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SOCIETY OF
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HISTORIANS

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Source: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Mar., 2006), pp. 26-49

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [Society of Architectural Historians](#)

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Mountain Temples and Temple-Mountains

Masrur

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In the first half of the eighth century, Indian craftsmen cut back a high ridge of sandstone, its back to the Beās River and the plains beyond, and carved a grand temple-complex facing northeast toward the Dhauladhar range, the first outcropping of the great Himalayan Mountains. The structure itself was an embodiment of the earth and mountains around it (Figure 1). The temple at Masrur—in the present Indian state of Himachal Pradesh—was never completed. Masrur seems today half returned to its primordial condition.¹ It was damaged by successive earthquakes that sheered the stone and folded parts of the complex back into the hill. Its ground plan, partial section, and a roof plan drawn by an Indian draftsman were published in the second decade of the twentieth century, but scholarship since has neglected and misrepresented the site.²

It is possible to reconstruct the intention of the planning of this important complex, however, and to reposition it in a historical and symbolic context. Not only did its creation mark a movement of political power in the eighth century, from the Gangetic valley into the hills, but the temple also mapped cosmological power and the construction of a “world-kingdom” in a new way.³ The metaphor of temple as mountain runs throughout India’s traditions of building, but the temple at Masrur, beyond all others from the Indian subcontinent, provides the antecedent and conceptual model for the great “temple-mountains” of Cambodia soon to be built by kings in southeast Asia (Figure 2).

Formal and Political Competition in the Eighth Century

Many stone temples in the Himalayas—most typically in Kashmir—have pyramidal towers with pent-roof gables (Figure 3). Under King Lalitāditya in Kashmir in the eighth century, this stone typology took on an exemplifying role, characterizing that mountain kingdom and distinguishing it from all others.⁴ Yet as early as the beginning of the eighth century a distinctive type of curvilinear tower, with offset planes and vertical bands (*latā*)—the “*latina Nāgara*” temple of middle India—was introduced into the hill regions of the lower Himalayas (the states of Himachal and Uttarakhand Pradesh) (Figure 4).⁵ The Nāgara formula—most often a single sanctum with tower and an axial entry hall or portico—evolved in the sixth century in the Gangetic valley and central India, establishing itself widely in the next century from Saurashtra and the Salt Range in the west and the northwest to Orissa and Bengal in the east, and from the hill states of the lower Himalayas to the Deccan in the south (see Figure 2).⁶

The introduction of a Nāgara stone-temple formula in the hill states early in the eighth century may represent political inroads made by Yaśovarman, king of middle India, ruling from Kanauj (Kānyakubja). Monuments in some cases offer more solid data than texts, and I argue that in this case they do.⁷ I begin my narrative with a discussion of two medieval royal documents—one a poem about Yaśovarman’s conquests written in the eighth century, the other



Figure 1 Masrur, Himachal Pradesh, rock-carved Shaiva temple complex, view from the north, ca. eighth century

Figure 2 Map showing Masrur's geographic context

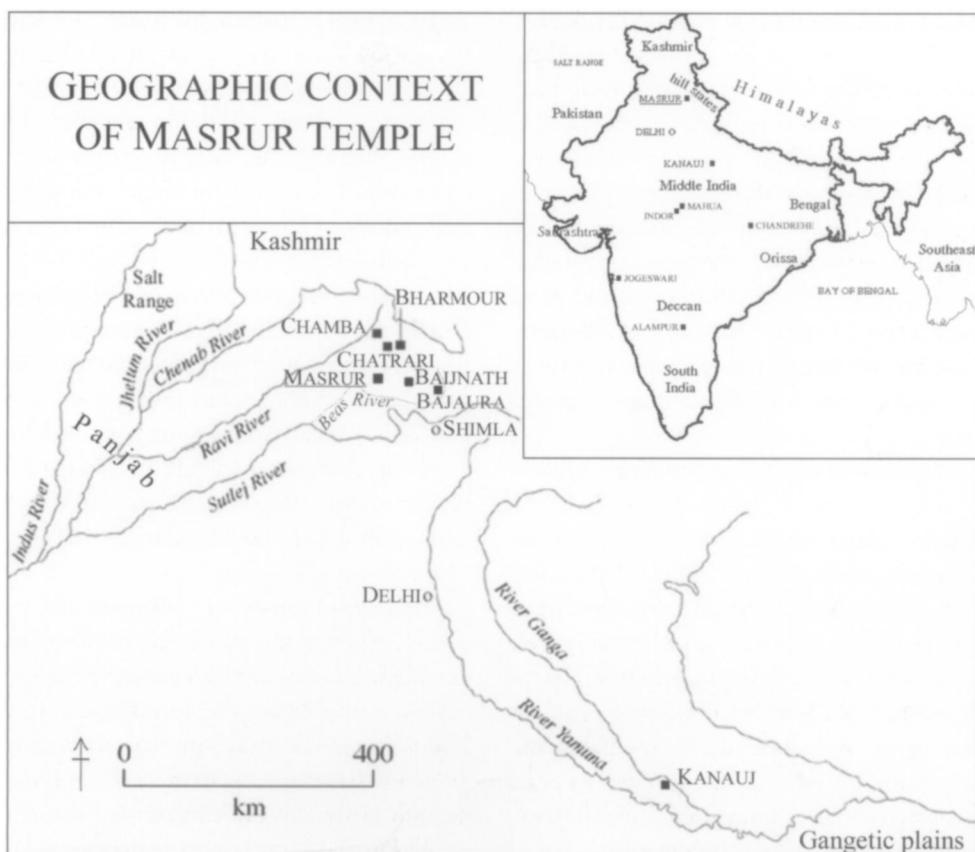




Figure 3 Śiva temple, Payar, Kashmir, ca. tenth century

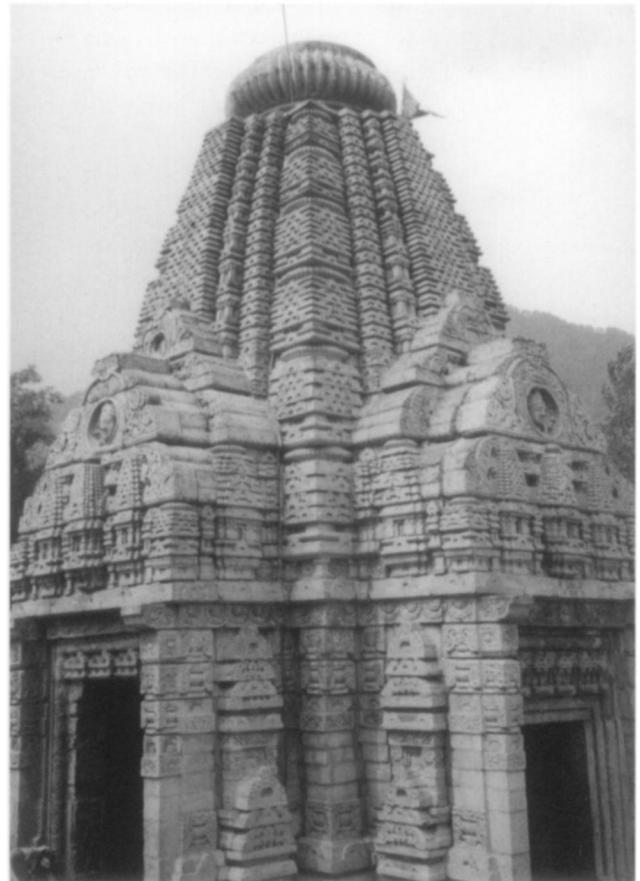


Figure 4 Bāśeśara Mahādeva temple, Bajaura, Kulu, ca. 800 C.E.

a chronicle of Lalitāditya's successors in Kashmir written in the twelfth century—with the poetics, contradictions, and anachronisms of such sources very much in mind.⁸ The validity of historical frames in South Asia must always be questioned. Reconstructions of history found in medieval documents and sources and in modern scholarship at times take on the characteristics of a myth.⁹ By examining ancient sources in the light of the monumental record, however, I hope to draw conclusions about the movement of political power in the lower Himalayas in the eighth century.

To determine patronage and stylistic sources for the Masrur temple, reconstruction of a political and historical context is essential. Yaśovarman, ruling over middle India, where Nāgara architecture first developed, and Lalitāditya, king of Kashmir, who marked his kingdom with a distinctive pyramidal type of temple (see Figure 3), were rivals for territory and fame in the eighth century. Both claimed the poetic trope of conquering the four quarters of a world kingdom.¹⁰ It is clear that they also interacted and collaborated politically.¹¹ Claims by Kalhaṇa, the twelfth-century

court chronicler of Kashmir, that privilege king Lalitāditya, however, need not be an accurate rendering of facts of the eighth century.¹²

In his verse chronicle, the *Rājataranginī* (River of Kings), Kalhaṇa compiled historical data to eulogize the Kashmir rulers of his time, but he in part also mythologized their lineage and important earlier forebears, such as Lalitāditya.¹³ Vākpatirāja, the court poet who wrote the “great verse” narrative (*mahākāvya*) about King Yaśovarman’s conquests, on the other hand, was a contemporary of Yaśovarman and wrote the *Gaūḍavaho* based on tropes and observations of his own lifetime.¹⁴

Historical sources as well as architectural remains suggest a more nuanced rivalry between Yaśovarman and Lalitāditya in the eighth century than Kalhaṇa’s twelfth-century chronicle recalls, but they require some reframing. Lalitāditya and Yaśovarman both sent emissaries with messages to China; in one of these, Lalitāditya claimed Yaśovarman “as his ally.”¹⁵ Vākpatirāja, as poet in Yaśovarman’s court, wrote beautifully of the physical and human land-

scape that Yaśovarman's army encountered in its wanderings—in so doing delineating the extent of the kingdom—but he detailed little about specific battles and made no mention of Lalitāditya or Kashmir, emphasizing always his king's primary position.

In the twelfth century, however, Kalhaṇa felt it necessary to portray Lalitāditya as “withering in a moment the mobile army of the mountain-like Yaśovarman,” reducing him “to the position of a minstrel to eulogize his virtues.” “What more need be said?” Kalhaṇa went on, “The territory of Kānyakubja [Kanauj] from the bank of the Yamunā to the bank of the Kālikā was, like the courtyard of his residence, under his subjection. Passing over Yaśovarman, like the Gaṅgā over the Snow-Mountain, [Lalitāditya's] army reached in comfort the eastern ocean” (the Bay of Bengal [see Figure 2]).¹⁶ Perhaps the point of this passage is that Kalhaṇa, in the twelfth century, had to explain away Yaśovarman's continuing power in central India in order to argue that Lalitāditya had been able to reach eastern India in his royal wanderings, as required of a world-king.¹⁷ More striking to me is Kalhaṇa's semiological referencing of Yaśovarman as both “mountain-like” and the “Snow-Mountain.”

Kalhaṇa's continuing praise of Yaśovarman is perhaps more revealing than his story of Yaśovarman's defeat. “The ruler of Kānyakubja appeared to those, who were versed in affairs of state, to be one possessing understanding. . . . His colleagues were even more than him full of self-assurance; more fragrant than even the spring is the breeze from the sandal tree.” Yaśovarman proposed a treaty—“written with diplomatic skill” according to Kalhaṇa—that read: “This is the treaty of peace concluded between Yaśovarman and Lalitāditya” of Kashmir. This was rejected by Lalitāditya's jealous minister because a “document which did not give precedence [to Lalitāditya] indicated the lack of superiority of his sovereign.” This quibble Kalhaṇa himself recounted was “disliked by the generals who were uneasy at the prolonged duration of the war.”¹⁸ If Kalhaṇa exaggerated Lalitāditya's dominion over Yaśovarman in order to defend Kashmir's claim to universal rule,¹⁹ he also had clear access to sources defining Yaśovarman's “mountain-like” stance.²⁰

In contrast to Kalhaṇa's later account, in Vākpatirāja's *Gaiūdavabo* Yaśovarman ended his tour of royal conquest of the four directions (*digvijaya*) by going north.²¹ In the celestial city of Ayodhyā he “built up a heavenly temple in one day.”²² “Various forest regions with their lovely aspects were observed by his army-men, who met in victory different countries on the earth in all directions.”²³ From Ayodhyā he moved to “the Himalayan tract including the Kailāsa mountain” (a mythical rather than specific place). Vākpatirāja's long description of this large region led his translator to observe that “Vā-

patirāja must have traversed these parts in person to observe them minutely and collect the details.”²⁴

The modern hill states of Himachal and Arunachal Pradesh are one small part of the western Himalayas (see Figure 2). Located between Kashmir and the Gangetic plains, their high mountains and fierce river valleys have kept back invaders through many centuries. While our understanding of who controlled these areas over time is limited, the evidence of monuments, texts, and inscriptions might suggest that this “liminal” region—both a margin and a threshold—had no single conquering raj.²⁵ Were the Varmans who founded a small kingdom at Bharmour (high above an offshoot of the Ravi river valley above Chamba, north of Masrur) early in the eighth century feudatories to the contemporary Varman rulers—Yaśovarman and his successors—in Kanauj?²⁶ Were there political links to the Varman kings who had established themselves in Cambodia well before the eighth century?²⁷ We know only that they introduced Indic ideas of kingship, deities, and architecture into Southeast Asia.²⁸ We know that a re-formed Chamba state fell briefly to a king of Kashmir in the eleventh century, as reported in the *Rājatarangīni* and in a chronicle of the Chamba kingdom compiled in the seventeenth century; yet only the “gradual but noticeable change of symbols provides indicators in the changing process of those who ruled.”²⁹

Architectural remains may provide evidence of Yaśovarman's importance relative to Lalitāditya that is more convincing than Kalhaṇa's twelfth-century panegyric. Nāgara stone architecture in the lower Himalayas in the eighth century suggests a movement of power and patronage from the plains to the hills.³⁰ Small stone temples with barrel-vaulted and simply layered superstructures related to Nāgara were first built in the hills at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century.³¹ At Masrur and Bajaura, two mature and developed Nāgara stone temples—both commissions requiring significant patronage and political stability—had been constructed by the end of the century (Figure 5; see Figures 1, 4).³²

These temples demonstrate, in contrast to Kalhaṇa's catalogue of Kashmir valley's many pyramidal temple sites (see Figure 3), that patronage in the hill states had, by the eighth century, incorporated Nāgara forms then dominant in Yaśovarman's India.³³ The story of these temples in the hills has not been adequately told. That a thirteenth-century (and later) Nāgara temple at Baijnath in Kangra, taken as a touchstone, for many decades was dated to the early ninth century by a misread inscription, is one indication of the literature's many confusions.³⁴

Most remarkable, under-studied, and mis-presented of these Nāgara hill temples is the large rock-cut Śaiva complex at Masrur (see Figure 5),³⁵ recently nominated as a



Figure 5 Śaiva temple complex, Masrur, Kangra, view from the east

UNESCO World Heritage Monument.³⁶ It is this mountain temple that I wish to analyze as a forerunner for the famed temple-mountains of Southeast Asia.³⁷

Masrur's Temple and Its Scholarship

A civilian officer, Henry Lee Shuttleworth, visited the “rock-hewn Vaishnava temple at Masrur” [emphasis mine] in “the Panjab sub-Himalaya district of Kangra” in April 1913, commenting in his report that there “is no evidence that it had been seen by any European prior to my first visit.”³⁸ He shared his photographs and notes with Harold Hargreaves, Officiating Superintendent, Buddhist and Hindu Monuments, of the Archaeological Survey of India’s Northern Circle, who visited the site in October 1913 and published a final report in the Survey’s annual report.³⁹ Hargreaves corrected Shuttleworth’s “Vaishnava” attribution of the ancient temple (although Viṣṇu’s incarnation as Rāma remains the cult in current worship) by observing an image of Śiva carved at the center over the sanctum doorway,⁴⁰ but described the site as having multiple temples, a confounding that has led many subsequent scholars to count and re-count the number of towers.⁴¹ Hargreaves cited Masrur’s presence in nineteenth-century district-listings,⁴² as had Shuttleworth, but added an important detail: “The senior draftsman now attached to my office, and to whom I am indebted for the excellent drawings which illustrate this article, was a member of the staff of the short-lived office of the first Archaeological Surveyor in the Punjab, and in 1887 assisted in the preparation of certain sketches of details of the temple. Of these drawings only two sheets have been preserved and were made over by the Public Works Depart-

ment to the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Lahore, when that appointment was revived in 1902.”⁴³ To this draftsman we owe the exceptional three drawings Hargreaves published in his report (Figures 6, 7).⁴⁴

It is worth, however, returning to Shuttleworth’s “rough index plan” of Masrur and to his intuitive perception of its unity (see Figure 6).⁴⁵ He numbered the temple’s “spires” (*śikharas*) starting with two that framed the entry to the pillared hall (*mandapa*) on the east in front of the sanctum. Two freestanding cruciform shrines in the eastern court—the northern one preserving a sixteen-sided spire (see Figure 9)—he numbered 3 and 4. His spires 5 and 6 mark stairways (not shrines) that once led up to the roof of the complex from either side of the eastern hall.⁴⁶ These multifaceted spires, like those of 3 and 4, were designed using the geometry of rotating squares (see Figures 12, 20).⁴⁷

The central *śikha* (see Figures 10, 14), over the sanctum to the west of this *mandapa*, Shuttleworth numbered 7; the two flanking *śikharas* on the roof (see Figure 5) he numbered 8 and 9. “The flat roof of the temple is about 50 yards in length; each of its corners is provided with a small *śikha*,” according to Shuttleworth; these he numbered 10 through 13 (see Figures 15, 16).⁴⁸ These four structures, paired to the north and south, actually frame two large entrances to courts that had only begun to be excavated when work stopped (see Figures 6, 13).⁴⁹ Set between these “corner” and the “stairway” spires 5, 6, 14, and 15 are four rectangular barrel-vaulted (*valabhi*) roof-structures (see Figure 11) that extend the roof plan on the north and south. These four “gateway” structures, of which remnants survive on both east and west, Shuttleworth numbered 16 through 19. He concluded that “at first it seems an extravagant and confused mass of spires,

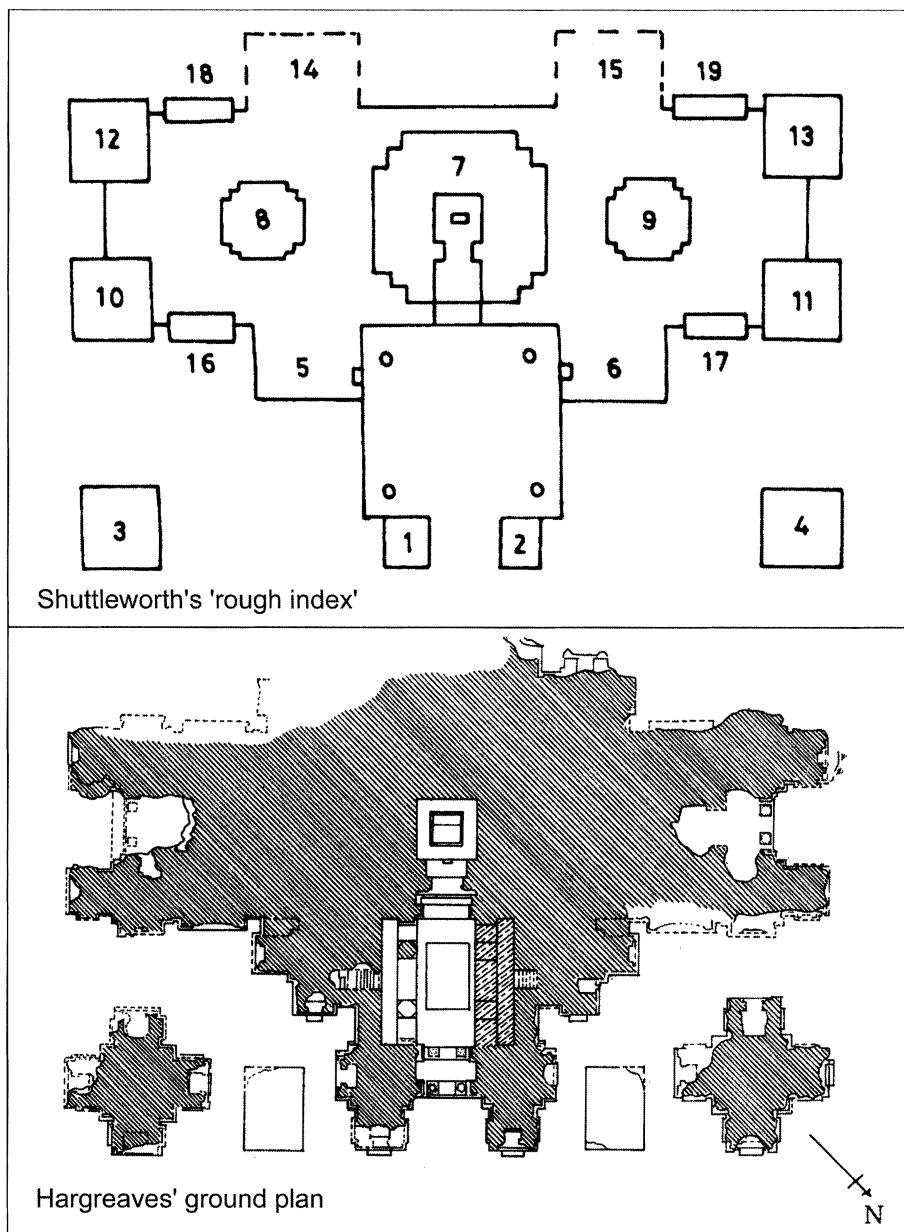


Figure 6 Masrur, Shuttleworth's "rough index" and Hargreaves's published ground plan

doorways, and ornament. The perfect symmetry of the design, all centering in the one supreme spire, immediately over the small main cella, which together form the *vimāna* [temple], can only be realized after a careful examination of each part in relation to the other.”⁵⁰

Restoring the Roof Plan

We are particularly lucky to have the carefully measured drawings of Hargreaves's draftsman. Of the three, only the

ground plan has often been reprinted (see Figure 6). Of uncommon interest, however, is his roof plan (see Figure 7), sketching the surviving remnants of existing spires, which can actually be superimposed on the plan itself. With these restored and with the four spires to the east added (Figure 8), Shuttleworth's “perfect symmetry of the design” becomes somewhat more obvious.

Hargreaves, on the other hand, wrote of a “defect of . . . design” caused by the “marked difference between the height of the main pinnacle and the *sikharas* of the sur-

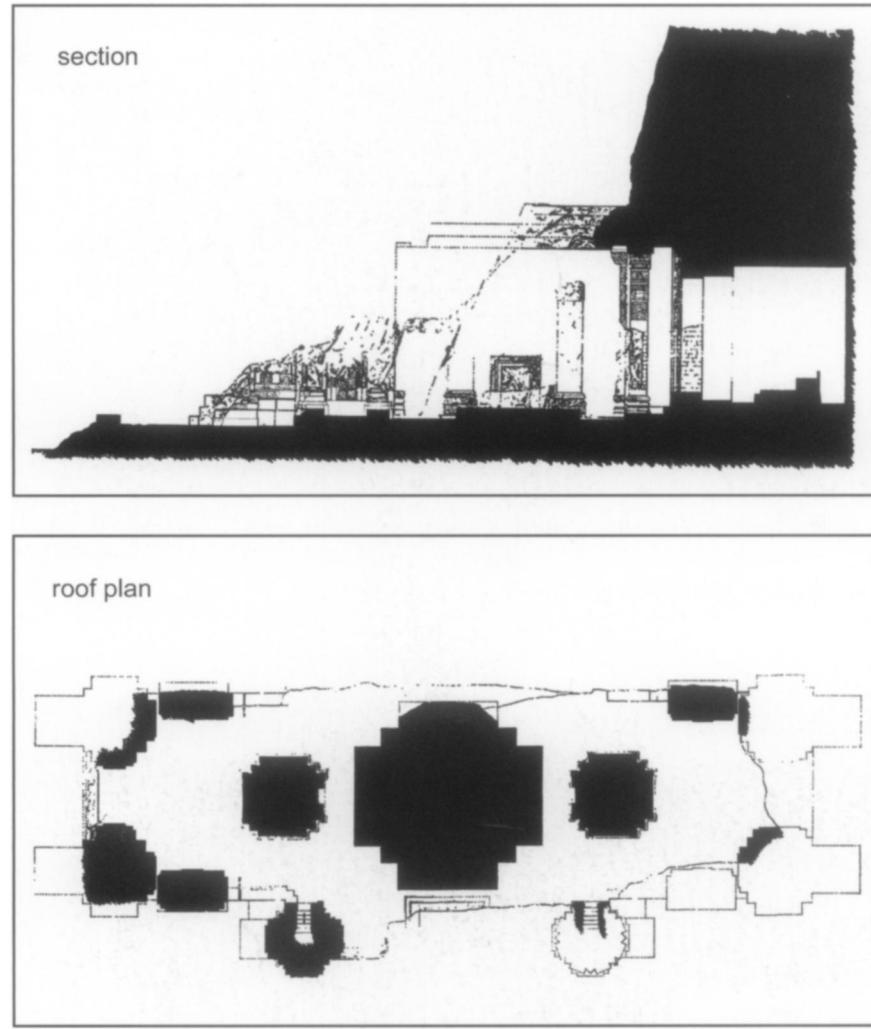


Figure 7 Masrur, Hargreaves's section and roof plan

rounding shrines," which he felt the architect had seen and rectified by placing two *sikharas* flanking the central spire on the roof (nos. 10, 11 in Figure 8). These, however, as Hargreaves observed, "are, from their position, incapable of marking any shrine whose cella could be indicated below."⁵¹

Hargreaves starts his description with the central *sikharas*, then in a somewhat meandering fashion follows the ordering I have numbered in my restoration of his roof plan (see Figure 8). His enumeration of these spires notably lacks the sense of architectural composition and grouping found in Shuttleworth's index. To his description of these "thirteen shrines and two staircases"⁵² Hargreaves adds the two free-standing "cruciform monolithic" shrines (Figure 9) with "sixteen-sided polygon" spires set in the eastern court, to the right and left of the portico of the central sanctum's

mandapa, making a total of fifteen shrines.⁵³ The four rectangular *gopura* (gateway)-like structures (marked A-D in Figure 8), described a few pages later, he called "subsidiary" shrines.⁵⁴

Restoring the Ground Plan

The ceiling of the excavated sanctum has been fully carved with elegant lotus patterns, but its walls were left rough, unfinished, with their height (16 feet) greater than the square sanctum's apparent width (13 feet) (see Figure 7). If I use Hargreaves's ground plan as a measure of the *mandapa* and portico existing on the east, and these are then superimposed as extensions completing the large unfinished excavations from the north and south (see Figures 13, 16), it seems apparent that the architect intended to have entries from these three directions (see

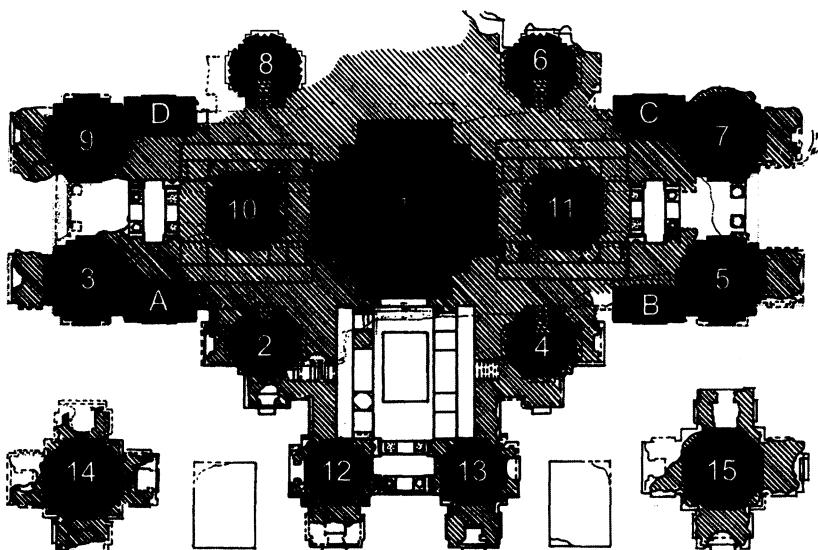
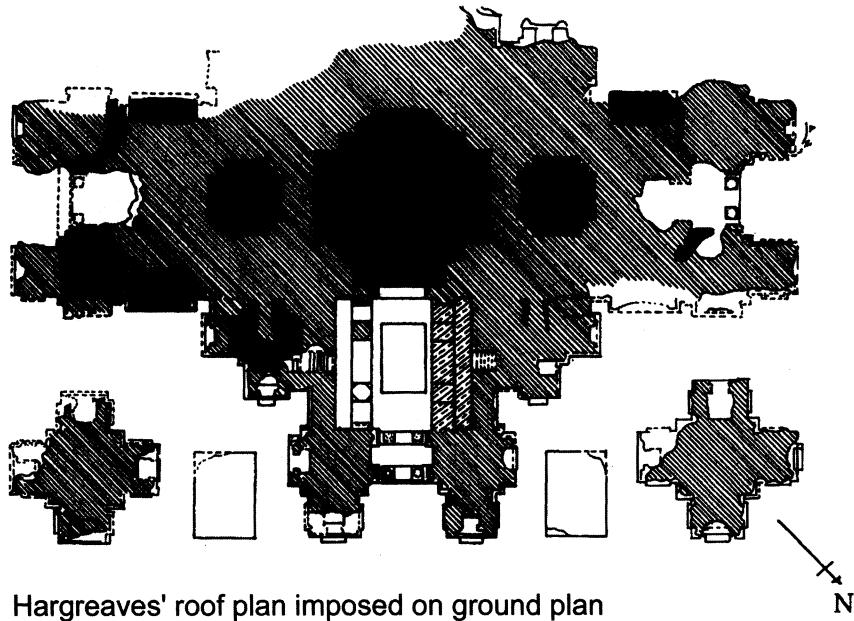


Figure 8 Masrur, Hargreaves's partial roof plan superimposed on his ground plan (top) and the full restored roof plan with his ordering of spires (bottom)

Figure 8) whether or not these could ever have been fully realized. It is these entries that most clearly demonstrate cessation of work at the site, not only because of their yawning cavities, but on account of a matrix of blocked-out but unfinished pillars and partially carved bands of ornament.⁵⁵

Only one antecedent for a three-entry, four-faced Śaiva shrine comes to mind—the remarkable cave temple at

Jogeśvarī near Bombay from the early fifth century, with its meandering corridors and entry halls leading to a four-faced *linga* sanctum (Figure 17).⁵⁶ The cave at Jogeśvarī, excavated into a low hill of rock, however, has no exterior massing and only the pathways from the east and west entries reach the surface. The temple at Masrur, however, like Jogeśvarī, was conceived in part from a ferment of Śaiva thought that sought



Figure 9 Masrur, cruciform monolithic shrine with sixteen-faced spire in court (no. 15 in Figure 8)

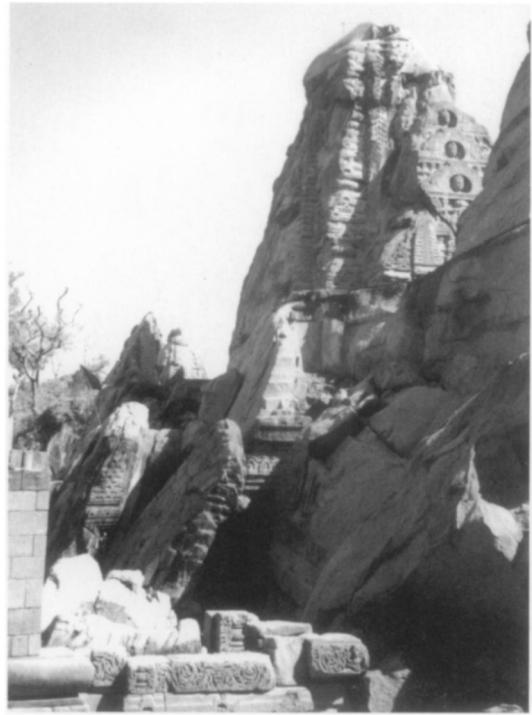


Figure 10 Masrur, central spire and complex from the northeast (no. 1 in Figure 8)



Figure 11 Masrur, rectangular barrel-vaulted "gateway" structure (A in Figure 8)



Figure 12 Masrur, rectangular, central, and "stairway" spires from the southeast (A, nos. 1, 2 in Figure 8)



Figure 13 Masrur, entry on the north, unfinished excavation (spires visible are nos. 5, 1, 11 in Figure 8)



Figure 14 Masrur, roof level, central wall-projection of spire 1

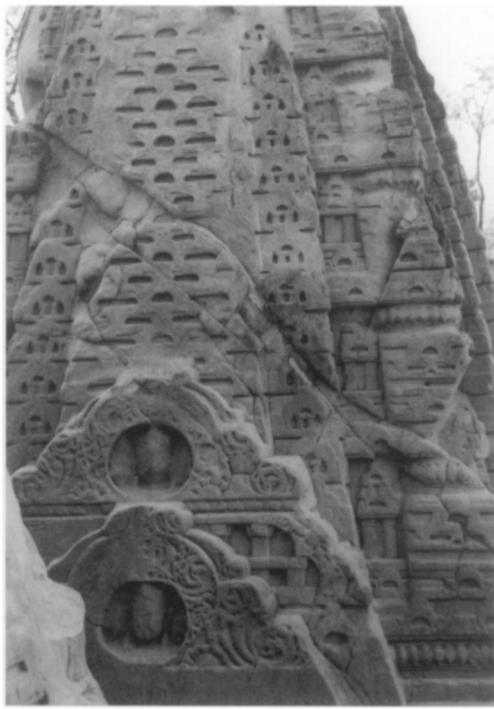


Figure 15 Masrur, roof level, southeast "corner" spire (no. 3 in Figure 8) with *bālapañjara* recess as part of its ornament (niches in recess to right)



Figure 16 Masrur, southwest "corner" shrine (no. 3 in Figure 8) as frame for an unfinished south entry

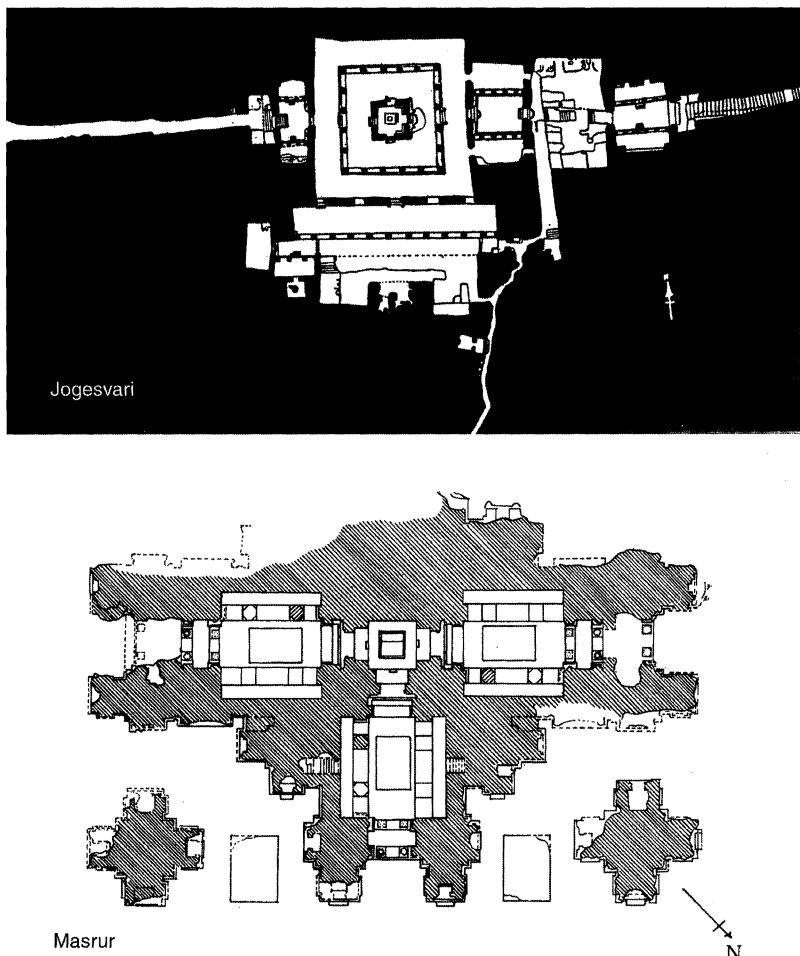


Figure 17 Jogeśvarī (Bombay), Maharashtra, Śaiva cave-plan compared to Masrur's ground plan restored with entry halls on north and south to complete the unfinished excavations

physical means to express the process of the divine coming into cosmic form.⁵⁷ Ronald Inden has characterized the shift from surviving "Vedist" (sacrificial) to "Deist" (image worshiping) liturgies over this period as a discursive process of "augmentation," utilized by both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects, that led to the substitution of temple rituals for those of sacrifice.⁵⁸

In my preliminary reconstruction of Masrur's conceptual plan, the two *sikharas* that flank the central spire stand above the centers of *mandapas* on the north and south (see Figure 8). This might suggest that the temple was also meant to have had a fourth entrance, with *sikharas* over the existing east *mandapa* and on the west (Figure 18). In her study of the "hundred-and-one temples" listed in the important eighth-century text, the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (*VDhP*), Stella Kramrisch identified one category—"whose *Maṇḍapas* are essentially part of their plan"—that seems particularly relevant to what we find at Masrur: "The tem-

ple [type called] Kailāsa heads the list. It has 5 Śikharas, 4 *Maṇḍapas* and 4 doors. The *Maṇḍapas* being in the four directions, the entrances at the cardinal points, this cross-shaped temple would have one central Śikhara and each *Maṇḍapa* would have a lesser Śikhara of its own."⁵⁹ This is a crucial and definitive description of the temple we find at Masrur. The *VDhP*, a vast conglomerate text compiled finally in Kashmir early in the eighth century, contains sections on painting and image-making as well as temple types, and much else that will take on further significance as my narrative continues.⁶⁰

Both Shuttleworth and Hargreaves acknowledged the possibility of a symmetrically planned, though now vastly damaged, west side to the temple. Hargreaves gave dimensions for the "intervening portion of the living rock" as "160 feet in length and not less than 105 feet in width," noting that the "back of the monument is now destroyed, so that it

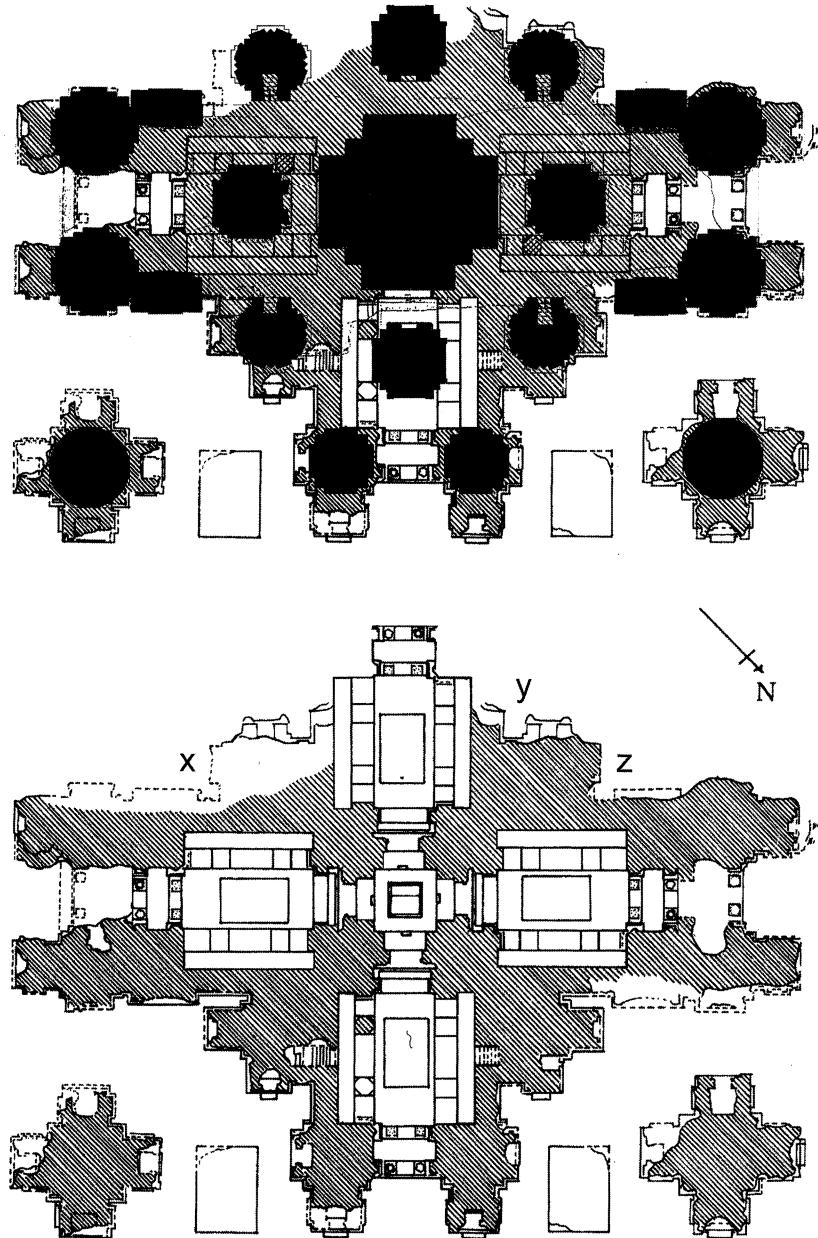
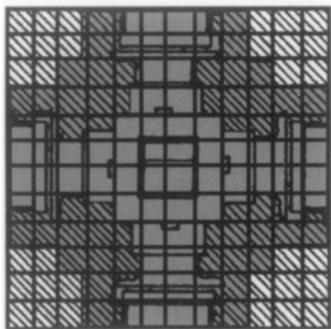
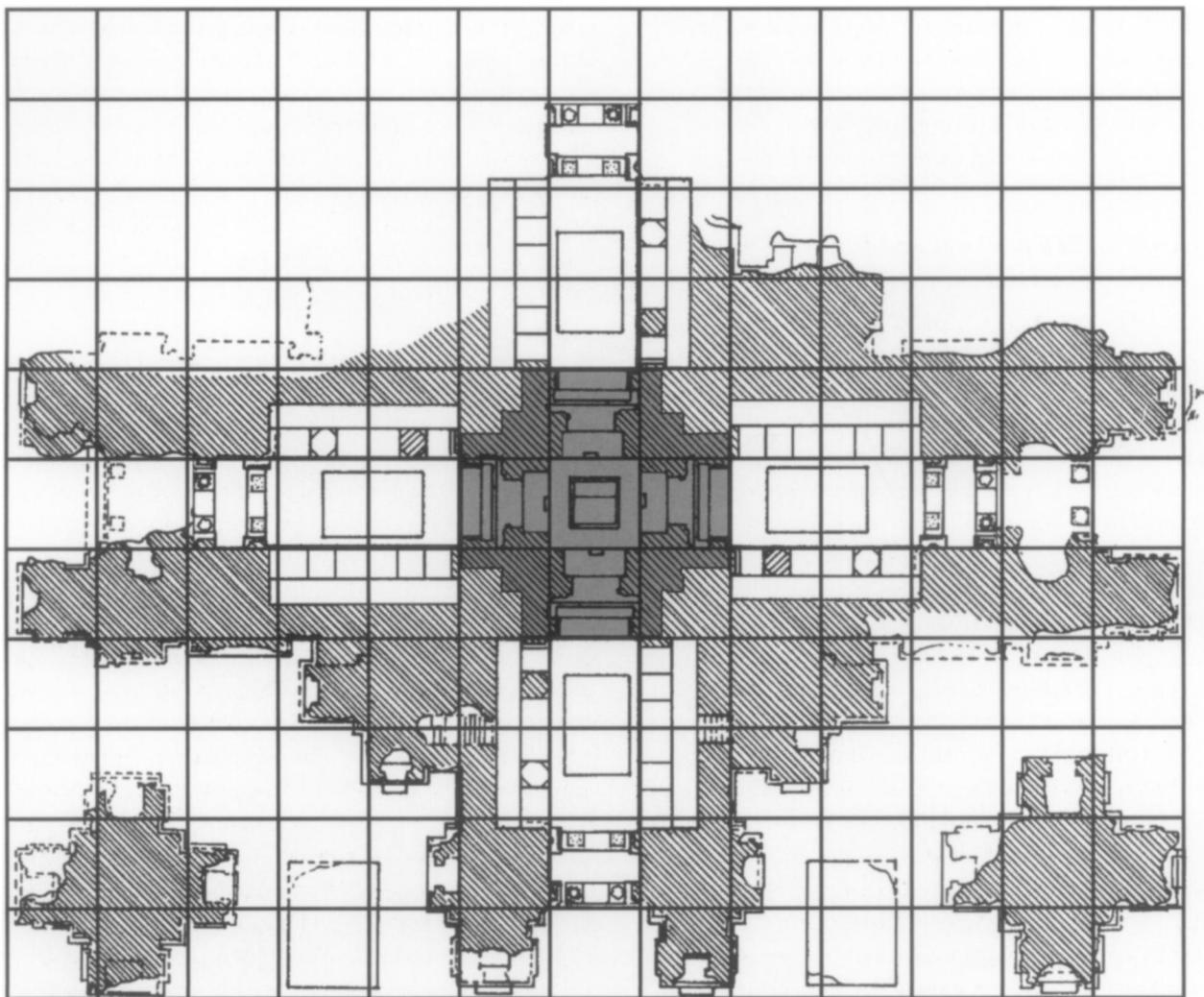


Figure 18 Masrur, overlays restoring flanking spires on the east and west and suggesting a fourth entry hall on the west (compare Figure 8)

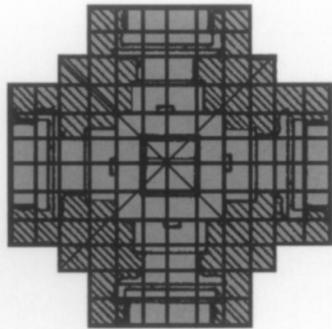
is impossible to state with certainty its original width.”⁶¹ Shuttleworth’s rough index plan (see Figure 6), on the other hand, had placed a solid line on the west, flanked by an outline of the two missing “stairway” spires, parallel to the eastern hall.⁶² Hargreaves wrote more ambiguously that “a similar arrangement of these secondary shrines [on the southeast] appears to have formed the back of the monument, so that the principal temple stood in the centre of eight smaller ones, the whole hewn in the base of a more or

less rectangular mass of rock.”⁶³ Neither, however, could explain the unfinished excavations to the north and south or dared to suggest multiple entries for the whole structure.

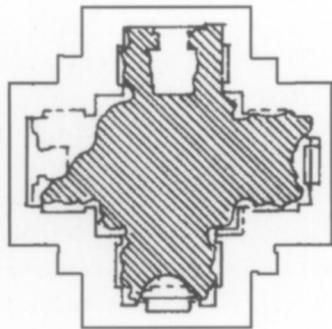
Shuttleworth did observe that all of the site’s Nāgara spires, excluding only the four rectangular “gateway” pyramids (see Figure 11), “are cruciform at their bases;”⁶⁴ Hargreaves’s draftsman had also carefully recorded the base moldings then surviving on the west face (see x, y, z, in Figure 18), which can be compared to those on the east. On



Masrur's central tower



8×8 proportioning grid



compared to four-faced sub-shrine

Figure 19 Masrur, temple compound measured by an overlaying grid determined by the dimensions of the sanctum; below, an analysis of the central tower using an 8×8 proportioning grid compared to the plan of the cruciform shrine in the court (Figure 9)

the northwest face, these base moldings extended as far as the angle where a *mandapa* would once have projected. I have been able to confirm some of his details at the site and to record remnants of wall ornament surviving on the west that can be matched to the better preserved east façade.⁶⁵

Proportion, *Bālapañjara*, and Innovative Turned-Square Design

If such a four-faced plan is analyzed using the sanctum as the module, substantial correspondences can be seen with the developed plan of the complex (Figure 19).⁶⁶ The central sanctum and its tower, which at the roof level is articulated as if with first-story walls (see Figure 14), can also be similarly analyzed. If the sanctum is divided into $4 \times 4 = 16$ squares,⁶⁷ the corners of the tower above then approximate sixty-four squares and each central buttress projects by about two squares. Measurements of this damaged tower on the roof deviate somewhat, but when compared to the ground plans of Masrur's cruciform subshrines and of the Śiva temple at Bajaura, their correspondences seem apparent (see Figures 4, 9, 19).⁶⁸

Dating of the Masrur temple to the eighth century has on the whole followed the suggestions of Hargreaves and Shuttleworth, but with little further investigation.⁶⁹ Its sculptural decoration strongly resembles that of the wood temple at Chatrari, usually dated to early in the eighth century, based on the epigraphy of bronze inscriptions from the time of Meruvarman, a local ruler.⁷⁰ A crucial architectural element for my estimation of the temple's dating is the presence of a well-formed *bālapañjara* (the string of pillared pavilions in the recess to the right in Figure 15) in some of Masrur's *latina śikharas*.⁷¹ This element is a critical and defining remnant of Nāgara formation of the seventh century, found at widespread sites from Mahua in Madhya Pradesh to Alampur in Andhra, that disappeared in middle India by late in the eighth century.⁷² While it may never be possible to determine the duration of excavation and carving at Masrur, I would suggest the second and third quarters of the eighth century, overlapping the reigns of both Yaśovarman (ca. 725–754) and Lalitāditya (ca. 724–760).⁷³

The stairway *śikharas* also are a critical indicator of both the architects' sophistication and their links to architectural experimentation in middle India (Figure 20). Based on four turned squares, these spires had eight *latā* spines alternating with eight right-angled projections, a kind of rotating geometry that had appeared in middle India by the seventh century and was realized with great subtlety in the Śiva temple at Indor, Madhya Pradesh, in the mid-eighth.⁷⁴ The two free-standing cruciform subshrines with "poly-

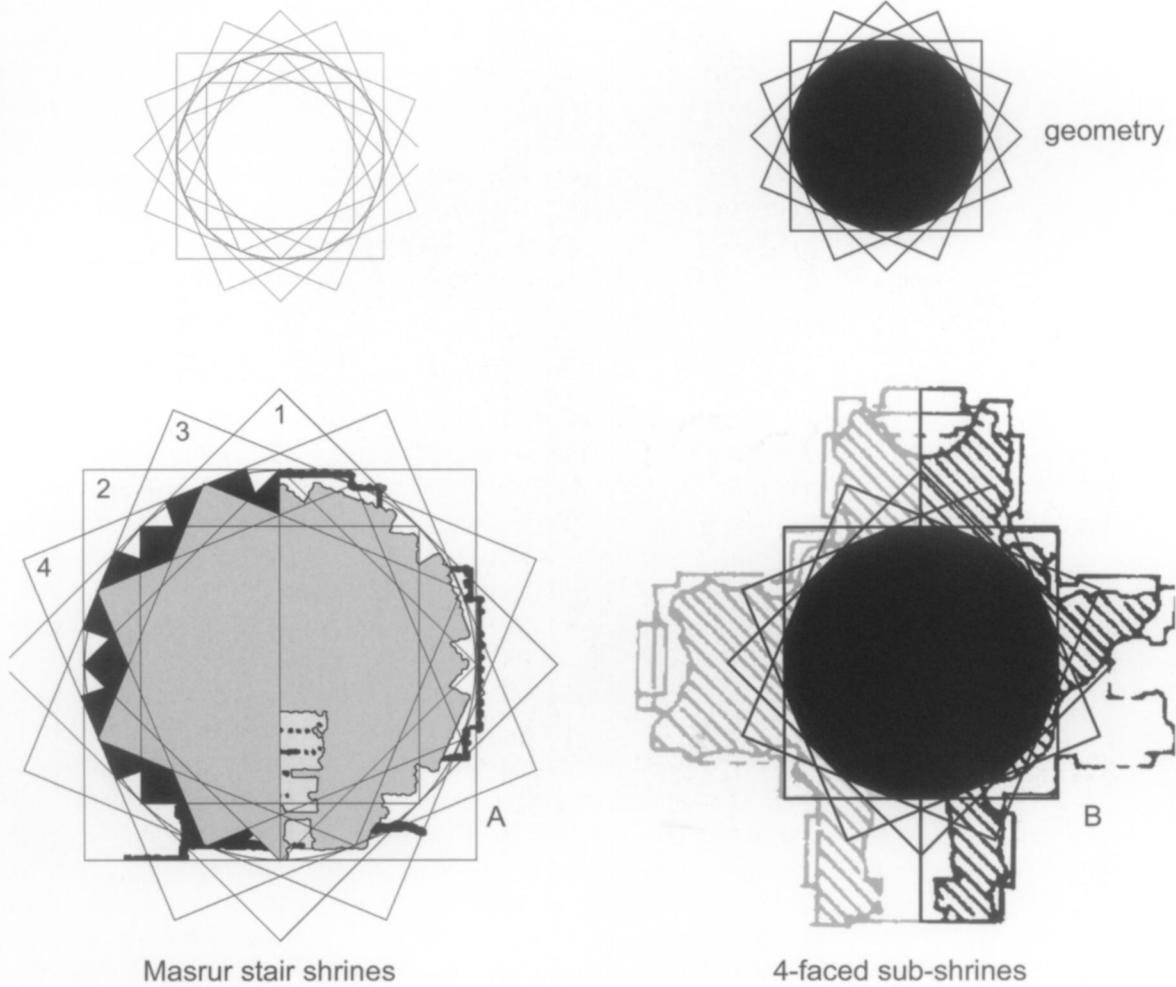
gon"⁷⁵ spires at Masrur use the same geometry to locate sixteen spines (see Figure 9). Such faceted "circular" *śikharas* remained rare, but became somewhat more prominent by the tenth century in central India, as at Chandrehi,⁷⁶ where they were in part associated with the spread of Śaivite Matamayūra monks. The cruciform plan of the base, however, has a parallel in the stairway and "corner" shrines at Masrur, and in the four-faced Bāśeśvara Mahādeva temple at Bajaura (see Figures 4, 19, 20).⁷⁷

Temple-Mountains and Cambodia

To conclude my conceptual reconstruction of the architect's ambitious plan at Masrur, I would compare the symmetrically reconstituted four-faced plan I propose to that of what Helen Ibbetson Jessup identifies as the "oldest known example of the temple mountain" found in Cambodia, the eighth-century brick structure of Prasat Ak Yum in Siem Reap (Figure 21).⁷⁸ Jessup writes that the "royal temple-mountain, first created by the Khmer in the eighth century, and not known in India, was a highly visible means of worshiping adopted deities."⁷⁹ By contrast, Fiona Kerlogue asserts: "Fundamental to Hindu influence on art in Southeast Asia is the cosmological conception of the universe with Mount Meru, the abode of the gods, at its centre."⁸⁰ These symmetrical four-faced structures, with multiple surrounding spires, developed in complexity and with great creativity over four centuries, and had their most famous and evolved expression in the twelfth century at Angkor Wat.⁸¹

That the mountain temple at Masrur was also conceived as a "temple-mountain," however, is a matter supported as much by myth and poetry as by its material form. Temples in India were thought of as being like a mountain, even before they looked like one.⁸² Śiva's home was Kailāsa—both a mountain and palace. His wife's father was an incarnation of the Himalayas. Mount Merū was at the center of India's early cosmology; and in the symbology of temples palace, mountain, and cosmos were perpetually entwined.⁸³ "If he follows his priest's advice," according to the *Mahābhārata*, "a king may aspire to win all of Merū-crowned, sea-girt earth."⁸⁴ If the Śiva temple at Bajaura architecturally simulates a mountain (see Figure 4), the organization of Śiva's multiple faces on the sides of the temple's tower (*śikha*) makes its mountain-body the embodiment of the deity's cosmic form.⁸⁵

To the east of the temple at Masrur, a large rectangular tank, 85 by 155 feet, spans the breadth of the compound. Shuttleworth reported this was "hollowed out of the rock," which might support the probability that such a tank was part of the temple's original conception. Hargreaves



Masrur stair shrines

4-faced sub-shrines

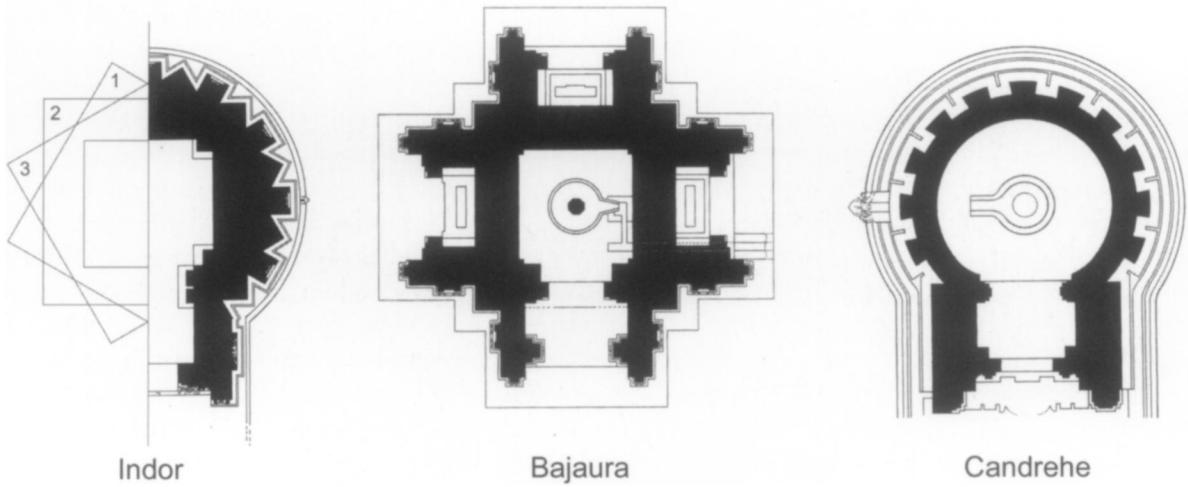
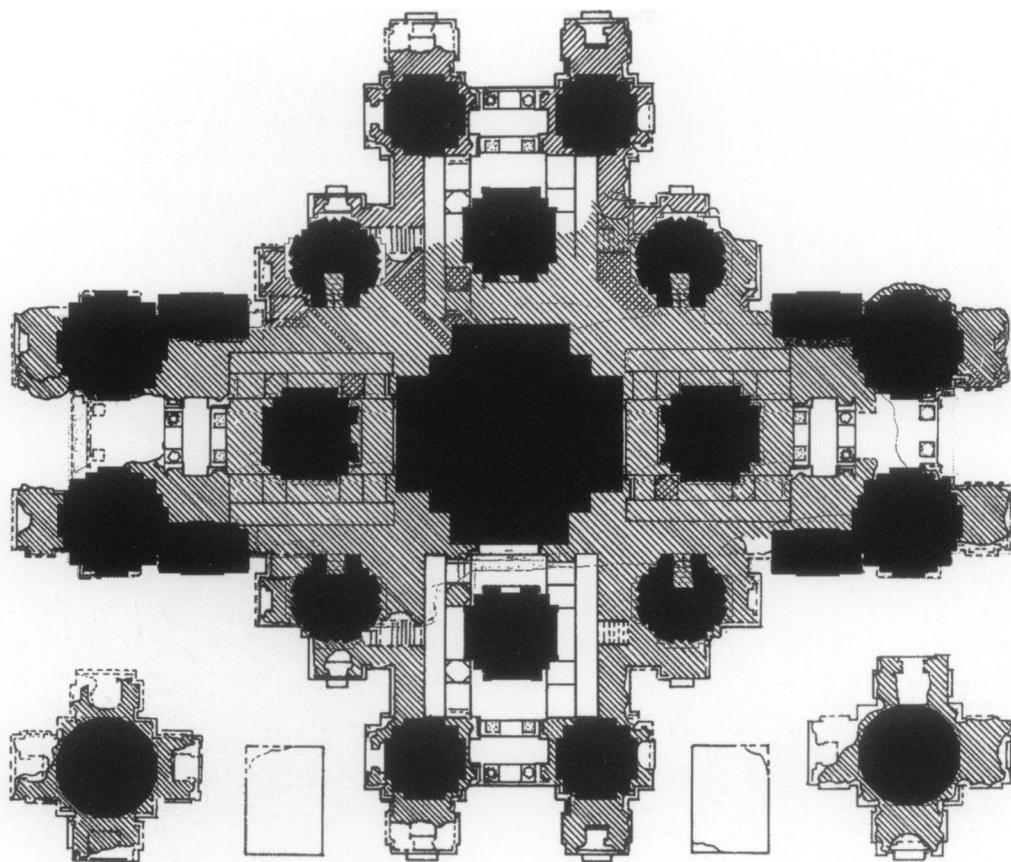
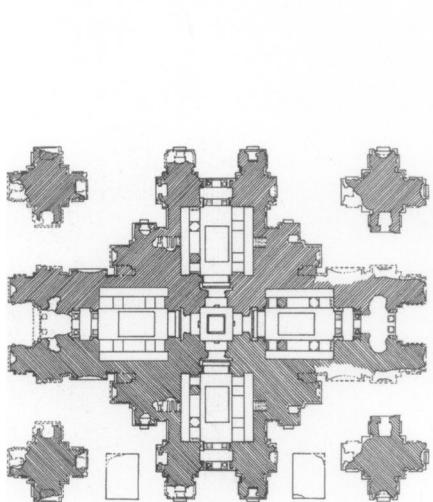


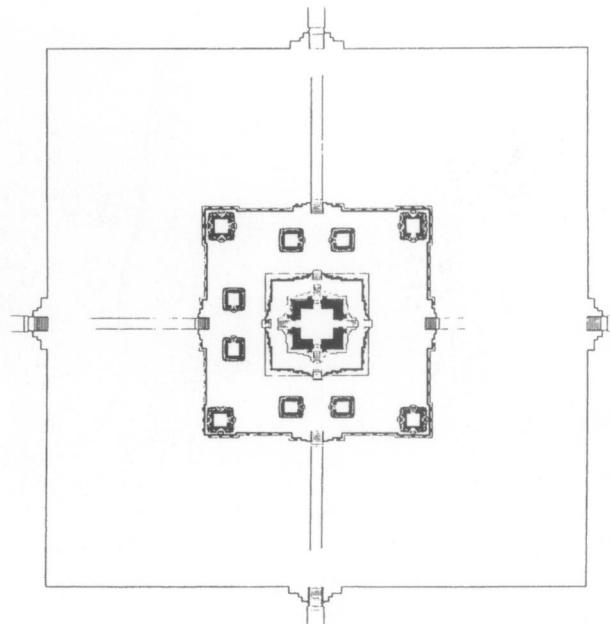
Figure 20 Masrur, analysis of the turning-square geometry of the "stairway" spires and spires of the cruciform subshrines in the court (nos. 2, 15 in Figure 8), and comparisons with plans from Bajaura (Figure 4), Indor, and Chandreh (labeled "Candrehe" here)



a.



b.



c.

Figure 21 Masrur, ground plan; overlays to suggest the conceptual cruciform plan for the Masrur complex, compared to the plan of the eighth-century "temple mountain" of Prasat Ak Kum, Siem Reap, Cambodia



Figure 22 Masrur, southeast “gateway-shrine” door frame (see Figure 11), central flying figures holding up a crown of spires

recorded that “although perched almost on the hill top and apparently fed from an exceedingly small catchment area, it is reputed to contain water even in the driest seasons.”⁸⁶ In telling the story of Indra, Lord of Heaven, clipping the wings of the flying mountains to make them settle to earth (one of the most remarkable tropes for the role of kingship in the *Gāudavaḥo*),⁸⁷ Vākpatirāja wrote:

147. One would imagine that it was not the mountain that [entered] the ocean, but the ocean itself entered the mountain in impetuous haste, flooding in to roll [inside] its valleys and caves, as huge as the interior of the nether world;

156. The earth disintegrated, the circle of mountains smashed and the seas pushed far back, the three worlds were [thus] brought to universal Destruction, as it were, by Indra, longing for peace and stability;

235. “The great Indra even, who had clipped the wing-rows of these mountains . . . nodded his head in admiration at the thought of this King [going on his expedition].”

Masrur’s temple-tank embodies the relationship of water to the temple’s range of towers (see Figure 5). Varāhamihira’s seminal sixth-century text, the *Bṛhat-Saṃhitā*—“on the forward cusp of a new, even ‘modern,’ architecture meant to shelter newly manifest images”—provides a very short chapter with a “brief description of various temples.”⁸⁸ This begins, as if referring to the location of Masrur: “Having made great water reservoirs and laid out gardens, let one build a temple, to heighten one’s reputation and merit. . . . The Gods used to haunt those spots which by nature or artifice are furnished with water and pleasure-gardens.”⁸⁹

Mountains are not singular, but exist in ranges. It is in part to recognize this concept that Masrur’s ridge was cut to allow lateral prolongation of the central square (see Figures 1, 5, 6). The *Mahābhārata* described an arena circled by “high-rising pavilions that seemed to scratch the sky like the peaks of Kailāsa.”⁹⁰ The *Bhāgavāta Purāṇa* represented Mount Kailāsa as “inhabited by gods. . . . Its summits are made up of various kinds of gems.”⁹¹ I might even speculate that the “crown” held by flying celestial figures over niches and doorways at Masrur (Figure 22) and elsewhere in Himachal (a “tiara type” described by Subhashini Aryan as “high pinnacles elaborately ornamented with jewels and strings of beads”) is a “crown of mountains,” a symbol of the “Merū-crowned, sea-girt earth” of conquering kings.⁹²

The “mythical geography” of this “terrestrial globe” is well described in the *Bhāgavāta Purāṇa*: “I am now desirous to know all about the dimensions and characteristics of those continents, in detail. For the mind, when concentrated on the Lord’s gross form—the physical universe . . . becomes capable of entering into and transfixing on the attributeless, subtle-most, self-refulgent, transcendent *Brahman*.⁹³ If I may paraphrase and abbreviate some of G. F. Tagore’s translation: “In this island continent in which we live (*Jambūdvīpa*) . . . there are nine continents . . . clearly separated from each other, by eight mountain ranges.” At the center of the inner continent “stands the all-gold mount Merū, the king of all the mountains.” On the summit of Merū, at its center, is “the city of gold,” god’s capital, square, surrounded by “eight cities of the guardian deities.”⁹⁴ “Some people describe eight minor subcontinents attached to Jambūdvīpa. They are said to have been made by the sons of Sagara who excavated the earth on all sides.”⁹⁵

There is a logic to these shared mythical landscapes that anyone who has seen the high-mountain snow-range of the “Kinner Kailāsa” from Kalpa, or the spires of Masrur’s mountain-made “golden city,” can recognize. The temple at Masrur was a remarkable attempt by an architect to make the cosmos and its transcendence—as well as the divine world and political potency on earth—material.⁹⁶

Masrur’s Kailāsa Crown

I have tried to demonstrate that the Masrur complex was intended to be quadriform. If so, I may also expand Hargreaves’s draftsman’s partial section (see Figure 7) to suggest the temple’s cross-sectional elevation (Figure 23). The sanctum, broadened by the presence of four entry porticoes (see Figure 18), is crowned by the central *sikhara*. Set above four halls in cardinal directions, four flanking *sikharas* would

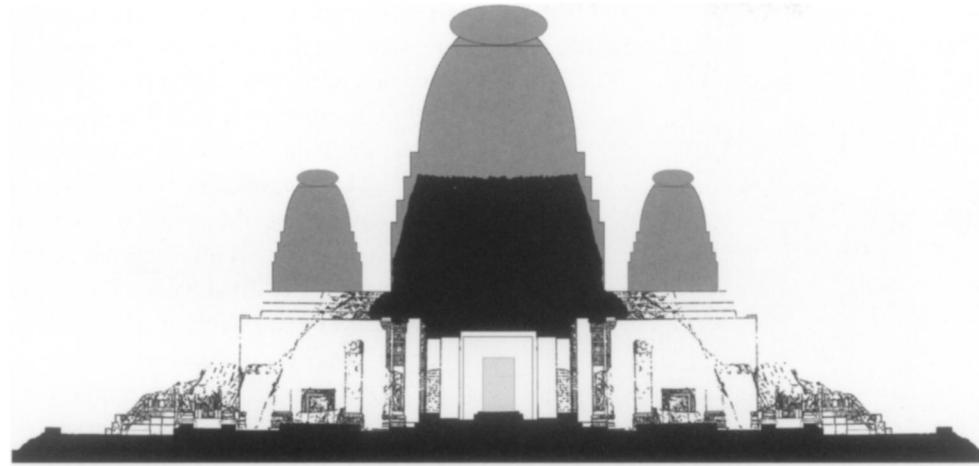


Figure 23 Masrur,
reconstruction of east-west
section

have made of Masrur an exemplar of the *VDhP*'s Kailāsa temple-type: "This cross-shaped temple would have one central Śikhara and each Maṇḍapa would have a lesser Śikhara of its own" (Figure 24).⁹⁷

The four cruciform stairway-towers combine with these cardinal śikharas to make a (rotating) ring of eight pinnacles around Masrur's central peak, set much like the "eight cities of the guardian deities."⁹⁸ Paired cruciform spires flanking the four cardinal entryways formed a second range of eight towers. These, however, vary along the two axes. The "corner" shrines to the north and south stand further from the sanctum, the porticoes between flanked by four rectangular "gateway" spires (see Figure 9, A-D). Smaller *dvi-anga* (square with one offset) towers flanked east and west

entrances.⁹⁹ The four cruciform free-standing shrines in the courts were aligned with these eight entry spires (see Figure 21b), restoring the compound—through what I might call symmetrical asymmetry—to a rectilineal plan.

This varied, complex, and beautifully suggestive plan—the crown of Kailāsa at the center, ringed like Mount Merū by the forms of "the physical universe" inhabited by a pantheon of Hindu deities (Figure 25)—far exceeds for its time the tentative contemporaneous explorations of a mountain-temple type found in Cambodia, such as the temple of Prasat Ak Yum (see Figure 21). Of king Yaśovarman, Vākpatirāja wrote: "You have so ascended on top of the world, elbowing out [others] on all sides, that only the crown [on your head] looms [over all] like a dome."¹⁰⁰

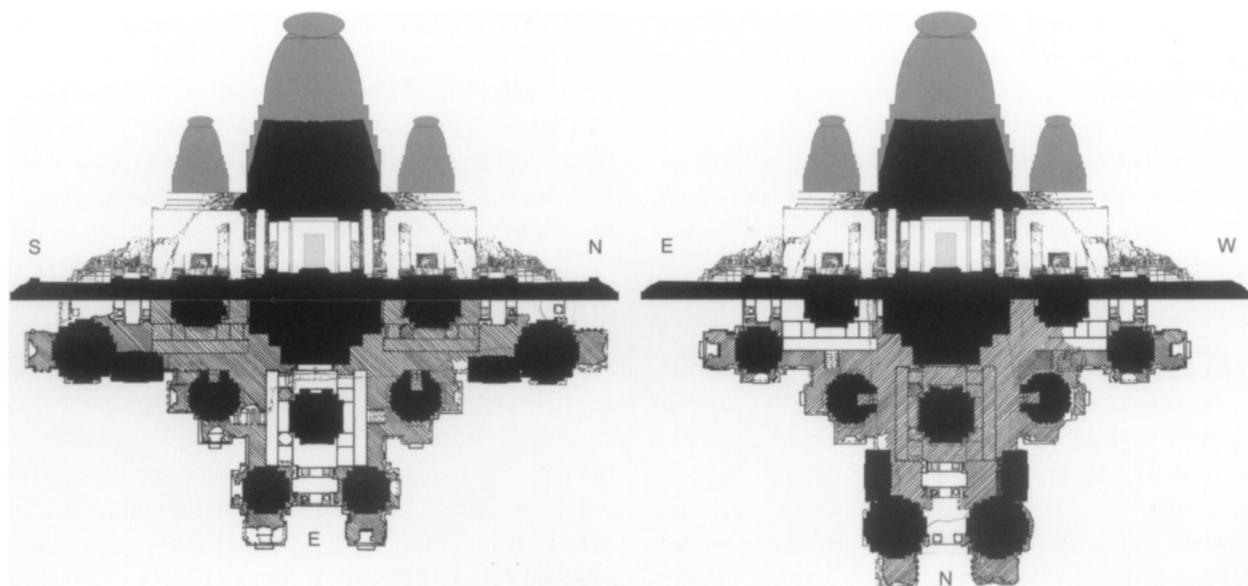


Figure 24 Masrur, symmetrical asymmetry of east-west and north-south axes, plans and sections

MASRUR iconography

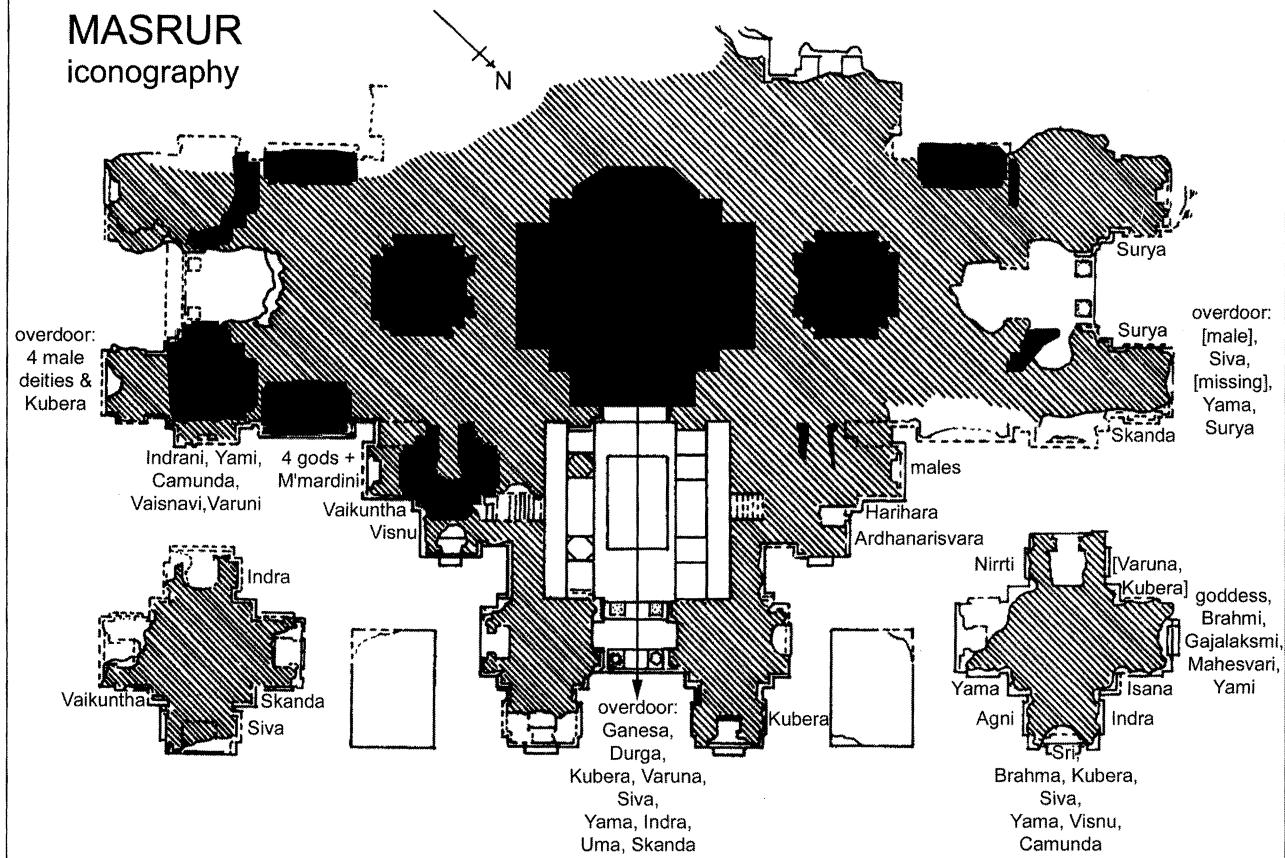


Figure 25 Masrur, provisional layout of surviving iconographic program

Kashmir and Copycat Cosmographies

One eighth-century text already cited above, the *VDhP*, can help further to provide a contextual frame for the temple at Masrur.¹⁰¹ Inden has described this vast compilation of texts with a Vaiṣṇava agenda as “both articulative of and articulated by its historical circumstances.” He goes on, “We can see the *VDhP* as a series of textual wholes, as a ‘scale of texts’ that have been articulated by its complex author acting as a reader or user of other texts.”¹⁰² Inden has interpreted the *VDhP* as an attempt to construct a Vaiṣṇava kingdom in Kashmir, from the hands of a Pāñcarātra preceptor.¹⁰³

Perhaps most relevant to the study of Masrur is one section of the *VDhP* described by Kramrisch as “a genealogical survey of the shapes of the temples at the time of its composition, after the seventh century, at an age when the fully compacted Hindu temple [the Nāgara temple] emerged.”¹⁰⁴ These included the Buddhist *stūpa* (Aiḍūka), Kashmiri pent-roof (Himavān) (see Figure 3), middle-Indian Nāgara (see Figure 4), *valabhī* (see Figure 11), and many other forms. Inden, in his analysis of the political

implications of the text, chose to focus his attention primarily on the Vaiṣṇava Sarvatobhadra temple, the 101st temple of the *VDhP*’s list—“auspiciously open on all sides . . . the massive shrine housing the four-faced image of Viṣṇu”—and on its political component: “This is the summa of all temples, the temple that the [Vaiṣṇava] Pāñcarātra king of kings is supposed to build after his conquest of the earth.”¹⁰⁵

Inden acknowledged that no Nāgara type of temple was built in Kashmir, and few “Himavān” Kashmiri-related structures beyond the Himalayas: “The style that the *VDhP* recognized as emblematic of a claim to universal rule was the style associated with the Gangetic plains, and especially the Middle Region. . . . Squaring the Kashmiri style with the universal style of northern India [Nāgara] was not the only problem Lalitaditya and his Pāñcarātra preceptor had to confront in their drive to constitute a Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇava kingship as the paramount kingship of India.”¹⁰⁶

Yet the typology of the Sarvatobhadra temple-type is not specifically Vaiṣṇava, nor dedicated to a single sect. It

rather is one expression of the *VDhP*'s eighth group of temple-types, of which, according to Kramrisch, "Kailāsa heads the list." "The [four-faced] temple Sarvatobhadra of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* [*VDhP*] is the foremost of its 'Maṇḍapatemple[s]'." But as Kramrisch warned in 1946, never in her very wide experience of Hindu temples having seen one that fit the description: "Where in reality the Sarvatobhadra of the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' was built and when, cannot be said as yet."¹⁰⁷

This was certainly true until the "Kailāsa" temple found at Masrur could better be understood. By focusing his attention on the specific story of the *VDhP*—on its authors, patrons, and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra frame in early eighth-century Kashmir¹⁰⁸—Inden misses in part the text's paradigmatic core. The issue with such a temple—Sarvatobhadra or Kailāsa—is more one of kingship than of sect. A king in India, at least from the time of the law books of Manu (ca. 500 B.C.E., compiled ca. 1st–2nd century C.E.), had been described in cosmological terms as created "out of particles of the eight Regents of the Quarters, so as to make him a superman."¹⁰⁹ Such a depiction of Indian kingship is not sectarian, but emphasizes the symmetry and centrality of kingship itself. More cogent than a temple's cultic dedication is the geography it creates for kings. The *VDhP*'s version of a Sarvatobhadra temple is a Pāñcarātra (Vaiṣṇava) response and analogue to Śiva's palace on Mt. Kailāsa.

Inden placed great emphasis on his text's construction of a Vaiṣṇava kingdom, but even he acknowledged that Kashmir was ruled by Vaiṣṇava kings for only a brief period: "Kashmir's day in the sun lasted for perhaps twenty-five years. Kashmir continued to be an imperial kingdom, but under a new dynasty it opted for a Śaiva order as the pre-eminent form of Theism."¹¹⁰ Of greater import is his recognition that the consequence of this text in Kashmir was "an imperial formation . . . in which the Theism of the Pāñcarātras and Pāśupatas [both Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas], with its liturgy of images and temples . . . would be instituted as hegemonic" in the definition of kingship.¹¹¹ Inden himself thus acknowledges a common effort to assert image-worship as the dominant form of temple liturgy, equally applicable to king Yaśovarman as to Kashmir's king Lalitāditya.

A description of Indian kingship—more germane than the priest's or preceptor's sectarian point of view in the *VDhP*—that can be applied to the world created by Masrur for its royal patrons is a statement paraphrased from a tenth-century source that "exalts the king to the level of the three Highest Deities of the Brahmanical pantheon":

The king . . . becomes Brahmā in his childhood when as a student he resides in his preceptor's household and studies the

sciences; he becomes Viṣṇu when after attaining sovereignty and receiving the ceremonial initiation at his consecration he attracts the love of his subjects by his qualities; and he becomes Śiva when with increased strength and with the possession of the highest authority he sets about extirpating thorns of State and becomes a conqueror. . . . When the king justly protects his subjects, all quarters fulfill the desires of people, the rains fall on time, and all beings live in peace.¹¹²

From the time of Aśoka Maurya in the third century B.C.E., through a variety of kingly lineages that claimed the status of world-ruler (*cakravartin*), kings have been patrons of multiple sects, peoples, directions, and regions. While each might choose a personal deity, their role as ruler was to order the universe, not to create a sectarian kingdom.

In my view, the most plausible patrons for Masrur's temple construction were Yaśovarman, his successors, and feudatories. For me to find firm evidence for Yaśovarman's conquest of the hills in forms of temple building, or to associate a Śaiva structure with what the *VDhP* calls the supreme Pāñcarātra type, may seem to contradict conventional views of eighth-century Kashmir, where Lalitāditya's wide hegemony is assumed. Yet in the broader cosmology of Indian kingship, it mattered less which king—or which divinity—was there than that the mountain crown be put in place.¹¹³

Notes

Planning and fieldwork for this project were supported by a grant from the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation. The history of art department there made funds available for three graduate students to travel with me in Himachal Pradesh in June 2004.

Prof. Deborah Klimburg-Salter of the University of Vienna and I co-organized parallel seminars on art in Himachal Pradesh and the Northwest in spring 2004 in anticipation of a joint collaborative study-tour for students from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Vienna, ably led by Verena Widorn. The Program for International Relations, University of Vienna, supported Prof. Klimburg-Salter's travel.

I thank Romila Thapar, Fritz Staal, John Henry Rice, and Melissa Kerin, who traveled with me on a return visit to Masrur in October 2004, for their insights, company, and conversation.

1. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, vol. 7, pt. A, *Kangra District 1924–25* (Lahore, 1926), 35, cites a Punjab government document no. 619 dated 27 April 1905 that describes a major earthquake in that year: "The sensation experienced shortly after 6 A.M. on the 4th April appears . . . to have been a preliminary tremor of brief duration followed immediately by first a violent counter-shock from north to south then an equally violent counter-shock in the opposite direction, and finally a third shock like a downwards sinking."

2. H. Hargreaves, "The Monolithic Temples of Masrur," *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1915–16* (Calcutta, 1918), 39–48. The temple at Masrur is at an altitude of ca. 2,500 feet. Because the site had not been doc-

umented and published in the nineteenth century, James Ferguson did not cite it in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London, 1876, rev. ed., ed. James Burgess [London, 1910]), and received only the briefest mention in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (New York, 1927), 107; Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)* (1942, 3rd rev. ed. Bombay, 1959), 116; Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (Calcutta, 1946), 168, n. 90; and P. N. Mago, *Marg* 23, no. 2, "Himachal Heritage" issue (Mar. 1970), 5–7.

3. The concept of a *cakravartin* or world-king goes back at least to the Mauryan empire and king Aśoka in the 3rd century B.C.E.; this trope of kingship requires the king—at least symbolically—to rule over the four quarters (and eight directions) of the universe.

4. See *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* (hereafter *EITA*), vol. 2, pt. 1, *North India, Foundations of North Indian Style*, ed. Michael W. Meister, M. A. Dhaky, and Krishna Deva (Princeton, 1988), for both this and Nāgara typologies. See also Michael W. Meister, "Prāsāda as Palace: Kūṭīna Origins of the Nāgara Temple," *Artibus Asiae* 49, no. 3/4 (1989), 254–80, and Meister, "Phāṁsanā in Western India," *Artibus Asiae* 38, no. 2/3 (1976), 167–88. Ancient wooden temples of the Himalayas may also have had pent roofs, as do more recent ones, but few survive; see Ronald M. Bernier, *Himalayan Architecture* (Madison, N.J., 1997).

5. See Subhashini Aryan, *Himadri Temples* (Shimla, 1994), and Laxman S. Thakur, *The Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh, Origin and Development of Temple Styles* (New Delhi, 1996).

6. I have addressed this topic in the following articles: "On the Development of a Morphology for a Symbolic Architecture: India," *Res, Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 12 (1986), 33–50; "De- and Re-constructing the Indian Temple," *Art Journal* 49, no. 4 (1990), 395–400; "Regions and Indian Architecture," *Nirgrantha* 2 (1997), 87–91; "Chronology of Temples in the Salt Range, Pakistan," in Maurizio Taddei and Giuseppe De Marco, eds., *South Asian Archaeology 1997* (Rome, 2000), 1321–339.

7. See Michael W. Meister, "Reading Monuments and Seeing Texts," in Anna Libra Dallapiccola, ed., in collaboration with Christine Walter-Mendy and Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallement, *Shastra Traditions in Indian Arts* (Stuttgart, 1989), vol. 1, 167–73; vol. 2, 94–108.

8. "European scholars searched for histories of India but could find none that conformed to the familiar European view of what a history should be The only exception according to them was the twelfth-century history of Kashmir." Romila Thapar, *Early India From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), 1.

9. Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya* (Wiesbaden, 1969). Ronald Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas: Kashmir as Vaiṣṇava Center of the World," in R. Inden, et al., *Querying the Medieval* (New York, 2000), 82 n. 93: "The most engaging reconstruction of [Lalitāditya's] conquest of the quarters is that of Hermann Goetz." Based on this foundation, Inden concludes: "Probably accompanied by the defeated Yaśovarman, Lalitāditya campaigned in eastern India . . . and then in the Deccan and south India." Ibid., 82.

10. Vākpatirāja, *Gāudavaho* (The assassination of Gauda), ed. and trans. N. G. Suru, Prakrit Text Series 18 (Ahmedabad, 1975), verses 192–512; Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī* (river of kings), trans. R. S. Pandit (New Delhi, 1968), vol. 4, 126–45.

11. "After a successful campaign against the Tibetans in conjunction with Yaśovarman of Kanauj, [Lalitāditya] renewed his dynasty's relationship (in 733) with the Tang emperor." Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas," 82.

12. "Kalhaṇa depicts Lalitāditya as taking command of [Kanauj] (which, with the historian's hindsight, he probably made more important than it was)." Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas," 85.

13. M. A. Stein, introduction and commentary to Kalhaṇa, *Kalhaṇa's*

Rājatarangiṇī, a Chronicle of the Kings of Kāśmir, trans. M. A. Stein (Westminster, 1900). A. L. Basham has argued that Kalhaṇa's poem was a "unique" example of historical writing in India. A. L. Basham, "The Kashmir Chronicle," in *Historians of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon*, ed. C. H. Phillips (Oxford, 1961), 57ff. Romila Thapar presented a much more nuanced argument for the roles and methods of such "historical" texts in South Asia. Romila Thapar, "Society and Historical Consciousness: The *Ithāsa-Purāṇa* Tradition," *Interpreting Early India* (Oxford, 1992), 137–73.

14. "Thus is (he) who is praised for merits, which are facts (*bbūattha*), by bards and great poets." Vākpatirāja, *Gāudavaho*, verse 253.

15. Pandit, in Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī*, lvii.

16. Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī*, vol. 4, 134, 144–46.

17. It is interesting to note S. P. Pandit's hesitation in the introduction to his early edition of *The Gāudavaho: A Historical Poem in Prākrit by Vākpati*, Bombay Sanskrit Series 34 (Bombay, 1887), xcvi–c, cited in Vākpatirāja, *Gāudavaho*, lxiii. Suru, the editor, remarks that "Yaśovarman must have slain the Gaudian king, long before he was himself deprived of his throne by Lalitāditya, which event must have occurred, if it did occur, in the very early part of the 8th century."

18. Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī*, vol. 4, 137–38, 139.

19. Inden attributed to "Lalitāditya and his Pāñcarātra preceptor" a goal "to constitute a Pāñcarātra Vaisnava kingship as the paramount kingship of India." Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas," 87.

20. Kalhaṇa reported that Yaśovarman "had been served by Vākpati[rāja] and the illustrious Bhavabhūti" and may well have had access to the *Gāudavaho*. Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī*, vol. 4, 144.

21. Vākpatirāja, *Gāudavaho*, verse 511. It is worth pointing out that in this respect Vākpatirāja might seem to contradict Goetz's fanciful reconstruction of the direction of Lalitāditya's campaign to the south and east. Kalhaṇa, however, claimed that Lalitāditya—before undertaking his campaign—"tore [king Yaśovarman] up from the root." Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarangiṇī*, vol. 4, 140.

22. Vākpatirāja, *Gāudavaho*, verse 508.

23. Ibid., verse 658; conquering the four directions was a repeated trope for Indian kingship; Vākpatirāja's close observation of the northern regions was not.

24. Suru, in ibid., xxi, and verses 513–568.

25. Perhaps the major imperial mission, for both Yaśovarman and Lalitāditya, in this maze of Himalayan valleys was to contain the growing influence of Tibet (see n. 11).

26. J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, vol. 1 (Lahore, 1933); Hermann Goetz, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba* (Leiden, 1955); and S. M. Mishra, *Yaśovarman of Kanauj* (New Delhi, 1977).

27. Bernard Pilippe Grosslier, *Indochina, Art in the Melting Pot of Races* (London, 1962).

28. Stanley J. O'Connor, *Hindu Gods of Penninsular Siam* (Ascona, 1972).

29. Romila Thapar, "The Mouse in the Ancestry," in Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts, Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi, 2000), 797; the 17th-century Chamba *varṇiśāvalī* (Chronicle) is incorporated into J. Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pt. 1, Archaeological Survey of India New Imperial Series, vol. 36 (Calcutta, 1911).

30. "The Kashmiri style of temple building . . . was not only distinct from other styles, it was apparently one that even the [*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*] recognized as regional." Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas," 86.

31. These temples were built at sites such as Jagesvara and Narayanakoti.

32. Krishna Deva notes that the simply layered curvilinear structures in the Himalayas "are crowned by āmalasāraka [ribbed stone] . . . never by ghanṭā [bell]" and are curvilinear and not shallow pyramids. "As such, they seem more clearly associated with Nāgara formulas than . . . pent-roof phāṁsanā structures," but he chose to "continue to use the term Phāṁsanā for both

- [the tall curvilinear form with a crowning ribbed stone and the low pyramidal form crowned by a bell] types." Krishna Deva, "Hill Dynasties," in *EITA* 2, no. 2, *North India: Period of Early Maturity*, ed. Michael W. Meister and M. A. Dhaky (Princeton, 1991), 97.
33. In mid-to-late-ninth-century sites in the Kashmir valley small reflections of Nāgara ornament begin to appear.
34. Coomaraswamy cited "temples apparently of the ninth century" at Baijnath (*History*, 107) (see n. 2). Thakur summarizes the complicated historiography of the inscription's early dating and then re-dating from 804 to 1204 c.e. (*Architectural Heritage*, 78) (see n. 5).
35. India has a long tradition of rock-cut caves and temples, but only those at Masrur in Himachal and Dhamnar in Malwa are Nāgara. See *EITA* 2, no. 2, 116–18, 311–14. Perhaps the most fabulous rock-cut complex in India, the Kailāsa temple at Ellora, in a South Indian style, architecturally takes the form of Śiva's palace with clustered subshrines. See *EITA* 1, no. 2, *South India, Upper Drāviḍadeśa, Early Phase*, ed. Michael W. Meister and M. A. Dhaky (Philadelphia, 1986), 111–24; Carmel Berkson, *Ellora: Concept and Style* (New Delhi, 1992).
36. "Shimla, September 14: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has prepared a proposal for the inclusion of the Tabo monastery in Lahaul-Spiti, the rock-cut temple of Masrur in Kangra and the Viceregal Lodge [Shimla] in the World Heritage Monument Project of UNESCO." *Tribune*, Chandigarh, on-line ed., accessed 9/11/04: www.tribuneindia.com/2003/20030915/himachal.htm#6.
37. See Groslier, *Indochina*, 72, 90, 98; Helen Ibbetson Jessup, *Art and Architecture of Cambodia* (London, 2004), 63; and Michael W. Meister, "Mountain Cities in Cambodia: Temple Architecture and Divine Vision," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 4, no. 3 (2000), 261–68. Until now, no proper antecedent in South Asia had seemed to survive.
38. H. L. Shuttleworth, "Note on the Rock-Hewn Vaishnava Temple at Masrur, Dera Tehsil, Kangra District, Panjab," *The Indian Antiquary* 44 (1915), 19–23. He does acknowledge that "brief allusions are made to it in the lists of . . . archaeological Monuments in the Panjab, published in 1875 and 1891," and that "native subordinates of the Archaeological Department have seen it on two occasions." The British Library catalogues the 1891 list as published in 1895, with the note "date of publication taken from entry in old printed IOL catalogue": Charles J. Rodgers, *Revised List of Objects of Archaeological Interest in the Punjab, compiled from returns sent in by deputy commissioners of districts, from old lists of the Public Works Department and from reports of the Archaeological Survey* (Lahore, 1895). The title page of the British Library's copy shows no printed date, but is hand-inscribed "Jan 12, 1905" and stamped "W. D. Secretariat Library Punjab."
39. Hargreaves does not acknowledge Shuttleworth, writing that the Masrur temple "was inspected in 1912 by the Assistant Surveyor [perhaps an Indian] and by myself in October 1913." Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 40 (see n. 2). The description of the site given in Rodgers, *Revised List*, 1895, makes clear, however, that someone quite observant had already surveyed the monument (45).
40. There are multiple sects that worship Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrins, Śaiva Paśupatas, and Mattamayūras are perhaps most directly relevant to the present discussion. The sanctum's overdoor at Masrur has a central Śiva; his sons Gaṇeśa and Skanda to each end; two goddesses; and the four Lokapālas (guardians of the quarters).
41. "The group comprises several temples. . . . The number of shrines is thought to be seven, nine, and fifteen. . . . In my opinion there are more than fifteen temples in all." Aryan, *Himadri Temples*, 46 (see n. 5).
42. Hargreaves cites *Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the Punjab and Its Dependencies* (Lahore, 1875), 6, and a passage from Rodgers, *Revised List*, 41: "The ridge of the hill has been cut through in two places and the intervening ridge has been cut into nine temples. Only one [sanctum] was excavated but nine towers were cut out and sculptured on the outside." Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 40.
43. Hargreaves also wrote that Masrur "was inspected in 1912 by the Assistant Surveyor"—possibly this same draftsman—before either he or Shuttleworth had visited the site, "and by myself in 1913, when plans and photographs were obtained." Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 40.
44. This draftsman's experience at the site in the nineteenth century was important for his preparation of these drawings for publication, particularly in view of further destruction caused by a major earthquake in 1905. The wide devastation is described in *Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District 1924–25* (see n. 1): "The area in which the shock was felt most severely was the portion of the Kāngra valley lying between the Beās River on the south and the Dhaulā Dhár mountain range on the north," precisely the location of Masrur (35).
45. Thakur reproduced Shuttleworth's drawing but changed his numbering "for the sake of convenience." Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, 41 (see n. 5).
46. "Access to the flat roof from the court is or was given by two staircases, inside two small spires, flanking the doorway of the cella (plan, nos. 5 and 6). Probably, to judge from some fallen fragments, there were two counterbalancing spires on the other side of the temple (plan, nos. 14 and 15)." Shuttleworth, "Note," 21, 23. Shuttleworth's index drawing indicates nos. 14 and 15 symmetrical with 5 and 6 on the west, and a space between which is analogous to the *mandapa* on the east.
47. Hargreaves described these stairway spires as "star-shaped in plan" and concluded that "when complete, [they] must, like that of the cruciform temple, have resembled more nearly the pointed spires of Europe rather than the Indian śikhara." Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 46.
48. Shuttleworth, "Note," 21.
49. Shuttleworth takes no note of these. Hargreaves shows these two unfinished excavations clearly in his draftsman's ground plan, but his text reduces them to "a verandah of noble proportions" that "joined each pair" of "corner" shrines. Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 45.
50. Shuttleworth, "Note," 20; Shuttleworth's "small" sanctum is actually ca. 13 square feet, small only in relation to the mass of the whole structure.
51. Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 42, 44. No other sanctum has been excavated, save the one at the center.
52. Ibid., 42. Hargreaves seems not to have noticed that the two stairway spires (and two more on the west face) had already been included among his "thirteen shrines." Of these stairways, he wrote that "on either side of the *mandapa* rose a śikhara which did not, however, mark the sanctum of a shrine but masked the stairs leading to the level of the flat roof."
53. Ibid., 42, 45.
54. Hargreaves wrote of these rectangular structures "the spire is suggestive of a Dravidian *gopura* [south Indian gateway]." Ibid., 45. He provided more pertinent references to examples at Sarnath in the Gangetic valley and Jagesvara in Uttarakhand Pradesh. "Valabhī" (barrel-vaulted or ridge-roofed) structures of this sort are also described in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*; see Stella Kramrisch, "The Hundred-and-one Temples of the Viṣṇudharmottara," in Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 411–26 (see n. 2).
55. Hargreaves provides some evidence that masonry was used to patch flaws in the sandstone in some places, but the nature of the cessation of ornament suggests abandonment of patronage at an overly ambitious site rather than a structural catastrophe. Hargreaves, "Monolithic Temples," 42–43.
56. This exceptional cave-temple has been analyzed and dated by Walter Spink in his "Jogeswari: A Brief Analysis," *The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Dr. Moti Chandra Commemoration Volume*, special no. (1978), 1–35. See also K. R. Srinivasan, "Jogeśvarī," in *Archaeological Remains Mon-*

- uments and Museums, pt. 1 (New Delhi, 1964), 137–38. It should be said, however, that all Nāgara temples implicitly are quadriform, with a functional entrance along the axis of entry, with three others as blind doors or niches on cardinal faces; Michael W. Meister, “The Hindu Temple: Axis and Access,” in Kapila Vatsyayan, ed., *Concepts of Space, Ancient and Modern* (New Delhi, 1991), 269–80.
57. Stella Kramrisch, “The Great Cave Temple of Śiva in Elephanta: Levels of Meaning and Their Form,” in Michael W. Meister, ed., *Discourses on Śiva* (Philadelphia, 1984), 1–11; Thomas S. Maxwell, “The Five Aspects of Śiva (In Theory, Iconography and Architecture),” *Art International* 35, nos. 3–4 (1982), 41–57; Doris Meth Srinivasan, “Śaiva Temple Forms: Loci of God’s Unfolding Body,” in Marianne Yaldiz and Wilke Lobo, eds., *Investigating Indian Art* (Berlin, 1987), 335–47; and Michael W. Meister, “Giving Up and Taking On: The Body in Ritual,” *Res, Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 41 (2002), 92–103.
58. “Pāśupata and Pāñcarātra belong together in the sense that both were sciences advocating theism . . . Śiva was the author of Pāśupata. The Pāñcarātrins of the *VDbP* considered Śiva to be a manifestation of Viṣṇu.” Inden, “Imperial Purāṇas,” 46 (see n. 9). “Procedures for temple construction and image installation replace those for the performance of multifire sacrifices.” Ibid., 53. “The earliest versions of these texts must, thus, be placed in the sixth to eighth centuries, and probably later rather than earlier, when brick and stone temples of a scale and complexity required by the Āgamic liturgy were first built.” Ibid., 54.
59. Kramrisch, “Hundred-and-one Temples,” 416–17.
60. Priyabala Shah, ed., *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, Third Khanda*, Gaekwad’s Oriental Series, vols. 130, 137 (Baroda, 1958, 1961); Priyabala Shah, *Pauranic Ritualism of the Fifth Century (Sri Viṣṇudharmottara)* (Calcutta, 1993), and *Vishnudharmottara-Purana: Pauranic Legends and Rebirths* (Delhi, 1999); and Inden, “Imperial Purāṇas,” who is especially interested in the mechanisms used by Vaiṣṇava priests who introduced this text as a means to advance Pāñcarātrin interests in the Kashmir court.
61. Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” 39. See also Rodgers, *Revised List*, 41 (see n. 38): “It is in the possession of attendants who cannot, however, preserve the temples from the effects of the weather, by which the southern and exposed portions of the pile have been entirely destroyed.”
62. Shuttleworth annotated his plan: “Broken lines indicate parts of the temple that have disappeared.” Shuttleworth, “Note,” 21 (see n. 38).
63. Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” 42; Hargreaves’s “eight smaller” towers around the central tower, however, were the four “corners,” two “stairways,” and two flanking spires shown in his roof plan.
64. Shuttleworth, “Notes,” 23.
65. The base moldings on the southwest have been covered by new masonry as part of recent conservation; but patches of decoration from the west wall survive and the configuration of the plan Hargreaves’s draftsman recorded on the northwest can be corroborated from fragments at the site.
66. See Michael W. Meister, “Vāstupuruṣamāṇḍalas: Planning in the Image of Man,” in Gudrun Buhnenmann, ed., *Mandalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions* (Leiden, 2003), 251–90, for a summary of the rationale for this methodology.
67. See Michael W. Meister, “Māṇḍala and Practice in Nāgara Architecture in North India,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99, no. 2 (1979), 204–19; and Meister, “Measurement and Proportion in Hindu Temple Architecture,” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 10, no. 3 (1985), 248–58. For application to a major rectangular temple of Yaśovarman’s period, see Meister, “Geometry and Measure in Indian Temple Plans: Rectangular Temples,” *Artibus Asiae* 44, no. 4 (1983), 266–96.
68. Thakur provides a useful 8 x 8 = 64 grid analysis of the Bāśeśvara Mahādeva temple, Bajaura. Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, 141 (see n. 5).
69. Shuttleworth, “Note,” 22: “Mr. Vincent Smith from an examination of my photos thinks it belongs to the 7th century A.D. Mr. Hargreaves puts it in the 8th century”; Coomaraswamy, *History*, 107: “eighth or ninth century”; Brown, *Indian Architecture*, 116 (see n. 2): “eighth century”; Krishna Deva, “Hill Dynasties,” 118 (see n. 32): “c. A.D. 800”; and Aryan, *Himadri Temples*, 46 (see n. 5): “circa A.D. 720–800.” Some recent fleeting references have made it later. George Michell, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India: Volume 1: Buddhist, Jain, Hindu* (London, 1989), 123: “Fifteen towered Hindu shrines dating from the 9th–10th century have been excavated out of solid rock.” Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York, 1985), 645 ch. 16, n. 4: “ninth century.”
70. See Goetz, *Early Wooden Temples* (see n. 26). “This temple shares numerous motifs with these wooden shrines.” Aryan, *Himadri Temples*, 50.
71. *Bālapañjara* ornament is a remnant of palatial referencing still partly present at Bajaura. Another early-eighth-century marker at Masrur is the presence of “ākāśalinga” (the sky emblem of Śiva) set above two surviving finials. See M. A. Dhaky, “Ākāśalinga Finial,” *Artibus Asiae* 36, no. 4 (1974), 307–15.
72. See Meister, “Prāsāda as Palace” (see n. 4).
73. Yaśovarman must have been the sponsor of the very large Teli temple built in Gwalior fort in the first half of the eighth century. *EITA* 2, no. 2, 15–17. See also Krishna Deva, “Teli-kā-Mandir, Gwalior,” in Frederick M. Asher and G. S. Gai, eds., *Indian Epigraphy, Its Bearing on the History of Art* (New Delhi, 1985), 161–64. On Yaśovarman’s immediate successor, see Michael W. Meister, “Āma, Āmrōl, and Jainism in Gwalior Fort,” *Journal of the Oriental Institute* 22, no. 3 (1972), 354–58.
74. Michael W. Meister, “Śiva’s Forts in Central India: Temples in Daksīṇa Kosala and Their ‘Dæmonic’ Plans,” in *Discourses on Śiva*, 119–43, and “Analysis of Temple Plans: Indor,” *Artibus Asiae* 43, no. 4 (1982), 302–20.
75. Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” 45.
76. Krishna Deva, “Kalacuris of Tripuri,” in M. A. Dhaky, ed., *EITA* 2, no. 3, *North India, Beginnings of Medieval Idiom* (New Delhi, 1998), 37–56.
77. Deva, “Hill Dynasties,” 114–16 (see n. 77). “It is quite clear that these temples were built in a time when Śaivism received a great impetus in northern India.” Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, 53 (see n. 5).
78. Jessup, *Art and Architecture*, 61 (see n. 37).
79. Jessup, “Temple Mountains and the Devarāja Cult,” in Helen Ibbetson Jessop and Thierry Zephir, eds., *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory* (London, 1997), 101. Emphasis mine.
80. Fiona Kerlogue, *Arts of Southeast Asia* (London, 2004), 70.
81. Jessup, *Art and Architecture*, 61–107 (see n. 37).
82. Kramrisch, “The Image of ‘The Mountain and the Cavern,’” in *Hindu Temple*, 161–76 (see n. 2). An eighth-century inscription on the base of a brass Nandi image in Bharmour describes a temple built by Merūvarman in terms that suggest wooden chambers, but uses the powerful simile, “like unto Mount Merū on the top of the Himavant,” Vogel, *Antiquities*, 144 (see n. 29), quoted in Aryan, *Himadri Temples*, 112 (see n. 5), where the author added “in our opinion, this description fits the earlier [wooden] temple style.” An inscription of ca. 423 C.E. refers to a king, Viśvavarman, “who surpassed (the mountain) Merū in firmness,” and to his son who had a Vaiṣṇava shrine built at Gangdhar in eastern Rajasthan “resembling the lofty peak of (the mountain) Kailāsa.” John Faithfull Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1888), “Texts and Translations,” 77–78. This comes at a time when stone temples were still small cubical structures, but the scribe still felt it necessary to remark that the sun, seeing its lustrous spire, “reins in his chariot-horses [and] runs away in fear.” Ibid., 78.
83. Michael W. Meister, “Symbology and Architectural Practice in India,” in Emily Lyle, ed., *Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China,*

- Judaism and Islam* (Edinburgh, 1992), 5–24.
84. *The Mahābhārata 1. The Book of the Beginning*, trans. and ed. J. A. B. Van Buitenen (Chicago, 1973), 324 [1(11)159.20].
85. “The temple itself is Īśāna Sadāśiva, encircled, like the Caturmukhaliṅga, by the four material aspects of the god.” Maxwell, “Five Aspects,” 42 (see n. 57). Masrur also has many 3-faced Śaiva “*bbadramukha*” motifs on its towers, but not so calculatingly oriented as at Bajaura. This motif becomes a signature pattern for later temples in Chamba, whether dedicated to any deity.
86. Shuttleworth, “Note,” 20 (see n. 38); Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” 39 (see n. 2).
87. Vākpatirāja, *Gaiḍavaho*, verses 114–60, 224–35 (see n. 10).
88. “He is not merely summing up a millenium of building, but marking a major transition.” Meister, “*Vastupuruṣamāṇḍalas*,” 254–55.
89. Varāhamihira, *Brhat-Saṃhitā*, trans. H. Kern, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, n.s., 6 (1872), ch. 56, 1–3.
90. *Mahābhārata*, 348 [1(12)176.20].
91. *The Bhāgavāta Purāṇa*, vol. 8, trans. and ed. G. V. Tagare (Delhi, 1976), 448 [IV.6.9–10].
92. *Mahābhārata*, 324 [1(11)159.20]. This tiara type, “in the course of time, became a standard feature of Himachali sculptures.” Aryan, *Himadri Temples*, 99. M. Postel, A. Niven, and K. Mankodi called such a crown “a typical north-western Kashmiri three-pointed diadem” that “came into general use [for Himachal images] from the ninth century.” M. Postel, A. Niven, K. Mankodi, *Antiquities of Himachal* (Bombay, 1985), 90.
93. *Bhāgavāta Purāṇa*, 712 [V.16.2–3] (trans. G. V. Tagare).
94. Ibid., 711–16 [V.16.5–7, 28–29]. These directional guardian deities are among sculptures found at Masrur, almost a complete set surrounding the northeastern quadriform subshrine (see Figure 25). They are placed on corners of most temples in the Gurjara-Pratihara period in middle India. See Corinna Wessels-Mevissen, *The Gods of the Directions in Ancient India* (Berlin, 2001), 66.
95. *Bhāgavāta Purāṇa*, 736 [V.19.29].
96. I wrote of Cambodia’s later temple-mountains that “it is the humanizing of concepts that in India can seem greatly abstracted—this making cosmology both material and pragmatic—that is one of Cambodia’s great and lasting contributions to ancient India’s cultural world.” Meister, “Mountains and Cities,” 266.
97. Kramrisch, “Hundred-and-one Temples,” 416–17 (see n. 2).
98. See n. 94.
99. The cruciform “shrines” to the north and south have *tri-anga sikhara*s (with three levels of offset); the one surviving on the east has a single central offset (*dvi-anga*), as does the much larger central tower.
100. Vākpatirāja, *Gaiḍavaho*, verse 248 (see n. 10).
101. See n. 60 and Kramrisch, “Hundred-and-one Temples” (see n. 2).
102. Inden is interested in the layered composition and multiple authors of this “articulated” text. He dates its final composition to the early eighth century. Inden, “Imperial Purāṇas,” 90, 92 (see n. 9).
103. Ibid., 87.
104. Kramrisch, “Hundred-and-one Temples,” 411.
105. Inden, “Imperial Purāṇas,” 61.
106. Ibid., 86–87.
107. Kramrisch, “Hundred-and-one Temples,” 416, 419, 421.
108. Inden, “Imperial Purāṇas,” 70: “And finally, that king, as conqueror of the entire earth, is made into the builder of an elaborate temple and the celebrant of a complex liturgy in honor of the four-faced image of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, styled the overlord of the cosmos.”
109. U. N. Ghoshal, “Political Theory, Administrative Organization, Law and Legal Institutions,” in R. C. Majumdar et al., eds., *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, The History and Culture of the Indian People, 4 (Bombay, 1955), 236.
110. Ibid., 90–91.
111. Ibid., 90.
112. Ghoshal, “Political Theory,” 239, paraphrasing Somadeva, *Nīti-vākyāmrīta*, 39.16–19.
113. Given Masrur’s present condition, no complete iconographic program can be reconstructed. In a separate study, I will address the small percentage—if large amount—of sculptural program surviving. The absence of any image of Lakuliśa, the founder of Pāśupata Śaivism, would seem to rule out affiliation with that sect. A wide variety of subsidiary images—Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śakti (Goddess), and Saura (Sun-worship)—suggests an ecumenism (and even henotheism) comparable to that of the Pāñcarātrins. Most strikingly, images of three-faced Vaikuṇṭha and standing Viṣṇu to the southeast are paralleled by images of three-faced Harihara and Ardhanārīśvara on the northeast. Sets of directional guardians (Lokapālas, Dikpālas) are consonant with the cosmological construct of the monument. The typology of the images of both Vaikuṇṭha and Sūrya suggests some local knowledge of Kashmiri conventions. Because of the present abraded condition of many of the carvings, the listing of deities in Figure 25 remains provisional.

Illustration Credits

- Figures 1, 5. Photographs by John Henry Rice
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- Figures 3, 4, 9–16, 22. Photographs by the author
- Figure 6 (top). Shuttleworth, “Note,” 23
- Figure 6 (bottom). Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” pl. 28
- Figure 7. Hargreaves, “Monolithic Temples,” pls. 29, 30
- Figures 8, 17 (bottom), 18, 19, 20 (top row; middle row; bottom row left), 21 (top; bottom left), 23, 24. Based on Figures 6, 7, edited and with overlays by the author
- Figure 17 (top). Spink, “Jogeswari,” fig. C
- Figure 20 (bottom center). *EITA 2*, no. 2, *North India: Period of Early Maturity*, 1991, fig. 57
- Figure 20 (bottom right). *EITA 2*, no. 3, *North India: Beginnings of Medieval Idiom*, 1998, fig. 9
- Figure 21 (bottom right). Jessup, *Art and Architecture*, fig. 59 (after Bruno Buguiet, *Le Prasat Ak Yum, État des connaissances, Recherches nouvelles sur le Cambodge* [Paris, 1994]).