer.

The temples of Devi near the Nandi -mandapa and of Subrahmanya are later additions, the former during the time of Konerirajamallan, a Pandya, of the thirteenth century, and the latter during the Nayaka period in the seventeenth century. The shrine of Ganesa and the mandapa of Nataraja are also very late in date. The temple of Subrahmanya has exquisite carvings and is an excellent example of south Indian temple-architecture in the late medieval period.

BRIHADISVARA TEMPLE, GANGAIKONDA- CHOLAPURAM

The great monument at Gangaikondacholapuram, the second Brihadisvara Gangaikondacholesvara temple (pi. VI), rears its head nobly and bespeaks the imperial dignity of the capital that Rajendra (1012-44), the son of Rajaraja, established after his victorious march to east India up to the river Ganga. The capital itself has disappeared: even the palace where the emperor dwelt does not exist except in ruins marked by brick debris about 5 km away from the temple, at a place known as Ulkottai, where a mound even now called Maligaimedu, 'palace-mound 5', supplies bricks to the villages. In the vicinity is another village with a large tank known as Tottikulam excavated by the king. About 1.5 km to the south of the temple is a third village, Vanadipattam, 'place of fireworks 5', which is believed to be the place where fireworks for the temple-festivals were prepared. Yet another place, Meikavalputtur, 5 km to the east, is so named as it was the place for the watchman of the temple. A fifth village, 5 km beyond the last one, is called Tir-thakulam, which had the teppakulam, the tank for floating the barge in the festivals of the temple. About 3 km to the west is the large water-reservoir known as Ponneri, now all in ruins. In this or in the reservoir outside the gopura of the temple, which is also dilapidated, must have been poured the sacred waters of the Ganga, which Rajendra caused to be brought from east India.

At the temple itself a ruined gopura greets the

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GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

visitor: it is in the inner compound-wall of the temple, the outer and larger wall, with its gopuras, having been despoiled long ago. On entering through the gopura,

one sees, beyond the bali-pitha, a huge bull, which, unlike its counterpart at Thanjavur, is not monolithic. Two flights of steps, on the northern and southern sides, as at Thanjavur, lead up to two dvara-palas —huge monoliths that guard the first entrance to a long closed mandapa . The plinth of the entire mandapa up to the ardha-mandapa and mukha-mandapa of the main temple is a part of the original structure itself, though its wall appears to have been renovated; the pillars and the platform are later additions.

The ardha-mandapa of the temple is approached by two flights of steps from the north and south. Here the mukha-mandapa is guarded on either side by two pairs of dvara-palas , and a third pair may be seen at the entrance to the east leading on from the main mandapa to the mukha-mandapa . Yet another pair of colossal dvara-palas guards the entrance to the sanctum. In the mukha-mandapa, the walls on the east, on either side, are decorated with carvings representing Siva in different aspects of anugraha (favour), such as Vishnvanugraha-murti (bestowing grace on Vishnu who worships him with his lotus-eye), Ravananugraha-murti (blessing Ravana who is penitent after having raised mount Kailasa), Devyanugraha-murti (bestowing grace on Devi who worships the linga), Kalyanasundara-murti (going forth for his marriage attended by his bhuta-ganas , goblins, and the marriage itself with all the incidental rejoicing and merry-making), Markandeyanugraha-

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murti (blessing his devotee Markandeya by rescuing him from Yama, the god of death, whom he overcame) and Chandesanugraha-murti (blessing Chandesa, who

did not refrain from cutting off his father's legs for having interfered with his worship of Siva and bathed the linga with the milk of cows in his care). To the north-east is a beautiful large-sized panel, a masterpiece of Chola art, which shows Siva bestowing his grace on

ChandikeSvara.

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The temple is 54*86 m high and in arrangement follows its Thanjavur predecessor. But while the latter is tall and stately, with its contour straight and severe, suggestive of strength, the present one is shorter and its contour more graceful and delicate and somewhat feminine in its lack of angularity.

The sculptures in the temple are less numerous than in the Thanjavur one but are of the same nature. Here again we have representations of princely warriors, with swords and shields. Lakshmi and Sarasvatl are shown seated in niches as at Thanjavur. In the northern and southern niches of the central shrine are Bhiksha-tana-murti and Chandesanugraha-murti (pi. VII), the former disfigured with a plaster-coat. In the southern niches a figure, presumably that of Dakshinamurti, is missing: the rest variously represent dancing Ganesa, Ardhanarlsvara beside the bull, Hari-Hara and Nataraja (pi. VIII A) dancing along with Kali and Bhringi attended by ganas and Karaikkalammaiyyar playing cymbals. On the sides of the niche Vishnu plays the drum, Ganesa and Karttikeya approach the scene on their vehicles, and Devi, with her arm resting on the bull beside her, watches

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GAN GAIKOND ACHOLAPURAM

the dance. To the west is Siva as Gangadhara appeasing Devi who is forlorn and sullen on account of her lord having received Ganga on his matted locks. On the sides of the niches is narrated the story of Bhagiratha's penance to bring Ganga down to the earth. Then there are Lingodbhava, Vishnu with his consorts and Karttikeya or Indra .and Siva as Uma-sahita. On the walls of the niche with Uma-sahita, Vishnu is shown adoring him by offering his eye as a flower . The northern niches contain the figures of Kalantaka with the story of Markandeya on the sides of the niche, eight-armed Mahishamardini standing beside her Son, Brahma with a beard, accompanied by his consorts Savitri and Sarasvati (pi. IX A), Bhairava with eight arms, Siva as Madanantaka burning Manmatha (pi. VIII B), one of his hands in tarjani (threatening) attitude, Manmatha and his consort Rati, the former first shooting with a bow and then helpless, and other gods intervening on his behalf. The lowest series of panels on the base of the temple shows seated lions with one of the paws raised and rearing in an attitude usually found in the Pallava temples of the time of Rajasimha (690-715) and with analogues at Prambanan in Indonesia.

The niches are arranged in the same fashion as at Thanjavur: there is a large central niche flanked on each side by two smaller ones, all projecting out of the main wall, with a kumbha-panjara pattern between each pair of niches. Noteworthy are the roof-forms on the respective tiers, in the shape of said, koshta and kudu. In the eaves of the lowest niches are bracket-figures of the ganas of Siva and rearing lions. The principal niche on each side

is devoted to one or the other of the gods of the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva: Siva Dakshina-murti on the south, Vishnu with consorts on the west and Brahma with consorts on the north. The bays of the niches at every stage have rows of yali as decoration, with makara-heads at the extreme ends from which warriors are issuing. The niche-tops are decorated in a circular fashion as in the Thanjavur temple.

The space on the temple-base below the yali -frieze is covered with inscriptions, though not as completely as at Thanjavur. In the niches, numerous iconographic forms are repeated in a different order and with the addition of a few more, such as Varaha rescuing the Earth, space for the representations being made available by the utilization of the space for the kumbha-panjaras in other niches in addition to the five main niches.

The shrine to the north of the main temple, dedicated to Chandikesvara, contains a large fine carving representing the steward of Siva's household. There are two other shrines, respectively to its north and south, contemporary with the main temple, on either side of the main shrine. There is no deity in the southern shrine, but in the shrine to the north is installed an image of Devi of a later date. That this shrine was also originally intended for Siva is indicated by the bull guarding the door. A feature to be noted here is that the bull is quite different from those of Chola workmanship and resembles those of the earlier Chalukya period. The dvara-palas in the two shrines and the images in the niches, wherever they are extant, are contemporary with, but less carefully executed than those in the main temple.

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To the south-west of the main temple is a small temple with a large image of Ganesa, his trunk curling round the sweets (modaka), as is usual in some early Chola representations of the deity.

Beyond and to the north of the shrine of Chandikesvara is another shrine, wherein is housed a fine early image of Mahishamardini. Further beyond is a large representation of Hanu in plastered brickwork, through the body of which runs a flight of steps leading into a large well, known as Simhakinar. The popular story goes that the Chola king got water from the Ganga and poured it into this well, so that there could be a perpetual supply of it for the bath (< abhisheka) of the deity.

Among the bronzes in the temple the following are specially noteworthy: a large Somaskanda, Bhogasaktidevi, another Devī and Mahasena or Karttikeya as war-god carrying a vajra, shield and cock (pi. IX B). The significance of the remarkable figure of the war-god to the ideal of the royal warrior Rajendra cannot be underestimated.

The unique slab with the nine planets (navagraha) (pi. X) in the large temple, hidden in total darkness, is an eloquent testimony to the cosmopolitan spirit of Rajendra, who, after his northern conquests, combined northern and southern elements to produce this most interesting group.

The most remarkable carving here, the Chandesannugraha-murti panel, is almost a suggestion of the laurels won by Rajendra through the grace of Siva, and he humbly presents himself as a devotee of the Lord, who blessed Chandesa.

airavatesvara temple, dArAsuram

As one enters the Airavatesvara temple at Dara-suram (pi. XI), one finds a large gopura , the upper portion of which is completely lost but the form of which may be imagined from the complete second (inner) gopura . The larger prakara- wall all around the temple, decorated with couchant bulls at intervals, is in continuation of the second gopura . Supporting the gopura are pillars in a row, which have some fine carvings of lovely apsaras, Siva-ganas and other motifs. Beyond the gopura is a large bali - pitha with beautiful lotus-petal decorations. Towards one side of it, just behind the large Nandi, is a quaint standing dwarf Siva -gana blowing a conch, which, together with the bull, is a fine artistic product. Long narrow strips of frieze, with a whole series of miniature figures dancing in lovely poses with musical accompaniment, provide, even as one enters, the key-note of the decoration in this temple nitya-vinoda , perpetual entertainment.

On either side at the entrance are small balustrades, intended to flank steps (now missing), with beautiful maA:am-decoration on their outer side. The makara with a floriated tail, short legs and curled-up snout and a pair of dwarf gfl/w-riders on it forms a lovely decoration. At the entrance the visitor is greeted by a beautiful mandapa with a number of pillars, to be approached through an extension of it towards the south, with flights of steps on the east and west. The balustrades for these steps are nicely decorated on the outer side with a long curling

Brihadisvara temple, Thanjavur. See p. 14

PLATE II

Brihadlsvara temple , Thanjavur : A, Bhikshatana-murti;

B, Alingana-Chandrasekhara-murti; C, dvara-pala. See pp. 16 and 17

PLATE III

Brihadlsvara temple, Thahjavur : Kalantaka. See p. 16

PLATE IV

Brihadlsvara temple, Thanjavur : musicians (painting). See p. 19

PLATE V

Brihadisvara temple , Thahjavur : Rdjardja and his guru
(painting). Seep. 19

PLATE VI

Brihadisvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram. See p. 22

PLATE VII

Brihadlsvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram : Chandesanugraha-murti.

See p. 24

PLATE VIII

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Brihadlsvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram : A, Nataraja; B, Siva
burning Manmatha. See pp. 24 and 25

PLATE IX

Brihadisvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram : A, Brahma; B, Karttikeya. See pp. 25 and 27

PLATE X

BrihadUvara temple , Gangaikondacholapuram : navagrahas. See p. 27

PLATE XI

PLATE XII

Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram : mandapa . See p. 36

PLATE XIII

Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram : A, female chauri-bearer; B, Kankalamurti.

See pp. 31 and 36

PLATE XIV

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trunk issuing out a lion-head; a similar second one runs parallel to the trunk of an elephant, lost in the open jaws of a makara whose floriated tail is curled up, to balance the complete design. The elephant is beautifully decorated and has on its back dwarf ganas viz., the sankha- and padmanidhis. The eight outer pillars of the mandapa are supported by squatting yalis with their trunks curled up and with pronounced abaci. The lotus-petal decoration below has prominent petal-tips. The capital, as in the other pillars in the mandapa, has the beginning of the bodhika-decoration, which, in the late Chola and Vijayanagara periods, develops into the lotus-decoration. Each of the four inner pillars is divided into sections, three oblong and two polygonal. The decoration which later develops into the naga-bandha is just present, and, as in other early Chola structures, is only a decorative pattern of the double-geese. The rectangular portions of the pillars are decorated with small panels illustrating mythological stories, such as the attack of Manmatha, the penance of Parvati, the prayer of the gods for a son of Siva, the birth of Kumara, Siva's marriage, his fight with the asuras, etc. On four pillars which lead on to the extension of the mandapa, short inscriptions are repeated, describing it as svasti sri-Raja-gambhiraṃ tiru-mandapam. If the elephants on the sides of the balustrades of the steps men-

tioned above are lovely specimens, there are equally lovely galloping horses, one on either side of the mandapa - extension immediately beside the flight of steps, with a huge wheel carved behind it, which gives the mandapa the semblance of a chariot. The front of the base of this mandapa-extension is decorated at the bottom with panels

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showing: Śiva fighting the Tripuras from the chariot and as Kalantaka repelling Yama for protecting the son of Mrikandu whom he had blessed with a long life; Śiva burning Kama who dared attack him with his flowery bow and arrow even while his lovely queens, including Rati, and other gods pray for his being spared; and the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice by Virabhadra. Above this, in five niches at intervals, are Agni, Indra, Brahma, Vishnu and Vayu, all standing with hands in the attitude of reverence to Śiva. It may be noted that the original plan of the flight of steps east of the mandapa has been completely spoilt by later renovations, and the symmetry, which no doubt originally existed, is now lost.

The main mandapa is in continuation of the mukhamantapa of the main shrine and is covered completely on the northern side at the extreme ends of the eastern and southern sides, providing on the outer face of the wall as in other portions of the temple, the usual pattern of niches with pilasters in between. The same pattern of alternating niche and pilaster with a main niche for every pair of subsidiary niches is found on the outer walls of the second mandapa which is a completely closed one, all the pillars' being inside. The main mandapa is decorated with a pair of dwarf yakshas guarding padma- and fankha-nidhis in niches on either side on the east. These

figures, like all the other special forms of deities in the niches, are of fine-grained black basalt, distinguished from the granite used in the entire structure. The pillars of the first (main) mandapa contain beautiful patterns of decorative creepers so arranged that in the circular medallions created therein are figures dancing in diverse

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poses, musicians and sometimes forms of deities such as Gangadhara and Tripurantaka. These figures adorn panels arranged in tiers of niches and solas on the sides of other pillars. Even where the pillars have purely decorative patterns, there are figures, mostly in dance-poses or playing musical instruments, introduced very deftly into them.

The ceiling shows square and rectangular patterns, bands of which are all filled with decorative designs. Almost all the central medallions contain similar dance and musical groups. The pillar-capitals here have the precursor of the bodhika- type, the ornamental precursor of the naga-bandha being also present.

As we enter the next mandapa , which leads on to the ardha-mandapa and the main shrine, there are in niches Devi with lotus, and ratna-kalafa (pot filled with gems) and Nandikesvara standing with hands in adoration on one side and saint Kannappa and seated Sarasvati on the other. It should be noted that the openings of the main mandapa have been bricked up here and there in modern times for converting portions into rooms and the centre of the northern side has been improvised into a cell for Devi; the chauri -holding dvara-palikas (pi. XIII A), fixed on either side of the doorway, also improvised,

are lovely and belong to the same period as the other fine sculptures arranged in the niches of the main temple itself. The pillars in the mandapa adjoining the main one, which leads on to the main shrine, are somewhat simpler, notwithstanding their being polygonal and with flower-petal decoration at intervals and corbels, which recall the Chalukya type.

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The mukha-mandapa, approached by long flights of steps from the north and south, marks the end of the mandapas and the beginning of the main shrine. Here there is a couchant Nandi smaller than the one at the start of the main mandapa. The dvara-palas of the main shrine are depicted as furious and with huge clubs; they have four hands in the threatening attitude (tarjani), bear tusks and carry trisula on their bound-up hair decorated with the lion-head design. The garland-decoration of their yajnopavita again recalls Chalukya influence.

A six-headed Kufnara standing to the left of the entrance of the main cell is a fine sculpture.

The walls of the mandapa and the main shrine contain niches, some of which still possess exquisite specimens of early Chola sculpture; the other niches either have no image or have poor modern substitutes in brick-and-plaster. Of the noteworthy Chola specimens are: a fine Ardhanarisvara, unique of its kind, with three faces and eight arms; a four-armed Nagaraja having snake-hoods over his head and hands joined in adoration; Agastya, the dwarf sage, seated with one of his hands in the teaching attitude and the other carrying a

water-vessel; another seated sage carrying the rosary and manuscript; dancing Martanda-Bhairava or Aghora-Virabhadra with four hands, three heads and a terrible countenance; Siva as Sarabha destroying Narasimha (in a niche to which a small mandapa, reached by a flight of steps, is provided); standing Ganesa; Dakshina-murti attended by sages seated under a banyan-tree and expounding the highest truth; Lingodbhava

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Siva, issuing from a flaming pillar, Brahma and Vishnu unable to reach the top and bottom, adoring the linga; Brahma; eight-armed Durga on the severed head of buffalo; seated Devi as Bhuvaneshvara carrying pasa and ankusa, in two of her hands, the other two being in abhaya and varada; Siva as Tripurantaka, carrying the axe, deer, bow and arrow; multi-armed Gajantaka destroying a demon in the guise of an elephant and dancing against the spread-out hide of the animal in the bhujanga-trasita pose, Devi shrinking away from him in fear; Bhairava with six arms standing with his dog behind him; a sage carrying a water-vessel and teaching two disciples; and Mahesa-murti seated with three heads and four arms carrying the spear, axe, rosary and water-vessel. All these sculptures, made of polished black basalt, are of exquisite workmanship.

In describing the sides of the main shrine, it should be mentioned that the lower half of the base is of the same type all over including the mandapas. The lowest series of panels above the lotus-petal decoration is divided by decorative bands and in them are yodhis, couchant or rearing, in pairs or single, women dancing to the accompaniment of music, dwarf gams in queer poses,

dancing, playing a drum, blowing a conch, carrying the chauri or holding their hands in wonder, often in the company of a bull. Above this is a long frieze, which is again repeated a little below the niches. There are miniature decorative carvings a little below the second row of ydlis, above it and immediately below the niches. In the main shrine the carving below the niche depicts scenes illustrating stories of Saivite saints, some of which

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have labels in Tamil. 1 Separating these scenes there are miniature carvings of dancing figures and Siva or Devi in different attitudes.

On the outer walls, on either side of the niches, are also carved fine figures corresponding to those enshrined in the niches, simulating the tradition of the earlier temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. Thus, Gaiiesa's niche is flanked by bhutaganas, dwarf attendants, carrying offerings with the deity's vehicle, the mouse; the niche of Dakshina-murti is flanked by exquisitely-carved figures of rishis, which are, however, hidden by a later brick structure. The niches of the main temple are three in number. The central one, larger than the flanking ones, has a double-pillar decoration on its either side. It has a top fashioned as a sdla , while the tops of the niches on either side illustrate the koshta- pattern. The double-pillar decorations between these have the lion-headed kudu for their top. Between the niches and the double-pillar decorations, all of which project forward, there are kumb ha-panjar a decorations against the main wall itself. Above the niches, near the caves, there is a whole row of dwarf ganas, dancing, playing musical instruments or otherwise merry. Against the roof here and there are kudus . Gaping bhuta- heads serve

as gargoyles for discharging water from the roof. The kudu -, pavillion- and ia/a-patterns are repeated in the different tiers of the vimana.

All around the main shrine is a broad strip, 3'66 m wide, paved with granite slabs, and a low wall, 25*40 cm

1 See Appendix, p. 40.

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high, of the same material, the latter beautifully carved with the lotus-pattern and Nandis seated in between. This beautiful row of Nandis is unfortunately mutilated everywhere. The existence of outlets for water at intervals shows that it was intended to be a sort of a pleasant water-receptacle to give the idea of a pool surrounding the temple in spring and keep the atmosphere cool in summer. A number of circular rings with low rims, carved out of stone, appear to have been lamps.

The gargoyle for discharging water from the main cell is on the north. It is long, has a dip and double course, is decorated with two lion-head motifs, one at the source and the other where it starts the lower course at the point of the dip, and discharges water into a large well-carved water-reservoir with the figures of dancing ganas on the sides. The gomukha is supported at the base by a caryatid dwarf gana 3 as in the gargoyle in the temple at Thanjavur (though the figure here is standing), by a rearing yaii and again by triple ganas at the end.

In the vicinity of the main temple near this gargoyle is the shrine of Chandikesvara, similar to the one

at Thanjavur.

The inner side of the entire prakara , surrounding the large paved courtyard, has a beautiful series of mandapa- decoration, which, in the main, is one long row of pillar-cloister with cells at intervals for deities, some of which have disappeared. At the four corners the cloister has been enlarged and embellished into mandapas, approached by steps decorated with balustrades, showing interesting motifs as a ferocious lion pouncing on an elephant with curled-up trunk lost in the mouth of a

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makara and with its sides covered up at the points where a niche or trellis-window is added as decoration (pi. XII). The base, as usual, has fine panels showing scenes of dance, jugglery tricks, themes of sculptural pun and so forth. All these points are best observed in the mandapa towards the north-west. Towards the north-west there is a similar mandapa , but lacking the trellis-work. Here the pillars are well-decorated with dance-figures; the ceiling also is profusely covered with beautiful panels and medallions filled with danseuses and musical figures.

The top of this mandapa is decorated with falam-roof suggesting Nataraja's sabhd; this is the ndtya-mandapa of the temple—a fact clearly borne out by not only the sculptures on the pillars and ceiling but also by a carving on the base of Vishnu playing the drum in front of the mandapa . Though now in a bad state of preservation, this must have been the place where originally the Nataraja bronze should have been housed. To the east, beyond this, is the yaga-sala, and further on is the representation of a king and queen, in addition to

figures of deities. The two portrait-statues are probably intended to represent either Virarajendra or Rajaraja II, either of whom was responsible for this temple, and his queen.

In the cloistered hall to the west of the ndtya-man-dapa there is a remarkable group of large carvings in the round, representing Siva as Kankala-murti (pi. XIII B), a number of rishi-patnis, the wives of sages of Darukavana who attended on Siva and were astonished at his beauty. The garments of one of the women in a pair (pi. XIV) are slipping off and the other has a finger on

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her lips indicative of wonder, Gfl/w-dwarfs are playing the drum or sounding a gong in quaint and picturesque attitudes. Kankala-murti himself is calm and serene and fondles a deer with one of his hands, while a dwarf-attendant carries his begging bowl. Of the women, some carry ladles for offering food to the divine begger. The composition is one of the great masterpieces of Chola art. There are also carvings of Manmatha and Rati on a chariot and Kannappa-nayanar, the saintly hunter.

Beyond this are one hundred and eight Siva-charyas (Saiva saints) in a row fixed in the wall, with their names and short descriptions incised below each. To the south a large portion of the pillared cloister has tumbled down.

In the roof of the niches, all along the wall of the mandapa to the north, there are representations of fishis , which, together with similar figures in the niches, point to the element of peace and tranquillity, as opposed to

the heroic element which is the key-note of sculpture in the temples at Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. The long series of stories from the Siva-purana and Siva devotees portrayed here also suggest the same. When we remember that this was the period when the stories of the Saiva kings and the sacred Dev dr am hymns were collected together, we can understand the purpose of this. It is not unlikely that the name Darasuram has something to do with Daruka-vana, especially when we consider the magnificent group of sculptures representing Kankala and the rishi-patnis described above.

The linga of the temple is known as Rajarajes-varam-tidayar, and the story goes that the temple was

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erected by Rajaraja himself to satisfy a cowherdess who made a gift of the huge stone used as the sikhara of the large temple at Thanjavur in accordance with her wishes that there should be a temple in her village.

Adjacent to this is the shrine of Devi, which is contemporary with the main temple. The balustrade-decoration of yalis with riders on either side as we enter the shrine are fine works of art. Some lattice-window carvings are also worthy of note. The gargoyle, which presents a dwarf gana in quaint pose both to receive and disgorge the water from the cell, is interesting even in its mutilated state. The niches of the outer walls of the shrine contain forms of Devi. The tiny dance-figures in the lattice-windows and the nJga-decoration are remarkable.

The profuse occurrence of dance and musical scenes and of figures in various dance-poses cannot but attract

the attention of the visitor. The Chola period was one of great patronage and encouragement for dance and music, and when we remember that the gopuras at Chidambaram, of slightly later date, have a number of dance-figures to illustrate the various sthanas and karanas of Bharata's Nalya-sastra, we can understand the reason for this exuberance of nalya -figures in the embellishment of the temple.

The narration of stories of the Saiva saints, with depictions of temples, ponds or rivers full of fish, shells and other aquatic animals and, in one case, a crocodile, along with the frequent figures of kings with royal paraphernalia, such as peacock-feather parasol, sages and Brahmanas with umbrellas in their hands and similar themes strongly recall the corresponding scenes of an

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earlier date at Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia. In fact, even the lions in the lowermost panels of the base of the main shrine remind us strongly of their counterparts at Prambanan. This is not at all surprising, as the intercourse between the Eastern Archipelago and India was considerable in the Chola period, most of these islands being under Chola sway for at least some time. The decorative elements, specially the creeper-patterns providing medallions for dance-figures on the pillars and some of the pillar-capitals recall their Rashtrakuta and Chalukya counterparts. This is easily accounted for by the constant Chola, Rashtrakuta and Chalukya inroads into the territories of one another. A dvapala figure, which was originally in the Darasuram temple but has now been removed to the Thajjavur temple, is of Chalukya workmanship and contains an inscription on

its pedestal in early Chola letters, mentioning that it was brought by the Chola king as a war-trophy after the sack of Kalyanapura, the capital of the Western Chalukyas.

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APPENDIX

STORIES OF SAIVA SAINTS DEPICTED AT

DARASURAM 1

The series of stories illustrated in miniature panels as the top line of the base of the vimana and the man^apa in the Darasuram temple is full of narrative interest. Most of them are explained by means of labels incised in characters of the period.

The story of Appar, the great saint who converted Mahendrarvarman Pallava and who is always represented with a spud held by his hand against his shoulder, is graphically depicted in a number of scenes.

Then there is the story of Tirumular bathing with his wife in the tank beside the temple. This is followed by the story of a saint, who was fond of feeding Saiva devotees and whom Siva, in the guise of a Brahmana, once tested by demanding food at midnight, which he supplied. The label for this runs Ilaiyamarangudi Marar kadai.

The next panel illustrates a lion-clad saint carrying a rod in his hand and standing before a scale, in which on one side there are two figures of a man and woman in adoration, and Siva and Parvati on Nandi grant them darsana.

There is a scene of a king offering his sword to a young lion-clad Saiva saint carrying a staff.

The devotion of Kannappanayanar is illustrated by representing him as plucking his eye with an arrow and offering it.

Markandeya appears next with the noose of Yama surrounding not only the neck of the adoring saint but also the linga itself.

Beyond it is the story of a woman with her hair being cut off, as a saint watches this and Siva appears with his consort on his bull high up in the sky.

This is followed by the representation of the legend of a saint playing the flute in a forest surrounded by cows and close to an elephant when Siva and Parvati on bull visit him.

1 See p. 34.

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STORIES OF §AIVA SAINTS

The next scene presents a devotee carefully preparing a garland and adoring with it Siva seated in front of a temple with a rosary in his hand.

Then comes the legend of Nanda, the great saint, who bathed in the tank and entered the fire to have access into the portals of the Chidambaram temple and Siva and Parvati on bull grant him dariana. This is labelled Tirunalai-povar kadai.

This followed by the story of Tirukkuripputondar, the saintly washerman of Kanchi, whose sincerity was tested by Siva, who is here shown as an old Brahmana with a staff in his hand demanding his clothes that could not be washed by that evening owing to a storm.

Scenes from the life of Chandesa are now shown. The boy-saint

is bathing a linga under a tree with the milk of his cows: on this father angrily interrupting, Chandesa, not brooking interference, cuts off his legs with an axe. For this he is rewarded by Saiva by winding a garland on his head. Chandesa is shown reverently seated at the foot of seated Siva and Parvati, while he is adorned with the garland. The inscription here reads Say nail urpillaiyar kadai.

Next is the story of the boy-saint Tirujflanasambanda, who overcame the Jainas, all shown impaled, by performing the miracle of floating a manuscript against the current of the stream. The saint is depicted as a very small boy with cymbals in his hand and as adored by a devotee from behind. Three nude Jainas, with flowers and other objects in their hands, are shown standing, probably to throw them into the stream and perform a miracle. The king is in the centre of the panel and beyond him are impaled the defeated Jainas.

Another carving shows a devotee, who, failing to secure ghee for lighting lamps as directed by an aerial voice from the Siva temple at Tiruvalur (indicated by a bull at the top) is shown filling a vessel with water from a lotus-pond full of fish and birds. The clear inscription here reads Naminandi adigal.

Then there is the story of the boy-saint Sambanda, described as Alulaiya-pillaiyar in the inscription. The father is questioning the boy, who points to Siva and Parvati on Nandi and explains that he was fed by them with divine milk.

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Beyond it is the legend of the warrior Kalikkamanayanar, dying on his bed rather than getting cured of paralysis by Sundaramurti, who, in turn, attempts to commit suicide rather than return without curing him. Finally the one is brought to life and the other prevented from killing himself. The inscription here runs eyarkon Kalikkdmantjldr.

Two priests are now presented, homa- fire between them, with a label painted Somdsimdranar.

A saint adoring Siva with a garland is shown next with the label Sakkiyandr. This is the story of a Jaina who took of Siva worship and was so lost in it that he did not know even when he used bricks instead of flowers.

This is followed by the legend of a great Saiva devotee, who offered his son's flesh to his guest who was no other than Siva in disguise and demanded this ghastly food. When, however, it was cooked, the guest refused to take food in the house of the childless couple but finally appeared before them and restored to life the child, whom the mother received with joy. The label here is Siruttondar kadai .

Next we have Seraman, the Chera king, going to Kailasa on an elephant. The label for it runs Seramanperumdl kadai.

Beyond this is a scene showing a number of scholars and a king. The inscription is in two strips, Poyyadimaiyillada pulavar and Kurruvanar , who were all Saiva saints.

The next is a story which is described in the inscription as Pugalcholanar. Here the saintly Chola king is so filled with sorrow at the sight of a head of a devotee of Siva in the midst of a number of heads piled in front of him by his victorious commander that, to expiate the sin, he took this enemy's head on his own and entered the fire when Siva and Parvati appeared on Nandi to bless him.

Beyond this is a scene from the life of a king who was fond of rewarding Saiva saints whether they were sincere or not. He is shown in the company of six pandaram saints. The label for this reads Narasingamunaiyaraigar.

The story narrated next is that of Adipattan, a fisherman, who used to offer the best fish from his daily catch to Siva at Naga-

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pat[^]inam. When one day he caught only one fish he willingly offered even that to the god, who immediately appeared before him with his consort on his bull and blessed him. The inscription reads Adibattar-kadai.

Then is the story of a devotee, who was in the habit of feeding Saiva devotees and who cut off the hands of his wife since she hesitated to welcome and wash the feet of their old servant now turned a recluse, standing at their door as the guest. He is consequently graced by the darSana of Siva and Parvat! on bull. The inscription here reads Kalikkambandar ka<jiai.

A saint is now shown as driving a pair of bulls for pressing oil, which is taken by him to the Siva temple beyond the river. One day he failed to get the required oil, so that, to feed the lamps with his own blood, he tried to cut his head, but Siva appeared and blessed him. The fragmentary inscription here is Kaliyanar.

The next story, as the inscription shows, is of Sattiyandar. a devotee of Siva, who used to cut off the tongue of those who spoke ill of Saiva devotees.

A Pallava king who abandoned royal glory for serving the god is now shown four times adoring temples at different places. The inscription here reads Aiyyadigal Katfavarkonar.

This is followed by a scene illustrating the story of the saint who regularly used to light lamps in temples, and once failing to obtain money by selling grass for purchasing ghee for the lamps, first lit the grass itself and later his own locks of hair. The devotee is Kanampulandar, as the inscription states.

The next carving is of the famous author of Tirukkovai , who spent all his wealth in renovating temples and finally reached

mount Kailasa. The inscription reads Kariyar.

The next scene shows the conversion of the Pandyan king Nedumaran through his queen and minister. The inscription here reads Netfumdrandr.

Beyond this is portrayed a sage seated with a rosary in his hand. The inscription names him Vayilar.

Another scene shows a king cutting off the hands of his queen with a sword. It illustrates the story of a Pallava king who mutilated

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his queen for having inadvertently smelt a flower intended for the deity. She had already had her nose cut off by a saint named Seruttunai for the same offence. The inscription for this reads Kalanchinganar.

The incident of the queen's nose being cut by Seruttunai is given in the adjacent panel. The inscription here reads SeruttuTiaiyandar.

Beyond this is illustrated the story of the saintly priest of the temple at Srivilliputtur, who steadfastly worshipped Siva even in the days of a great famine. When he once dropped his water-pot on a linga on account of his extreme infirmity, the god appeared and directed him to seek and find a coin daily near the bali-pitha, so that he could sustain himself. The inscription here reads Pugalttunaiyar.

The next is a scene of a warrior killing a child with his sword, while some women shout in fear and crouch away from him. He then adores Siva on Nandi with Parvatl. It illustrates the story of the commander of a Ghoja king who killed all his men, including

even babies, for having consumed paddy intended for Siva during a famine when he was away in the battlefield. The inscription here reads Kolpuliyyandar.

The next scene is of saint adoring a number of other saints—an act which is as meritorious as adoring Siva himself. The inscription reads Battaraippanivar.

The following scene shows, devotees singing and sounding cymbals in front of a Siva temple. The label reads Paramanaiye paduvar; meaning that their songs of praise are only for Siva.

In the same train of thought is a scene showing a saint in contemplation, seated in the vicinity of a temple whence the deity is taken out in procession to the accompaniment of music and dance outside the temple near the bali-pitha and Nandi.

The next scene shows saints adoring Siva at Tiruvarur. The inscription reads Tiruvarurpirandar, meaning that everyone born in the holy spot of Tiruvarur is saintly enough to be adored.

Beyond this a saint is worshipping linga; there is a bell hanging from above and below there is a conch on a tripod, reminding

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us of similar objects portrayed in Javanese sculpture. This, with its inscription Mukhalam tirumeni tinduvdr, glorifies the greatness of those who worship Siva thrice a day.

Another panel depicts the story of the Pandya king and his queen Mangayarkarasi, who, with the help of the boy-saint Sambanda, converted her husband to Saivism. The inscription reads Pandimadevi...

Then there is the, story of the weaver-saint Ne[^]andar, who always gave away the products of his loom to Saiva devotees. This is indicated by the respective inscription.

A beautiful sculpture beyond this shows a king adoring a temple: this is a portrait of one of the Chola monarchs who was ranked among the saints for his devotion. The inscription reads Ko Singappcrumdl.

The scene that comes next illustrates the story of a devotee and his wife who played musical instruments and sang near the temple of Siva at Madurai. In the hand of the saint is an early type of vinda (interesting for the study of ancient musical instruments), and his wife plays on cymbals. The inscription reads Tirunilaka ntapperumbdnandr.

Beyond this can be recognized with the help of the inscriptions Sadaiyanar and Isaifianiyar, the father and mother of Sundara, whose story is illustrated in the succeeding panels.

An old Brahmana with a manuscript and umbrella in his hand talking to a princely youth, with the inscription reading Avana-olaikattinapafi , illustrates the incident of Siva coming disguised as a Brahmana to fetch Sundara-murti on the day of his marriage to his temple at Tiruvennainallur by presenting a document in proof of his claim over Sundara's person as also earlier over those of his father and grandfather.

The scene that follows shows some Saiva saints and a youth sounding cymbals in front of a temple. This illustrates the beginning of Sundara's career as a composer of hymns. The inscription reads Udaiyanambiyai andukondaruliypa(li .

After this a princely youth, evidently Sundara, is shown leading a king beside a temple and directing him to cross a river

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to reach another temple of Siva beyond it. The inscription here reads Uaiyanambikku ollenrarulinapaf.

The next scene shows Sundara, almost princely in appearance with peacock-feather umbrella carried by one of his attendants, waylaid by dacoits and robbed of the wealth he got from the Ghera king. The inscription here runs Udayanambiyai velipparittavidam .

Further up is a scene showing Sundara sounding cymbals in the vicinity of a temple where a number of bags are piled before him. This illustrates how the thieves restored the wealth robbed from Sundara at the command of the god at Tirumuruganpundi. The inscription reads Tirumuruganpundiyl perrapadi.

Beyond this is the last scene which shows a woman receiving her child from the jaws of a crocodile in a tank adjoining a temple. The princely figure here is saint Sundara with his hands in adoration. The scene illustrates the story of how, by singing a hymn, Sundara caused a crocodile to disgorge the child it had swallowed near the temple at Avinasi. The inscription reads Avindsiydndar mudalaivaipillai.

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GLOSSARY

abhaixga, slight flexion (in the standing pose of a figure).

allijlha, the pose of a warrior with his right leg bent forward.

ardha-man4apa, , 'half hall', the smaller hall connecting the shrine and the larger pillared hall (mandapa).

bali-pitha, altar for the placing of offerings.

bhujanga-trasita, 'scared by snake', a dance-pose suggesting movement

ment away from a snake out of fear.

bodhika , a corbel surmounting the capital of a pillar like the pushpa-bodhika , ‘corbel of flower-pattern’.

chatura , a dance-pose, with the left foot slightly raised but still touching the ground.

gana, a dwarf follower of Siva.

gopura, the imposing temple-gateway.

katichuki, ‘shirt-wearer’, a chamberlain in the royal harem.

kosh\ha , a cell or niche.

koshtha-pahjara, a niche decorated with curved cage-motif (cf. kumb ha-panjar a).

kudu , the arched-window motif on roof-line with shovel- or lion-head top.

kumbha-pahjara , a vase with foliage crowned by curved cage-like pattern, a motif alternating with kosktha-pahjara niches.

maharajalila , a royal pose of sitting at ease.

makara , the motif of a crocodile with floriated tail.

mantfapa, the pillared and canopied hall.

mukha-man4apa) the narrow hall connecting the ardha-manjapa or the maniapa with the shrine.

naga-bandha , a pillar-decoration simulating the hood of a snake.

padmasana , a seated pose of ease with the legs crossed and soles turned up.

pahjara 3 ‘nest’, a cage-like decorative motif for a niche or base.

paryahka-bandha , legs, bound in a strap for being easily kept in a yogic pose of meditation (cf. yoga-patta).

said, a hut-shaped barrel-roofed pavilion.

tri-bhahga } triflex (in the standing pose of a figure).

mmdnay the elevation of the shrine with the superstructure.

yali, leograph.

yoga-patta a band-strip for binding the legs in a pose of meditation

(cf. paryahka-bandha).

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